

The Life of St. Teresa of Avila

Fr. Philippe, ocd, Toulouse 2014

We are going to get to know Teresa through her life. To begin she had **three names**: her **maiden** name, Teresa de Ahumada-Cepeda (combined names of her two parents); her name as the **reformer** of Carmel, Teresa of Jesus, it is said that this name is **a mystery**; her **native** village, Teresa of Avila. She was also known as the **'Saint'** in Spain and the **'Madre'** in Carmel. Teresa was born on March 28, 1515 or five hundred years ago. It seems far away because she was profoundly entrenched in a culture and in a time that could seem foreign, but she is still very much alive for us. She was born in the golden age or the height of Spanish history. She is near because throughout her whole life she most certainly witnessed the **vocation of man: to know God and enter communion with the life of God**. Even as a small child she marveled at the mystery of eternity, of our destiny--forever, forever. She would think of the joy that would last eternally. What are 5 centuries in comparison to eternity? In this sense she is quite contemporary.

Let's visit Teresa's era but first let's imagine that there was a **new** St. Teresa of Avila, a Teresa of Washington, DC for example. What would we say about her times? We'd say that she was born into a century of profound upset, with two world wars, two great but deadly ideologies: communism and the Nazis; the planetary upset with globalism, communication with no limits in the global village; the arrival of the internet, connection of all forms as well as deep modification of ethical norms with the philosophy of tolerance; a questioning of all certainties, as well as the arrival of the fundamentalists and terrorism. The symbol of our entry into a new century with the collapse of the world trade towers in New York.

We might not have enough distance yet to see clearly but with Teresa we have a much better perspective. She too lived in a time of much upset much like today. All the norms that came out of Medieval Christianity were being questioned. The year 1492 was an important year in the history of Europe and the world for several reasons. Christopher Columbus discovered America. Another important event was the end of the occupation of the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims. The taking back of Spain was accomplished with the fall of Grenada. So, 1492 is important for **two main reasons: first** the

discovery of America; and, **secondly**, the taking back of the Iberian Peninsula by the Catholic Kings.

But, there is yet **another event** that is going to play an important role in Teresa's life and that was the **expulsion of the Jews** from the Peninsula. It was also the **end of the Middle Ages**, a turning point in the history of Spain, Europe and the world as we know it today. It was also the birth of the **Renaissance**, an entry into modern times.

In 1455, another important date, the Guttenberg Bible was printed. It was revolutionary as the world entered the era of printed books. When the monks copied the books, they remained limited in their diffusion. With the arrival of the **printing press** the whole culture could be shared with a much larger audience.

In 1517, Luther posted his 95 theses, a sign representing his rupture with Rome and the beginning of the **Protestant Reformation**. It was the beginning of the religious rupture of Europe which will put division between Catholic and Protestants resulting in religious wars.

This was the world that Teresa was born into: the discovery of America, the taking back of the Iberian Peninsula by the Catholic Kings, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the explosion of the culture with the printed book, religious wars, the Protestant Reformation and the empire of Charles V which went from Spain to Belgium.

If we draw a parallel with Teresa, we can see that she just maybe isn't as far from us as could be thought. She appears in a world of deep change; a world opening to new dimensions and a culture in profound mutation putting man at the center. The great movement of the Renaissance was underway.

Teresa was a contemporary of Erasmus, the great humanist and Copernicus and his great revolution putting man at the center. The world was rapidly changing. Teresa said it was a **world on fire**. **Teresa will be called by God to bring God's response to these upsets**. Each era has its crisis and each era has its saints that will answer.

Teresa was called to give the answer to a humanity that was getting a hold of itself. Europe was in the process of freeing itself from the Church, developing a new awareness of itself and conquering new territory.

The first **map of the world** was put together by Mercato while Teresa put together the **map of the soul**. This is how we can situate her in context. With each change of

civilization God's Saints appear. In Spain alone, there was Teresa, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. John of God. She will erect the **monument of theological humanism** or a deep vision of man seen as the **dwelling place of God**, a man called to **union with God, a total union with Christ**. This is the answer that God brings to humanity. Man, who wonders who he is, who imagines himself autonomous independent of all external authority. Teresa reminds man that he can only understand himself as a **creature loved and saved by God**, a son of God, a creature filled with desire for God, called by God to become the **spouse of his Creator**. She shows us the eternal newness of the Bible of the good news of the Gospel.

How was this answer from God? To answer this question, we are going to look at her **spiritual journey** because it is the path that St. Teresa is leading us down. She **teaches us by her life**. Like modern man, she starts with her own experience and even after 5 centuries she is still able to reach each one of us. She invites us to follow her and to live the same experience she did; in other words, **her experience of intimacy with God**, her experience of **friendship with Christ**.

She doesn't teach us theory or repeat spiritual doctrine that she learned. No, she simply **tells her story**. She tells us about **God's work in her**. She goes from the story of her life to the story of God within her. At the **heart of her story is an invitation for us to let our Lord enter our lives and to allow ourselves to be seized and transformed by him to become capable of union with him**. She takes us by the hand and reassures us that we can have complete and audacious trust in God.

When Teresa was small, she was lively, clever, beautiful and very charming. She was born in Castile in her family home within the walls of the city of Avila (of Horsemen).

Avila, 1,000 meters above sea level, was a city of 8,000 souls, situated on the vast flats of Castile, surrounded by a deserted countryside full of rock formations. The climate in winter is severe. It seems that the sky devours the earth with the immense horizons. The presence of the vast sky is captivating.

Teresa was born into a very large family with a lot of boys. Her father, Alonzo Sanchez de Cepeda had two children, Maria and Juan. He was from a family of Jewish businessman from Toledo, a difficult heritage to have in Spain in 1492. Jews who refused to convert were expelled from Spain and there would always remain a suspicion concerning Jewish families of

whether they had made false conversions and continued to practice their faith.

This is a past one tried to forget. Teresa's father tried by any way possible to forget the family's past either by a court hearing where false testimony was bought to recognize the person as nobility with a guarantee of a pure blood line, having neither Jewish or Muslim blood. In 1654, her father, a widow, married a girl from a good family, another way to erase one's origins. Dona Beatrice de Ahumada was 15 years old. She gave him 10 children, 2 girls and 8 boys.

Teresa grew up amid all these brothers who dreamed of only one thing and that was to leave Spain to conquer the Americas. They all would leave.

This explains why Teresa's convent would fill. With all the men gone to America, the women had little choice but to go into the convent. When Teresa first went into the convent there were only 30 nuns and 20 years later there were 180.

Teresa's family lived under the pious and austere eye of Alonzo who managed his affairs very poorly, but who was very pious. Her mother was pious as well and very devoted to the Virgin Mary. She was exhausted by the pregnancies and sought escape from time to time in books on the adventures of Knights that she hid from her husband who only wanted pious book in the house. Teresa found herself between her two parents. She was influenced by her father, the lives of the Saints and a desire for sainthood yet this imaginary world of romanticism in the books her mother read in secret drew her interest as well.

One thing is certain and that is that Teresa had the temperament of a **leader**. She succeeded in convincing her brother Rodrigo to come along with her on an adventure that was typical of her ideal. She saw heaven promised to the Saints and martyrs. She wanted heaven, so she had to become a martyr. To be a martyr there was only one solution and that was to go to Muslim country where her head would be cut off. She persuaded her brother to come with her. They started out only to be stopped by an uncle after a few hundred meters.

In 1528, when she was 13, Teresa lost her mother. She turned to the Virgin Mary. But adolescence arrived with its dangers. Teresa realized her immense **power of seduction** that followed her throughout her life. She was always able to turn even the most resistant in her favor. She realized that she was beautiful, and she began to get interested in the vanity of the outward appearance which

at that time was anything but simple-hairstyles, dress, make-up etc.

A frivolous cousin started to have a bad influence on her and she was often surrounded by a following of her cousins. The adventure books won out over the books on Saints. Though Teresa had an extreme concern for her honor, her father had noticed her behavior and put her in an **Augustinian convent** not far from the walls of the city. Teresa was 16-year-old.

Teresa wasn't happy leaving her group of admirers to go to the convent. It had to be done secretly to avoid having people think that she had done something wrong. When you put a young girl in a convent people talk. Her father simply wanted to protect her.

She had a rough start but after a week she made the decision that she would live there and formed relationships with the other students. **Wherever she went people loved her**, but she did what it took for that to happen. She controlled her powers of seduction when it came to her vocation but took advantage of this gift later when carrying out her mission.

She was a disciple at this point in her life. She developed an admiration for a nun, **Marie Briceno, who would lead her along the virtuous path of prayer and perhaps even gradually awaken in her the idea of becoming a nun.**

Teresa would leave this school rather quickly because of health issues but a **difficult spiritual combat** (2-3 years) was taking place in her soul until she finally decided for God. She entered the Incarnation Convent of the Carmelites, '**dead in the soul**', the day of the dead, **November 2, 1520**. She described feeling that her **bones would come apart as she crossed the threshold of the convent. She was 20 years old.** She had **one unique reason for entering the convent** and that was to **avoid going to hell**. She chose that specific convent because she had a friend there. By today's standards she would not be accepted by vocation services.

There is the contrast between the description she left us and **what she was really feeling in the depths of her soul**. She describes in the Vida that she at once felt a great joy to at last be in God's service but it needs to be said that she felt under the gun (this or else). There was something in her that **resisted because she became ill** very quickly and had to leave to be taken care of. This was in vain because she ended up in the hands of a healer who almost killed her. She was even **4 days in a state of catalysis**, as if dead, to the point that a grave was even dug for her and her funeral arranged.

She attributed her **miraculous recovery to the intercession of St. Joseph**. She would continue to have a great devotion to him her whole life. It was really Teresa who **launched the devotion to St. Joseph in the Catholic Church**.

She would remain sick throughout her life. Like a lot of great Saints, Teresa was very sick. She was always in a precarious state. This was to help us understand that all the good she did, her foundations, her adventures, etc. was **God who did it through her. God would shine through the heart of her illness and weakness**.

Let's go back to her first steps in religious life. She lived in a monastery that wasn't completely without rigor, but it isn't what we would expect today in religious life. It was far from what the **Council of Trent**, that would reform the Church, would soon reform religious life to be.

The Incarnation was a very poor monastery considering the amount of people in it. Nuns were occasionally obliged to leave to take care to their health and get enough to eat.

The cloister was also porous in the opposite direction. People from the outside were able to come in as well. Families would entrust their daughters to their religious aunts. It was a source of revenue for the monastery. So, there were nuns, children, servants, other members of the family. Religious life reflected the society of the times. When we visit it today, there is a great cloister with 4 sides and the church. It was like a village. There was the wing where the offices of the superior were located, the library, the accounting office which was the equivalent of the town hall. There is another wing for the sisters of nobility. These nuns could own their own cell and leave it in a will. Teresa had **a two-story apartment with a view of the ramparts** (city walls), a kitchen, a chapel, a living room, and bedrooms. She lived there with her sister Juana who would join her later. She had friends come and join her.

There was another wing for the nuns from more **modest backgrounds** which consisted of a **large dormitory**. The inequality in the society of the day was reproduced in religious life. This type of convent had nothing to do with what St. Teresa was to establish a few years later. In her monasteries, **all the nuns were to be friends and the social origins of the families forgotten**. Besides Teresa, we don't know any nuns' family names. The convent had other rooms that would play an important role in the life of St. Teresa: the **parlors**. Parlors are separate rooms with two sections; on one

side was the nun and on the other the visitor. Between the two, there was a thick barrier. This is paradoxical. On the one hand, you have a porous convent and on the other thick barriers in the parlors, mainly for the men. The nuns could have **pious conversations** with the gentlemen from town. These conversations took a lot of Teresa's time. There was also the risk of **vanity** which left Teresa with a bittersweet after taste and a divided heart. She **would suffer** many years from the lack of coherence in her religious life. She described those years as **stormy** ones. She struggled with herself. She struggled with God who patiently worked in her soul. When she was in the parlor, she felt the call of the Lord to join him in her soul. When she was in her chapel, she missed the conversations in the parlor. She was being **pulled in two directions**: towards intimacy with the Lord and towards this taste for relationships to please and seduce others and for beautiful things. This would be her **life's combat** that would take place in and around silent prayer. It is from this struggle that the **heart of her message for us today would come**.

The experience that she would talk to us about in all her writings was about the experience of her life of prayer. She discovered **silent prayer to be the path of salvation**; the path of peace and joy.

The Incarnation monastery had a very developed liturgical life. It wasn't here that Teresa learned silent prayer. She discovered it for the first time when she left the monastery for medical attention. She stopped at her uncle's house and to please him, she read to him. He gave her a book called the Third Spiritual Alphabet written by a Franciscan, Osuna in 1527. It was a spiritual bestseller of the times.

The book offers a **path of prayer** called **recollection**. It asks us to detach from all that surrounds us and captures our senses and our imagination. **We turn towards the center of our soul to experience the presence of God**.

The Presence in her heart is not an abstract one. She was looking for and found the Good Jesus in his Holy Humanity. Silent prayer had a major impact in St. Teresa's life. Jesus answered her by giving her favors; by seizing her soul. She was rapidly overcome by God's presence. The faculties of her soul (will and intellect) would be progressively touched, transformed and invaded by the Beloved.

A new world of clarity and peace opened to her. She discovered that her **soul was a garden**. The different ways of praying, that she would describe for us in her Life, are the different ways of watering the garden with

the **water of grace**. Little by little, the Lord takes over the soul to spread the living water of grace and dilate the heart.

Teresa read a lot, experienced prayer and taught it to all who came to see her in the parlor as well as to her friends who came to see her in her cell. She was doing all of this even though she remained divided. She was able to counsel others but not herself. There was even a time when she had abandoned prayer all together, it didn't last long however, but she continued to teach it to others.

She was really **tortured between a magnificent God who didn't stop giving himself freely to her when she presented herself to him and yet she remained a prisoner of human affection**. But, she didn't give up prayer. She remained determined, a determination of which she speaks in the Way of Perfection.

The Lord would at last completely conquer her heart for him alone. Between her arrival at the monastery in 1535, and her **final conversion** around 1555, twenty years had passed. It's very consoling for us, very encouraging! This invites us to **persevere and be patient** but also to remain committed.

She gives us an account of her own **spiritual combat** in the first chapters of her autobiography. Her combat really speaks to those of us who wrestle with a divided heart, internal struggles and hesitations that we too can end up being completely delivered to God as she was. Around 1555, there were **3 major events** that took place. The **first** was the reading of St. Augustan's **Confessions**. It was a very important moment for Teresa because she discovered a '**converted**' person in St. Augustine who tells us of his conversion. St. Augustine knew what it was to be a sinner. He is also a **doctor of grace**, the free grace of God that comes to save us, and the **master of the internal path**. He invites us to look for God within. St. Augustine played a very important role in her life.

A **second transforming experience** happened when she entered the chapel and was totally overcome by a **statue that represented the wounded and flagellated Christ**. She understood that it was both for and because of her that Jesus was stripped and beaten by his torturers. She was overcome by the love of Christ for her. She realized that she was defeated when faced with so much love. She said she wouldn't get up until she was converted. The **last event** that took place enabled her to **completely turn from her worldly conversations in the parlor**. It was truly a **moment of grace**. Her Jesuit spiritual

director understood that it wasn't possible to reach Teresa with violence but with gentleness. He told her to **ask the Lord for grace, to pray to the Holy Spirit and implore his grace.** It was when she began to pray to the Holy Spirit that she heard what would completely set her free: **'I don't want you talking with man but with angels.'**

Teresa continued to talk a lot with others, but from then on, she was speaking the **language of angels.** In each conversation she sought **God's will.** Her **only worry** from then on would be the **spiritual well-being of the one to whom she was speaking or to receive a message from God** from that person. She is now completely absorbed by intimacy with our Lord. She will go on to have great and deep friendships. She won't deprive herself but it will be with a **liberated heart,** a heart no longer seeking man but messengers from God.

In 1566, around Pentecost all came to an end. Teresa was 41 years old. It has taken 20 years since she entered the convent to be able to **receive the power to fully respond to her vocation.**

Her story could stop here! It's already a very beautiful one. We would have a holy nun who would continue to grow within her community. The community itself was growing, it had reached 180 nuns.

If the path to personal conversion had been accomplished, there was however another path that would now open and place St. Teresa in another **adventure.** It would put her on the Castilian roads and make her a reformer and a founder. This is the Teresa that we know today.

The tipping point into the second part of her life can be characterized by the words of Teresa of Calcutta when she spoke of her **calling within a calling.** St Teresa too would experience a **calling within a calling** which would happen at summer's end in 1560. Teresa received a very special, exceptional and surprising **grace.** She stated that it was the greatest gift of her life. She would call it the **'vision of hell.'**

She described an **experience of hell,** and even more profound, an **experience of God's mercy** that took place in a brief instant that she would remember until the end of her life. She would have an **inner experience** of the place the demons had prepared for her in hell; the place that she would have ended up if she hadn't accepted the **grace of conversion.** She really experienced what hell is. It's about a soul who willingly cuts themselves off from God, refuses love, self-destructs and tears

themselves apart. The **drama of the refusal of God overwhelmed her.**

She immediately took the lesson for herself when she saw the **suffering that results from a rupture with God.** She decided to do whatever it took to be loyal to God and to do everything that was **in her power.** What was in her control was to **live her religious life perfectly.**

This decision led her to return to the **purity of the primitive rule of Carmel removing all mitigating additions** that had been added the previous centuries due to the Plague and the Hundred Year War that had influenced Europe in both the 14th and 15th Centuries.

This was a decision of personal conversion. She wanted to go deeper. The challenge didn't stop there. Teresa had tasted the mercy of God, the salvation of God. Can we really understand what mercy and salvation are, if we haven't grasped what being lost is?

She understood it. She had been wounded by the mercy that she had freely received from God and grasped the danger that all who don't know God risk. This wasn't a theological hypothesis for her. She could see entire populations who were leaving the Church and she began to hear of other populations who didn't even know the Christ. She saw teachers who refused the Eucharist and she was filled with compassion before the threat of eternal perdition. **The Always, Always, of her childhood came to memory when she thought of the destiny of the person cut off from God.**

Teresa decided that she wanted to dedicate her life to prayer and intercession for all those souls who risked being lost. She prayed that these souls would find priests, Saints or religious that would be ministers of the Church to them and bring them back to the path of salvation.

A woman in Spain in the 16th century didn't have the power to speak to souls, she couldn't preach but that is exactly what she has been doing for the last 500 years through **her writings which have been translated into every language.** She is even a **doctor of the Church.** To succeed in her plan, she developed with the help of her friends, a **military-style strategy to conquer souls.** In 1562, Teresa founded the **St. Joseph's monastery.** She describes her program in the first chapter of the Way of Perfection. When Jesus was abandoned by his own, a small group of fervent souls, a new college of apostles, to reproduce the first Disciples of Christ, who would form to work around him to evangelize. **It was a life of austerity, radical poverty, peace, humility and**

simplicity of heart. They practiced very simple fraternal relationships; Teresa said that all the nuns **must be friends.**

It was at the same time a life directed by **two hours of silent prayer daily.** It was however a profoundly **balanced,** joyful and familial life with **two hours of daily recreation.** The nuns would all come together, and while doing handwork (sewing), would talk to and encourage one another on this **path of sainthood.**

St. Teresa proposed the virtues of an evangelic way of life to the little group of nuns to make real

contemplatives of them. They were to be **servants of love,** free people, totally welcoming of God's gifts, available for the work that God would do in them.

The **work of the Carmelite is intercession,** a contemplative apostolate. They pray for souls and for priests because they are so united with God, his true spouses, that the Carmelites are able to **bring all their weight on the heart of Jesus to obtain the graces** that the **Church needs, that Christians be excellent and bring about vocations to the priesthood.**

Teresa will connect her group to a circle of communities with her practical wisdom and will produce a true **program of spiritual life founded on the virtues of faith, hope and charity, detachment and humility, rooted in the experience of contemplative prayer.** The teachings she gave her sisters produced a classic, the Way of Perfection.

This life began on August 22, 1562, with the foundation of St. Joseph, the cradle of the new reformed Carmel initiated by Teresa. There was a lot of strife in the village because of competing monasteries. When there are too many competing for resources through begging, that creates tensions which ended in legal proceedings and unending controversy until this **little group of nuns was finally able to calmly give themselves to prayer.**

They were called Discalced Carmelites because as a **sign of penance they removed their thick stockings** and put on sandals. In a life of prayer and work, they would **reproduce the life of the house of Nazareth.** Teresa would live 5 years in this monastery. It was sheer happiness for her. She called it a little **dovecot for the Blessed Virgin.**

The **apostolic zeal** wasn't however extinguished in her heart. She continued to receive **graces** that she felt the need to share and spread. In 1566, she met a Franciscan in the parlor who had just returned from America, Alonzo de Mateo. He described the **dramatic situation in America where thousands of souls didn't know**

God due to lack of mentoring. The conquistadors had come to America for only one reason, to bring gold back to Spain **not to spread the Gospel.** What does that serve to gain the whole world if we lose our soul? What good does it do to bring back gold from America if we pay for it with our soul?

Teresa **felt confined** in her monastery. She wanted to do something for the souls. Destiny responded to her desires as always with the visit of the Carmelite General Fr. Rubio, to Castile. He had travelled from Rome and while in Castile he visited Teresa in her convent. He discovered in St. Joseph the **ideal of how he wanted to reform his order.** He welcomed and encouraged Teresa's project. He gave her permission to **found as many monasteries as she had hairs on her head.**

Teresa felt the need to be helped by friars who would share the same ideal and style of life. She obtained the surprising **permission to found two convents of friars.**

This is a part of the blessing of the General. She was to become as Pope Francis wrote in a letter for her 500-year anniversary, the **wandering lady.** The nun that was always on the move who her contemporaries would either **admire or criticize.** She was always on the road when she should have been cloistered. She **founded 16 convents;** the 17th was founded by Ann of Jesus.

Try and imagine nuns travelling in covered wagons; Teresa with a statue of Jesus in her arms. They strove to maintain the same rhythm as in the monastery. The roads in Spain were a challenge and sometimes the wagons would flip over. Sometimes they had to cross rivers at high tide. They were accompanied by a few kind men. Today there are **890 Carmelite convents in the world** with a total of 11,500 nuns.

The Foundations is a summary of her travels through Spain. It reads like a novel. There are portraits of people, circumstances and crisis. In one instance, they arrived at night so as not to be noticed. They began to set up the chapel but it wasn't large enough, so they broke through a wall and wound up in the neighbor's bedroom. Each time they placed the Holy Eucharist in the little chapel's tabernacle, Teresa was ecstatic at being able to offer a **new oasis to her Lord that was surrounded by a new crown of Carmelites full of enthusiasm and willingness to serve of the Church.**

One of the greatest joys of Teresa was the encounter with a young Carmelite friar, Jean of St. Matthias. She would draw him into her adventure with another friar, Antoine de Jesus. He would be called St. John of the Cross and would open the **first convent of Carmelite**

friars on November 28, 1568. Today there are 4,000 friars throughout the world.

All her foundations are not a monotonous account of wonderful successes. There were crisis within the communities and many difficulties founding the monasteries. From 1577-1579, there was widespread **persecution of the new reform** to kill it in its inception. **St. John of the Cross** was **confined to a monastery** in Toledo and was told not to come out. A few months later, he was taken at night and put in a small **prison, where he was very poorly treated for 9 months. No one knew where he was.** The strife would bring about a **separation** between the traditional Carmelite order and the Reform. Today, there are the O'Carms and the Discalced or Reformed Carmelites.

These difficult years were for Teresa a time of going deeper within and of spreading her order. On November 18, 1572, Teresa received the grace of **Spiritual Marriage** or a total and definitive **union with our Lord.** In 1577, she wrote the **Interior Castle**, her masterpiece, which traces the path of transformation of the soul under the action of grace. Teresa described the soul as a castle where the **Trinity resides.** This castle has countless rooms organized into 7 mansions or stages of spiritual progress; **the soul journeys from a superficial life, to a life of prayer, to a conversion, to mystical transformation, and finally to spiritual marriage.** Teresa showed us that in progressing through these steps, the soul is ever more in service to the Church and its mission and ends up with **one ideal, the imitation the Christ by offering one's life. Her work at the end was to help the Crucified by participating in the work of salvation.**

The path of Teresa's early life comes to an end as the night falls on an exhausted Madre. In 1582, she stopped off at her monastery in **Alba de Tormes.** She was 67 years old. She was supported by her loyal secretary and nurse, Ann of Barthelme. She **died on the feast of St. Francis**, the 4th of October. Gregory XIII had eliminated 10 days from the calendar, so she died on the night of the 4th but we celebrate her feast on the 15th of October. She died saying that she was a now a **daughter of the Church** and told the Lord that **it was time that they see one another.**

The Way of Perfection was edited for the first time in Portugal in 1583 one year after her death. Her works were edited in 1588 by Louis de Leon, a great professor of the Bible from Salamanca.

She was **beatified by Paul V on April 24, 1614.** While alive, she knew 10 Popes. She was **canonized on March 12, 1622,** the same time as Ignatius of Loyola, Phillip Nero, Francis Xavier and Isidor Labrador. She was made a **Doctor of the Church on September 27th, 1970 by Pope Paul VI.**

St. Teresa left us a brilliant testimony of the richness of a life completely given over to the **power of grace. She led a life that allowed merciful love to own her and make her a slave of love.** She was devoted to the service of the Church, to souls and to God's loving design to save all men and bring them together in the mystery of the Church.

Teresa burned with love for the holy humanity of Christ. She met and contemplated Him long hours in silent prayer. She left us a testimony through her writings that **describe God's work in her.** She also left us a testimony through the communities she founded and render today her manner of proceeding, her way of praying and of living a simple and joyful life together in fraternal friendship.

The Carmelite family has enriched the Church by several **treasures of holiness:** St. John of the Cross, Therese of the Little Flower, Elizabeth of the Trinity and Edith Stein.

St. Teresa's testimony is a confession and a celebration of the greatness and beauty of the Mother of God, who only waits for us to give the consent of our poor love. The Saints invite us to trust and to sing with them eternally the mercy of God—the **Magnificat of Mary**—that the Church sings every evening with Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the **true Mother and inspiration of Teresa of Jesus.** **AMEN**

Fr. Philippe, ocd Toulouse 2014