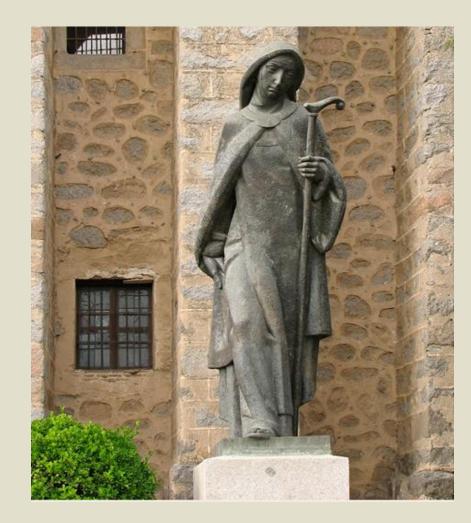
Episodes from the Life of St. Teresa of Avila



Session Three Life and Experiences in the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation



Teresa born in 1515, died in 1582 Her life of 67 years can be considered as having three distinct phases



- First 21 years: First Phase, childhood and young adult until she entered the Monastery of the Incarnation in 1536
- Next 27 years, Second Phase, as a Carmelite nun in the Monastery of the Incarnation until 1563, when she is 48 years old
- Next 19 years, Third Phase as Carmelite Mother Teresa and Foundress, until she dies age 67

These Three Phases remind us of the Classic Three Stages of Spiritual Progress The Purgative, the Illuminative and the Unitive. Also known as the stages of Beginners, Proficient and Perfect

Fundamental characteristics: Beginners: avoiding sin Proficient: doing what God wants Perfect: being with God

We can see these stages in her life First 21 years: as a Beginner, learning to avoid sin and the occasion of sin



We can see these stages in her life Next 27 years: as a Proficient, learning what God wants her to do, and beginning to do it



We can see these stages in her life Next 27 years: as a Perfect, being with God



These stages are not fixed, do not follow seamlessly one after the other We see this in Teresa's life. We see it in our life, in our spiritual growth. Successful spiritual development is a trend from our beginnings through proficiency to perfection; from avoiding sin, to learning what God wants of us, to being with him. A trend with many reverses, many detours,

many cycles, in our lives as in Teresa's.

Life and Experiences in the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation



November 2 1535 Teresa leaves secretly and walks to the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation



November 2, 1536: Receives the Habit "Within an hour, Christ gave me such great happiness at being in the religious state of life that it has never left me up to this day".



The Monastery of the Incarnation



Blessed John Soreth founded the order of Carmelite nuns in 1452. The first convent, was in Florence; the movement rapidly spread to Belgium, France, and Spain. Founded in Avila in 1478, the Incarnation began only 26 years later.

In 1536 it was one of eleven Carmelite monasteries for nuns in Spain. It was moved outside the city onto land that had been a Jewish cemetery and a new monastery was built. It was opened on 4 April 1515, the date on which Teresa was baptized.

In 1536, who lived in the Incarnation? 180 nuns and at least 20 others



Beatas and Choir Sisters Generally from wealthy or noble families



They bring dowry, keep their property, have nice cells, have visitors, go out freely, have no ministries, no rule of enclosure



Lay Sisters, also Religious, worked to keep the monastery running



Teresa thinks about these differences Is this what the Lord wants?



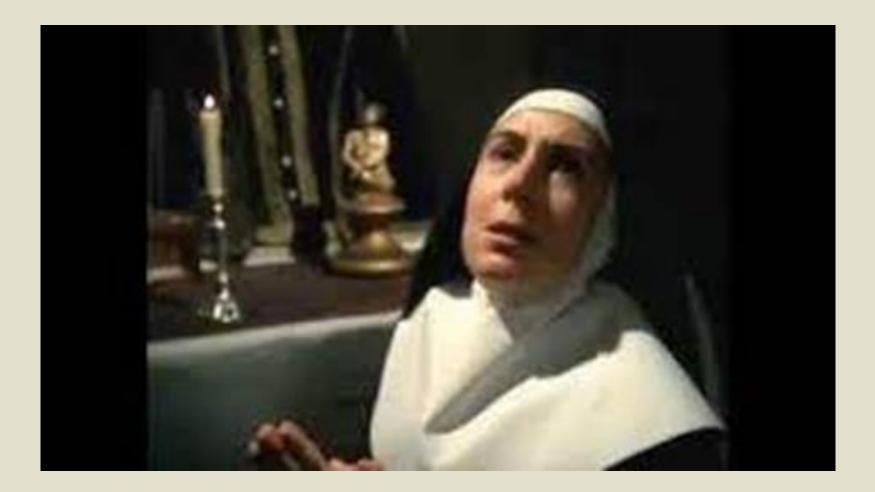
At the Incarnation, religious life includes Mass, fasting and abstinence liturgy of hours, hours of silence



No instruction about mental prayer



Teresa begins to have "experiences" She is afraid



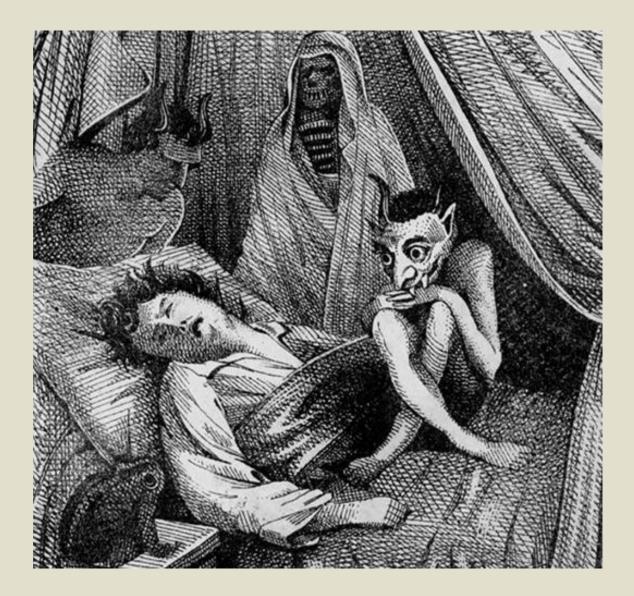
Why is she afraid? Upheaval in Spain



Spanish Inquisition



Widespread fear of the Devil



National infatuation with visions and extraordinary phenomena Led to fame and adulation



While Teresa was at the Incarnation 1543: Magdalena de la Cruz confesses to hypocrisy and possession



Teresa tells all to her Confessors The Lord assures her: "I was given calm together with fortitude, courage, security, quietude, and light"



Teresa is 44: Index of Forbidden Books The Lord says he will be for her a living book. Later, she writes her own books on prayer



Teresa has difficulty with prayer "I was more anxious that the hour I had determined to spend in prayer be over than I was to remain there"



At 39, Teresa has a Second Conversion "I saw a statue that represented the much wounded Christ and I threw myself down with the greatest outpouring of tears."

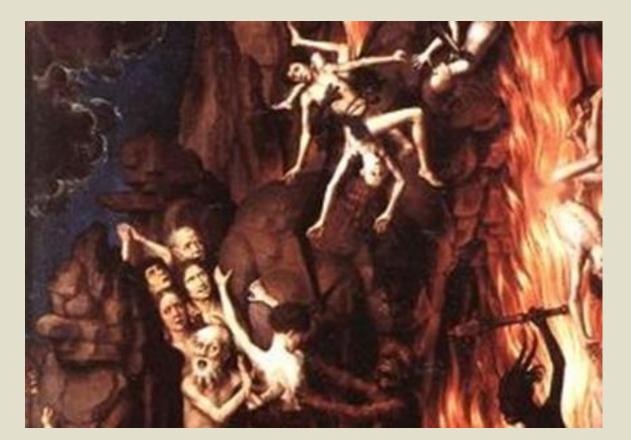


Once, at Mass: "The Lord's most sacred humanity in its risen form was represented to me completely, as it is in paintings, with such wonderful beauty and majesty"

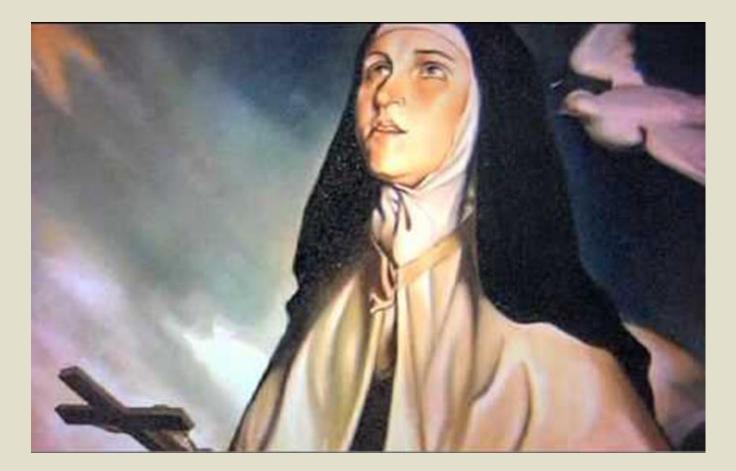


A Vision of Hell

"The bodily pains were unbearable and they would go on without ever ceasing. This was nothing next to the soul's agonizing"



A Vision of Hell "This experience was one of the greatest favors the Lord granted me"



"I saw close to me toward my left side an angel, in his hands a large golden dart, he plunged it several times into my heart"



"When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me; he left me all on fire with great love of God."



Teresa's incorrupt heart is displayed in a reliquary in the Church in Alba de Tormes. A puncture wound in it is clearly visible.



At the Incarnation, Teresa's learns from her spiritual experiences. She perseveres in prayer, humility, love for her brothers and sisters, for the Carmelite Order and for the Church.



She dreams of the Carmelite Rule of St. Albert. The Lord kindles in her soul another charism. Teresa is to be a cloistered nun, a teacher of prayer and even more - a foundress to establish monasteries for nuns and friars.



For Reflection and Discussion

What were some events and people during this stage of her life that opened Teresa's soul to her vocation, and strengthened her resolve? How did she react to visions and other supernatural events?

What events and people in your life have led you to a deeper experience of prayer? How did you react initially to these events?

Any questions or comments?

