

# The Book of Her Life

**St. Teresa of Avila**

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

## The Two Editions

### **First Edition** (completed 1562)

-Written in Toledo at Dona Luisa de la Cerda's Palace between January & June 1562;

-No Chapters, one long manuscript;

-Recipients were her Confessors;

-Not Included: Foundation of St. Joseph (ch. 32-6); Blessings of the Last Hours (ch. 37-40); perhaps Expose on Interior Prayer (ch. 11-21).

### **Second Edition** (completed 1565)

-Version we have today in the Escorial Library, Window 26);

-Her Confessor Fr. Garcia de Toledo, a Dominican, ordered her to write an account of the Foundation of St. Joseph's and 'other things' in 1562;

-'Other things' was her LIFE;

-In 1562-3, the Inquisitor from Toledo met with Teresa, she told him everything. He suggested following her Confessor's advice and write an extensive account of her whole life and then give it to the Master of Avila (St. John of Avila).

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

## The Different Recipients of the Book

**Confessors:** Garcia de Toledo; Domingo Banez first before turning it over to John of Avila;

**Well-wishers:** Dona Ulloa, Fr. Alvarez, Francisco de Salcedo (the saintly gentleman), Gaspar Daza (secular);

Teresa felt **driven** to write the book, her confessors and God both wanted it for a longtime;

The book would be in the hands of the **Inquisition** until her death. Ana of Jesus retrieved it from them. She gave it to Luis de Leon (editor). It was then given to Phillip II to be preserved at the Royal Saint Laurence of Escorial Library, Window 26.

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

## **The Three Testimonies (also called Relations)**

From the writings of Teresa concerning the period from 1562 to 1565, the context of the Book of her Life, we have the Testimonies;

There were many Testimonies, but only the first three are available to us today. They are the first spiritual writings (1560-63);

The Testimonies were meant for Teresa's Confessors to guide her in discernment and spiritual direction;

From them insight is gained into the spiritual life of Teresa through her theological preoccupations.

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

- ❖ **LIFE** covers the first 50 years of St. Teresa's Life or up until 1565;
- ❖ An account of both her life and her prayer experiences (1562-65);
- ❖ Teresa's mystical life was drawing the attention of the people of Avila;
- ❖ The Carmelite reform was causing commotion.

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

## A Turbulent Century

Spain was the USA of the era. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the spiritual norm went from the external one & vocal prayer to an internal one based on personal experiences;

Advent of Printing Press (around 1440) brought about internal norm born in Netherlands- **Devotio Moderna**, mental prayer;

**Recogimento**, the most well-known movement, would emerge from the practice of mental prayer: think of nothing; attention on God alone; Love (Osuna).

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

## The Spanish Illuminist Movement

**Illuminism** developed from the **pensar nada a solo amor** way of recollection, much appreciated by its practitioners;

**Alumbrados** illuminists sought union with God through mental prayer. Passionate about supernatural phenomena;

Mental Prayer was considered divine, neither penance nor virtues were considered important. To not disturb recollection or the prayer of quiet they abstained from all action both internal and external...no thought of the humanity of Christ.

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

## The Spanish Illuminist Movement

Result was imperfection. Union with God was sought through passivity & abandonment. Quest for the extraordinary was turned to communion; exterior worship was done away with. These experiences were sought at all costs;

St. Teresa's prayer life was attracting attention. She was obliged to write it down for Theologians to determine its veracity;

Inquisition sought to eliminate all members of this movement. A suspicious eye was cast on mental prayer. Teresa defended this practice. Lutheran reform was happening in Germany. Heretical movements were under scrutiny by the Inquisition.



# The Presentation of Her **LIFE**

The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

## A Woman in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Women in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain were distrusted, generally not educated and in the eyes of men more apt to get off track spiritually;

Practice of mental prayer not appreciated especially by those without a theological Formation;

Account of her **LIFE**, a long examination of conscience, to better enable her Confessors to authenticate her spiritual life;

# The Presentation of Her LIFE

## The Climate in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain

### A Woman in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century

In conclusion, Teresa had everything to attract the Inquisition's attention:

- 1/ She was a woman with no formal theological training;
- 2/ She advocated for the right to practice mental prayer;
- 3/ She experienced mystical phenomenon;
- 4/ She undertook the reform of a male dominated religious order.