



## Saint Teresa of Ávila (aka St. Teresa of Jesus)

### Doctor of the Church

Feast Day: October 15

Born: March 28, 1515

Died: October 15, 1582

Beatified: April 24, 1614 by Pope Paul V

Canonized: March 12, 1622 by Pope Gregory XV

Patron: Sick, religious orders, those ridiculed for piety, lace makers, Spain

St. Teresa was born in Avila, Spain in 1515. She was the third of ten children to wealthy parents.

As children, St. Teresa and her brother were inspired to travel to Morocco with the intention of becoming martyrs at the hands of Muslims. Their uncle stopped them and returned them home.

At about age 14, Teresa's mother died. She began to lose zeal for God and instead began to take interest in worldly things. She cared more for her outward appearance than for her spiritual health. She was beautiful and popular. Concerned, her father sent her to a school run by Augustinian nuns. After two years, Teresa became ill and was sent home.

The nuns taught Teresa much about the path to salvation. Teresa immersed herself in theology and developed a devotion to the Blessed Mother. She renounced her possessions and wished to consecrate herself to Jesus, desiring to enter religious life. Her father urged her to wait.

Teresa was 20 years old when she took vows with the Carmelite Order. Two years later, she fell gravely ill and was sent home. She was in severe pain, became paralyzed, then slipped into a coma for 4 days. She was expected to die. Upon being revived, Teresa insisted on returning to the convent. While rehabilitating, she developed a close personal connection to Jesus. But as she grew healthier, her prayer life lapsed. In general, the Carmelites were not living according to their vows.

Twenty years later, Teresa again began to have profound experiences where she felt the physical presence of Jesus, levitated, and received the stigmata. She experienced transverberation where her heart was so on fire with love for God. It was painful as if angels pierced her heart with arrows. She became a great theologian for which she was named the first female Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970. Her leadership was greatly needed during the upheaval of the Protestant Reformation and corruption within the Church. Teresa helped reform the Catholic Church by renewing the hearts of the faithful through profound works such as *Interior Castle*. She called for her order to return to the simplistic life that was practiced when they were originally founded (which is believed to date back to the Old Testament prophet Elijah.) Many fiercely opposed the restoration of the order and so they split. Teresa's order became the Discalced (barefoot) Carmelites.

Teresa died in 1582 at age 67. Her body was buried and exhumed multiple times and always found to be incorrupt with a beautiful fragrance emanating from her body. Most of her is buried in Alba de Tormes, Spain but other parts of her relics are housed in churches in Portugal, France and Italy.

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.” ~St. Teresa of Avila