

St. Teresa of Avila

Feast Day: October 15
Born:1515 :: Died:1582



Teresa was born in Avila, Spain on March 28, 1515. Her comfortable life was upset when Teresa was fifteen, for her beloved mother died. At this point her father entrusted her care and education to a convent of Augustinian women, a common practice at the time. When she returned home several years later, Teresa felt called to the religious life.

At the age of twenty, against her father's wishes, Teresa joined the local Carmelite convent in 1535. Illness was to plague her stay there though. As a result, a year later her father had to take her home. There her health continued to deteriorate. At one point she fell into a coma and came close to death. For almost three years she remained paralyzed from the waist down.

Eventually Teresa recovered and returned to the convent. This brought little consolation, however. As was the case in many religious communities, life there was easy. Little was asked of her. This all changed, when at the age of thirty-nine, Teresa experienced a mystical vision of the "sorely wounded Christ." She felt called to reform her own lax spiritual life. In the end, she formed a new Carmelite community in Avila in 1562.

Reformer, Mystic, and Writer

Unlike her life in the convent she had just left, Teresa and her sisters lived simply, admitted few visitors, and spent most of their time studying and praying. Symbolic of their austere way of life was their name—the Discalced (literally "shoeless") Carmelites. God blessed Teresa with special spiritual insights and grace. However, her new foundation was met with suspicion and opposition from the townspeople and Church leaders. Despite this, she went on to found sixteen other convents.

In addition to her work as a reformer, Teresa was also a spiritual writer. Perhaps her greatest and most influential work is ***The Interior Castle, written in 1577. In it Teresa compared a person's relationship with God to a beautiful castle, with***

Jesus at the center. The castle has a series of rooms, which represent different stages of prayer and spiritual growth.

Shortly after founding her last convent, Teresa returned to Avila in poor health. The trip was too much for her, and she died several days later in October 1582. Canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, her feast day is October 15. Pope Paul VI demonstrated the esteem the Church has for her by declaring her a Doctor of the Church (along with St. Catherine of Siena) on September 27, 1970. Teresa and Catherine were the first women to be so honored.

As a reformer, mystic, and writer, Teresa is an outstanding example of virtue of hope.

Let's Do it!

- In the spirit of St. Teresa's writings, invite the children to draw a castle. On it have them write one area in their life they need to change or in which they need to grow so they can be better disciples of Jesus. Allow them to decorate their castles as well.

Source: <http://www.rtjcreativecatechist.com/articles/activities/saints/2011/09-01/st-teresa-of-avila>