

Saint Teresa of the Andes



ST. TERESA OF JESUS “OF THE ANDES” (Juana Fernandez Solar) was born in Santiago, Chile on July 13, 1900. Her parents were wealthy and had six children. Juana, the fourth, was affectionately called Juanita by her family and friends. Juanita did not start off as a saintly child. She worked hard to overcome her tendencies toward vanity and pride as a little girl. While she did possess an inclination to piety, she often manifested her fiery temperament. When she was ten, she made her First Communion. This event changed her completely. She recounted that it was truly “a fusion between my soul and God.” Each time she received Communion, she records that “Jesus spoke with me for a long time.”

Nevertheless, she was an ordinary teenager, who loved parties and dancing, excelled in horseback riding, tennis, croquet, and was an excellent swimmer. She had a lovely voice and a talent for music, playing the piano, and harmonium. She did very well in school but valued her membership as a Child of Mary over all her other accomplishments. Juanita was a beautiful young woman, and her diary reveals the struggles she had to grow in virtue. This intimate, personal account also records frequent bouts with bad health, and she realized that her life was to be one of suffering and love. She witnessed to the power of love and faith within her family circle and with friends, displaying a particular love and mercy towards her wayward brothers: one a proclaimed agnostic and the other who lived a bohemian lifestyle. Juanita was remembered as the bond of love that united her struggling family relations in the midst of difficult times.

She had a deep devotion to Our Lady and prayed the Rosary every day. At fourteen she made a vow of virginity and resolved to become a Carmelite nun. This decision may have been influenced by her reading of the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*. Like St. Therese, she strove for holiness wherever she found herself: at home, at school, with her young friends.

On May 7, 1919, she entered the Carmelite Monastery of Los Andes and was given the name Teresa of Jesus. Her joy was great in Carmel. She wrote: “It is impossible to imagine how happy I am. I feel peace and an intimate joy.” She saw everything that happened to her as coming from the hand of God and joyfully looked for opportunities to offer sacrifices to Him. Shortly after her entrance into Carmel, her health, which had always been precarious, began to fail. She became desperately ill with typhus and, in view of her impending death, was allowed to make her Solemn Profession. She died on April 12, 1920 at nineteen, having lived in Carmel a brief eleven months. She was beatified on April 3, 1987 and canonized by St. John Paul II on March 21, 1993. She is proposed as a model for young people and is the first Chilean and the first member of the Teresian Carmel in Latin America to be canonized. Her feast is celebrated today, on July 13. April 12, 2020, which happened to be Easter Sunday this year, marked the anniversary of the Centenary of St. Teresa of the Andes’ death. Today’s feast day closes the Order of Carmel’s year-long celebration of her Centenary.

Day 6

Saint Albert of Trapani



ST. ALBERT OF SICILY (Alberto deli Abati) was born near Mount Trapani at the turn of the fourteenth century. His childless parents vowed that they would consecrate any child they might have to the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Albert was the fruit of that promise.

He entered the Carmelite Monastery at Trapani and was ordained a priest. He was, eventually, elected provincial of the province of Sicily, an office he fulfilled with prudence, tact, and charity.

St. Albert was acclaimed a national hero because of his successful efforts to obtain food and supplies for the people of Messina who, having been besieged by the French after the Sicilians’ revolt against occupying French forces in 1282, were dying of starvation.

He was a model religious with a widespread reputation as a holy man and worker of wonders. While stories of miracles and wonders about St. Albert and his intercession abound, perhaps the most popular one is the account of his cure by Our Lady with water blessed by her. It is related that Albert, gravely ill, prayed to Mary for healing. She appeared to him holding a crystal cup filled with water which she offered him to drink. St. Albert asked her to bless the water and, after drinking it, was immediately cured. Out of zeal for the good of his brothers and sisters in Christ, he asked Our Lady to attach a healing power to water he would bless in her name and that of her Divine Son. The holy Virgin granted his prayer. During his lifetime, Albert used this power, and he continues to do so by means of water blessed with his relics. Many cures have been reported by persons who have prayed to him and used this water with faith and confidence. St. Albert died in Messina on August 7, 1306. His feast was introduced in 1411 and is celebrated by the Carmelite Order on August 7.

Day 7

Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity



ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY (Elizabeth Catez) was born in 1880 in the military camp of Avor, near Bourges, France, where her father was an officer. Her early years belied her future as the calm, peaceful, and prayerful person she was to become. Her volatile temperament and outbursts of anger as a child were, as her younger sister Marguerite recalled, “terrible to behold.” Gradually, Elizabeth learned to control her anger. Gifted with a definite musical talent, at eight she was enrolled in the conservatory of Dijon, where she soon became one of its outstanding students and won many prizes for her piano playing. She developed into a warm, affectionate young woman who made friends easily, loved beautiful clothes and fancy hats, traveling, parties, dancing and hiking, and was highly sensitive to the beauties of nature and the arts while maintaining a fruitful apostolate of youth work, teaching catechism and visiting the sick and elderly.

At fourteen, she consecrated herself to God and placed herself and her future in the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Her confessor, the Dominican Father Valle, began to instruct her on the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul. For Elizabeth, this was the revelation that was to characterize her entire spiritual life. A few days after her 21st birthday, she entered the Carmel of Dijon, where she became an exemplary religious. Elizabeth has been called a prophet of the presence of God dwelling in our souls. She found the perfect model of how to respond to this Presence in Mary. *“The Virgin kept all these things in her heart. Her whole history can be summed up in these few words. It was within her heart that she lived.”* Elizabeth loved to call Mary *Gate of Heaven*, because she saw Mary as standing at the threshold of her soul, opening a way into this mysterious Divine Presence. Imitating Mary, she became a faithful adorer in spirit and in truth of the Trinity dwelling in her soul. Elizabeth lived only five years in Carmel. She died of Addison’s Disease at 26 on November 9, 1906. Pope Francis canonized her on October 16, 2016. The Order celebrates her feast on November 8.

Day 8

Saint Teresa Margaret Redi



ST. TERESA MARGARET (Anna Maria Redi) was one of the brightest stars in the Carmelite Order of the eighteenth century. She was born in Arezzo in Tuscany in 1747. Her family was of the lower nobility of the time and moderately wealthy. Anna was well mannered and refined, simple and innocent, quiet and unassuming but could be vivacious and, on occasion, somewhat mischievous.

Her vocation to Carmel was revealed to her when, saying goodbye to a friend who was entering Carmel, she heard in her heart these words: “I am Teresa of Jesus and I want you among my daughters.” Distressed and upset she fled to the tabernacle, where she again heard the voice saying: “I am Teresa of Jesus and I tell you, in a short time you will be in my monastery.” On September 1, 1764, at eighteen, Anna Maria entered the Carmel of Florence. Characteristically, she bought a pair of long red gloves to wear at a party she attended the night before her entrance. She was a model religious with an astonishing depth of spirituality, purity of heart, humility, and ardent love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was given a special contemplative experience of the words of St. John, “God is love,” and she lived in fidelity to this experience by a hidden life of love and self-gift. Her love of God was powerfully expressed in her love for her sisters, to whom she gave herself in dedication and service. Appointed Infirmarian, she cared for the ill and elderly of her community, even the most difficult, with gentleness, equanimity, and patience.

True to the tradition of the Order, Teresa Margaret was utterly devoted to Our Lady whom she regarded as the model and protectress of her own virginal purity. She died in 1770 at 23. Pope Pius XI canonized her on March 13, 1934. This year the Carmelite Order celebrated the 250th anniversary of her death on March 7. Her feast is kept on September 1.

Day 9

Novena Honoring Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

(July 8th -16th)



MARY & THE

SAINTS OF CARMEL

Saint Teresa of Jesus Our Holy Mother



ST. TERESA OF JESUS (Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda), Doctor of the Church and Mother of Spirituality, was born on March 28, 1515 in Avila, Spain. At nineteen, she entered the Carmelite convent there. Shortly after her Profession, she became seriously ill and was bedridden for several years. After praying to St. Joseph, she gradually recovered. In 1558, she was inspired to return the Order to its original ideal of prayer and contemplative union with God through a reform of the Carmelite nuns and, later, with the help of St. John of the Cross, of the Carmelite friars. For Teresa, Carmel was the Order of the Virgin. “Let us daughters, in some way, imitate the humility of the Blessed Virgin whose habit we wear.” Her immense devotion to Our Lady began in her childhood. When she was twelve, her mother died. Grief stricken, she turned to Mary. “In my distress I went to an image of Our Lady and with many tears besought her to be a mother to me. Though I did this in my simplicity I believe it was of some avail to me; for whenever I have commended myself to this sovereign Virgin I have been conscious of her aid.”

Teresa was a woman whose rare beauty, keen intelligence, and ardent temperament were transformed by her great sanctity and enriched with extraordinary mystical experiences. These made her an unsurpassed teacher of prayer. However, she was also witty, engaging, practical, and a shrewd business woman with a unique capacity for attracting and influencing people. A Dominican priest said of her: “With merely two words and that amazing smile of hers, she enchanted everybody.” Her books *The Way of Perfection*, *The Interior Castle*, and *The Foundations*—which enshrine her teachings on prayer, her ardent love for the sacred humanity of Jesus, her devotion to Mary and her profound religious experiences—were written hastily during her travels throughout Spain while making foundations of the nuns and friars. They remain permanent religious classics, gifts of the Holy Spirit, from this humble woman who triumphed over chronic bad health, painful persecutions and spiritual trials of all kinds. St. Teresa died at Alba de Tormes in 1582. She was canonized in 1662. On September 27, 1970, St. Paul VI declared her the first woman Doctor of the Church, the “Mystical Mother”, a mother of wonderful simplicity and a remarkable depth. Her feast is celebrated on October 15.

Day 1

Saint John of the Cross Our Holy Father



ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS (Juan de Yepes), Priest and Doctor of the Church, is a key figure in St. Teresa’s reform of the Carmelite Order. His writings hold a unique place in the Church’s history of mystical theology and in the literary heritage of Spain. Within this quiet, unassuming man, austere yet gentle, reflective yet outgoing and friendly, burned the relentless flames of total commitment and profound mystical experience. John was born in the village of Fontiveros, Spain, some twenty-five miles from Avila, in 1542.

At twenty-one, he entered the Carmelite Monastery in Medina del Campo, where he obtained permission to follow the Carmelite Rule more strictly. Soon after his ordination to the priesthood, he met St. Teresa. He was 25 and she 52. Immediately enthused with him, Teresa wrote: “Although he is small in stature (just about five feet), I believe he is great in the sight of God.” She persuaded him to begin, with several other friars, her reform within the Carmelite Order. In this, he suffered many trials and persecutions, including being imprisoned for eight months in Toledo by Carmelites who were opposed to the reform. It was in this prison that, despite terrible physical and spiritual sufferings, he composed the poems that were to be the basis for his future writings. John credited Our Lady’s help with his success in escaping from the prison.

In the following years he held a number of administrative offices and served as spiritual director for Carmelite nuns, friars, and lay people. His most important accomplishment, however, was the composition of his four major works: *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame of Love*. All his writings are commentaries on his poems, which are ranked among the greatest in Spanish literature. While references to Mary are not prolific in these writings, she is always the reference point in his description of the soul’s ascent to God and perfect union with Him. “Such was the glorious Virgin, Our Lady, who having been raised to this high estate (union with God) from the beginning . . . was always moved by the Holy Spirit” (Ascent III: 2:10). St. John died at Ubeda on December 14, 1591. He was canonized by Benedict XIII in 1725 and declared a Doctor of the Church, the Mystical Doctor, by Pope Pius XI in 1926. The Carmelite Order celebrates his feast on December 14.

Day 2

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus & the Holy Face



ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS and THE HOLY FACE (Therese Martin), Doctor of the Church, was born in Alencon, France on January 2, 1873. The death of her Mother when she was three and a half deeply traumatized her and brought about an acute sensitivity and sadness which lasted for eight years. When she was ten, she began to experience a mysterious illness, which caused convulsions, hallucinations, and comas so severe that it was feared she would die. After three months, Therese was cured almost instantly by the Blessed Virgin, whose statue, Therese said, smiled at her at the moment of her cure. This experience of Mary’s maternal love flowered fully in Carmel. “How I love the Blessed Virgin,” she wrote. “She is described as unapproachable, whereas she should be pointed to as a model.” “I do not tremble when I see my weakness, for the treasures of a mother belong also to her child and I am thy child, O dear Mother Mary.” “Do not be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her enough, and Jesus will be very happy because the Blessed Virgin is His Mother.”

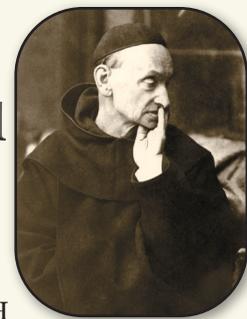
From 1877 to 1886, she went through a spiritual trial of sensitivity and scruples. Healed of these at Christmas 1886, she began to attain psychological and spiritual maturity and developed a thirst to save souls and to pray for priests. Therese grew into a tall, blonde, blue-eyed girl. She was pretty, quiet, and somewhat reserved, but she could also be daring, vivacious, and entertaining.

Although she possessed a missionary heart, she realized she could be more effective in a cloistered life of prayer and sacrifice. On April 9, 1888, at fifteen, Therese entered the Carmel of Lisieux, where she spent the remaining nine and a half years of her life. Her appointment as Assistant Novice Mistress in 1893 gave her an opportunity to share her spiritual insights, particularly the “Little Way of Spiritual Childhood”—a rediscovery of the Fatherhood of God and the depths of His merciful love. Her memoirs, *Story of a Soul*, written under obedience, enshrine her teaching and her personal spiritual journey. Pope Benedict XV declared that it “contained the secret of sanctity for the entire world.”

After months of agonizing sufferings and temptations against faith, she died of tuberculosis on September 30, 1897, at the age of twenty-four. Therese was canonized in 1925 and named co-patron of the missions in 1927. St. John Paul II declared her a Doctor of the Church in 1997. Her feast day is observed on October 1.

Day 3

Saint Raphael of St. Joseph



ST. RAPHAEL OF ST. JOSEPH (Joseph Kalinowski) was born to Polish parents in Vilna, Lithuania in 1835. He attended the university in Vilna, where, for a time, he fell away from the practice of his faith. He was a military engineer in the Polish army and took part in the uprising against Russia in 1863. Captured by the Russians in 1864 and condemned to ten years of forced labor in Siberia, he proved himself to be a person of extraordinary compassion and charity for his fellow prisoners by caring for them in their illness and giving them his meager portions of food.

Released when he was 39, he taught school in Vilna, then became a tutor to the Polish prince, August Czartoryski, in Paris. August was later to renounce a diplomatic career in order to follow his vocation to the priesthood. The young prince, whom Raphael cared for, and to whom he offered encouragement and spiritual guidance, was to become a very holy Salesian priest and was himself beatified in 1927.

St. Raphael entered the Carmelite Order in Linz in 1877 at the age of 42. He was ordained a priest in 1882 and, shortly after, was elected prior of Czerna. His contemporaries described him as “a living prayer.”

For the next twenty-five years in Carmel, he was a preacher, an administrator, a confessor, and spiritual director. When hearing confessions, he was like a father to his penitents, addressing them as “my child” or “my dear child.” For him, the Sacrament of Confession was a “treasury of divine mercy.” At every request, he was ready to hear confessions, and his confessionals were places of numerous conversions.

Renowned for his sanctity and his heroic status in Poland due to his years in Siberia, Raphael greatly popularized the Order and is credited with bringing about its restoration in Poland. He was distinguished in his zeal for the advancement of the Church, his efforts toward Church unity, and, in particular, his love of Our Lady, Queen of Poland. For him, devotion to Mary was the yardstick of progress in the way of perfection. She was the visible sign of the action of the Holy Spirit in souls and participated, in a particular way, in the process of their sanctification. He died in Wadowice in 1902 at age 72 and was canonized by St. John Paul II in 1991. His feast is observed on November 19.

Day 4

Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross



ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS (Edith Stein) was born in 1891 in Breslau, which was then a part of the German Empire. Today the city is known as Wroclaw, Poland. Edith’s family members were very devout Jews, but Edith herself had no interest in religion and abandoned Judaism in her early teens. She says of herself: “During my early years I was mercurially lively, always in motion, spilling over with pranks, impertinent and precocious, and at the same time intractably stubborn and angry if anything went against my will.” An over-achiever gifted with a brilliant intellect, she earned a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Göttingen in 1916. One evening, at the home of some Christian friends, she picked up the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila. Fascinated, she read the entire volume in one sitting. Closing the book, she declared: “This is the truth.” The next day, she bought a catechism and began to study the Catholic faith. She was baptized in 1922 and started teaching at a Dominican girls’ school in Speyer. She then was appointed a lecturer at the Educational Institute of Munich but was forced to resign her position under pressure of the Nazi government. In 1933, Edith entered the Carmel of Cologne and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

In her book entitled *Woman*, St. Teresa Benedicta praises Our Blessed Mother as the model woman, unique in her vital, maternal role in salvation history and in the life of the Church: “*Mary is the most perfect symbol of the Church because she is its prefiguration and origin. She is also a unique organ from which the entire Mystical Body, even the Head itself, was formed. She might be called, and happily so, the heart of the Church. . . . Mary is our mother in the most real and lofty sense which surpasses that of earthly maternity. She begot our life of grace for us because she offered up her entire being, body and soul, as the Mother of God.*” St. Teresa Benedicta understood that the maternity and bridehood of the *Virgo-Mater* was continued in her life as bride of Christ.

In an attempt to keep her safe from Nazi persecution of the Jews, she was sent with her sister, Rosa, from Cologne to the Carmelite monastery in Echt, Netherlands in 1938. However, the Nazis conquered Holland in 1942, and, in retaliation for the Dutch bishops’ denouncement of their racism, they arrested all Dutch Jews who had become Christians. St. Teresa Benedicta and Rosa were deported to Auschwitz and died in a gas chamber on August 9, 1942.

The writings of St. Teresa Benedicta fill 17 volumes, many of which have been translated into English. She was a woman of integrity, who followed the truth wherever it led her. St. John Paul II wrote of her: “This woman had to face the challenges of such a radically changing century as our own.” He canonized her in 1999. Her feast is celebrated on August 9.

Day 5