



## *Essential Evangelization*

### **St. Teresa of Avila**

Beautiful, outgoing, affectionate, wise, energetic, and courageous are but a few of the adjectives to describe this great mystic and reformer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She was canonized a saint only 40 years after her death, and, in 1970 was declared, along with St. Catherine of Siena, the first women honored as doctors of the Church.

Born in Avila, Spain, and raised by her mother Beatriz as a pious Christian, at the age of 7 she ran away from home in search of martyrdom. She was however promptly brought back home by her uncle. Determined to live a life for God, she left home for good at the age of 20 and joined a Carmelite Convent outside of Avila. Through her spiritual discipline and writings, she developed directions for examinations of conscience and spiritual self concentration and prayer. Illness pervaded much of her life and through her meditation on the passion of Jesus experienced “devotions of ecstasy” in her perfect union with God and “mystical marriage” with Christ. She experienced visions of Jesus over a two year period and wrote about the 4 stages of this deep form of prayer called the “ascent of the soul.” The stages are: mental prayer, prayer of quiet, the devotion of union, and the devotion of ecstasy or rapture. It was in this fourth stage that Teresa was observed literally levitating at Mass on more than one occasion.

She traveled wide through the country of Spain and founded 16 convents including a couple for men that resulted in the formation of such saints as John of the Cross and Anthony of Jesus. She died around mid-night on October the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1852, but since this was the year that the Church was transitioning from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar and the subsequent removal of 10 days from the October calendar, her feast day became the following day, October 15<sup>th</sup>. She is enshrined by one of Bernini’s most famous works in The Ecstasy of St. Teresa in Santa Maria Della Vittoria in Rome and a statue of her resides at St. Peter’s Basilica. Her writings and poetry are some of the greatest works in the history of Spain, and *The Interior Castle* and *Way of Perfection* have assisted believers to a deeper life of spirituality throughout the ages. Today she is the patron saint, of all things, headaches.

*“Let nothing trouble you, let nothing make you afraid. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains everything. God alone is enough.”*

From a Bookmark penned by her hand and discovered in her prayer book after her death

*This is one of a series of articles on  
Evangelization from the  
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