

October 15, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

MEMORIAL OF SAINT TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN, MYSTIC, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

By Sr. Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

A Quote

*“Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.”*

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Her Story

The familiar poem prayer, “Let nothing disturb you,” was written by Doña

Teresa de Ahumada, a Carmelite nun in the Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila. Born in 1515 of a wealthy Spanish merchant, Teresa entered the monastery when she was 20 and soon after her profession, she contracted a serious illness that was poorly treated and nearly caused her death. During her years of convalescence, Doña Teresa experienced many trials and realized she was following the ways of the world rather than the life of prayer she was called to live. Part of this was due to the laxity in the monastery in Avila, which was home to 180 wealthy women, many of whom enjoyed their social life visiting in the parlors of the monastery.

When Teresa was 39, she experienced a midlife conversion that gave her “new life” and she began to experience God as a loving, divine presence. She became disgusted with her mediocrity, and when she glanced on a small statue of Christ in his passion called “Ecce Homo,” she was moved by Christ’s profound love for her and surrendered herself to him. Another moment in this conversion experience happened when Teresa was reading the *Confessions* of St. Augustine and was deeply moved by the story of Augustine hearing a voice in the garden. Teresa was also hearing God’s intimate call for a deep life of prayer and solitude. Since this was not available in the crowded monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, Teresa began to dream of founding a new smaller monastery that would support solitude and prayer. Eventually she made her first foundation of San José in Avila according to the new contemplative style she developed, and invited 12 nuns to join her. At this time, God gave many mystical graces to Teresa, and she began to write the book of her *Life* which was followed later by *The Way of Perfection*, *The Interior Castle* and her *Book of Foundations*. She became known as Teresa de Jesús.

In 1567 Madre Teresa de Jesús met Fray John (St. John of the Cross) as she was preparing to begin a new foundation in Medina for a second community of nuns who would make profession to the Carmelite life according to Teresa’s contemplative style that she began in Avila. She was 52 and he was 25. Fray John also desired more solitude and prayer and was enthusiastic to work with Teresa to adapt this new reformed way of life for the friars. Eventually this new group of reformed Carmelite men and women were known as “discalced” because they wore sandals instead of shoes. Teresa established 17 monasteries for Carmelite Nuns and John established 7 foundations for the Carmelite Friars and wrote exquisite poetry about the mystery hidden in Christ Jesus.



Saint Teresa of Jesus
Photo by Alicia Rodriguez

An Excerpt from St. Teresa's Autobiography

“If people have Christ Jesus with them as Friend and loving Guide, they can put up with anything. For Christ helps and strengthens us, he never abandons us, and is a sincere and true Friend. I see ever so clearly that if we want to please God and receive great graces from him, he for his part wants these graces to come through the hands of that sacred humanity which pleased him so greatly.”

For Pondering and Prayer

As you reflect on the story of this great saint, Teresa of Jesus, what strikes you regarding her conversion experience? Does she give you hope that God alone waits patiently for us to awaken to God’s immense love for us?

Perhaps you would like to pray this prayer from the Breviary:

*“Holy and merciful God,
your Spirit raised up St. Teresa of Avila*

*to show how greatly the way of perfection is needed in the Church.
Grant that we may ever be nourished by her heavenly teaching
and inflamed with desire for true holiness.
This we ask you in Christ Jesus, Amen."*

Meet the Authors

**Join us Sunday morning, October 27,
for a fun gathering with the writers of our Daily Reflections!**

Learn how each writer decides on the format and content of their reflections, how writing reflections impacts their own spiritual lives, and how YOU can create reflections for yourself and the people you care about. A light brunch buffet will be served.

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