

October 15

Theresa of Avila (1515-1582) nun

Today the Catholic and Anglican churches commemorate Theresa of Jesus, a Carmelite nun and reformer of her Order. Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in 1515 in Avila into a family of the Spanish nobility. An ardent young woman with high ideals, she entered the local Carmelite monastery at the age of twenty, braving her father's opposition.

Transferring all of her passion into the inner life, Theresa experienced deep intimacy with God, but she also experienced aridity, the "night of the senses." At the age of forty, events she describes in her writings as mystical experiences helped her reach a certain spiritual stability, although her physical health remained precarious, permanently weakened by the poor living conditions in her monastery, as in others of that time.

Encouraged by Francesco Borgia and Pietro di Alcántara, and then by John of the Cross, Theresa began to found small Carmelite communities throughout Spain so as to offer women the possibility of an intense life of prayer. This was the beginning of the reform of the Carmelite Order, which soon began to involve men's communities as well.

Having come to know herself and God's presence in her heart, Theresa wrote treatises on prayer and the inner life at the request of her spiritual father. Her teachings earned her the title of Doctor of the Church, conferred by Paul VI in 1970.

Theresa died on October 4, 1582, but is commemorated on October 15, the day the Western Church changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Wis 7:7-15; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 14:1-7

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Theresa of Avila, teacher of the faith

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Theresa of Avila, virgin and doctor of the church (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (5 bàbah/teqemt):

Paul (d. 351), patriarch of Constantinople, martyr (Coptic Church)

Abuna Gabra Manfas Qeddu (14th-15th cent.), monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Theresa of Avila, doctor of the church in Spain

Edwige of Silesia (d. 1243), witness to the faith

MARONITES:

Lucianus of Antioch (d. 312), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Lucianus, priest of the great Antioch, martyr

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Isaiah of Aleppo (4th cent.?), hermit

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Theresa of Avila (Malabar Church)