

Saint Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, baptized as Teresa SÁnchez de Cepeda y Ahumada (28 March - 4 October), was a prominent Spanish mystic, Roman Catholic saint, Carmelite nun, author, and theologian of contemplative life through mental prayer.

Piously reared as she was, Teresa became completely fascinated by stories of the saints and martyrs, as was her brother Roderigo, who was near her own age and her partner in youthful adventures. Once, when Teresa was seven, they made a plan to run away to Africa, where they might be beheaded by the infidel Moors and so achieve martyrdom. They set out secretly, expecting to beg their way like the poor friars, but had gone only a short distance from home when they were met by an uncle and brought back to their anxious mother, who had sent servants into the streets to search for them. She and her brother now thought they would like to become hermits, and tried to build themselves little cells from stones they found in the garden. Thus we see that religious thoughts and influences dominated the mind of the future saint in childhood. Teresa was only fourteen when her mother died, and she later wrote of her sorrow in these words: Reading tales of chivalry was one of their diversions, and Teresa even tried to write romantic stories. I was so enchanted that I could not be happy without some new tale in my hands. I began to imitate the fashions, to enjoy being well dressed, to take great care of my hands, to use perfumes, and wear all the vain ornaments which my position in the world allowed. This action made Teresa aware that her danger had been greater than she knew. After a year and a half in the convent she fell ill with what seems to have been a malignant type of malaria, and Don Alfonso brought her home. After recovering, she went to stay with her eldest sister, who had married and gone to live in the country. Then she visited an uncle, Peter Sanchez de Capeda, a very sober and pious man. At home once more, and fearing that an uncongenial marriage would be forced upon her, she began to deliberate whether or not she should undertake the religious life. She now announced to her father her desire to become a nun, but he withheld consent, saying that after his death she might do as she pleased. This reaction caused a new conflict, for Teresa loved her father devotedly. Feeling that delay might weaken her resolve, she went secretly to the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation outside the town of Avila, where her dear friend Sister Jane Suarez was living, and applied for admission. Of this painful step, she wrote: It seemed as if all the bones in my body were wrenched asunder. There was no such love of God in me then as was able to quench the love I felt for my father and my friends. After a period of intense suffering, during which, on one occasion, at least, her life was despaired of, she gradually began to improve. She was helped by certain prayers she had begun to use. Occasionally, for brief moments, she attained the "prayer of union," in which all the powers of the soul are absorbed in God. She persuaded her father to apply himself to this form of prayer. After three years Teresa went back to the convent. Her intelligence, warmth, and charm made her a favorite, and she found pleasure in being with people. It was the custom in Spain in those days for the young nuns to receive their acquaintances in the convent parlor, and Teresa spent much time there, chatting with friends. She was attracted to one of the visitors whose company was disturbing to her, although she told herself that there could be no question of sin, since she was only doing what so many others, better than she, were doing. During this relaxed period, she gave up her habit of mental prayer, using as a pretext the poor state of her health. In the midst of sickness the best prayer may be offered, and it is a mistake to think it can only be offered in solitude. But during these years of apparent wavering, her spirit was being forged. When depressed by her own unworthiness, she turned to those two great penitents, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Augustine, and through them came experiences that helped to steady her will. One was the reading of St. From that day I have gone on improving in my spiritual life. Though she was persuaded these manifestations came from God, she was at times fearful and troubled. She consulted many persons, binding all to secrecy, but her perplexities nevertheless were spread abroad, to her great mortification. Among those she talked to was Father Gaspar Daza, a learned priest, who, after listening, reported that she was deluded, for such divine favors were not consistent with a life as full of imperfections as hers was, as she herself admitted. A friend, Don Francis de Salsedo, suggested that she talk to a priest of the newly formed Society of Jesus. To one of them, accordingly, she made a general Confession,

recounting her manner of prayer and extraordinary visions. He assured her that she experienced divine graces, but warned her that she had failed to lay the foundations of a true spiritual life by practices of mortification. He advised her to try to resist the visions and voices for two months; resistance proved useless. Francis Borgia, commissary-general of the Society in Spain, then advised her not to resist further, but also not to seek such experiences. Another Jesuit, Father Balthasar Alvarez, who now became her director, pointed out certain traits that were incompatible with perfect grace. He told her that she would do well to beg God to direct her to what was most pleasing to Him, and to recite daily the hymn of St. She was censured for her austerities and ridiculed as a victim of delusion or a hypocrite. But Teresa tells us that the visions now brought with them their own evidence of authenticity, so that it was impossible to doubt they were from God. Nevertheless, she obeyed this order of her confessor. Pope Gregory XV, in his bull of canonization, commends her obedience in these words: Few saints have been more experienced in the inner life, and he found in Teresa unmistakable evidence of the Holy Spirit. He openly expressed compassion for what she endured from slander and predicted that she was not at the end of her tribulations. However, as her mystical experiences continued, the greatness and goodness of God, the sweetness of His service, became more and more manifest to her. She was sometimes lifted from the ground, an experience other saints have known. Of the latter she writes: This angel appeared rather small than large, and very beautiful. His face was so shining that he seemed to be one of those highest angels called seraphs, who look as if all on fire with divine love. He had in his hands a long golden dart; at the end of the point methought there was a little fire. And I felt him thrust it several times through my heart in such a way that it passed through my very bowels. And when he drew it out, methought it pulled them out with it and left me wholly on fire with a great love of God. An unlettered woman, she wrote in the Castilian vernacular, setting down her experiences reluctantly, out of obedience to her confessor, and submitting everything to his judgment and that of the Church, merely complaining that the task kept her from spinning. Teresa wrote of herself without self-love or pride. Towards her persecutors she was respectful, representing them as honest servants of God. They are proof of her industry and her power of memory, as well as of a real talent for expression. One admiring critic says: This thought may somewhat lessen our surprise that an unlearned woman should have expounded what the greatest doctors never attained, for God employs in His works what instruments He wills. Any woman, in fact, who wanted a sheltered life without much responsibility could find it in a convent in sixteenth-century Spain. The religious themselves, for the most part, were not even aware of how far they fell short of what their profession demanded. So when one of the nuns at the House of the Incarnation began talking of the possibility of founding a new and stricter community, the idea struck Teresa as an inspiration from Heaven. She determined to undertake its establishment herself and received a promise of help from a wealthy widow, Dona Guiomar de Ulloa. Father Ibanez, a Dominican, secretly encouraged Teresa and urged Dona Guiomar to continue to lend her support. Her little nephew was crushed by a wall of the new structure which fell on him as he was playing, and he was carried, apparently lifeless, to Teresa. She held the child in her arms and prayed. After some minutes she restored him alive and sound to his mother. Another seemingly solid wall of the convent collapsed during the night. A wealthy woman of Toledo, Countess Louise de la Cerda, happened at the time to be mourning the recent death of her husband, and asked the Carmelite provincial to order Teresa, whose goodness she had heard praised, to come to her. Teresa was accordingly sent to the woman, and stayed with her for six months, using a part of the time, at the request of Father Ibanez, to write, and to develop further her ideas for the convent. Joseph, was quietly opened. The news soon spread in the town and opposition flared into the open. The prioress of the Incarnation convent sent for Teresa, who was required to explain her conduct. Detained almost as a prisoner, Teresa did not lose her poise. The prioress was joined in her disapproval by the mayor and magistrates, always fearful that an unendowed convent would be a burden on the townspeople. Some were for demolishing the building forthwith. Teresa was allowed to go back to her convent and shortly afterward the bishop officially appointed her prioress. The hubbub now quickly subsided. They were poor, without regular revenues; they wore habits of coarse serge and sandals instead of shoes, and for this reason were called the "discalced" or shoeless Carmelites. Although the prioress was now in her late forties, and frail, her great achievement still lay in the future. Convinced that too many women under one roof made for relaxation of discipline, Teresa limited the

number of nuns to thirteen; later, when houses were being founded with endowments and hence were not wholly dependent on alms, the number was increased to twenty-one. He gave her full authority to found other convents on the same plan, in spite of the fact that St. Five peaceful years were spent with the thirteen nuns in the little convent of St. Teresa trained the sisters in every kind of useful work and in all religious observances, but whether at spinning or at prayer, she herself was always first and most diligent. In August, , she founded a second convent at Medina del Campo. The Countess de la Cerda was anxious to found a similar house in her native town of Malagon, and Teresa went to advise her about it. When this third community had been launched, the intrepid nun moved on to Valladolid, and there founded a fourth; then a fifth at Toledo. On beginning this work, she had no more than four or five ducats approximately ten dollars , but she said, "Teresa and this money are nothing; but God, Teresa, and these ducats suffice. Antony de Heredia, prior of the Carmelite monastery there, and John of the Cross. With their aid, in , and the authority given her by the prior general, she established a reformed house for men at Durelo, and in a second one at Pastrana, both on a pattern of extreme poverty and austerity. She left to John of the Cross, who at this time was in his late twenties, the direction of these and other reformed communities that might be started for men. Refusing to obey the order of his provincial to return to Medina, he was imprisoned at Toledo for nine months. After his escape he became vicar-general of Andalusia, and strove for papal recognition of the order.

Chapter 2 : The Interior Castle - Wikipedia

the life of teresa of jesus the autobiography of teresa of Ávila translated & edited by e. allison peers from the critical edition of p. silverio de santa teresa, c. d.

Teresa of Avila spent most of her life in a convent, was never formally schooled, and was repulsed at the idea of attaining public fame. Yet no other books by a Spanish author have received such widespread admiration as *Life and Interior Castle* by St. What caused her to earn such an exceptional reputation? The grace of God. Teresa, in fact, was opposed to writing but did so out of obedience at the request of her superiors. She considered herself, and therefore her writings, to be of so little importance that she did not ever reread what she had written in between writing sessions. Her audience was the sisters of the convent. She also wrote for those that might someday have the desire to penetrate either the outer or inner Mansions. She wrote *Interior Castle* towards the end of her life, starting the book on June 2, , and finishing it on November 29 of the same year. During this time, much was happening; the Reform, the transition of St. Her experiences of persecution, due to the Inquisition, also had an influence on her writings. Although she was uneducated, the theology of her books was very accurate. Woven throughout her works were themes of the importance of self-knowledge, detachment, and suffering. Upon its completion, her book was reviewed by a Dominican theologian, P. He said this of her writing: I would take up numerous phrases in the book saying that they did not sound well to me, and Fray Diego would reply, while she St. Teresa would tell us to expunge them. And we did expunge a few, not because there was any erroneous teaching in them, but because many would find them too advanced and too difficult to understand; for such as the zeal of my affection for her that I tried to make certain that there should be nothing in her writings which could cause anyone to stumble *Interior Castle*, like many of her other books, was written in a very simplistic way, yet her thoughts were profound and full of theological significance. She described the subject of her writing as such: She then went on to describe how it was by prayer and meditation that the door to the first castle could be entered. A key virtue that was brought up again and again was humility. She also stressed the importance of self-knowledge. The souls that made it to the First Mansions were in a state of grace, but were still intoxicated with the venomous creatures symbolic of sin that dwelt outside of the castle in the outer courtyards. In order for the souls to have made any progress, they would have to stay in the First Mansion, The Mansion of Humility, for a long time. The Second Mansions were where the soul would seek every opportunity for growth, by listening to sermons, partaking in enriching conversations, and so on. These were the Mansions of the Practice of Prayer. In these rooms, the soul would not be free from the attack of the venomous creatures, but its powers of resistance were strengthened. The Third Mansions were those of Exemplary Life. These souls had attained a high standard of discipline and were charitable towards others. Limitations in this stage were that one lacked vision and the ability to fully experience the force of love; also it had not yet come to the point of total submission and its progress was slow. It had to endure a spirit of aridity and was given only occasional glimpses of the Mansions beyond. It was in the Fourth Mansions that the supernatural and natural met. No longer did the soul depend upon its own efforts. The soul would be totally dependent on God. This was the Mansion of the Prayer of the Quiet. Love came not from an aqueduct, but flowed from the true source of living water. It had broken all bonds which had previously hindered it and would not shrink from trials. It had no attachments to things of the world and could pass between the ordinary life to one of deep prayer, and back again. The Fifth Mansions were described as the Prayer of Union—it marked a new magnitude of contemplation. In the Sixth Mansions, Bride and Groom were able to see each other for a long period of time. The soul would reach Spiritual Marriage in the Seventh Mansion. Transformation was made complete and no higher state could be reached. It is truly a gift to have a writing such as *Interior Castle*. We can see that though centuries separate us from those such as St. Teresa of Avila, we are united by the commonality of Christ. Values such as self-knowledge and humility, and desires like seeking intimacy with Christ, are timeless. Teresa of Avila; Peers, E Allison. Garden City, New York:

Chapter 3 : The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself by Teresa of Ávila

St. Teresa of Ávila: Saint Teresa of Avila, Spanish nun, one of the great mystics, reformers, and religious women of the Roman Catholic Church. Author of numerous spiritual classics, she was elevated to doctor of the church by Pope Paul VI in

Of its own accord, the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come. The Kingdom has both a natural and a supernatural element. These aspects intertwine with each other so that the seed of faith sown in love may grow to its fullness. The gardener spreads the seeds in the garden the natural element. Once the seeds have been sown, the planting grows of its own accord, something unknowable to the gardener the supernatural element. An Insight from St. Teresa of Avila It is in this context that I want to introduce a thought from St. Her focus for this movement is centered on the idea of prayer. Within chapters 11 to 18 of her work she details four ways to water a garden. Her four ways of watering the garden explain how one moves from doing for God to finally just being with God, as her definition implies. Teresa was aware, it was the Lord who planted the seeds of faith in her heart the garden , and without Him there would be no way for those seeds to grow. She knows that the seeds are not from her and that she has no power over them. Yet, she reminds us that the Lord, as He did with Adam and Eve, invites us to walk and work with Him in the garden. Through our lives of prayer, unlike our first parents, we can fully embrace the gift of being in His presence and resting our being fully in His. Water from the Well The first way of watering the garden is by means of a well. For the gardener, this method is the most laborious. Teresa even reminds us that as the water is brought to the surface, our own tears may become mixed with it, as the sadness of memories and past actions come to our mind SA, Book 11, Ch. However, this call to internal recollection is not an excuse for a person to ignore or abandon his commitments in the world. We must not forget that friendship exists through charity, and we offer our charity to Christ through the care we show the people entrusted to us within our lives. We, as the gardener, experience the charity of Christ through the strength He offers us whenever we grasp the rope of our bucket and pull it up to the surface of our garden. Let us never be afraid of how deep our well is or how long our rope is because the strength of Christ, His love, has been entrusted to His gardeners. Shifting Our Gaze A second way to water the garden is by means of an aqueduct, and St. Teresa invokes the image of a water wheel to explain it. This way entails a different movement of the eyes. With the well, the eyes of the gardener were focused on the earth beneath his feet and the water hidden within it; now, the gardener turns his eyes toward the mountain. The gardener has no control over when or how much of the water the mountains will yield; the mountain offers up its water freely to all who seek it. This gift of watering brings joy to the gardener, which is a sign to the gardener that he has entered a little bit more deeply into spiritual friendship offered by God that is manifested through prayer. Nonetheless, this period of prayer is not totally filled with joy because the gardener does not control the mountain or the water flow. The gardener is learning that life does not come from his own hands. The hands of the gardener only participate and nurture that gift of life. There will be times of aridity in this second way of watering because the mountain holds back its water. These times of aridity are important for the gardener. It is through these moments that the gardener grows closer to the cross of the Lord. The cross protects and saves the gardener from the whispering presence of the devil, who is still speaking the same lie he told Adam and Eve. In general, the movement of the second stage of watering is shown through the journey of two events during Holy Week: Palm Sunday and Good Friday. The joy of Palm Sunday, as the presence of Jesus flowed into Jerusalem, is thus pushed aside in order that, like the holy women, we may find ourselves at rest before the cross of Jesus in faith. Hence, through faith we can embrace the cross and follow Jesus when He calls us Matthew Our Joy and the Cross Now that our eyes have turned beyond the patch of dirt before us “ our soul “ we can turn to the river and spring. The river and spring are the third way by which a gardener may water his garden. Using a river that covers the garden at times, the gardener has now moved to a deeper level of being present to the Lord, where the space between the two does not need to be filled with words and actions. The heart is invited to rest even more in the Lord of the Garden. God is now the one taking

upon Himself the more active role in our lives of prayer. The labor at the beginning of the process, whereby we desire to keep the garden alive for our own sake, is slowly being replaced. Also, those unseen energies within ourselves, those we freely gave to God for the building up of the kingdom of heaven through caring for His garden, are now showing signs of growth. The new fruit that is budding forth will soon be food not only for the gardener but for all those around him. God is the Lord of the garden and those all around the garden can glean from it Lev. The building up of the Kingdom, through care of the garden, reminds the gardener that he is not his own 1 Cor. Likewise, his desire to praise the Lord of the garden and make His garden known is unstainable yet compelling SA, Book 16, Ch. Being in Union The fourth way of watering is by means of rain. All labor from the gardener is done away with at this moment. The heavens have opened and union now fully exists between the garden and the water. The gardener, as he tends the garden, is covered with the rain of the heavens. Ecstasy, an unbridled joy, rises in the gardener as his garden is covered equally and fully from a source beyond his control. All the gardener can do is rest and be saturated by the rain. Through the rain, the beauty and the dignity of the garden are acknowledged and celebrated by the heavens themselves. The beauty of the spring rain has dawned upon the garden, and the praise of the gardener is made known: Now, the heart of the gardener rests upon the heart of the Lord of the garden, and the two can just be together in a blessed union as the seeds grow of their own accord. Though this rest may only be for a second, the seeds have fully ripened and now the harvest is ready for all those in need. Who is the Garden For? As gardeners, may we never forget that no matter which way we have been called to water at this moment in our lives, the water is never our own. As we tend to the garden, which is our heart, we open the precious ground so it may receive that gift of life from the Lord. We are called to offer Him praise because every drop of water given through the Spirit is a sincere gift from the Lord. As the Lord has called forth life from the dirt, He continues to do so within us today. Thus, through the growth of the seeds He has given us, through Him we are able to feed an untold amount of people. The life of prayer, which helps build the Kingdom through care of a garden, is never a selfish endeavor. It is a means for the charity and nourishment of the Lord to be made manifest to all those that seek His care, for through the harvest of the garden, His love is made known. Teresa of Avila aptly explains:

Chapter 4 : St. Teresa of Avila's Prayer Philosophy - The Pray More Retreat

calendrierdelascience.com of Avila. This translation of the Life of St. Teresa is so excellent, that it could hardly be improved. While faithfully adhering to her wording, the.

She was an influential and pivotal figure of her generation. Her parents were both pious Catholics and in some ways inspired their daughter to take up a life of prayer. As a young child, Teresa showed signs of a deeply religious nature; she would often retreat into silence for prayer and would enjoy giving alms to the poor. She was very close to her mother, who provided a warm counterbalance to the strictness of her father. The young St Teresa tells of her despair and how she turned instinctively to the Virgin Mary for comfort. With many tears, I implored the Holy Virgin to become my mother now. Uttered with the simplicity of a child, this prayer was heard. From that hour on, I never prayed to the Virgin in vain. She recounted how she became interested in worldly matters and enjoyed the company of a wide circle of friends. She had a natural charm and found it easy to make friends. In return, she enjoyed the compliments and friendships of others. However, she was not at peace, considering herself to be a miserable sinner; later she would look back in guilt at her early life. At the age of 16, her father decided to send Teresa to a convent school to be educated. This reignited in Teresa an interest in following a spiritual life and after some deliberation resolved to become a nun of the Carmelite Order. At the time the convent rules were not very strict; it was probably more relaxed than living with her father. The convent accepted many people into the order, often for financial reasons. The convent became overcrowded, and people were often judged not by spiritual intensity but on material possessions. In this climate, Teresa struggled to find time for quiet reflection, although she did start teaching people on the virtues of mental prayer. Shortly after becoming a nun, Teresa experienced a severe illness malaria , which left her in great pain for a long period. At one point it was feared that her illness was so severe that she would not be able to recover. However, during this period of intense physical pain, she began to increasingly experience divine visions and an inner sense of peace. These inner experiences of joy and peace seemed to transcend the intense physical pain of the body. She describes in her own words her state of mind during these trials and tribulations: What followed seemed to hurt less. I was completely surrendered to the will of God even if he intended to burden me like this forever! The other sisters wondered at my God-given patience. Without Him I truly could not have borne so much with so much joy. However, after telling others of her visions and spiritual experiences, she was dissuaded from pursuing them. Certain clergy felt they were delusions of the devil. As a result, for many years Teresa lost the confidence to practise her prayers, and her spiritual life was almost put on hold. However, when Teresa was 41, she met a priest who convinced her to go back to her prayers and implore God to come back. Initially, she had some difficulty sitting through prayers. However, in the course of time, she became absorbed in deep contemplation in which she felt an ever-growing sense of oneness with God. At times she felt overwhelmed with divine love. The experiences were so transforming, she at times felt the illumining grace of God would wash her soul away. She was so filled with divine contemplation it is said at times her body would spontaneously levitate. When she felt it happening she would ask other nuns to sit on her to prevent her floating away. Teresa was not a just a quiet, placid saint. She had an endearing, natural quality; her life energy attracted and inspired many who were close. They admired her for both her outer charm and inner serenity. But at the same time, her religious ecstasies also caused jealousy and suspicion. Unfortunately, she was born into the period of the Spanish Inquisition, during this time any deviation from the orthodox religious experience came under strict observation and scrutiny. On one occasion Teresa complained to God about her mistreatment from so many different people. However, on the one hand, she felt these experiences to be more real than ordinary events. At the age of 43, St Teresa decided she wanted to found a new order recommitting to the values of poverty and simplicity. She wanted to move away from her present convent which made a life of prayer more difficult. Initially, her aims were greeted with widespread opposition from within the town of Avila. However, with the support of some priests, the opposition waned, and she was allowed to set up her first convent. St Teresa proved to be an influential leader and founder. She guided the nuns not just through strict disciplines, but also through the power of love, and common sense. Her

way was not the way of rigid asceticism and self-denial. As she herself says: I am not sure if that is because no one gives me cause to reprove her, or because I have discovered that things go better in that way. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything. Her travels and work were not always greeted with enthusiasm; many resented her reforms and the implied criticism of existing religious orders. She eventually died on October 4 at the age of 47. A fellow sister describes the hours just before the death of St Teresa: Occasionally she gave some outward sign of surprise or amazement. But everything proceeded in great repose. It seemed as if she were hearing a voice which she answered. Her facial expression was so wondrously changed that it looked like a celestial body to us. Thus immersed in prayer, happy and smiling, she went out of this world into eternal life. Overcoming physical ailments, she became fully absorbed in her devotion to God. As contemporary spiritual master Sri Chinmoy says: In she wrote what is considered her greatest work: This involved describing the various stages of spiritual evolution leading to full prayer; she wrote Las Fundaciones Foundations from to , so they would remember the early history of their order.

Chapter 5 : St. Teresa of Avila - Christian Classics Ethereal Library - Christian Classics Ethereal Library

"The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself" is the autobiographical account of Saint Teresa S  nchez de Cepeda y Ahumada, a prominent 16th century Spanish mystic, Carmelite nun, and writer of the Counter Reformation.

March 28, Beatified By: Less than twenty years before Teresa was born in , Columbus opened up the Western Hemisphere to European colonization. Two years after she was born, Luther started the Protestant Reformation. Out of all of this change came Teresa pointing the way from outer turmoil to inner peace. This put Teresa in the middle -- especially since she liked the romances too. Her father told her never to lie but her mother told her not to tell her father. Later she said she was always afraid that no matter what she did she was going to do everything wrong. When she was seven-years-old, she convinced her older brother that they should "go off to the land of the Moors and beg them, out of love of God, to cut off our heads there. After this incident she led a fairly ordinary life, though she was convinced that she was a horrible sinner. As a teenager, she cared only about boys, clothes, flirting, and rebelling. When she was 16, her father decided she was out of control and sent her to a convent. At first she hated it but eventually she began to enjoy it -- partly because of her growing love for God, and partly because the convent was a lot less strict than her father. Still, when the time came for her to choose between marriage and religious life, she had a tough time making the decision. When she finally chose religious life, she did so because she thought that it was the only safe place for someone as prone to sin as she was. Once installed at the Carmelite convent permanently, she started to learn and practice mental prayer, in which she "tried as hard as I could to keep Jesus Christ present within me My imagination is so dull that I had no talent for imagining or coming up with great theological thoughts. Part of the reason for her trouble was that the convent was not the safe place she assumed it would be. Many women who had no place else to go wound up at the convent, whether they had vocations or not. They were encouraged to stay away from the convents for long period of time to cut down on expenses. Nuns would arrange their veils attractively and wear jewelry. Prestige depended not on piety but on money. There was a steady stream of visitors in the parlor and parties that included young men. What spiritual life there was involved hysteria, weeping, exaggerated penance, nosebleeds, and self- induced visions. Teresa suffered the same problem that Francis of Assisi did -- she was too charming. Everyone liked her and she liked to be liked. She found it too easy to slip into a worldly life and ignore God. The convent encouraged her to have visitors to whom she would teach mental prayer because their gifts helped the community economy. But Teresa got more involved in flattery, vanity and gossip than spiritual guidance. Then Teresa fell ill with malaria. When she had a seizure, people were so sure she was dead that after she woke up four days later she learned they had dug a grave for her. Afterwards she was paralyzed for three years and was never completely well. Yet instead of helping her spiritually, her sickness became an excuse to stop her prayer completely: Later she would say, "Prayer is an act of love, words are not needed. Even if sickness distracts from thoughts, all that is needed is the will to love. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything. Sometimes her whole body was raised from the ground. If she felt God was going to levitate her body, she stretched out on the floor and called the nuns to sit on her and hold her down. Far from being excited about these events, she "begged God very much not to give me any more favors in public. She never saw these gifts as rewards from God but the way he "chastised" her. The more love she felt the harder it was to offend God. She says, "The memory of the favor God has granted does more to bring such a person back to God than all the infernal punishments imaginable. After that God always came first in her life. Some friends, however, did not like what was happening to her and got together to discuss some "remedy" for her. Concluding that she had been deluded by the devil, they sent a Jesuit to analyze her. The Jesuit reassured her that her experiences were from God but soon everyone knew about her and was making fun of her. One confessor was so sure that the visions were from the devil that he told her to make an obscene gesture called the fig every time she had a vision of Jesus. She cringed but did as she was ordered, all the time apologizing to Jesus. In her autobiography she would say, "I am more afraid of those who are terrified of the devil than I am of the devil himself. Teresa felt that the best evidence that her

delights came from God was that the experiences gave her peace, inspiration, and encouragement. At the age of 43, she became determined to found a new convent that went back to the basics of a contemplative order: When plans leaked out about her first convent, St. The town started legal proceedings against her. All because she wanted to try a simple life of prayer. In the face of this open war, she went ahead calmly, as if nothing was wrong, trusting in God. To her, spiritual life was an attitude of love, not a rule. Although she proclaimed poverty, she believed in work, not in begging. She believed in obedience to God more than penance. When someone felt depressed, her advice was that she go some place where she could see the sky and take a walk. Teresa believed that the most powerful and acceptable prayer was that prayer that leads to action. Good effects were better than pious sensations that only make the person praying feel good. She wrote this book not for fun but because she was ordered to. Many people questioned her experiences and this book would clear her or condemn her. Because of this, she used a lot of camouflage in the book, following a profound thought with the statement, "But what do I know. At 51, she felt it was time to spread her reform movement. She braved burning sun, ice and snow, thieves, and rat-infested inns to found more convents. But those obstacles were easy compared to what she face from her brothers and sisters in religious life. She was called "a restless disobedient gadabout who has gone about teaching as though she were a professor" by the papal nuncio. When her former convent voted her in as prioress, the leader of the Carmelite order excommunicated the nuns. A vicar general stationed an officer of the law outside the door to keep her out. The other religious orders opposed her wherever she went. She often had to enter a town secretly in the middle of the night to avoid causing a riot. And the help they received was sometimes worse than the hostility. A princess ordered Teresa to found a convent and then showed up at the door with luggage and maids. When Teresa refused to order her nuns to wait on the princess on their knees, the princess denounced Teresa to the Inquisition. In another town, they arrived at their new house in the middle of the night, only to wake up the next morning to find that one wall of the building was missing. Why was everyone so upset? Teresa said, "Truly it seems that now there are no more of those considered mad for being true lovers of Christ. Teresa looked on these difficulties as good publicity. Soon she had postulants clamoring to get into her reform convents. Many people thought about what she said and wanted to learn about prayer from her. Soon her ideas about prayer swept not only through Spain but all of Europe. In , she was invited to found a convent by an Archbishop but when she arrived in the middle of the pouring rain, he ordered her to leave. Though very ill, she was commanded to attend a noblewoman giving birth. She is the founder of the Discalced Carmelites. In she was declared a Doctor of the Church for her writing and teaching on prayer, one of two women to be honored in this way. Teresa is the patron saint of Headache sufferers. Her symbol is a heart, an arrow, and a book. She was canonized in

Chapter 6 : EWTN's Saints and other Holy People Home

Teresa also relates the vision and instructions she received from God later in her life. This book also contains St. Teresa's writings on the four states of mental prayer. In the first stage, believers learn to pray.

How the Lord began to rouse her soul in childhood to a love of virtue, and what a help it is in this respect to have good parents 2. Of her great debts to the Lord for making her resigned to her great trials, of how she took St. How she began to lose the graces the Lord had given her, and of the evil life she began to lead. Of the great profit that she derived from not entirely abandoning prayer, for fear that she might lose her soul. She describes the excellence of prayer as a help towards winning back what is lost, and exhorts everyone to practise it. She begins to explain the favours which God gave her in prayer, telling the extent to which we can help ourselves, and how important it is that we shall understand the favours God is granting us. She explains why we cannot attain the perfect love of God in a short time, beginning with a comparison which sets out the four stages of prayer. More about the first state. She continues to speak of this first stage, and gives advice concerning certain temptations that the devil sends at times. She begins to explain the second stage of prayer, in which the Lord already grants the soul more special consolations. Continuing the same subject, she gives certain advice on behaviour during the prayer of quiet. She tells how there are as many souls that advance to this stage, but few who pass beyond it. She treats of the third stage of prayer, and continues to explain things of a very lofty nature, telling what the soul that has come so far can do, and what are the effects of such great favours from the Lord. She continues to explain the third stage of prayer, and completes her account of its effects. She treats of the fourth stage of prayer, and begins an excellent explanation of the great dignity to which the Lord raises the soul in this state. This is meant to spur those who practise prayer to make efforts to reach this exalted state, which it is possible to attain on earth, though not through our merits, but only by the goodness of God. Continuing the same subject, she begins to describe the effects upon the soul of this stage of prayer. She earnestly exhorts those who have attained it not to turn back, even if they should afterwards fall, nor ever to give up prayer. She describes the harm that they would suffer if they did so. She treats of the difference between union and rapture, and explains what a rapture is. She continues and concludes her account of this last stage of prayer, telling what the soul who has reached it feels when it returns to live in the world. She tells of an incident in which she was herself deceived. She returns to the history of her life, and tells how she began to strive for greater perfection. This is profitable matter for those who have to direct souls engaged in the practice of prayer, and teaches them how to deal with beginners. She treats of the means and manner whereby these words that God speaks to the soul are perceived without being actually heard, and of some possible descriptions in regard to them. She tells how false locutions are to be distinguished from true. She describes another way in which the Lord teaches the soul and, without speech, makes His will known to it in a wondrous manner. She also speaks of a vision and of a great favour, which was not imaginary, that the Lord granted her. She tells of the great favours that the Lord bestowed on her, and of His first appearance to her. She defines an imaginary vision, and speaks of the great effects and signs produced by one that is from God. She returns to the story of her life, and tells how the Lord greatly relieved her trials by bringing her a visit from that holy man, Friar Peter of Alcantara of the Order of the glorious St. She tells how it pleased God to carry her in the spirit to a place in hell that she had deserved for her sins. She describes a title of what was shown her there, and begins to tell of the ways and means by which the convent of St. She continues her account of the foundation of the glorious St. She tells how at this time she had to leave the town. She begins to describe what happened to her there, and to tell how the Lord in His mercy made her the instrument whereby His Majesty roused a very important person to serve him in earnest, also to say how she afterwards found help and protection from Him. She continues the story of the foundation of this house of our glorious father, St. Joseph, and of the way in which the Lord ordained that holy poverty should be observed there. She continues with the previous subject, and describes how the foundation of this convent of the glorious St. She describes the effects that remained with her after the Lord had granted her a favour, and gives much sound teaching as well. She describes certain great favours that the Lord bestowed on her, by graciously revealing to her some of the secrets of heaven, and by

vouchsafing her further great visions and revelations. She continues with the same subject, and recounts the great mercies which the Lord has shown her. She continues her account of the great favours that God granted her, from some of which excellent lessons can be obtained. For instruction, as she says, after obedience and the recording of such favours as will be of profit to souls, has been her principal motive in writing. With this chapter the account of her life comes to an end. May it be for the glory of the Lord.

Chapter 7 : The Life of St. Teresa: Free Full Audiobook MP3 Download & eBook PDF

There are few who have made such an impact on the Church, or the lives of believers, as St. Teresa of Avila. If it were only her mysticism, her writings, or her reforms of the Carmelite order alone it would suffice to place her with the saints; but the combination of all of these give St. Teresa a very honored place among the saints.

If it were only her mysticism, her writings, or her reforms of the Carmelite order alone it would suffice to place her with the saints; but the combination of all of these give St. Teresa a very honored place among the saints. Looking at her biography, her writings, her mysticism, and her reforms will help anybody grow in holiness. Her grandfather was a convert from Judaism and would actually face the inquisition for allegedly returning to Judaism. She was so inspired by these stories that when she was 7 years old she and her brother left home to try to become martyrs, seeking out Muslims invading Spain. Thankfully her uncle found the two young children and brought them back home. She left for boarding school, where she was educated by religious, and she eventually joined the Carmelite order. Visions and Mysticism Teresa began to experience visions of Jesus Christ that some people claimed were not from God at all, but Teresa was reassured by her spiritual director that these were real. These mystical experiences led to perhaps her most famous mystical experience. In one of her visions she saw an angel pierce her heart with a spear with a golden tip and the pain, instead of being debilitating, became a movement into ecstasy for the mystic. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The great Italian sculptor Bernini would eventually create a masterpiece depicting this event that can be seen in the Santa Maria della Vittoria Church in Rome. Writings Her writings focus on her mystical theology, particularly the ascent of the soul towards God. She says that the soul goes through four stages in its ascent. The first stage she called the Devotion of the Heart. The second stage she called the Devotion of Peace. In this stage, God gives a special grace of quiet and peace to the person, and although distractions may come, the supernatural gift of peace is present. The third stage she called the Devotion of Union and in this stage God gives the gift to the person of becoming one with Him in that their reason is completely subsumed into Him and the only thing left that the person can control is their memory and imagination. The fourth, and final stage, she called Devotion of Ecstasy. In this stage the person, through the grace of God, is totally unaware of their own self and their own body and is completely subsumed by God. It is important to note that human discipline and effort can only get one to the first stage, the other three stages are all gifts freely given by God and as such may be withheld from some people. They are also usually only given to those people who are quite mature in their spiritual life and so many people never achieve them in their lifetimes. Doctor of the Church By virtue of her writings on mental prayer and mysticism Teresa was declared a Doctor of the Church, alongside saints such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Her writings, together with the force of her life, led to reforms in the Carmelite order. However, rather than simply calling them reforms, it would be more accurate to say that through her life St. From her writings to her contribution to the understanding of mental prayer and mysticism, to the continued faithfulness of the Carmelites, we have so much to be thankful for in the life of St. What have you learned from the life of St. Share in the comments below.

~ *St. Teresa of Avila* ~ *St. Teresa of Avila spent most of her life in a convent, was never formally schooled, and was repulsed at the idea of attaining public fame. Yet no other books by a Spanish author have received such widespread admiration as Life and Interior Castle by St. Teresa of Avila.*

History[edit] St. Her humility and claims that "I am not meant for writing; I have neither the health nor the wits for it" almost prevented Teresa from composing *The Interior Castle*. Diego wrote that God revealed to Teresa: The nearer one got to the centre, the stronger was the light; outside the palace limits everything was foul, dark and infested with toads, vipers and other venomous creatures. It contained the basis for what she felt should be the ideal journey of faith , comparing the contemplative soul to a castle with seven successive interior courts, or chambers, analogous to the seven mansions. This concept of an interior life is still important in Spanish thinking in the 21st century. The first English translation was published in ; the second in London by the Rev. John Dalton, in ; and the third by the nuns of Stanbrook Abbey in *Seven Mansions or Dwelling Places*[edit] This section does not cite any sources. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. October Learn how and when to remove this template message *The Interior Castle* is divided into seven mansions also called dwelling places , each level describing a step to get closer to God. In her work, Teresa already assumed entrance into the first mansions by prayer and meditation. The first three mansions are considered to be active prayer and asceticism. The third mansions are the Mansions of Exemplary Life characterized through divine grace a love for God that is so great that the soul has an aversion to both mortal and venial sin and a desire to do works of charitable service to man for the ultimate glory of God. The fourth through seventh mansions are considered to be mystical or contemplative prayer. The fourth mansions are a departure from the soul actively acquiring what it gains as God increases his role. The fifth mansions contains incipient Union in which the soul prepares itself to receive gifts from God. If the fifth mansion can be compared to a betrothal, the sixth mansion can be compared to lovers. The soul spends increasing amounts of time torn between favors from God and from outside afflictions. The soul achieves clarity in prayer and a spiritual marriage with God in the seventh mansions. In fact she humbly repeats that she is never worthy of these consolations but is always immensely grateful for them. Teresa as "that most mystical of Catholic figures" and alludes to St. Gilbert was raised a Protestant Christian, but her book describes her path to God through yoga. Teresa also inspired American author R. If you realize your pitiable condition, how can you refrain from trying to remove the darkness from the crystal of your souls? Remember, if death should take you now, you would never again enjoy the light of this Sun.

Chapter 9 : Biography St Teresa Avila -Biography Online

Saint Teresa of Avila's Story Teresa lived in an age of exploration as well as political, social, and religious upheaval. It was the 16th century, a time of turmoil and reform.

October 15 In the Autobiography which she completed towards the end of her life, Saint Teresa of Avila gives us a description of her parents, along with a disparaging estimate of her own character. Piously reared as she was, Teresa became completely fascinated by stories of the saints and martyrs, as was her brother Roderigo, who was near her own age and her partner in youthful adventures. Once, when Teresa was seven, they made a plan to run away to Africa, where they might be beheaded by the infidel Moors and so achieve martyrdom. They set out secretly, expecting to beg their way like the poor friars, but had gone only a short distance from home when they were met by an uncle and brought back to their anxious mother, who had sent servants into the streets to search for them. She and her brother now thought they would like to become hermits, and tried to build themselves little cells from stones they found in the garden. Thus we see that religious thoughts and influences dominated the mind of the future saint in childhood. Teresa was only fourteen when her mother died, and she later wrote of her sorrow in these words: Reading tales of chivalry was one of their diversions, and Teresa even tried to write romantic stories. I was so enchanted that I could not be happy without some new tale in my hands. I began to imitate the fashions, to enjoy being well dressed, to take great care of my hands, to use perfumes, and wear all the vain ornaments which my position in the world allowed. This action made Teresa aware that her danger had been greater than she knew. After a year and a half in the convent she fell ill with what seems to have been a malignant type of malaria, and Don Alfonso brought her home. After recovering, she went to stay with her eldest sister, who had married and gone to live in the country. Then she visited an uncle, Peter Sanchez de Capeda, a very sober and pious man. At home once more, and fearing that an uncongenial marriage would be forced upon her, she began to deliberate whether or not she should undertake the religious life. She now announced to her father her desire to become a nun, but he withheld consent, saying that after his death she might do as she pleased This reaction caused a new conflict, for Teresa loved her father devotedly. Feeling that delay might weaken her resolve, she went secretly to the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation^[2] outside the town of Avila, where her dear friend Sister Jane Suarez was living, and applied for admission. Of this painful step, she wrote: It seemed as if all the bones in my body were wrenched asunder There was no such love of God in me then as was able to quench the love I felt for my father and my friends. After a period of intense suffering, during which, on one occasion, at least, her life was despaired of, she gradually began to improve. She was helped by certain prayers she had begun to use. Occasionally, for brief moments, she attained the "prayer of union," in which all the powers of the soul are absorbed in God. She persuaded her father to apply himself to this form of prayer. After three years Teresa went back to the convent. Her intelligence, warmth, and charm made her a favorite, and she found pleasure in being with people. It was the custom in Spain in those days for the young nuns to receive their acquaintances in the convent parlor, and Teresa spent much time there, chatting with friends. She was attracted to one of the visitors whose company was disturbing to her, although she told herself that there could be no question of sin, since she was only doing what so many others, better than she, were doing. During this relaxed period, she gave up her habit of mental prayer, using as a pretext the poor state of her health. In the midst of sickness the best prayer may be offered, and it is a mistake to think it can only be offered in solitude. But during these years of apparent wavering, her spirit was being forged. When depressed by her own unworthiness, she turned to those two great penitents, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Augustine, and through them came experiences that helped to steady her will. One was the reading of St. From that day I have gone on improving in my spiritual life. Though she was persuaded these manifestations came from God, she was at times fearful and troubled. She consulted many persons, binding all to secrecy, but her perplexities nevertheless were spread abroad, to her great mortification. Among those she talked to was Father Gaspar Daza, a learned priest, who, after listening, reported that she was deluded, for such divine favors were not consistent with a life as full of imperfections as hers was, as she herself admitted. A friend, Don Francis de Salsedo, suggested that she talk to

a priest of the newly formed Society of Jesus. To one of them, accordingly, she made a general Confession, recounting her manner of prayer and extraordinary visions. He assured her that she experienced divine graces, but warned her that she had failed to lay the foundations of a true spiritual life by practices of mortification. He advised her to try to resist the visions and voices for two months; resistance proved useless. Francis Borgia, commissary-general of the Society in Spain, then advised her not to resist further, but also not to seek such experiences. Another Jesuit, Father Balthasar Alvarez, who now became her director, pointed out certain traits that were incompatible with perfect grace. He told her that she would do well to beg God to direct her to what was most pleasing to Him, and to recite daily the hymn of St. She was censured for her austerities and ridiculed as a victim of delusion or a hypocrite. But Teresa tells us that the visions now brought with them their own evidence of authenticity, so that it was impossible to doubt they were from God. Nevertheless, she obeyed this order of her confessor. Pope Gregory XV, in his bull of canonization, commends her obedience in these words: Few saints have been more experienced in the inner life, and he found in Teresa unmistakable evidence of the Holy Spirit. He openly expressed compassion for what she endured from slander and predicted that she was not at the end of her tribulations. However, as her mystical experiences continued, the greatness and goodness of God, the sweetness of His service, became more and more manifest to her. She was sometimes lifted from the ground, an experience other saints have known. Of the latter she writes: This angel appeared rather small than large, and very beautiful. His face was so shining that he seemed to be one of those highest angels called seraphs, who look as if all on fire with divine love. He had in his hands a long golden dart; at the end of the point methought there was a little fire. And I felt him thrust it several times through my heart in such a way that it passed through my very bowels. And when he drew it out, methought it pulled them out with it and left me wholly on fire with a great love of God. An unlettered woman, she wrote in the Castilian vernacular, setting down her experiences reluctantly, out of obedience to her confessor, and submitting everything to his judgment and that of the Church, merely complaining that the task kept her from spinning. Teresa wrote of herself without self-love or pride. Towards her persecutors she was respectful, representing them as honest servants of God. They are proof of her industry and her power of memory, as well as of a real talent for expression. One admiring critic says: This thought may somewhat lessen our surprise that an unlearned woman should have expounded what the greatest doctors never attained, for God employs in His works what instruments He wills. Any woman, in fact, who wanted a sheltered life without much responsibility could find it in a convent in sixteenth-century Spain. The religious themselves, for the most part, were not even aware of how far they fell short of what their profession demanded. So when one of the nuns at the House of the Incarnation began talking of the possibility of founding a new and stricter community, the idea struck Teresa as an inspiration from Heaven. She determined to undertake its establishment herself and received a promise of help from a wealthy widow, Dona Guiomar de Ulloa. Father Ibanez, a Dominican, secretly encouraged Teresa and urged Dona Guiomar to continue to lend her support. Her little nephew was crushed by a wall of the new structure which fell on him as he was playing, and he was carried, apparently lifeless, to Teresa. She held the child in her arms and prayed. After some minutes she restored him alive and sound to his mother. Another seemingly solid wall of the convent collapsed during the night. A wealthy woman of Toledo, Countess Louise de la Cerda, happened at the time to be mourning the recent death of her husband, and asked the Carmelite provincial to order Teresa, whose goodness she had heard praised, to come to her. Teresa was accordingly sent to the woman, and stayed with her for six months, using a part of the time, at the request of Father Ibanez, to write, and to develop further her ideas for the convent. Joseph, was quietly opened. The news soon spread in the town and opposition flared into the open. The prioress of the Incarnation convent sent for Teresa, who was required to explain her conduct. Detained almost as a prisoner, Teresa did not lose her poise. The prioress was joined in her disapproval by the mayor and magistrates, always fearful that an unendowed convent would be a burden on the townspeople. Some were for demolishing the building forthwith. Teresa was allowed to go back to her convent and shortly afterward the bishop officially appointed her prioress. The hubbub now quickly subsided. They were poor, without regular revenues; they wore habits of coarse serge and sandals instead of shoes, and for this reason were called the "discalced" or shoeless Carmelites. Although the prioress was now in her late forties, and frail, her great achievement still lay in the

future. Convinced that too many women under one roof made for relaxation of discipline, Teresa limited the number of nuns to thirteen; later, when houses were being founded with endowments and hence were not wholly dependent on alms, the number was increased to twenty-one. He gave her full authority to found other convents on the same plan, in spite of the fact that St. Five peaceful years were spent with the thirteen nuns in the little convent of St. Teresa trained the sisters in every kind of useful work and in all religious observances, but whether at spinning or at prayer, she herself was always first and most diligent. In August, , she founded a second convent at Medina del Campo. The Countess de la Cerda was anxious to found a similar house in her native town of Malagon, and Teresa went to advise her about it. When this third community had been launched, the intrepid nun moved on to Valladolid, and there founded a fourth; then a fifth at Toledo. On beginning this work, she had no more than four or five ducats approximately ten dollars , but she said, "Teresa and this money are nothing; but God, Teresa, and these ducats suffice. Antony de Heredia, prior of the Carmelite monastery there, and John of the Cross. With their aid, in , and the authority given her by the prior general, she established a reformed house for men at Durelo, and in a second one at Pastrana, both on a pattern of extreme poverty and austerity. She left to John of the Cross, who at this time was in his late twenties, the direction of these and other reformed communities that might be started for men. Refusing to obey the order of his provincial to return to Medina, he was imprisoned at Toledo for nine months.