

Reflection Thursday Week 28 St Theresa of Avila 2020

St Teresa of Ávila was born in 1515 in Ávila, in Spain and entered the Carmelite convent at 20, not with any great attraction to religious life but because it seemed the most sensible thing to do. At this time Carmelite convents were comfortable places. One was well looked after, had easy contact with the outside world and could keep one's possessions. In time, and despite ill-health, she made great progress in contemplative prayer, had a number of mystical experiences, which she treated with suspicion since she felt she was not holy enough to receive them. However, it led her to seek a more perfect life. In 1562, in the face of much opposition, she founded a convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Ávila. "Discalced" ("shoeless") signified their devotion to poverty. She established more and more Discalced Carmelite convents in the face of intense opposition from the unreformed Carmelites but she received help from the highest levels. In 1566 the General of the Carmelite Order approved Teresa's original foundation and permitted her to make new ones. In 1575, the Chapter of the Order decided to dissolve them all, and for five years every effort was made to destroy Teresa's reforms and many of her followers (including St John of the Cross) were imprisoned and cruelly treated. Finally, in 1580, and with the support of King Philip II, the Discalced Carmelites were made independent and St Teresa was able to found more new convents. She died, worn out by her efforts, on 15 October 1582. St Teresa is an outstanding example of how the contemplative life can well up and overflow into action. She wrote much about contemplative prayer and her writings are still standard works today. She was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

The words of the psalm *"Your words are spirit Lord and they are life"* were certainly true for St Theresa. It was through prayer that she allowed the Spirit to guide her, leading her into a deeper relationship with God and giving her the courage and perseverance to do God's will. She is someone who will help us fulfil what is right no matter how great the opposition. Theresa did exactly what Jesus asked of her when she made her home in him. Jesus certainly his home in her!!

Something to think about. . . .

Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly. - Dalai Lama

A lifelong friend is someone you haven't borrowed money from yet. - Anonymous

Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe. - Albert Einstein