

Reflection Monday Week 19 St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross 2021

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (1891 - 1942) was born into a practising Jewish family. She was a distinguished philosopher and awarded a doctorate from Freiburg University, but her academic career was impeded because she was a woman. After reading the autobiography of Saint Teresa of Ávila she became a Catholic on 1st January 1922. She taught at a Dominican girls' school and studied Catholic philosophy. She lectured at the Institute for Pedagogy at Münster but was thrown out in 1933 because of Nazi anti-Semitic legislation. She entered a Carmelite monastery in Cologne taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Her order moved her to the Netherlands to keep her safe from the Nazi threat. While a Carmelite she wrote on philosophy and St John of the Cross. On 20th July 1942 the Dutch Bishops had a statement read in all churches condemning Nazi racism. In retaliation, the authorities ordered the arrest of all Jewish converts to Christianity. Teresa Benedicta was taken to Auschwitz and killed on 9th August 1942. Despite her love for philosophy and for learning, her desire to teach others the wisdom she had discovered, Teresa's true love was Jesus Christ and the Gospel. So strong was this love she gave her life totally to him.

She says: "God is present in moments of rest and can give us in a single instant exactly what we need. Then, the rest of the day can take its course under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace. When night looks back and you see how fragmentary everything has been, and how much you planned has gone undone, and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed: just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it to Him – really rest – and start the next day as a new life."

Pray with her: "O my God, fill my soul with holy joy, courage and strength to serve You. Enkindle Your love in me and then walk with me along the next stretch of road before me. I do not see very far ahead, but when I have arrived where the horizon now closes down, a new prospect will open before me and I shall meet with peace."