

Reflection Tuesday 3rd Week Advent St John of the Cross 2021

John of the Cross was born in Fontiveros, Spain, about 1542 and joined the Carmelite friars. In 1568, Saint Teresa of Ávila persuaded him to pioneer the reform of the Carmelite order, a difficult and dangerous task. He suffered imprisonment and severe punishment from the Church authorities. He died at the monastery of Ubeda in Andalusia on 14th December 1591. The monks initially treated him as the worst of sinners but, by the time he died, they recognised his sanctity and his funeral was a source of great enthusiasm. He wrote two major mystical poems and is considered one of the great poets of the Spanish language. He was canonized in 1726 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926.

St John of the Cross gave up everything for Christ and suffered rejection by his religious family, the Carmelites, and the family of the Church, both of whom he loved deeply. Because of his self-sacrifice and complete absence of accusation or seeking recrimination against his persecutors, they eventually recognised the presence of God in him. It also led to him discovering *“the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.”* (1Cor 2:10) Jesus was continually turning our thinking on its head. He gave away his life in order to win life for all and in the end he did not die. Putting God first does not mean that everything and everyone else is secondary. Putting God first will help us discover how God is present in so many ways in the ones we love and family as well as in the events and circumstance of life both good and bad. In recognising that presence we grow closer not only to God but to family, to people, to parish and particularly to the natural world in which we live. We walk not only on Holy Ground like Moses but experience the holiness of God in everything.

An exercise for people who are out of shape:

Begin with a five-pound potato bag in each hand. Extend your arms straight out from your sides, hold them there for a full minute, and then relax. After a few weeks, move up to ten-pound potato bags. Then try 50-pound potato bags, and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-pound potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. Once you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag. —Beverly Gross