

## Reflection Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Week Advent St John of the Cross 2023

**St John of the Cross** was born in Fontiveros, Spain, about 1542. He became a Carmelite friar. In 1568, Saint Teresa of Ávila persuaded him to pioneer the reform of the Carmelite order. This was a difficult and dangerous task: he suffered imprisonment and severe punishment from Church authorities. He died at the monastery of Ubeda in Andalusia on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1591: the monks initially treated him as the worst of sinners, but by his death they recognised his sanctity and his funeral was joyfully celebrated. He wrote two major mystical poems and is considered one of the great poets of the Spanish language. His detailed commentaries on them and the spiritual truths they convey are renowned. He was canonized in 1726 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926.

*“Commit your life to the Lord, trust in him and he will act, so that your justice breaks forth like the light, your cause like the noon-day sun”*, the psalmist writes. Words aptly applicable to John of the Cross who has been a bright light in the church for centuries. In being asked to Reform the Carmelites, John was able to reflect on his own life and seek God’s inspiration, support, wisdom and courage which expressed itself in his writings. This would have demanded serious preparation to allow God to work through him. His resulting works are proof that God was very happy to do this. To us, St John of the Cross writes:

- *In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human success, but rather on how much we have loved.*
- *In the inner stillness where meditation leads, the Spirit secretly anoints the soul and heals our deepest wounds.*
- *Where there is no love, pour love in, and you will draw love out.*
- *Silence is God's first language.*
- *Never give up prayer, and should you find dryness and difficulty, persevere in it for this very reason. God often desires to see what love your soul has, and love is not tried by ease and satisfaction.*