

Teresa of Ávila

For other saints with similar names, see [Saint Teresa](#).

Teresa of Ávila, also called **Saint Teresa of Jesus**, baptized as **Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada** (28 March 1515 – 4 October 1582), was a prominent Spanish mystic, Roman Catholic saint, Carmelite nun, an author of the Counter Reformation and theologian of contemplative life through mental prayer. She was a reformer of the Carmelite Order and is considered to be a founder of the Discalced Carmelites along with John of the Cross.

In 1622, forty years after her death, she was canonized by Pope Gregory XV and on 27 September 1970, was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI.^[5] Her books, which include her autobiography (*The Life of Teresa of Jesus*) and her seminal work *El Castillo Interior* (trans.: *The Interior Castle*) are an integral part of Spanish Renaissance literature as well as Christian mysticism and Christian meditation practices as she entails in her other important work, *Camino de Perfección* (trans.: *The Way of Perfection*).

After her death, the cult of Saint Teresa was also known in Spain during the 1620s due to the religious claim and debate of national patronage versus Saint James Matamoros. Teresa's younger brother, Rodrigo Cepeda y Ahumada later brought a Santero image of the Immaculate Conception of *El Viejo* now widely venerated among Nicaraguan Catholics.^[6] Pious Catholic beliefs also associate Saint Teresa with the esteemed religious image called Infant Jesus of Prague with claims of former ownership and devotion.

1 Early life

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in 1515 in Gotarrendura, in the province of Ávila, Spain. Her paternal grandfather, Juanito de Hernandez, was a marrano (Jewish convert to Christianity) and was condemned by the Spanish Inquisition for allegedly returning to the Jewish faith. Her father, Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda, bought a knighthood and successfully assimilated into Christian society. Teresa's mother, Beatriz de Ahumada y Cuevas,^[7] was especially keen to raise her daughter as a pious Christian. Teresa was fascinated by accounts of the lives of the saints, and ran away from home at age seven with her brother Rodrigo to find martyrdom among the Moors. Her uncle stopped them as he was returning to the town, having spotted the two outside the town walls.^[8]

When Teresa was 14 her mother died, causing the girl a profound grief that prompted her to embrace a deeper devotion to the [Virgin Mary](#) as her spiritual mother. Along with this good resolution, however, she also developed immoderate interests in reading popular fiction (consisting, at that time, mostly of medieval tales of knighthood) and caring for her own appearance.^[9] Teresa was sent for her education to the Augustinian nuns at Ávila.^[10]

In the cloister, she suffered greatly from illness. Early in her sickness, she experienced periods of religious ecstasy through the use of the devotional book *Tercer abecedario espiritual*, translated as the *Third Spiritual Alphabet* (published in 1527 and written by Francisco de Osuna). This work, following the example of similar writings of medieval mystics, consisted of directions for examinations of conscience and for spiritual self-concentration and inner contemplation (known in mystical nomenclature as *oratio recollectionis* or *oratio mentalis*). She also employed other mystical ascetic works such as the *Tractatus de oratione et meditatione* of Saint Peter of Alcantara, and perhaps many of those upon which Saint Ignatius of Loyola based his *Spiritual Exercises* and possibly the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves.



The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa by Bernini, Basilica of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

She claimed that during her illness she rose from the lowest stage, “recollection”, to the “devotions of silence” or even to the “devotions of ecstasy”, which was one of perfect union with God (see below). During this final stage, she said she frequently experienced a rich “blessing of

tears.” As the Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sin became clear to her, she says she came to understand the awful terror of sin and the inherent nature of original sin. She also became conscious of her own natural impotence in confronting sin, and the necessity of absolute submission to God.

Around 1556, various friends suggested that her new-found knowledge was diabolical, not divine. She began to inflict various tortures and mortifications of the flesh upon herself. But her confessor, the Jesuit Saint Francis Borgia, reassured her of the divine inspiration of her thoughts. On St. Peter’s Day in 1559, Teresa became firmly convinced that Jesus Christ presented himself to her in bodily form, though invisible. These visions lasted almost uninterrupted for more than two years. In another vision, a seraph^[11] drove the fiery point of a golden lance repeatedly through her heart, causing an ineffable spiritual-bodily pain.

This vision was the inspiration for one of Bernini’s most famous works, the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* at Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

The memory of this episode served as an inspiration throughout the rest of her life, and motivated her lifelong imitation of the life and suffering of Jesus, epitomized in the motto usually associated with her: *Lord, either let me suffer or let me die.*

2 Activities as reformer

Teresa entered a Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Ávila, Spain, on 2 November 1535. She found herself increasingly in disharmony with the spiritual malaise prevailing at the Incarnation. Among the 150 nuns living there, the observance of cloister — designed to protect and strengthen the spirit and practice of prayer — became so lax that it actually lost its very purpose. The daily invasion of visitors, many of high social and political rank, vitiated the atmosphere with frivolous concerns and vain conversations. These violations of the solitude absolutely essential to progress in genuine contemplative prayer grieved Teresa to the extent that she longed to do something.^[12]

The incentive to give outward practical expression to her inward motive was inspired in Teresa by the Franciscan priest Saint Peter of Alcantara who became acquainted with her early in 1560, and became her spiritual guide and counselor. She now resolved to found a reformed Carmelite convent, correcting the laxity which she had found in the Cloister of the Incarnation and others. Guimara de Ulloa, a woman of wealth and a friend, supplied the funds. Teresa worked for many years encouraging Spanish Jewish converts to follow Christianity.

The absolute poverty of the new monastery, established in 1562 and named St. Joseph’s (San José), at first excited a scandal among the citizens and authorities of Ávila, and

the little house with its chapel was in peril of suppression; but powerful patrons, including the bishop himself, as well as the impression of well-secured subsistence and prosperity, turned animosity into applause.

In March 1563, when Teresa moved to the new cloister, she received the papal sanction to her prime principle of absolute poverty and renunciation of property, which she proceeded to formulate into a “Constitution”. Her plan was the revival of the earlier, stricter rules, supplemented by new regulations such as the three disciplines of ceremonial flagellation prescribed for the divine service every week, and the discalceation of the nun. For the first five years, Teresa remained in pious seclusion, engaged in writing.



Church window at the Convent of St Teresa.

In 1567, she received a patent from the Carmelite general, Rubeo de Ravenna, to establish new houses of her order, and in this effort and later visitations she made long journeys through nearly all the provinces of Spain. Of these she gives a description in her *“Libro de las Fundaciones.”* Between 1567 and 1571, reform convents were established at Medina del Campo, Malagón, Valladolid, Toledo, Pastrana, Salamanca, and Alba de Tormes.

As part of her original patent, Teresa was given permission to set up two houses for men who wished to adopt the reforms; she convinced John of the Cross and Anthony of Jesus to help with this. They founded the first convent of Discalced Carmelite Brethren in November 1568 at Duruello. Another friend, Gerónimo Gracian, Carmelite visitor of the older observance of Andalusia and apostolic commissioner, and later provincial of the Teresian reforms, gave her powerful support in founding convents at Segovia (1571), Beas de Segura (1574), Seville (1575), and Caravaca de la Cruz (Murcia, 1576), while the deeply mystical John, by his power as teacher and preacher, promoted the inner life of the movement.

In 1576 a series of persecutions began on the part of

the older observant Carmelite order against Teresa, her friends, and her reforms. Pursuant to a body of resolutions adopted at the general chapter at Piacenza, the “definitors” of the order forbade all further founding of convents. The general chapter condemned her to voluntary retirement to one of her institutions.^[13] She obeyed and chose St. Joseph’s at Toledo. Her friends and subordinates were subjected to greater trials.^[13]



Teresa of Ávila by François Gérard (1770–1837), a French painter

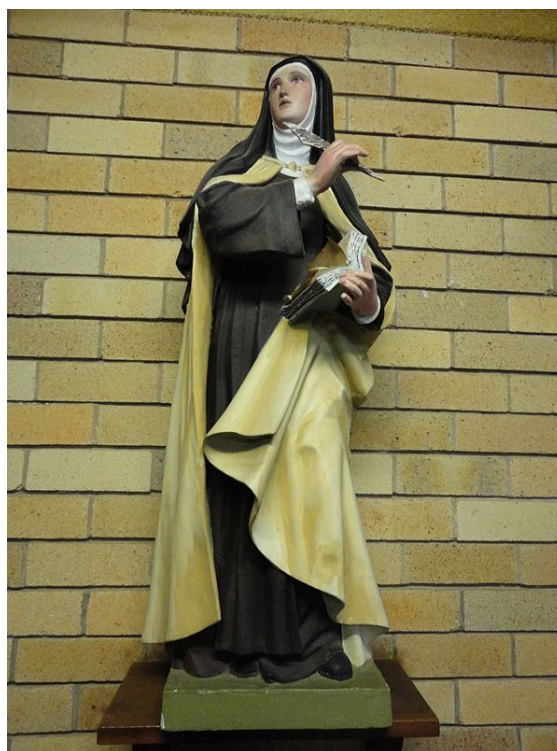
Finally, after several years her pleadings by letter with King Philip II of Spain secured relief. As a result, in 1579, the processes before the inquisition against her, Gracian, and others were dropped,^[13] which allowed the reform to continue. A brief of Pope Gregory XIII allowed a special provincial for the younger branch of the discalced nuns, and a royal rescript created a protective board of four assessors for the reform.^[13]

During the last three years of her life, Teresa founded convents at Villanueva de la Jara in northern Andalusia (1580), Palencia (1580), Soria (1581), Burgos, and Granada (1582). In total seventeen convents, all but one founded by her, and as many men’s cloisters were due to her reform activity of twenty years.

Her final illness overtook her on one of her journeys from Burgos to Alba de Tormes. She died in 1582, just as Catholic nations were making the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, which required the removal of 5–14 October from the calendar. She died either before midnight of 4 October or early in the morning of 15 October which is celebrated as her feast day. Her last words

were: "My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time to meet one another."^[14]

In 1622, forty years after her death, she was canonized by Pope Gregory XV. The Cortes exalted her to patroness of Spain in 1617, and the University of Salamanca previously conferred the title *Doctor ecclesiae* with a diploma. The title is Latin for *Doctor of the Church*, but is distinct from the papal honor of *Doctor of the Church*, which is always conferred posthumously and was finally bestowed upon her by Pope Paul VI in December 27, 1970 along with Saint Catherine of Siena making them the first women to be awarded the distinction.^[15] Teresa is revered as the Doctor of Prayer. The mysticism in her works exerted a formative influence upon many theologians of the following centuries, such as Francis of Sales, Fénelon, and the Port-Royalists.



Statue of Saint Teresa of Ávila.

3 Mysticism

The kernel of Teresa’s mystical thought throughout all her writings is the ascent of the soul in four stages (*The Autobiography* Chs. 10-22):

The first, or "mental prayer", is that of devout contemplation or concentration, the withdrawal of the soul from without and especially the devout observance of the passion of Christ and penitence (*Autobiography* 11.20).

The second is the "prayer of quiet", in which at least the



"It is love alone that gives worth to all things." - St. Teresa of Avila

human will is lost in that of God by virtue of a charismatic, supernatural state given by God, while the other faculties, such as memory, reason, and imagination, are not yet secure from worldly distraction. While a partial distraction is due to outer performances such as repetition of prayers and writing down spiritual things, yet the prevailing state is one of quietude (*Autobiography* 14.1).

The "devotion of union" is not only a supernatural but an essentially ecstatic state. Here there is also an absorption of the reason in God, and only the memory and imagination are left to ramble. This state is characterized by a blissful peace, a sweet slumber of at least the higher soul faculties, or a conscious rapture in the love of God.

The fourth is the "devotion of ecstasy or rapture," a passive state, in which the feeling of being in the body disappears (2 Corinthians 12:2-3). Sense activity ceases; memory and imagination are also absorbed in God or intoxicated. Body and spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence and unconsciousness, and a spell of strangulation, sometimes by such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. This after half an hour is followed by a reactionary relaxation of a few hours in a swoon-like weakness, attended by a negation of all the faculties in the union with God. The subject awakens From this in tears; it is the climax of mystical experience, producing a trance. Indeed, she was said to have been observed levitating during Mass on more than one occasion.

Teresa is one of the foremost writers on mental prayer, and her position among writers on mystical theology is unique. In all her writings on this subject she deals with

her personal experiences. Her deep insight and analytical gifts helped her to explain them clearly. Her definition was used in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Contemplative prayer [*oración mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us."^[15] She used a metaphor of mystic prayer as watering a garden throughout her writings.

4 Writings



This is the one portrait of Teresa that is probably the most true to her appearance. It is a copy of an original painting of her in 1576 at the age of 61.

Teresa's writings, produced for didactic purposes, stand among the most remarkable in the mystical literature of the Catholic Church:

- The "*Autobiography*", written before 1567, under the direction of her confessor, Fr. Pedro Ibáñez;^[16]
- "*El Camino de Perfección*", written also before 1567, at the direction of her confessor;^[17]
- "Meditations on Song of Songs", 1567, written nominally for her daughters at the convent of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- "*El Castillo Interior*", written in 1577;^[18]

- “*Relaciones*”, an extension of the autobiography giving her inner and outer experiences in epistolary form.
- Two smaller works are the “*Conceptos del Amor*” (“Concepts of Love”) and “*Exclamaciones*”. In addition, there are “*Las Cartas*” (Saragossa, 1671), or her correspondence, of which there are 342 extant letters and 87 fragments of others. St Teresa’s prose is marked by an unaffected grace, an ornate neatness, and charming power of expression, together placing her in the front rank of Spanish prose writers; and her rare poems (“*Todas las poesías*”, Munster, 1854) are distinguished for tenderness of feeling and rhythm of thought.

4.1 Excerpts

Saint Teresa, who reported visions of Jesus and Mary, was a strong believer in the power of holy water and wrote that she used it with success to repel evil and temptations.^[19] She wrote:^[20]

I know by frequent experience that there is nothing which puts the devils to flight like holy water.

Let nothing disturb you.

Let nothing make you afraid.
All things are passing.
God alone never changes.
Patience gains all things.
If you have God you will want for nothing.
God alone suffices.
— St Teresa, *The bookmark of Teresa of Ávila*,^[21]

The modern poem *Christ has no body*, though widely attributed to Teresa,^{[22][23]} is not found in her writings.^[24]

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
— Teresa of Ávila (attributed)

5 Saint Teresa and the Infant Jesus of Prague

Though there are no written historical accounts proving that Teresa of Ávila ever owned the Infant Jesus of Prague statue,^[25] according to a pious legend Teresa once owned the statue and gave it to a noblewoman travelling to Prague.^{[26][27]} The age of the statue dates to approximately the same era as Teresa.

It was thought that Teresa carried a portable statue of the Child Jesus wherever she went. Contemporary history cannot confirm that the Prague image was what she was thought to have owned. Catholic pious beliefs follow the local legend, certainly already circulated by the early 1700s.

Saint Teresa is also portrayed in the biographical 1984 film *Teresa de Jesús*, and shown in the movie protecting this infant statue in her many calamitous travels. In some scenes, the other religious sisters take turn in changing its vestments. The devotion to the Child Jesus spread quickly in Spain, possibly due to her mystical visions.^[28] The Spanish nuns who established Carmel in France brought this devotion with them, and it became widespread in France.^[29] Indeed, one of Teresa’s most famous disciples, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux,^[30] a French Carmelite, herself named for Teresa, had as her religious name “Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face”.

6 Patron saint

In the 1620s Spain debated who should be the country’s patron saint; the choices were either the current patron, Saint James Matamoros (“Moor-slayer”) or a combination of him and the newly canonised Saint Teresa of Ávila. Teresa’s promoters said Spain faced newer challenges, especially the threat of Protestantism and societal decline at home, thus needing a more contemporary patron who understood those issues and could guide the Spanish nation. Santiago’s supporters (*Santiaguistas*) fought back viciously and eventually won the argument, but Teresa of Ávila remained far more popular at the local level.^[31]

7 Portrayals

- A biography of Saint Teresa was written by Marcelle Auclair (available in English, written originally in French)^[32]
- “St. Teresa” was painted in 1819–20 by François Gérard, a French neoclassical painter.
- Saint Teresa was the inspiration for one of Bernini’s most famous sculptures, *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

- The Belgian **Félicien Rops'** painting, also entitled “The Ecstasy of St. Teresa”, is an explicit erotic painting depicting the Saint as involved in masturbation.[image]
- Simone de Beauvoir singles out Teresa as a woman who lived her life for herself (perhaps the only woman to do so) in her book *The Second Sex*.
- Saint Teresa is the subject of the song “Theresa’s Sound-World” by **Sonic Youth** off the 1992 album *Dirty*, lyrics by **Thurston Moore**.
- Saint Teresa features prominently in **Joan Osborne's** song with the same name.
- She is a principal character of the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* by the composer **Virgil Thomson** with a libretto by **Gertrude Stein**.
- She is mentioned prominently in **Kathryn Harrison's** novel *Poison*. The main character, **Francisca De Luarca**, is fascinated by her life.
- **R. A. Lafferty** was strongly inspired by *El Castillo Interior* when he wrote his novel *Fourth Mansions*. Quotations from St. Teresa’s work are frequently used as chapter headings.
- **Pierre Klossowski** prominently features Saint Teresa of Ávila in his metaphysical novel *The Baphomet*.
- **George Eliot** compared **Dorothea Brooke** to St. Teresa in *Middlemarch* (1871–1872) and wrote briefly about the life and works of St. Teresa in the “Prelude” to the novel.
- **Thomas Hardy** took St. Teresa as the inspiration for much of the characterisation of the heroine **Tess (Teresa) Durbeyfield**, in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891), most notably the scene in which she lies in a field and senses her soul ecstatically above her.
- The contemporary poet **Jorie Graham** features Saint Teresa in the poem *Breakdancing* in her volume *The End of Beauty*.
- **Paz Vega** stars as Teresa in *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo*, a 2007 Spanish biopic directed by **Ray Loriga**.
- **Barbara Mujica's** novel *Sister Teresa*, while not strictly hagiographical, is based upon Teresa’s life.
- St. Teresa was the subject of a 1959 play, “La Madre”; she was portrayed by actress **Kate Wilkinson**.
- Performance artist **Linda Montano** has cited Teresa of Ávila as one of the most important influences on her work and since her return to Catholicism in the 2000s has done performances of her life.

- **Concha Velasco** portrays Teresa in *Teresa de Jesús*, a 1984 television miniseries directed by **Josefina Molina**.
- **Timothy Findley's** 1999 novel *Pilgrim* features St. Teresa as a minor character.
- **Luis Buñuel** cites her as an influence.^[33]

8 See also

- Visions of Jesus and Mary
- Saints and levitation
- Carmelite Rule of St. Albert
- Book of the First Monks
- Constitutions of the Carmelite Order
- Byzantine Discalced Carmelites
- Spanish Renaissance literature
- Asín on mystical analogies in St. Teresa of Avila and Islam
- Mental prayer
- Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites
- *Teresa de Jesús*, 1984 Spanish language mini-series

9 Notes

- [1] At some hour of the night between 5 October and 15 October 1582, the night of the transition in Spain from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar
- [2] Notable Lutheran Saints
- [3] Church of England calendar of “Holy Days”
- [4] “Holy Men and Holy Women”
- [5] (Italian)
- [6] http://www.corazones.org/maria/americ/nica_inmaculada_viejo.htm
- [7] **Zupeda, Reginald.** *From Spain to Texas*, ISBN 9781479770083
- [8] **Medwick, Cathleen,** *Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul*, Knopf, 1999, ISBN 0-394-54794-2
- [9] “St. Teresa of Avila”, Catholic News Agency
- [10] **Zimmerman, Benedict.** “St. Teresa of Avila.” The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 12 Dec. 2013

- [11] Teresa wrote that it must be a cherub (*Deben ser los que llaman cherubines*), but Fr. Domingo Báñez wrote in the margin that it seemed more like a seraph (*mas parece de los que se llaman seraphis*), an identification that most editors have followed. Santa Teresa de Ávila. "Libro de su vida". *Escritos de Santa Teresa*.
- [12] Reform of St. Teresa of Avila
- [13] Kavanaugh, Kieran (1991). "General Introduction: Biographical Sketch". In Kieran Kavanaugh. *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*. Washington: ICS Publications. pp. 9–27. ISBN 0-935216-14-6.
- [14] *2000 Years of Prayer by Michael Counsell* 2004 ISBN 978-1-85311-623-0 page 207
- [15] Catechism para. 2709
- [16] Pedro Ibáñez, "La Vida de la Santa Madre Teresa de Jesús", Madrid, 1882; English translation, *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus*, London, 1888.
- [17] "El Camino de Perfección", Salamanca, 1589; English translation, "The Way of Perfection", London, 1852.
- [18] "El Castillo Interior," English translation, "The Interior Castle," London, 1852, comparing the contemplative soul to a castle with seven successive interior courts, or chambers, analogous to the seven heavens.
- [19] Bielecki, pp 238-241
- [20] Teresa of Avila, 2008 *Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* ISBN 978-1-60680-041-6 page 246
- [21] Teresa of Avila. *Let Nothing Disturb You: A Journey to the Center of the Soul with Teresa of Avila*. Editor John Kirvan. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996. ISBN 978-0-87793-570-4
- [22] Howell, James C. (2009). *Introducing Christianity : exploring the Bible, faith, and life* (1st ed. ed.). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. p. 151. ISBN 9780664232979.
- [23] "The Journey with Jesus: Poems and Prayers". Retrieved 6 December 2012.
- [24] *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (7th ed.). Oxford: OUP. 2009. p. 684. ISBN 9780199237173.
- [25] <http://www.ewtn.com/library/christ/infhist.txt>
- [26] Infant Jesus of Prague
- [27] DEVOTIONS & PRAYERS: Infant of Prague
- [28] Infant Jesus of Prague » Saints.SQPN.com
- [29] carmelnet.org/biographies/Margaret.pdf
- [30] "Saint Therese of Lisieux: A Gateway"
- [31] Erin Kathleen Rowe, *Saint and Nation: Santiago, Teresa of Avila, and Plural Identities in Early Modern Spain* (2011)
- [32] Auclair, Marcelle; Kathleen Pond (trans.) (1988). *Saint Teresa of Avila* (Reprint; Originally published: New York: Pantheon, 1953 ed.). Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications. ISBN 9780932506672. ISBN 0932506674, OCLC 18292197 (457 pages); French original: Auclair, Marcelle (1950). *La vie de Sainte Thérèse d'Avila, la Dame Errante de Dieu*. Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil. OCLC 4154440 (493 pages)
- [33] http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000320/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm

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- “Castles in the Sand” fiction with cited sources about Teresa of Avila by Carolyn A. Greene, Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2009. ISBN 978-0-9791315-4-7
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- Santa Teresa: an Appreciation, 1900, by Alexander Whyte, from Project Gutenberg

12 External links

- “St. Teresa, Virgin”, *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*
- Statue of St Teresa in St Peter’s Basilica
- Biography Online: St Teresa of Avila
- Patron Saints: Saint Teresa of Avila
- Books written by St Teresa of Avila, including St John of the Cross
- Works by Teresa of Avila at Project Gutenberg
- Basilica of Saint Teresa in Alba de Tormes (in Spanish)
- Alba de Tormes, sepulcro de Santa Teresa - Tomb of Saint Teresa on YouTube (in Spanish)
- Convent of St Teresa in Avila
- Poems of St Teresa

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13.1 Text

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TERESA OF ÁVILA (1515–1582) TERESA OF ÁVILA (1515–1582), founder of the Discalced Carmelites and a patron saint of Spain [1]. Teresa of Ávila was born Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada in Ávila, Spain, to Beatriz de Ahumada and Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda. Español: Teresa de Jesús (1515 - 1582) religiosa, Doctora de la Iglesia Católica, mística y escritora española, fundadora de las carmelitas descalzas. Français : Thérèse d'Avila (1515 - 1582) religieuse, Docteur de l'Eglise Catholique, mystique et écrivaine espagnole, fondatrice de couvents de carmes déchaux. Deutsch: Teresa von Ávila (1515 - 1582) war eine spanische Karmelitin, Ordensgründerin (der Unbeschuhten Karmelittinnen und Karmeliten) und Mystikerin. In der katholischen Kirche wird sie als