



# CARMEL CLARION

Discalced Carmelite Secular Order

Washington, D.C.



*Saint  
Teresa  
Margaret*

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### CARMEL CLARION

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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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# Editorial

In this edition of the *Clarion* we are featuring another of those young, precious flowers that the Lord saw fit to take to Himself at a very young age. She was the first of Carmel's young religious canonized or beatified by the Church — Teresa Margaret. She was followed by Therese, Elizabeth and Teresa of the Andes. Until Teresa of the Andes was canonized, Teresa Margaret was the youngest canonized Carmelite.



What do the four of these young women have in common and what sets them apart? We can answer this question in one word: Love. Each of these young women lost her heart to Jesus Christ very early in life. From that moment their surrender to Jesus was complete.

At a very early age, Teresa Margaret would question the adults around her as to “Who is God?” Of course, no one could give her an adequate answer. As she grew, her love for God became a thirst and a desire to, as she said, “return love for love.” In order to quench this thirst and to fulfill this desire she entered the Carmelite convent in Florence at the age of 17.

From the very beginning of her life in Carmel she manifested extraordinary sanctity. She desired to live a life of service, within the community, hidden from the eyes of all, even the members of her own community. She was especially solicitous of the sick of her community, spending long hours ministering to them in any way she could. As St. Edith Stein points out, “She was tireless in her care for those who were ill, and no impatience, no irritability nor any ingratitude of theirs could decrease

her loving concern. Her strict superior, with whose care she was entrusted, knew how to try her most severely and had something to complain about in spite of all her eagerness. However, Teresa Margaret always remained loving and patient” (*Hidden Life*).

In her religious development we find aspects of her spirituality foreshadowing elements associated with the spirituality of her future sisters in Carmel. She used the phrase “with empty hands” in a conversation with her father regarding forgiveness; a notion in our time associated with St. Therese. Her desire to live a hidden life doing the ordinary things of life in service is also something we associate with Therese. In the article by Fr. Gabriel, he points out how important the Indwelling of the Trinity was in Teresa Margaret's spiritual life. Like Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity, a century later, the Indwelling was the center of her interior life.

Teresa Margaret made a resolution early in her religious life. She proposed “to have no other purpose in all my activities, either interior or exterior, than the motive of love alone...” to insure her returning love for love. However, this proved to be the beginning of her dark night. The more she entered into the mystery of the Trinity, the more she realized that she was incapable, no matter how hard she tried, of matching God's love. This caused her great suffering and demanded great faith on her part.

There is much we can learn from this almost forgotten Carmelite saint. I hope that the little we have provided about Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart will move you to want to find out more about her. For this you can check out a website dedicated to her: [www.StTeresaMargaret.org](http://www.StTeresaMargaret.org). ■

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.

# The Life of St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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*Sandra Malkovsky, OCDS*



## Her Early Life

**S**t. Teresa Margaret was born Anna Maria Redi on July 15, 1747 to a large, loving Catholic family in Arezzo, Italy. She was baptized the following day, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by V.R. Canon John Baptist, the brother of her father. Her Godfather was Cardinal Henry Enriquez. She was a beautiful child with clear blue eyes, golden hair and delicate features which might have caused one to anticipate for her a future as the lady of a manor and a life of leisure.

Her father Ignatius and her mother Camille were of the lower Tuscan nobility but were not overly wealthy. Anna Maria was the second of thirteen children. Her mother bore twelve children in fourteen years. The last two were twins who lived only a few weeks. Three other children also died in infancy.

Camille did not have a strong constitution and the strain of childbirth left her a semi-invalid. As the oldest girl, Anna Maria was entrusted with the supervision of the older of her little siblings while her mother was busy in the nursery. Her father said of Anna Maria that she had a fiery temperament and she was not above getting physical to maintain control over her little charges.

Her father testified that he could clearly see that from the age of five, Anna Maria had given her heart completely to God and used all her facilities to know and to love Him. In later years she told her confessor simply that “from infancy I have never longed for anything other than to become a saint.”

“Who is God?” she asked her mother, her aunt, her father... The answers she received from the adults around her never fully satisfied her. People told her about what God is, not *who* God is. When her mother told her one day that God is love, Anna Maria lit up with joy. This answer at

last gave her some satisfaction. But then she wondered, "What can I do to please Him?" From this moment her inexhaustible quest to love God as He loved her had begun. It is touching to note that when this childhood zeal was brought up to her, she replied in innocence "But everyone does that".

Anna Maria's parents were serious and pious. The family circle was warm and loving. Family prayer and daily Mass were an integral part of their lives. It appears that Camille would have liked more social life in the villa but Ignatius would have seen that as a waste of time and resources.

The Redi villa was an ideal home for a child with a religious disposition and it is probably not an accident that all but one of the eight surviving children entered religious life or the priesthood. The large comfortable house had inspiring murals of the crusades on the walls of the entrance hall. The bedrooms contained religious art. A striking fres-

co of the Assumption was on the ceiling of Camille's room. Anna Maria's bedroom had its own altar where she spent hours in prayer, after bribing the young ones with holy cards if they would leave her in peace. Sometimes they would creep back to observe her absorbed in prayer. Her brother Cecchino recorded that he thought she looked like a little Madonna.

The villa contained beautiful gardens and orchards. Anna Maria could be found in the corner of the gardens looking toward heaven and "thinking". Close to the house was a chapel. It was decorated simply with frescos from episodes in the life St. Francis of Assisi. Anna Maria took St. Francis as her patron and was inspired by him with a love of poverty.

Although it was a peaceful and prosperous home, the children were not permitted to be idle. They were expected to spend their leisure time constructively. Anna Maria learned sewing and knitting and she was sometimes found knitting a simple object while completely absorbed in prayer.

At the age of seven Anna Maria made her first Confession. At that time first Confession preceded first Communion by several years. She was very attracted to the sacrament and prepared for it carefully and received it often. A conversation which took place while returning from Church and recorded by her father gives an idea of her attitude towards the sacrament.

*"I have been thinking about the text that was preached on Sunday, the unforgiving servant. We come to the great King of Heaven with empty hands, in debt to Him for everything: life itself, and grace, and all the gifts He lavishes on us. Yet all we can say is, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all I owe,' while all the time*



*The Redi villa*

*we could never pay anything towards the remission of our own debts, if God did not put into our hands the means to do so. And then, how often do we go away and refuse pardon for some slight fault in our neighbors, withholding our love, remaining aloof, or even nursing a grievance against them, and building up grudges that cool charity."*

After this conversation, Ignatius, who already appreciated the piety of this child, felt certain that God was calling Anna Maria in a special way. From that point on he began to provide her with true spiritual direction appropriate to her understanding. It was Ignatius who introduced Anna Maria to the devotion to the Sacred Heart, a devotion which became one of the central focuses of her spiritual life. The love of this father and daughter grew deeper as their profound spiritual confidences expanded the already deep familial affection. As an adult, Sr. Teresa Margaret would say "So great was the good my father has done to my soul that I can truly claim that he has been my father twice over". It is a tender irony that in aiding the rapid spiritual growth of this most beloved daughter Ignatius was preparing the path that would take her away from him forever.

### **St. Apollonia's Boarding School**

At the age of nine, Anna Maria was sent to the boarding school of the Benedictine nuns of St. Apollonia's in Florence. While other families of their status thought educating their daughters was a waste of money, the Redi family was determined to do so. His decision to provide the best of educations for Anna Maria and her three sisters as well as for his four sons forced Ignatius to tighten



*Church of St. Apollonia*

the family budget. One of their sacrifices was to give up the family coach. This was not only a sacrifice in convenience, but also in status. A coach was the mark of a family's situation, but Ignatius was not moved by such considerations. Young Anna Maria was deeply impressed by this sacrifice and urged her older brother to be very diligent in his studies in response to this generosity.

St. Apollonia's boarding school, being Benedictine, was simple, austere and unadorned. It was quite a change from the lush sun-drenched Redi villa. But Anna Maria had wanted to attend St. Apollonia's because she heard that one could better serve God there.

The daily life of the school was likewise simple and austere following in many ways that of the nuns themselves. Each pupil had her own room, the day was regulated by the sound of a bell, and meals were taken in silence or with the reading aloud from a good book. The course of studies was more in the line of a finishing school rather than one of

rigorous academics. Even so, Anna Maria had some difficulty with her studies, especially Latin and mathematics and it was only with regard to her studies that she was ever found lacking. She was scolded for being lazy although she did apply herself to the work. Otherwise the nuns considered her modest, cheerful and obedient and it was clear that Anna Maria was very happy at the school.

She passed her years at school appearing little different from her classmates. Yet Anna Maria was already working on a method of perfection which was to last all her life and take her to the heights of sanctity.

Aside from the noise of her younger brothers and sisters, it was easy enough at home to slip away unnoticed and spend hours in prayer and meditation to which she was called at a very early age. At home she could spend time with her holy cards or alone and in thought in the corner of the garden. She could pursue her program of holiness without arousing the curiosity of those around her. The environment at school was quite different. It would be difficult to continue her practices without calling attention to herself, yet she was determined to continue her spiritual progress while not appearing to be different from any other student.

At the age of ten, Anna Maria was developing a well-balanced program for her spiritual life. She saw the necessity of exterior conformity to all the directions of her teachers and the practices of her classmates all the while striving quietly for sanctity. Her method was to hide herself. She would shun anything that would appear singular or attract attention. She would appear no different than any other student, or better yet, she would pass unnoticed while her interior life flourished.

There were two reasons Anna Maria want-

ed to keep her interior life hidden. First, she understood from an early age that "the merits of a good action can diminish when exposed to the eyes of others who, by their praise or approval, give us satisfaction or at least flatter our self-love and pride too much; and that therefore it is necessary to be content to have God alone." The second reason was in order to imitate the hidden life of the Holy Family. This singular family appeared to the folk of the little village of Nazareth to be no different from any other. This was Anna Maria's goal.

But she needed help in carrying out her program especially after making her First Communion. The nuns allowed her to make her First Communion on the Feast of the Assumption, one month after her tenth birthday and a year earlier than usual. Though she tried to hide her piety, the nuns had noticed her devout and recollected attitude in prayer. They noticed her joy in the presence of the Tabernacle and the deep sighs that escaped while she gazed upon it. Sometimes tears betrayed her emotions as the older children went to receive the Blessed Sacrament. And so the good sisters moved up the date for her First Communion.

From that day on she continually experienced movements of love which impelled her to try to live a more holy life. Yet she feared others would notice if she intensified her devotional exercises and this went against her determination to remain hidden. She did not want to turn to the regular confessor of the school for advice for the same reasons. Any extended time in the confessional would arouse curiosity. In her need, she turned to the one she called twice her father, and so started an extraordinary correspondence with Ignatius Redi. He remained her spiritual director for the next five years

until, as the result of a retreat, she came under the direction of Dom Peter Pellegrini. It is a great loss for us that Ignatius, obedient to her wishes, burned each of Anna Maria's letters after reading it.

Dom Pellegrini had great confidence in Anna Maria's piety, disposition for the religious life and love of God. He immediately endeavored to help her "to soar in the way of God". He gave her good reading material and helped her to make rapid progress in mental prayer and the virtues.

It is a mark of Anna Maria's intelligence that she succeeded in her almost contradictory goals, extraordinary growth in holiness while appearing to be just like all the rest. The proof of her success can be found on the one hand, in the permission her confessor gave her to receive Communion as often as the nuns, and on the other, by the general opinion of her held by her classmates and most teachers that she was a good, but more or less an ordinary girl.

At the age of sixteen as her time at St. Apollonia was coming to an end, Anna Maria was finding it difficult to make a decision regarding her future. She felt drawn to the religious life and loved the Benedictine nuns at St. Apollonia yet there was something missing. A very strange and singular incident put Anna Maria on the path to Carmel.

One day a distant acquaintance of Anna Maria, Cecilia Albergotti, who was about to enter Carmel, paid a farewell visit to St. Apollonia. She told Anna Maria she wished to speak to her, but the time passed and there was no opportunity to do so. However, as she was leaving, Cecilia took Anna Maria's hand and looked at her intently, saying nothing. Anna Maria walked back to her room with a strange feeling inside. Suddenly she

heard the words "I am Teresa of Jesus, and I want you among my daughters." Confused and a bit frightened, she went to the chapel and knelt before the Blessed Sacrament. She heard the words again.

Now convinced of the authenticity of the locution, she determined at that moment to enter Carmel and started immediately making plans to leave the school. She was only home for a few months when preparations were made for her application to the Carmel in Florence. She entered on September 1, 1764 a few weeks after her seventeenth birthday taking the name Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus.

### **Entrance into Carmel**

The community she entered contained thirteen professed nuns and two novices. The religious observance in the convent was excellent and Teresa Margaret always had high regard for the nuns there whom she called angels or great saints. She always, to her last day, felt unworthy to be among them.

From her first days in Carmel it was obvious to her superiors that she was an unusually mature and capable young woman. Because of her spiritual maturity she was treated severely by the novice mistress, Mother Teresa Maria, for the purpose of aiding her growth. Although Teresa Margaret exercised complete control over her actions and attitudes, her fair complexion which blushed bright red often gave away the interior battle she waged to maintain this control.

The period of postulancy was usually three months but it was extended one month because she developed an abscess on her knee. The ailment required surgery to scrape the infection away from the bone. This was done without anesthesia and the nuns mar-



veled at her courage. Teresa Margaret however chided herself when a small whimper escaped her during the cutting. She feared that this ailment might cause the nuns not to accept her into the novitiate, but there was no cause to worry. The nuns found her spiritually mature and obedient, with a sweet and gentle nature. They considered her a gift and a true daughter of St. Teresa. She was accepted by a unanimous vote.

It was the custom at the time for the candidate to make a brief return to the world to consider once more the life she was leaving behind. Teresa Margaret visited again with members of her family and spent precious time with her father. There was no doubt now that their next parting would be forever. If anything could have kept Teresa Margaret from returning to the Carmel, it would have been the pain she was causing her father. When Ignatius brought her back to the convent those around her were alarmed at her pallor. That evening she confided in her superior, Mother Anna Maria "I do not think that it is possible for me ever to suffer greater pain than that which I experienced in leaving my father." She wept copious tears that night to the point of alarming Mother Anna Maria and causing her to wonder how Teresa Margaret had kept her composure through the day.

The next day Teresa Margaret was composed and radiant. Her father however was overcome and moved to a back corner of the church unable to watch the clothing ceremony. Later in the afternoon he was able to visit with her in the parlor. He could see her flooded with the peace the world cannot give and a joy no earthly pleasure can produce. He left her with an emptiness his other children could never fill yet he was at peace and thankful to God for the gift of this sacrifice.



*Mother Anna Maria*

The duties of the novices were general housekeeping and various small tasks needed by the community. But even as a novice, Teresa Margaret started the work that would take most of her time and energy for the rest of her years in Carmel; that of caring for the sick. Of the thirteen professed nuns, nine were elderly and often ill. Teresa Margaret started by assisting the aged novice mistress prepare for bed each night. She then took on the care of an ailing novice. More and more she spent any free time assisting the infirmarian in caring for one or the other of the seriously ill nuns. Some times she would move into the room of a sick sister to provide care during the night. Aside from the required periods of prayer Teresa Margaret gave herself to physical labor. Her work went far beyond what was required or expected.

A year after her clothing Teresa Margaret was scheduled to be professed. The abscess on her knee reappeared. She wondered if

this might be a sign that she was mistaken, that she did not have a vocation after all. She brought her doubts before God with simplicity and humility desiring only the will of God whatever it might be. The abscess disappeared. When the time came for her profession, with honest feelings of unworthiness she asked to be professed as a simple lay Sister. This was not allowed, but she kept this humble attitude all through her life in Carmel and often helped the lay sisters at their tasks. No duty was too lowly for her.

Theresa Margaret lived only four years after her Profession. For two years she served as assistant sacristan but never gave up her work among the sick. She was finally named assistant infirmarian though she had been doing the job all along.

She loved this job and the constant charity it demanded for she stated "love of neighbor consists in service." Although an "assistant" she soon was in fact exercising full responsibility for the infirmary. She was young and strong and seemed to thrive on the hard work. During her years of service, in spite of her continued determination to keep hidden her gifts and graces, remarkable incidences occurred: the miraculous healing that occurred after Teresa Margaret, filled with compassion, kissed a sister weeping in pain; her ability to converse with a deaf nun with whom no one else could communicate; various cures which, though not miraculous were at the least unusual; and her uncanny ability to know when a patient needed her no matter where in the monastery she might be.

### **Her Interior Life**

Teresa Margaret had a rich, active interior life. The first tenant, as has been mentioned, was to remain hidden, to keep her gifts and

graces hidden from all but her Lord while appearing quite ordinary to the world.

In her desire to prove her love to God, she practiced severe penances; sleeping on the floor, using a hairshirt, leaving windows open in the winter and closed in the summer, taking the discipline, etc. There was nothing masochistic in these practices. She wanted to discipline her body and unite herself to the suffering Christ. For her suffering was a way of repaying love for love. As she grew she modified these practices and took as her motto "Always receive with equal contentment from God's hand either consolations or sufferings, peace or distress, health or illness. Ask nothing, refuse nothing, but always be ready to do and to suffer anything that comes from His Providence."

Her daily spiritual exercises were simple. She determined to present a smiling and serene exterior no matter how severe her interior and exterior trials. She practiced the art of never doing her own will for she believed that "she who does not know how to conform her will to that of others will never be perfect." She would never offer an excuse for a fault or defend herself when falsely accused. She wrote that "everything can be reduced to interior movements, where the constant exercise of abnegation is essential." She believed that God would be found when God alone is sought. To that end she made the following resolution: "I propose to have no other purpose in all my activities, either interior or exterior, than the motive of love alone, by constantly asking myself: 'Now what am I doing in this action? Do I love God?' If I should notice any obstacle to pure love, I shall take myself in hand and recall that I must seek to return my love for His love." As for love of neighbor, she determined to "sympathize with

their troubles, excuse their faults, always speak well of them, and never willingly fail in charity in thought, word or deed”.

All these little practices seem to be no more than what any good Christian should be doing. How simple and unheroic they are. Yet to spend even one day in the minute by minute application of them would be more than most of us could hope to accomplish.

One Sunday in choir, Teresa Margaret was given a particular grace to understand the meaning of the love of God. While the community was reciting Terce, the words “*Deus caritus est*”, (God is Love) were read and it seemed to her she heard them for the first time. She was flooded with an elevated understanding of these words that seemed to be a new revelation. Despite the fact that she tried carefully to hide this sudden grace, all around her were aware something out of the ordinary had happened. These words occasioned a mystical experience which transformed her knowledge of God.

For the next few days the words “God Is Love” were constantly on her lips as she went about her duties. She appeared so out of herself that the Carmelite Provincial was brought in to examine her to see if she were suffering from “melancholy”. After examining her he responded: “I would indeed very happily see every sister in this community afflicted with such ‘melancholy’ as that of Sister Teresa Margaret!” It was only later that the community came to attribute her “faraway look” to her habitual awareness of the presence of God and His continual operations in her.

### **Night of the Spirit**

This grace was however to start a great spiritual trial for Teresa Margaret. She had always found it impossible to return to God “love for

love” as she desired. Now that she had a mystical experience of the love of God, the abyss between God’s love for her and her ability to return that love sufficiently became a source of increasing torment to her.

In a series of letters to her spiritual director Fr. Ildephonse she wrote: “I am telling you in strict confidence, sure of your discretion that I find myself in pain because I am not doing anything to correspond to the demands of love. I feel that I am continually being reproached by my Sovereign Good and yet, I am very sensitive to the slightest movement contrary to the love and knowledge of Him. I do not see, I do not feel, I do not understand anything interiorly or exteriorly which could impel me to love ... no one can imagine how terrible it is to live without any love when one is actually burning with the desire for it.”

“This is a torture to me, let alone the fact that it requires such an effort to apply myself to the things of God,” she confessed later. “I fear that God is very displeased with my Communions; it seems that I have no desire to ask His help because of the great coldness which I experience ... It is the same with prayer and, of course, in all the other spiritual exercises. I am continually making good resolutions but I never succeed in attaining some way of successfully overcoming these obstacles which stand in my way and prevent me from throwing myself at His feet.”

“The tempest has become extremely violent and I feel myself being so knocked about that I scarcely know what to do if this continues. Everywhere there is darkness and danger. My soul is so dark that the very things which used to afford me some spiritual consolation are only a source of torture to me ... I must do violence to myself in order

to perform each interior and exterior spiritual exercise ... Finding myself in this state of supreme weariness I commit many failings at each step ... My mind is in such turmoil that it is open to temptations of every sort, especially to those of despair ... I have a great fear of offending God grievously ... I see that I do wrong and at the same time try to follow the inspiration to do good and then I feel remorse for my infidelity; and to top it all, I am not succeeding in conquering myself because my repugnance is so great ...”

“The cruelest torturer of her soul,” wrote Fr. Ildephonse, “was her love which, in the very same measure that it increased – hid itself from the eyes of her spirit. She loved, yet believed she did not; in the measure love grew in her soul, in the same measure augmented the desire of loving and the pain of thinking that she did not love.” He was convinced that she was at the stage of Spiritual Marriage. When he later heard of her sudden and unexpected death he remarked, “she could not have lived very much longer so great was the strength of the love of God in her.”

## **Her Death**

It is suspected that Teresa Margaret had a premonition of her death. After obtaining permission from Fr. Ildephonse, she made a pact with Sr. Adelaide, an elderly nun she was caring for. The pact was that when she died, Sr. Adelaide would ask God “to permit Sister Teresa Margaret to join her quickly in order that she may love Him without hindrance for all eternity and be fully united with the fount of divine charity.” Shortly after the death of Sr. Adelaide, Teresa Margaret was indeed with God. It is believed that the cause of Teresa Margaret’s death was a strangulated hernia. If so, it is more than likely

that it was in lifting the heavy, inert body of Sister Adelaide that she strained herself causing the hernia. If so, it was a delightful seal to their pact.

In mid-February, 1770, Teresa Margaret wrote her last letter to her father, in which she begged that he begin a novena to the Sacred Heart at once for a most pressing intention of hers.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> she asked Father Ildephonse to allow her to make a general confession, as though it were to be the last of her life, and to receive Communion the following morning in the same dispositions. Whether or not she had any presentiment that this was indeed to be her Viaticum one cannot know; but in fact it was. She was only twenty-two years old and in excellent health, yet it appears she was making preparations for her death.

On the evening of March 6<sup>th</sup> Teresa Margaret arrived late to dinner from her work in the infirmary. She ate the light Lenten meal alone. As she was returning to her room, she collapsed from violent abdominal spasms. She was put to bed and the doctor was called. He diagnosed a bout of colic, painful but not serious. Teresa Margaret did not sleep at all during the night, and she tried to lie still so as not to disturb those in the adjoining cells. The following morning she seemed to have taken a slight turn for the better

But when the doctor returned he recognized that her internal organs were paralyzed and ordered a surgeon for a bleeding. Her foot was cut and a bit of congealed blood oozed out. The doctor was alarmed and recommended that she should receive the Last Sacraments right away. The infirmarian however, felt that this was not necessary, and was reluctant to send for a priest because of the patient’s continued vomiting. In addition, Sis-



*Monastery Church*

ter Teresa Margaret's pain appeared to have lessened. The priest was not called.

Teresa Margaret offered no comment, nor did she ask for the Last Sacraments. She seemed to have had a premonition of this when making her last Communion "as Viaticum". She held her crucifix in her hands, from time to time pressing her lips to the five wounds, and invoking the names of Jesus and Mary, otherwise she continued to pray and suffer, as always, in silence.

By 3 pm her strength was almost exhausted, and her face had assumed an alarmingly livid hue. Finally a priest was called. He had time only to anoint her before she took her flight to God. She remained silent and uncomplaining to the end, with her crucifix pressed to her lips and her head slightly turned towards the Blessed Sacrament. The community was stunned. Less than twenty-four hours earlier she had been full of life and smiling serenely as she went about her usual duties.

## Glory Revealed

Teresa Margaret had attempted all her life to remain hidden. In many ways she succeeded. But upon her death, the veil over her exalted sanctity was lifted by God Himself.

The condition of Teresa Margaret's body was such that the nuns feared it would decay before proper funeral rites could be accomplished. Her face was discolored, her extremities were black, the body already bloated and stiff. When her body was prepared and laid out in the choir later in the day, it was almost unrecognizable to the sisters who had lived with her for the last five years.

Her funeral was held the following day and plans were made for her immediate burial. When she was taken into the vault however, everyone noticed that a change had taken place in the body. The blue-black discoloration of her face was much less noticeable. The community decided to postpone the burial. A few hours later a second examination showed that the entire body had regained its natural color. The nuns were consoled to see the lovely face of Teresa Margaret looking just as they had known her.

They begged the Provincial's permission to leave her unburied until the next day, a request which he, dumbfounded at this astonishing reversal of natural processes, readily granted. The final burial of the body was arranged for the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, fifty-two hours after her death. By that time her skin tint was as natural as when alive and in full health, and the limbs, which had been so rigid that dressing her in the habit had been a difficult task, were flexible and could now be moved with ease.

This was all so unprecedented that the coffin was permitted to remain open. The nuns, the Provincial, several priests and doc-

tors all saw and testified to the fact that the body was as lifelike as if she were sleeping, and there was not the least visible evidence of corruption or decay. Her face regained its healthy appearance; there was color in her cheeks. Mother Victoria, who had received the profession of this young nun, suggested that a portrait should be painted before the eventual burial. This was unanimously agreed to, and Anna Piattoli, a portrait painter of Florence, was taken down to the crypt to capture forever the features that now in death looked totally life-like.

The Carmel burial vault was a scene of much coming and going during these days, and had assumed anything but a mournful atmosphere. By the time the painting was completed, a strange fragrance was detected about the crypt. The flowers that still remained near the bier had withered. But the fragrance persisted, and grew in strength, pervading the whole chamber. And then, miles away in Arezzo her mother Camille also became aware of an elusive perfume which noticeably clung to certain parts of the house.

During the next two weeks several doctors and ecclesial authorities came to the crypt to examine the body. As the days continued to pass the body regained more and more the characteristics of a living being. The Archbishop of Florence came on March 21st to make his own examination. The body was now totally subtle. Her bright blue eyes could be seen under lids slightly opened. Finally a little moisture collected on her upper lip. It was wiped off with a piece of cloth and rendered a "heavenly fragrance". The Archbishop declared: "Extraordinary! Indeed, it is a miracle to see a body completely flexible after death, the eyes those of a living person, the complexion that of one in the best of

## Quotes of Saint Teresa Margaret

*"Lord, I shall be yours, whatever the cost, despite all repugnance."*

*She who is silent everywhere finds peace.*

*She who desires peace must see, suffer and be silent.*

*She who does not know how to conform her will to that of others will never be perfect.*

*I am resolved to give complete obedience in everything without exception, not only to my superiors, but also to my equals and inferiors, so as to learn from you, my God, who made yourself obedient in far more difficult circumstances than those in which I find myself.*

health. Why, even the soles of her feet appear so lifelike that she might have been walking about a few minutes ago. She appears to be asleep. There is no odor of decay, but on the contrary a most delightful fragrance. Indeed, it is the odor of sanctity."

Teresa Margaret was finally buried eighteen days after her death. The report of miracles attributed to her intercession began immediately. Thirty-five years later, on June 21, 1805, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the incorrupt body of St. Teresa Margaret was transferred to the nuns' choir in the Carmel of Florence where it remains to this day. ■

# St. Teresa Margaret and the Virtue of Poverty

*Sandra Malkovsky, OCDS*



St. Teresa Margaret could be a model for all who strive to grow in virtue. She approached the exercise of all the virtues in an intelligent and carefully planned manner. The little table in her cell contained many small scraps of paper with her resolutions carefully written out as reminders to her of her plan of action. The particulars in her practice of the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience may not be wholly imitable for us who live outside the monastery but the motives which underlie her practices are the motives which drive us all in our spiritual lives, the desire to love and serve God and neighbor.

Her approach to the practice of the virtue of poverty is representative. An examination of this approach will be an inspiration to our own attempts to practice this or any virtue. We can trace three related motives in her plan of action; the imitation of Christ, openness to God, and generosity towards our neighbor.

It was from St. Francis of Assisi that St. Teresa Margaret first developed a love for the virtue of poverty. On the grounds of her family's villa was a small chapel decorated simply with frescos from episodes in the life of St. Francis. She took St. Francis as her patron and before her entrance into Carmel, her father, always sensitive to her unspoken desires, took her on a pilgrimage to La Verna to visit the places made holy by this Saint.

In the cave where St. Francis prayed and slept she saw and appreciated first hand the great physical rigors of the Saint's life. At the site where he received the stigmata she prayed and entered an ecstasy during which she came to a deep understanding of how a soul in love with God must be transformed into an image of Jesus Crucified. Here her love for the virtue of poverty as an entering into the poverty of Christ and in response to the great love of God

became even more clearly defined in her heart. It was her desire to imitate St. Francis of Assisi in every way and to repeat with him, "Deus meus et omnia". With this background it was easy for Teresa Margaret to understand and embrace the words of St. Teresa of Jesus:

*"Poverty of spirit is a good that includes all the others and renders those who have it master of all the goods of the earth, because it makes us despise them". (Way of Perfection 2,5)*

In Carmel, Teresa Margaret was perfection itself in the externals of the practice of poverty. The oldest, the shabbiest, the least convenient were her choice and ambition, and nothing made her happier than to be allowed to exchange some useful article for one that was faulty.

Her habit was the oldest and most patched. In the convent in Florence a new postulant was not given a new habit, but the habit of a deceased nun. Teresa Margaret was happy to take the oldest she could find. She was not content with what was permitted her but was always seeking in everything for her use "the worst, poorest and most disdained," and even "the leftovers and discarded articles of others". She was careful in the smallest things, never wasting anything, not a thread of silk or a drop of oil, or even a small piece of paper. Little bits of paper, even if they had been used, she would treasure to write down her thoughts and her resolutions; some of these are still preserved in the convent. She was always most pleased "with something old or used by a deceased religious, wishing to be treated as the poor little ones of Jesus Christ".

She never liked to see even crumbs of bread wasted; she would sweep them off the

floor to feed the birds. One day she was being chided about her zealous concern over these crumbs of bread. To this she responded that nuns, who are Christ's poor, should render an account even of such little things. "These little crumbs are of no use to any one, so I scatter them on the terrace and feed the sparrows, who have come to expect them, and yet I am not sinning against holy poverty," she said.

She never showed a desire for anything, yet she did this without drawing attention to it, even at times managing to go without necessities in spite of the careful watch of the fraternal charity of her community. When she did lack for necessities it pleased her to be able to really experience what she called "at least a little the weight of religious poverty". Her practice of poverty extended to the use of objects of piety and devotion. She seemed to practice a particular vigilance in this, and many times she gave back something to the mistress or to the prioress in order to deprive herself of it. She seemed also to honestly feel that if someone else had it, it might be put to better use.

Careful not to accumulate anything, hers was the poorest of poor cells. When a new novice entered the community, Mother Anna Maria would search the cells of the sisters for articles which might be given to the newcomer. She recalled having had a difficult time ever finding anything useful in Sr. Teresa Margaret's cell.

Her spirit of poverty lead her to a love for manual labor. It was a natural impulse that from the first days urged her to give herself, to spend herself for the community even to not having a minute for herself, while the desire of a true solidarity with the poor stimulated her to an "assiduous and diligent" zeal for work that permitted her, notwithstanding





*Teresa Margaret's incorrupt body*

prayer. Any free time she did find was spent in her cell or in the chapel remembering the words of the Rule: "Each one of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the Lord's law day and night and keeping watch at his prayers unless attending to some other duty". (*Rule of St. Albert Art.10*)

One might ask: "Is it worth the time and energy to be so careful about crumbs of bread, using

an apparent slowness, to finish by herself in one day "as much as could have been done by all together".

Of all this Teresa Margaret was unaware. Mother Anna Maria said: "From her demeanor it was easily observed that she truly kept before her eyes the point of our Rule of having to work, as moreover on the other hand to earn one's sustenance with the work of one's own hands, and sometimes with humble sorrow she expressed to me that she did not merit the common allowance of food because it seemed to her to deviate from the counsel and point of the Rule: 'For the charge we gave you when we were with you was this: that whoever is not willing to work should not be allowed to eat.'" (*Rule of St. Albert Art. 20*)

At the same time she tried invariably to select the worst tools to work with, the most inferior or worn out ones, and yet she would take the greatest care of them, as would a poor person who had nothing else. When she was not at work she was at

the worst materials, etc.?" Today we might ask, is it worth the time to clip and save every coupon, travel to several different markets to get the best price? St. Teresa Margaret was intelligent and these types of questions occurred to her too. She discussed them with her confessor Fr. Ildefonse.

The response of Fr. Ildefonse was "that seeking it on purpose was not to be done, but do it for love of religious poverty when the chance presented itself". Again, Teresa Margaret had in mind our Holy Rule: "Our Lord, at his second coming will reward anyone who does more than he is obliged to do. See that the bounds of common sense are not exceeded, however, for common sense is the guide of the virtues". (*The Rule of St. Albert Art. 24*)

There are some people who due to a careless or even slovenly nature are not concerned with the condition of their cell, their habit or of the materials they use. This is not the virtue of poverty. Teresa Margaret was very fond of propriety and neatness.

Although she took for herself the poorest of everything she cared for them as though they were the best and most precious.

It is very important to be clear on the underlying rationale for Teresa Margaret's behavior and not just focus on the externals. The externals were expressions of the interior virtue and the proof of the deep spiritual insights that motivated her.

For Teresa Margaret poverty was a means to imitate Christ. As with so many of our saints, her meditations were focused on Christ Crucified. She saw Christ on the cross as the ultimate poverty. To practice poverty was for her to conform herself "to the life and spirit of her beloved Lord".

She wanted to reach the state of a person who was poor and had not the right of ownership of her own goods. Her poverty had at origin an attraction of love, an insupportable need to imitate Christ "in his earthly condition of annihilation". (Phil 2:7)

She also saw in the practice of poverty a means of being open to God. The practice of poverty bears fruit in receptivity for God, making room for His presence and His word. "The one who allows herself to be dispossessed and reduced to interior poverty, is the one who can truly hear God". Her solicitude for poverty, obvious in her whole manner of being was due to the desire to imitate Jesus but also to the need of being truly free to love Him. In the liberating freedom of poverty, Teresa Margaret experienced profoundly that "God alone suffices".

*Her entire day was absorbed, not only by the community acts, the hours in choir, and by her duties as infirmarian, but by never refusing acts of charity and of service to all who asked her.*

Teresa Margaret also saw in the practice of poverty a means of practicing charity. Choosing the poorest of everything for herself allowed others have what was better. Working harder and longer than anyone relieved burdens from others.

Her spirit of poverty and charity little by little left her with no free time at all.

Her entire day was absorbed, not only by the community acts, the hours in choir, and by her duties as infirmarian, but by never refusing acts of charity and of service to all who asked her. Often a sister in the infirmary would ask Teresa Margaret to pray the Office with her. Although she had already prayed the Office in Choir, she would take

the time to pray it again. Or she would be asked by a sister to join her in her private devotions. Giving up her own prayer time, she would stay in the infirmary to pray with the one who asked.

St. John of the Cross teaches us that when we leave our prayer for the service of charity we will gain more from the Lord than we would have gained in doing our prayer. Certainly this seems to have been the case for Teresa Margaret. While losing the precious time for private prayer she continued to make great strides in her spiritual life until receiving from the Lord the gift of Spiritual Marriage by the tender age of twenty-two.

Teresa Margaret seemed to be truly unaware of all she accomplished each day. At the end of a very busy day, the only com-

ment she would make was that of attributing the fruit of the day to the Lord: "Do you not see how God aids us, and at the end of the day, everything is done?"

And yet even at the end of the day, she was not done. When all was quiet and the daylight faded, the over worked saint had one more task. She who meditated on the mystery of Christ who came to serve and identify with the poor and suffering could not keep from making one last round of her patients. The sisters saw her, when it was already dark, make her last round from one patient to the other, lighting the darkness of the long halls with a faint light obtained by burning spoiled walnuts: it was the last loving touch of a day spent in poverty and charity. It was the final proof that all her acts of poverty were manifestations of her love of God and neighbor.

Once when questioned by Mother Anna Maria on her practice of poverty and detachment, Teresa Margaret gave the following counsel: "Always receive with equal contentment from God's hand either consolations or sufferings, peace or distress, health or illness. Ask nothing, refuse nothing, but always be ready to do and to suffer anything that comes from His Providence".

Many will be put off by the extremes of St. Teresa Margaret's practice of poverty, obedience, penance, etc. Perhaps only when one has meditated as deeply as she on the charity, humility and poverty of the Sacred Heart of Jesus can one begin to grasp the dimension of her exalted soul. One of the readings for the Mass of St. Teresa Margaret is taken from Ephesians:

*Out of His infinite glory, may He give you the power through His Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ*

*may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God. (Eph 3:16)*

St. Teresa Margaret truly knew the love of Christ. But we must not simply look at her marvelous spirit in awe; we must allow her to inspire us to do the same. The closing words of this reading tell us that it can be done:

*Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to Him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:20-21) ■*

## ✉ Letter to the Editor

Dear Fr Regis,

Happy New Year and thank you for all that you do for the Clarion. I am a 3rd order member and feel so blessed by our newsletter. The recent Nov/Dec '04 issue on St John was a special gift. Ian Matthews article on the Seasons of Prayer was a very moving piece and in my current struggles, I felt very blessed by his writings ... "They have no wine". Let your need be your prayer". How relevant for all of us in our world today.

God bless you and all those involved in the Clarion. It is a great gift. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
L.J., OCDS, Barrington, IL

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# From the Sacred Heart to the Trinity

## (An excerpt)

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*Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, OCD*



**W**e are going to speak, first of all, about the progress of the Saint in contemplation; second, we shall study the phases of her progress in mystic love. The testimony of Fr. Ildephonse will assume capital importance because, in the last year of her life, he was her only confidant.

After Fr. John of the Cross had completed the term of office begun by Fr. Colombino as ordinary confessor of the convent, he was replaced by Fr. Valerian, to whom the Saint said nothing about her current spiritual trials. She did this at the advice of Fr. Ildephonse. Fr. Valerian, therefore, who was a witness at the process, tells us very little of importance about the Saint. Fr. John of the Cross, on the other hand, would have been a valuable witness at the informative process; we regret his premature death.

Only Fr. Ildephonse can bear witness to her interior life during this period, but we are certain that he is completely reliable.

When speaking of the contemplation of the Saint, Fr. Ildephonse remarked that “she bathed in it sweetly to such a degree that, during the last years of her life, it became for her the bitter spiritual agony which it is accustomed to become in souls most advanced in it. To illustrate by using a weak comparison: it is as if a person found himself in an open field during the heat of a scorching summer day; her eyes are so illumined by the light of the sun that, if she were to look at the sun itself, she would see only darkness. This comparison is certainly far from adequate in fully expressing the supernatural effects of divine grace in souls especially dear to God. It is true, nevertheless, that the more the Servant of God was animated and illumined by this elevated knowledge of God, so much the more did it seem to her that she was in a dark forest and in the most parched spiritual aridity. In her knowledge of God Teresa Margaret no longer knew Him by means of created images but in His perfections themselves; this knowledge poured over into the silence of her faculties and of her heart and she knew that,



*Fr. Ildephonse*

regardless of how much she might know of Him in this life -even in purest faith — she still would be far from the Being Who is infinitely perfect and yet supremely simple. So a double pain followed: that of not truly knowing this God (although she did know Him in such a wonderful manner) and that of not loving Him (although she loved Him with her complete being).”

Fr. Ildephonse is doubtlessly thinking of the *Spiritual Canticle* of Saint John of the Cross which, since 1748, he would have been able to secure in an Italian edition published in Venice translated by Fr. Mark of Saint Francis. In the commentary on these words of the thirty-ninth strophe: “on a serene night with a flame which consumes without giving pain” we find the inspiration for Fr. Ildephonse’s excellent description.

Contemplation of the most elevated mystical degree always remains a “ray of darkness”: “high as this knowledge might be, it still remains a fact that the soul is living in a dark night in comparison with beatific knowledge ...” And to live unsated can only be a tremendous pain for a soul desirous of perfect knowledge and deepest love.

It appears that, while remaining within the orbit of terrestrial contemplation, Teresa Margaret had, in the last years of her life, aspired to that ultimate perfection of contemplative knowledge which can be found only in an experience of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

We have noticed, in studying the notes of her retreat of 1768, that the Saint was strongly attracted to the mystery of the hidden life of Christ. Actually, she was completely dedicated to the pursuit of the life of love which, although hidden, burned in the heart and soul of the Redeemer, and she longed to penetrate into the deepest recesses of this sanctuary so that she might share in that life to the fullest possible degree. But to the interior, hidden life of Christ belongs, not only His life of love, but also the life of knowledge; thus, after having centered her attention upon the affective aspect of His life, Saint Teresa Margaret now contemplated its intellectual aspect. In all this she burned with the desire of partaking to the greatest possible degree in the activity of this knowledge. We know that the human intellect of Christ, enriched with the light of glory, contemplates the most Holy Trinity with no shadow to obstruct it; it knew that the Person of the Word was the subject of all its human activity, it knew the Father of Whom Christ proclaimed Himself the Son, it knew the Holy Spirit Who resided in His soul “as in His chosen temple” and Who governed all His operations. The spiri-

tual life of Christ was truly "Trinitarian." Teresa Margaret had the desire "to become His perfect image" and in these last years, especially after she had made her act of oblation, she felt a growing need to enter into closest union with the most Holy Trinity.

Fr. Ildephonse reported that "during the following two years, that is, during the last two years of her life, she asked my permission to imitate the hidden life of Our Savior. When I granted her this permission the first time, I was thinking rather of her exterior life, devoid of any manifestation of what might win the esteem of men. This was my ordinary way of dealing with her. I always let her think that whatever she told me was an ordinary thing and not as lofty as it really was. This did not prevent me, however, from giving her in an indirect manner advice or counsel which she needed. I acted thus to prevent her from having to undergo temptations to vanity. I knew, furthermore, that these words which I spoke, apparently inadvertent and unintended, were far more profitable to her than long discourses. Thus I acted, pretending that I understood her as speaking of the hidden exterior life of Our Lord. During the next year, with more insistence and greater precision, she asked the permission of me once again, recalling to my memory with a touching and tactful modesty everything which she had told me previously. She said that exterior human cares whether hers or others bothered her not at all, thanks to God. To her they were as if they were not. The only thing in this life, she continued, which was worth getting excited about was God and the soul. Then, as I now recall, I began to explain to her the life of Christ, mystically hidden, in a commentary on the words of the Apostle Paul: 'You are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'"

"She told me that this time I had fully answered the question that she had asked of me previously and that she was able to penetrate more profoundly into the ascetic and mystical implications of the Apostle's words. She then proceeded to harmonize them with other quotations, principally the words of the Savior Himself: 'No one comes to the Father except through Me — who sees Me sees My Father — The just man lives by faith.' It was then that I understood that she was called to emulate this aspect of the Savior's life in faith as far as it is permitted to a creature, namely, the life and the internal, hidden operations of the intellect and will (i.e. the sublime knowledge and affections) of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ hypostatically united to the Word. Then, with more feeling than she had ever exhibited on any previous occasion, she repeated these words (or their equivalent): 'O Father! what a wonderful ladder is our good Jesus! What a precious and untouchable ladder!' What she intended to say was 'indispensable'."

In spite of its rather confused style this page of Fr. Ildephonse is quite remarkable and reveals the mysterious workings in her soul during the last two years of her life: "She was called to imitate in faith, as far as it is permitted to a creature, the life and the internal, hidden operations of the intellect and will of the Sacred Humanity of Christ hypostatically united to the Word."

Since Christ's intellect, illumined by the light of glory, was completely centered upon the holy Trinity, and since Saint Teresa Margaret sought to imitate its intimate, hidden operations, she was necessarily going to become a "Trinitarian" soul.

At this point we must study Teresa Margaret's relationship to the mystery of the

Divine indwelling. Whenever she spoke of it with her spiritual director, she used to refer to the beautiful text of Scripture which reveals it to us: "If anyone loves Me He will keep My word and My Father will love Him and We shall come to make our dwelling in him." Then, says Fr. Ildephonse, "she was all the more intensely taken up with the idea, seized with admiration, wondering at the tenderness of a God Who would deign to make with men a pact of love and friendship which was so unequal."

The indwelling of the blessed Trinity in the soul so touched Saint Teresa Margaret that she used to repeat with great joy the words of the Apostle: "The temple of God, which you are, is holy. For you *are* the temples of the living God as the Lord has said: 'I shall live in them and walk amongst them.'" Another quotation which delighted her was the following from the Gospel: "The kingdom of God is within you." Confronted with such singular richness of the soul she cried: "Oh, what a temple filled with such grandeur! How beautiful is the royal home of our God!"

Here we see how she entwines the thought of the divine indwelling with that of "God is love." We have already seen how Teresa Margaret had been permitted to enjoy the privilege of "feeling experientially" the presence of the God of love in the soul. Fr. Ildephonse recalled that the feast of the holy Trinity "was each year for her a day of highest contemplation of this incomprehensible mystery and the day on which she expressed most vehemently her desires of someday

contemplating this august mystery in heaven. I recall that the days which she spent in preparation for the feast were as filled with graces as was the feast itself, for she felt within herself tremendous drives towards union with God in the celestial fatherland ...; they drove her with such force that she often cried: 'When shall I come and appear before Thy Face?' — I also recall one occasion, similar to this, upon which, seized by a rapture, she told me very lofty facts about this mystery, about the relative and eternal operations

of the Divine Persons amongst Themselves. I am forced to admit that I was beside myself with astonishment and admiration." Unfortunately, Father did not desire to go into a fuller explanation of this fact; it would have been highly interesting. In any event, let it suffice for us to say that Saint Teresa Margaret certainly knew mystical Trinitarian contemplation.

We must note that her "life with the Trinity" was not reduced to the mystical manifesta-

tion; this came as the crowning-point of a long, arduous personal effort to keep herself in contact with this mystery by use of scriptural texts. She assimilated their content by reflective meditation and contemplation of them, which was occasionally rewarded by some mystical grace. Fr. Ildephonse remarked that the Saint had many personal practices which made her soul rise to the mystery of the Trinity frequently during the day. These practices were based upon the dogma of the Trinity. "She was very devoted to the sovereign mystery of the Holy Trinity which she adored within her heart hundreds





of times during the day by using the words: 'Gloria Tibi Trinitas' (Glory be to Thee, Trinity). She often would repeat the words of the elect in heaven: 'Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth' (Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts). Still again she would use the formula of the Servant of God, Sister Eleanor Ramirez de Montalve: 'Love, praise, honor, glory, thanksgiving be to Thee, most holy, most blessed, most glorious Trinity, one God.' She was accustomed to renewing these acts of adoration in the monastery choir where, as I mentioned previously, she pictured herself in the midst of the blessed spirits. She did this especially when the 'Gloria Patri' and the last strophes of the hymns were said and, in a general way, she wanted to do this at each breath and each beat of her heart, both day and night. Sunday was the day of the week which she set aside in a special manner for honoring the Blessed Trinity with more intense acts of adoration, praise, honor and gratitude for all the benefits received from the Divine Persons distinct in the unity of God. She was accustomed to honor those perfections which, although common to the members of the Trinity, we mortals are inclined to attribute to each of the Persons separately: omnipotence to the Father, wisdom to the Son, love to the Holy Ghost. Before the throne of the Trinity she would renew all her more particular offerings and vows as if she had only begun to live in that day.

"She celebrated, with all possible solemnity, the feast of the august Trinity which the universal Church celebrates on the Sunday following the feast of Pentecost and she used to prepare herself for it under my direction and in complete obedience to me by a seven day preparation consisting of vari-

ous acts of virtue, mortification, internal and external piety ..."

We can conclude from all this that the Saint neglected no means of "living with the Trinity." She was deservedly rewarded by God, therefore, when He permitted her a contemplative glimpse into that mystery.

We can easily surmise the manner in which Saint Teresa Margaret bore herself towards each of the Divine Persons from the testimony in the processes.

Mother Anna Marie Piccolomini tells us: " (One day) she told me that the words 'No one comes to the Father except through Me' always impressed her very deeply; after a few moments she said: in this, God the Father is everything, for God is love and has produced all things as an effect of His love! He is the first principle of all things and this love is God Himself. To conquer Him in Whom is all good no suffering should seem hard to us and never must we turn back on account of the difficulties which we might encounter, but rather embrace bitterness and every other type of cross very promptly ..."

Mother Anna Maria insisted that these words approximate those of the Saint. They show how she considered the heavenly Father the source of all good Who deserves man's total dedication of himself. She felt deep gratitude to Him for all the gifts which He had so lavishly bestowed upon her. Fr. Ildephonse remarked: "Her gratitude was very tender, and she frequently had the words of the psalmist on her lips: 'What shall I return unto the Lord for all the things which He has rendered unto me?' or 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all the good things you have received from Him ...' She would often call upon all creatures: 'Come, listen, and I shall tell to all those who fear the

Lord how much He has done for my soul ...' She begged me with great humility to unite myself to Jesus and Mary and all the celestial court, particularly during the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in order to supplement the gratitude which she felt that she owed to God ..."

The knowledge which we already have from Fr. Ildephonse about her contemplation of the relationship between the three divine Persons in the Trinity will show how she considered the Word in the bosom of the Father. She always began with Christ, and she was inclined to view Him as man and as the only way to the Father.

But Teresa Margaret would not have been a Trinitarian soul if she had had no devotion to the Holy Spirit. This phase of her spiritual life is remarkable, and we see her once again uniting herself to liturgical and dogmatic tradition, enlightened with special insights.

Let us recall how she interpreted "God is love and who dwells in love dwells in God ...". She understood by this phrase the experimental and mystical invasion of the soul by the Holy Spirit. Once again we find practices which gave a concrete form to her devotion toward the Spirit of Love whom she honored especially on Pentecost and during the novena in preparation for it. Fr. Ildephonse observed that "each year on this solemnity she would receive an increase of love for God and of perfection in all the other virtues."

Teresa Margaret considered the Holy Ghost "the source and the substantial life (she meant *stimulus*) of holy love with which she was inflamed and with which she ever desired to burn ... Several times a day she would approach Him in all confidence, humbly begging Him never to be inactive in her heart but rather illumine and increase her love." This devotion of the Saint to the Holy Spirit, the

Spirit of Love, permits us to penetrate into another aspect of particular interest in her truly remarkable life: its apostolic aspect.

The ardent desires of the apostolate, the need of procuring in the most efficacious manner the good of the Church, could not fail to have been present in this true daughter of Saint Teresa of Jesus. Teresa Margaret knew that the apostolic means par excellence of the Carmelite soul is intercessory prayer arising from the soul of one dear to God in charity, but she used this intercessory power to try to expand in the Church this wonderful flood of love which she had herself experienced. It seems that she had a profound grasp or intuition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, a role which the tradition of the Holy Fathers, confirmed by the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, expresses in the adage: "The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church." Saint Teresa Margaret called upon Him incessantly, begging Him to give to each soul according to its own character that form of spiritual life most necessary for it. Fr. Ildephonse says: "In her daily prayers she addressed herself to Him on behalf of sinners who had driven Him from their hearts by sin, asking Him to call them back to Himself by strong impulses of grace; she begged for souls tepid in their love, who saddened Him Who dwelt in their hearts by their frequent venial sins, that He would enflame them and make them burn with fervor; she prayed for ardent and perfect souls in order that they might increase unceasingly in His divine love; she interceded for the souls in Purgatory in order that He might take them quickly to heaven where they can consummate their love which as yet is still fettered in Purgatory; she prayed on behalf of

*(Continued on last page)*

## FRIENDS OF TERESA Domingo Báñez, O.P.

**D**omingo Báñez lived from 1528–1604. Born in Valladolid, he began his studies in Salamanca in 1543 and entered the Dominicans there (San Esteban) in 1546 where he made his religious profession a year later. He remained in Salamanca, studying philosophy and theology (1547–51) and then taught these subjects at San Esteban for ten years. In 1561 he was transferred to Santo Tomas in Avila as professor until 1567. In 1565 he took his doctor's degree at the University of Sigüenza. In 1567 he became professor of theology at Alcalá. In 1573–77 he was Rector at St. Gregor's in Valladolid, then returned to Salamanca as professor in 1577. In 1577 he won the chair of Prime at Salamanca University, which he held until 1604. He was a preacher and theologian with great prestige, becoming famous for his debates with the Jesuits over the complex question of predestination and free will. According to witnesses, he always had great admiration and respect for Teresa.

His relationship with St. Teresa extended from the time she made her first foundation in Avila in 1562 until her death in 1582. Báñez first entered Teresa's life when she was making her foundation of St. Joseph's in Avila. At one point he was confessor to the nuns at St. Joseph's. He vigorously defended her before the city council. She said concerning this intervention: "Only one member, a



presentado of the order of St. Dominic, although he was opposed (not to the monastery, but to its being poor), said it wasn't something that had to be suppressed, that the matter should be considered carefully, that there was time for this, that such a decision pertained to the bishop—or other things of this nature. What he said was very helpful for they were so furious that it was a wonder they didn't carry out their decision right away " (L 36,15).

In one way or another Báñez had something to do with almost every one of Teresa's writings. He was especially involved with the *Life*. As official censor for the Inquisition, he was given the task of examining Teresa's *Life*, which had been denounced to that body by the princess of Eboli. He gave the work his approval and defended Teresa's spirit, also pointing out, however, that the work should be kept secret.

Teresa writes in the Prologue of the *Way of Perfection*: "I received permission from the Father Presentado, Friar Domingo Báñez, of the order of the glorious St. Dominic, who at present is my confessor, to write some things about prayer. . .if I should be mistaken, the Father Presentado, who will be the first to see this book, will either make corrections or burn it " (*Way*, Prol.). At the end of the *Way* (42,6) she writes: "Those who have reached this fount will

find that book very beneficial and receive much light from it. You may get it from Father Domingo Báñez, a presentado of the Order of St. Dominic, who as I said is my confessor and the one to whom I'll give this book. If this one is all right for you to see and he gives it to you, he'll also give you that other one (the *Life*)."



Báñez was, without doubt one of the most influential people in Teresa's life. She constantly sought his advice on theological matters, especially the doctrine of grace and the theology of the Trinity. Although only four letters addressed directly to Báñez have survived he is mentioned in many of Tere-

sa's letters to others.

After Teresa's death, he published his magisterial work of theology in 1584, a commentary on the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas. In 1590, he wrote to Nicolás Doria (Superior of the Reformed) about a controversy that was taking place concerning St. Teresa's constitutions. Since the problem had originated with Anne of Jesus and the nuns at Santa Ana in Madrid, he wrote to Doria, urging him to refrain from any kind of ruthless punishment of the discalced nuns, especially the community at Santa Ana.

Báñez died in Medina del Campo in 1604. ■

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## From the Sacred Heart to the Trinity

(from page 24)

the general and particular needs of Holy Mother the Church which is indeed confided to His care to conserve and increase the spirit of truth and holiness which resides in her alone because of Him; finally, on behalf of all those who live outside the confines of the true Church, and for all the prelates and members of the Church. All this I know with certitude because she submitted everything to my approval."

It seems proper to indicate that the spirituality of this Saint is a magnificent synthesis of contemplative life and apostolic efficacy. Her contemplative life raised her to the dizzy altitudes of Trinitarian life, caused her to feel in her own life the great fertility of the invasion of the Spirit of Love, and it is this invasion of the Holy Spirit, producer of sanctifying grace, which caused her to use her intercessory power, united to Christ, to intercede for the same invasion to occur in the

entire Church. The more He Who is the soul of the Church vivified her by inundating her with grace, the holier the Church would become and the more it would reflect the life of Christ. Teresa Margaret devoted herself entirely to begging for the Church the treasures of holiness.

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