St. Teresa of Avila
A Journey of Love
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Preface

2015 marks the 500th birthday of St. Teresa of Avila and plans world-wide for personal renewal have been under way since 2010 by all the Discalced Carmelite family.

Saint Teresa of Jesus, or Teresa of Avila, was conferred the title ‘Doctor of the Church’ by Pope Paul V1 on September 27, 1970. She is the first woman to have been given this title. The favours that God blessed her with served to develop her natural qualities to the fullest. Her endearing warmth, rare gift for communicating with people, business acumen, sparkling wit, astuteness, common sense, great empathy and understanding as well as psychological and spiritual perception are just some of her personality traits that make her both special and inspiring.

Her spiritual masterpiece ‘The Interior Castle’ shows us the depth of her interior world or mystical side. The Divine Indwelling in the soul is the foundation of her doctrine. She tells us that what Our Lord promised is possible. God does make His home in us. He does speak to us as a friend. She shows us the simple steps of a growth and movement whose end is nothing else than a transforming union with God – a goal which all can attain.

Heaven is possible on earth for those who love God. After having done whatever we can, everything remains in God’s hands as best embodied in this sentence: “....leave it in the hands of the Lord, for it is His business and He will bring much good from it all.”

We hope that through this pictorial book on her extraordinary life, many will come to imbibe her spirit of a deep and intimate relationship with God through Jesus. May her unwavering dedication to God continue to teach and inspire us, ordinary mortals, to make that leap of faith and surrender ourselves to Him.
16th century Spain and Portugal became the pioneers of global exploration and colonial expansion coupled with the opening of trade routes across the oceans. This resulted in the flourishing of trade across the Atlantic between Spain and the Americas, and also across the Pacific between East Asia and Mexico, by way of the Philippines.

During this golden age and under the rule of Ferdinand's and Isabella's successors, Spain became a powerful country in Europe. The oceans witnessed the prowess of the Spanish navy.

Among some of the most outstanding figures of this period was Teresa of Avila.
Teresa's father, Alonso de Cepeda, moved as a boy with his family from Toledo to Ávila in Spain. In 1505, he married Catalina del Peso and lived comfortably in a desirable neighbourhood.

Tragedy struck the family when Catalina died just two years after the marriage, leaving Alonso with two young children, María the eldest and Juan.

Mama is happy with God in heaven, we have to carry on without her now.

I know of a fourteen-year-old cousin of Catalina, your late wife, her name is Beatrice de Anhuma. She comes from an old Christian family.

Alonso, now that the mourning period is over, don't you think it would be better for you to marry again? The children are young and you can't be both father and mother to them.
Anumada? Her ancestors bravely defended a tower in the 11th century when Spain recaptured Castile.

They fought their way through the smoke and flames and won the tower back from their captors. They even won their own special family crest.

Maybe it would be a good idea to marry again. The children would have a mother to look after them and an alliance with a family of old Christian blood and connections with Spanish aristocracy would come in very useful later on.

Alonso and Beatrice married in the country at the Anumada property. Beatrice bore Alonso ten children.

How beautiful she is, Alonso! See those tiny little fingers and smiling lips? Our first little girl. What shall we call her?

Indeed she is lovely. She might turn out to be one who has a will of her own. Look at that mouth. Doesn't it show you that?

On 18th March 1515, Beatrice gave birth to their third child - a girl.
Teresa? Yes ... Teresa, she shall be!

Oh, come now, Alonso! Anyway, shall we call her Teresa? After my grandmother who also had a will of her own?

Teresa? Teresa? I'm coming after you. I've caught all the others and we're all searching for you. We will soon get you, so you might as well give yourself up.

Teresa's brothers could not find Teresa who was up on a tree quietly watching everyone below.

We have searched everywhere and there is no sign of Teresa. She is a wizard at hiding herself. What a shame, nine boys, and all are unable to find Teresa!

After some time...

Alright, Teresa, we give up... you win. Now, will you show yourself?
HA, HA, HA... SO YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF LOOKING UP? SHAME ON YOU! OH, PROMISE ME YOU WON'T TELL PAPA WHERE I WAS.

YES, WE PROMISE.

ANOTHER TIME...

OH, RODRIGO, HOW GOOD IT IS TO READ ABOUT THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS. SEE, BY BECOMING MARTYRS, HOW QUICKLY THEY WERE ABLE TO GO TO HEAVEN AND SEE GOD.

Hmm...

JUST THINK RODRIGO, HOW EASILY WE COULD GET TO HEAVEN AND ENJOY ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS THERE... IF ONLY WE COULD BECOME MARTYRS.

WELL, HEAVEN WOULD CERTAINLY BE BEAUTIFUL, BUT HOW?

TOMORROW, WE WILL GET UP EARLY, SLIP OUT OF THE HOUSE AND START WALKING TO WHERE THE FIGHTING IS. BEING CHRISTIANS, WE'LL SURELY BE KILLED. HOW SIMPLE... AND WE'LL BE IN HEAVEN FOREVER AND EVER.

EARLY NEXT MORNING, THE TWO STOLE AWAY BEFORE THE SUN WAS UP.

Ah... FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER!
Unfortunately for them, they were spotted by their uncle.

What on earth are both of you doing here so early in the morning?

Er... Er... Er

You should have had more sense, Rodrigo than to let your sister talk you into running away from home to be martyrs!

The two children tried to build hermitages in their garden by piling some stones which quickly fell apart. They could not fulfill their desire to do something for God.

Another time...

Well, Rodrigo, since it is impossible for us to be martyrs, shall we be hermits?

It sounds like a good idea to me.
Teresa was thirteen when her thirty-three-year-old mother died after her health had deteriorated. Realising her loss, she went tearfully before an image of our Lady and...

Oh most Holy Mary, be my mother since I no longer have my earthly one.

The years passed quickly and by fourteen, Teresa turned out to be an extremely attractive young girl with dark sparkling eyes and arched eyebrows. She spent her time beautifying herself to enhance her charms.

Elena, could you hand me another dress? This does not suit me at all.

Oh, just that she is now having a new boyfriend and that Alvaro whom she was going out with is heartbroken.

Her attractive qualities formed a halo of danger about her. Being an extrovert, she delighted in company and relationships. With her wit and lively intelligence, Teresa often became the centre of attention.

Teresa, what did you say about Celia the other day?

I would too, Teresa, if you did not see me for more than a week.
ALONSO FELT SOME MISGIVINGS, HE DID NOT WHOLLY APPROVE OF THE UPBRINGING OF HIS SISTER'S CHILDREN WHO WERE MORE GIVEN IN TO WORLDLY PLEASURES THAN HIS OWN. EVEN SO, HE COULD NOT SHUT THE DOOR ON THEM.

TERESA, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS DELIGHTED WITH HER COUSINS AND THEY WITH HER. ALONSO WAS EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HER CHOICE OF A LADY FRIEND, AN OLDER DISTANT RELATIVE WHO WAS MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN HERSELF AND VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE THINGS OF THE WORLD. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE INTENSE, EMOTIONAL FRIENDSHIPS THAT YOUNG GIRLS WERE FRENCH TO AND TERESA WAS ALWAYS IN THE COMPANY OF THIS FRIEND, GOSSPING AND BEING INITIATED INTO FAST TIMES SHE HAD NOT KNOWN BEFORE.

I UNDERSTAND, PAPA. THE BOYS ARE QUITE SELF-RELIANT AND IT'S EASY ENOUGH TO GET A GOOD FAITHFUL PAPA FOR LITTLE JOANNA, BUT WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH TERESA? SHE CANNOT BE LEFT ALONE BY HERSELF...

WITH YOU MARRIED AND AWAY FROM HOME, IT WOULD BE PERFECT TIMING TO SEND HER AWAY TO A BOARDING SCHOOL TO COMPLETE HER EDUCATION AND ABOVE ALL, TO REVIVIFY AND DIRECT HER SPIRITUAL ENERGIES. YES, I BELIEVE THE NUNS WILL HAVE A VERY GOOD INFLUENCE ON HER.

MARIÁ, MARTÍN DE GUZMAN HAS ASKED FOR YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE. HE IS A GOOD AND HARDWORKING MAN. UP TO NOW, YOU HAVE HESITATED TO ACCEPT ANYONE BECAUSE OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE FAMILY. BUT I THINK YOU HAVE TO THINK OF YOURSELF NOW BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

ALONSO WITH MARIÁ, HIS ELDEST DAUGHTER BY THE FIRST MARRIAGE...

THAT'S EXCELLENT, PAPA. SHE WILL BE UPSET AT FIRST, BUT SHE WILL ADAPT.

LATER THAT EVENING...

OH PAPA, HOW LOVELY FOR MARIÁ! WHAT DID HE DO, PAPA? KNEEL DOWN AND ASK HER TO BE HIS BRIDE LIKE IN THE NOVELS? HOW ROMANTIC!

TERESA, MY DEAR... I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. MARTIN DE GUZMAN HAS ASKED FOR MARIÁ'S HAND IN MARRIAGE AND BOTH OF THEM WILL BE GETTING MARRIED SOON.
There is still a little more I need to speak to you about. Maria will be moving out after her marriage and it would not be fitting for a young girl like you to be staying here without another or an older sister... So I have made arrangements for you to go to a convent to finish your education.

Oh, Papa. I will miss you, my brothers and little Juana. We have always been together. Is that your final word, Papa?

Yes, Teresa. It has to be this way till you are a little older.

The convent chosen for Teresa was one of the best in Old Castile: that of the Augustinians. Teresa suffered much the first week, but she began to settle down and was at peace. Soon, all the sisters were favourable towards her. By unpretentiously imposing her sparkling youth on others, she won their approval unconsciously and without any secret interest.

We have a fine young lady in that new girl, Teresa. She seems to be a born leader.

Ah yes! She is very well accepted by the girls too.

She is friendly, mixes well and is ever ready to give a helping hand.
Dona Maria de Bricena, take note of Teresa. We could have a possible vocation in her. She seems to be a bright and religious child.

Ah, Dona Maria of Augustine, you should have a talk with her someday. See what she plans to do with her life and gradually bring up the subject of a vocation.

Dona Maria de Bricena taught the boarding girls. Because of her admirable qualities, she was appointed the girls' teacher and she remained with them both day and night. She insisted on the strict observance of the austere and formal educational principles of the times. She was the most able person to instil holy enthusiasm into young girls. Her countenance revealed an inner conviction. Whenever Sr. Maria spoke of God, "She was always discreet and saintly," and her eyes became very luminous. Teresa listened to her rapturously.

Sr. Maria, how well you speak of God. I see how much he loves you and how much you love him too. I wish I could love him like that too.

God is love, Teresa. His love is so immense that there are just no words for it. He cannot but love... Love... Love. I wanted very much to belong to this great God of love entirely... totally. And I made my decision to become a nun when I read these words in the Bible: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Oh Teresa, if only you knew the rewards this Lord of love grants to those who give up all for his sake.

Acustomed as she was to the trivialities of the century, a whole new world of peace, space, and clarity opened before her and gradually, Teresa's spirit began to change. Grace was working in her. She began to desire eternal things. After a year and a half in this convent, she was much better. She began to recite many vocal prayers and asked God to show her the state of life in which she was to serve him. She had no desire to be a nun and asked God, not to give her this vocation. She also feared marriage as she witnessed her mother wasting away with so many childbirths.