

## Teresa of Avila 15 October

*Spiritual Teacher and Reformer, 1582 — Commemoration*

Teresa of Avila was a Spanish nun of the sixteenth century whose visions of Christ and gifts as a spiritual director have placed her among the greatest of all Christian mystics.

She was the only daughter of a minor nobleman and entered the Carmelite convent in her native town of A'vil-a when she was twenty-one. Over the next two decades she endured many illnesses, one of which left her paralyzed, and also a nagging sense that in her prayers and devotions she was doing nothing more than "treading water." Then, in answer to her despair, she began to have visions and hear "interior voices." The most famous of these experiences, known as "transverberation of the heart," took place over a number of days in 1559. At her left side Teresa beheld an angel who held a golden spear with a flaming tip, with which he pierced her heart again and again. Teresa later wrote that each time the angel withdrew the spear she was "left completely afire with a great love for God," and knew that her soul would "never be content with anything less than God."

Three years later, in obedience to another vision, Teresa left her convent with thirteen other nuns to observe the primitive constitutions of the Carmelite Order in all their strictness.

Despite fierce, sometimes violent opposition from the Carmelite establishment, Teresa eventually founded sixteen other Reformed Carmelite houses.

In the midst of her other concerns Teresa also found time to write a number of books, which reflect her holiness, wisdom, and sense of humour; and through them she has become one of the most widely loved saints in the Church, attractive even to those who have not shared her Spanish catholicism or her monastic vocation.

*See Readings, page 679.*

## Sentence

All the works of the Lord are very good, and whatever he commands will be done at the appointed time. *Sirach 39.16*

## Collect

Almighty God,  
who spoke to your servant Teresa  
in the stillness of your abiding love,  
grant us the will to follow her example,  
that in prayer and sacrament,  
and by meditation upon your Word,  
we may find your peace wherever we live;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.

## Readings

1 Kings 19.4-13 Psalm 66.7-11

*Refrain* The Lord brought us into a place of liberty.  
John 14.1-11

## Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,  
you made the work of your Son to triumph  
in the life of your servant Teresa.  
Mercifully assist us in our offering of praise,  
that thirsting for your peace,  
we may drink from the well of eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Preface of a Saint

## Prayer after Communion

Heavenly Father,  
you open the doors of heaven over this table  
and make us sharers in your eternal banquet.  
Grant us such perseverance in prayer  
that in company with your blessed servant Teresa,  
we may know our lives  
to be held in your loving hands,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.