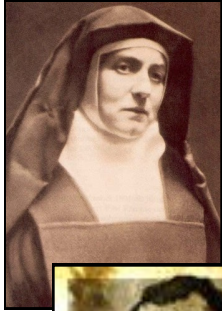


# Carmelite Saints and Blessed

## Volume II



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**St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary and Principal Protector of the Carmelite Order**  
**Solemnity celebrated on March 19th**



There are only three Solemnities celebrated in the Carmelite Calendar of Saints, the Solemnities of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Elijah, the Prophet, and the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary and Principal Protector of Our Order.

Just as St. Joseph protected, guarded, defended, supported and loved the Holy Family, he does the same for the Church, and in a special way, the Carmelites.

In his 1889 encyclical *Quamquam Pluries* (On Devotion to St. Joseph), Pope Leo XIII wrote “It is, then, natural and worthy that as Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Christ.” How similar this cloak is to the mantle Our Lady has bestowed upon the Carmelites.

In the early part of the 16th Century, it was a Carmelite who encouraged the renewal of devotion to St. Joseph. In her life story, St. Teresa of Jesus tells us of her call to start a new monastery. She says “One day after Communion, His majesty earnestly commanded me to strive for this new monastery with all my powers, and He made great promises that it would be founded and that He would be greatly served by it. He said it should be called St. Joseph and that this saint would keep watch over us at one door, and Our Lady at the other.”

Later on in history, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. Pope Pius X approved the Litany to St. Joseph. Pope Pius XI declared Joseph the Patron of the Church’s fight against communism. Pope John XXIII entered the name of Joseph into the Canon of the Mass just after Mary, and before the apostles., and he declared St. Joseph the Patron and Protector of the Second Vatican Council.

Most recently in his 1989 Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (St. Joseph—Guardian of the Redeemer), Pope John Paul II writes that the gospels tell us what Joseph did, but John Paul continues on to tell of what seems to be the Carmelite spirituality of St. Joseph. He tell us that by Joseph’s actions, we discover in his silence “an aura of deep contemplation.” “Furthermore, in Joseph, the apparent tension between the active and the contemplative life finds an ideal harmony.”

Joseph the contemplative, the just man, the willing man, the obedient man, along with Mary, was the first guardian of the divine mystery. He shared these attributes with Jesus, and thereby shares them with us, the members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Teresa of Jesus told her sisters “I know by experience that the glorious St. Joseph assists us generally in all necessities. I never asked him for anything which he did not attain for me.” “Go to Joseph.”

## Blessed Mary of the Angels

**Feast Day: December 16**

Marianna (Blessed Mary of the Angels) was born in Turin, Italy on January 7, 1661.

At 14, she wished to enter the Discalced Carmelite nuns. Her father, Count John Donatus Fontanella di Baldissero, had already died by this time. Her mother, Countess Mary Tana di Santana, was strongly opposed to her daughters wish.



Eventually the Countess relented and Marianna was clothed with the Carmelite habit on November 19, 1674. She took the name Mary of the Angels. She professed her vows in 1677.

Mary of the Angels experienced a great deal of physical suffering, but in spite of all the pain she lived with, she was known for her heroic serenity.

Her holiness was known beyond the walls of her Carmelite convent. She prayed continually for her family and for her country. Many of her friends at the time, including some who were members of royalty, believed that her intercessory prayers helped to end the war for Savoy.

Blessed Mary of the Angels lived the true Carmelite spirit. She observed the Rule in purity and with zeal. She was particularly known for her devotion to the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph.

She died in Turin on December 16, 1717.

## Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

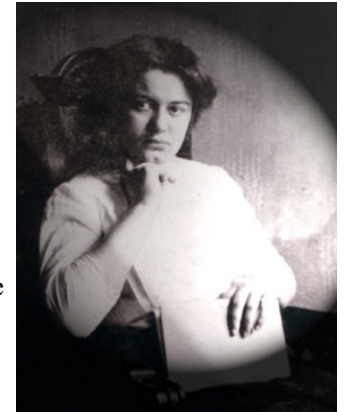
**Feast Day: August 9**

Edith Stein was born into a Jewish family on October 12, 1891 on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Feast of Atonement. She was the youngest of eleven children. She was considered to be a rather bright child. She finished her early education and she went on to the University of Breslau to study German and history. She was a radical suffragette, and she had a passion for philosophy and women's issues. She went on to advanced studies in philosophy, and as she continued, she became interested in the Christian faith. She was visiting a friend, and during the visit she picked up the Autobiography of Saint Teresa. The book stimulated her baptism as a Catholic.

Edith wrote extensively on both philosophy and women's rights, and at the same time continued with her advanced studies.

On October 14, 1933, at the age of 42, Edith entered the Carmelite Convent in Cologne, Germany. She took the name Sister Teresia Benedicta a Croce. We know her as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the cross. Her sister Rosa, who also converted, eventually joined her in Carmel as a lay person who was employed there.

Germany, at this time, was a dangerous place for Jews. The prioress of the Cologne Convent made arrangements for Teresa Benedicta and her sister to be moved to a convent in the Netherlands. On New Year's Eve, 1938, the two sisters were smuggled across the border. While in the Netherlands, she continued with her studies and her writing.

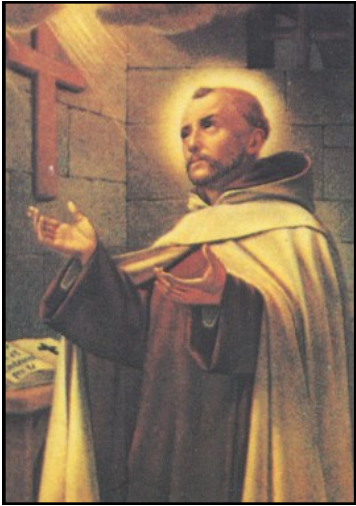


On August 2, 1942, she and her sister were picked up by the Gestapo. On August 7th, they were transported to Auschwitz. It was most probably August 9, 1942, when she and her sister, along with many others, were killed in a gas chamber.

She was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 11, 1998. She was named a Patron Saint of Europe.



## Saint John of the Cross Feast Day: December 14



Saint John of the Cross is considered to be one of the foremost poets in the Spanish language. His writings are among the most important mystical works in Spanish. Among the Church's contemplatives, perhaps no one has had more influence on Catholic spirituality and mystical theology. As a man of prayer, he is often portrayed as serious or rigid, and in many ways as far as he cared for himself, this portrayal is somewhat accurate. What isn't always considered with John of the Cross is that this austere contemplative was very much a man of action.

As a child he learned to care for others, and the skills he learned he brought with him through the years as he physically helped to care for the sick and the elderly

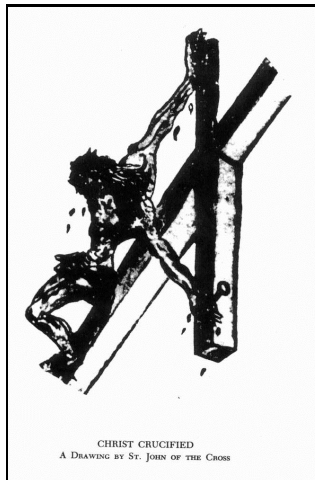
friars. He worked in the fields, he repaired buildings, and he designed and supervised the construction of an aqueduct that is still in use today.

John was also an artist who sketched pictures for his brethren, the cloistered nuns for whom he was a confessor, and for people to whom he gave spiritual direction. He was also an administrator who travelled extensively to establish numerous monasteries and convents.

He was a reformer who was not always welcomed by members of the Carmelite Order at the time. He was imprisoned for nine months because of his efforts to bring his brethren back to the ancient rule and a stricter, more contemplative lifestyle. It was in his jail cell in Toledo that he composed poems, using writing materials given to him by one of his jailers. He composed part of the *Spiritual Canticle* during this time, as well as other lesser known poems. Though these were not among his best works, they give evidence that John remained focused on his God, and the gifts of God's creation.

In his work *John of the Cross: The Person, His Times, His Writings*, Michael Dodd, OCD wrote:

"Some may be inclined to say that it does not matter what image you have of John of the Cross, since it is primarily his writings that interest us today. Yet people also say that they find John of the Cross difficult to read or to believe or to accept. It is commonplace to say that John of the Cross's writings should not be given to beginners in the spiritual journey or that no one should read them without the guidance of a knowledgeable director. Yet he did not write his works for specialists in human development or those with doctorates in spiritual theology. He wrote for nuns and friars, novices and laywomen, for any who love God and desire God with passion."



## Blessed John Soreth Feast Day: July 24

John Soreth was born in Caen, in Normandy, in 1394. At 20 he joined the Carmel in Caen. He was ordained in 1417. He had the opportunity to study theology at the University of Paris, and he eventually became the regent of studies in the convent of his Order.

He held other elevated positions within the Order. For eleven years he was the Provincial of the Carmelites in France. In 1451, he was elected the prior general of the Order, and held that position until his death in 1471.

His legacy was one of reform. He worked hard at returning the Order to the original Carmelite religious observances. This included the Rule and constitutions, practice of poverty, and the practices of personal and community prayer and reflection.

Soreth took his position of General seriously. He travelled extensively to visit the houses of his Order. He was also involved with the beginnings of Carmelite nuns.

When the Papal Bull *Cum Nulla* was promulgated in 1452, permission was granted by the Pope to establish women as part of religious orders. Based upon *Cum Nulla*, Soreth formalized the affiliation of women with the Order of Carmel. Up to that time, women affiliated with the Order lived in their own homes.

*Cum Nulla* gave the authority to the Prior General to receive, admit and protect the women, who in the future would ask to live under the habit and protection of the Carmelite Order. Soreth actively responded to *Cum Nulla*, and in addition to officially establishing cloistered nuns within the Order, the Third Order of Carmel was also formally established.

John Soreth died in Angers on July 25, 1471.

In pictures, John Soreth is often represented with either a pix or ciborium in his hand. This is in memory of an event which occurred in Liege during the devastation of the city on the part of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders. Braving death, Blessed John Soreth gathered up the Sacred Hosts which the populace had seized and thrown on the ground. Soreth carried the Sacred Hosts back to the church of his Order.





## Blessed Josepha Girbés Feast Day: November 6

Blessed Josepha was a member of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. She was born on December 11, 1820 in Algemesi, a small village in Spain. She was the oldest of five children.

As a child, her family provided her with an environment infused with faith. She was confirmed in 1828, and received her First Communion at age 9. She was taught to read and write, and she was taught the fine skills of embroidery. These skills would be used well in her lifetime.

Her mother died when Josepha was 13. As was expected, as the eldest daughter, she then took care of her younger brothers and sisters.

As an adolescent, her love for Jesus grew to the point where she made a vow of perpetual chastity. She dedicated her life to God and she dedicated service to her community. In her home, she gathered the women of her village together. She taught them to embroider, taught basic catechism, prepared children for first communion, and got the people involved in Church activities.

It is uncertain when Josepha entered the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of St. Teresa. Many records were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War. We do know that she had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In her church in Algemesi, there remains today a large picture of Our Lady of Mount Carmel embroidered in gold and silver that was designed and made under her tutelage.

During her lifetime, Josepha frequently spoke this message: “Prayer, prayer; pray for awhile each day and life will be easier and bearable. Learn to speak to God without words and in this way, practice the prayer of meditation.”

After years of living with a heart condition, Josepha died on February 24, 1893 at 72 years of age.

She requested to be buried in the brown tunic and white mantle of the Carmelite habit.



## St. Teresa of Jesus Feast Day: October 15

St. Teresa of Ávila was known as St. Teresa of Jesus. She was born on March 28, 1515 in Ávila, Spain, and was baptized Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada. Her paternal grandfather was a convert to Catholicism from Judaism. His son, Teresa’s father, made a successful assimilation into Christian society. Her mother raised her as a pious Catholic. From an early age, Teresa was fascinated by the lives of the saints. When she was 7, she and her

brother ran away from home to find martyrdom among the Moors. Fortunately, an uncle saw them walking along the road picked them up and returned them to home.

At 19, Teresa entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Ávila. For a period of time she was quite ill, and it was during this time that she experienced periods of spiritual ecstasy. She claimed that during her illness, among other things, she was blessed with a better understanding of sin, both mortal and venial. She also learned that she couldn’t conquer sin on her own. Many of her friends and fellow religious suggested that these thoughts were not from God, but were evil in design.

Undaunted, the seeds of reform grew. Teresa left the monastery of the Incarnation, and with the help of a benefactress, established the monastery of Saint Joseph in 1562. This move seemed scandalous to many of the people in Ávila, but Teresa continued on. The new monastery was subject to a rule of absolute poverty and renunciation of property. This brought her little community into a revival of the early, stricter Rule of the early Carmelites.

By 1567, she had permission to establish new houses of her Order. She also instituted 2 houses for men who also wished to adopt her reforms. They founded the first house in 1568. St. John of the Cross was one of the two original friars in this house.

Things went well for a period of time, but in 1571, a series of persecutions from the yet non-reformed Carmelites threatened future growth to the point of bringing her before the Inquisition, and in 1579 the processes with the Inquisition were dropped. Pope Gregory XIII allowed for a special provincial for the reformed houses. By the time of her death in 1582, she had founded 16 convents and as many houses for men.

Teresa’s mysticism was shared through her many writings including her autobiography. She wrote “Whoever lives in the presence of so good a friend and excellent leader as is Jesus Christ can endure all things. Christ helps us and strengthens us and never fails; He is a true friend.”







**St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus  
and of the Holy Face  
Feast Day: October 1**

Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin was born on January 2, 1873 in Alençon, France. She was the youngest of the nine children of Zélie and Louis Martin. Zélie died when Thérèse was only 4 years old. Five of the children, all girls, survived to adulthood. Thérèse's early life was lived in an environment of religious fervor. Being the youngest, she developed a pampered life, but developed into a daring adolescent, one who went to the foot of Pope Leo XIII and begged to be allowed to enter the Carmel of Lisieux at 15 years of age.

When Thérèse became a Carmelite postulant in 1888, two of her older sisters were already at the Carmel in Lisieux. Her sister Celine remained home with their father. He had a stroke in 1889, from which he never fully recovered. He died in 1894. In 1895, Celine also entered the Carmel at Lisieux. The "middle sister", Leonie, entered the Visitation Convent in Caen.



Thérèse had many challenges to face in Carmel. There were those who thought she was too young. There were those who believed that there were too many Martin sisters in their convent. In her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse describes some of the small trials, such as the sister who rattled her rosary beads too loud in chapel and the sister who splashed soap on her when doing her wash. Thérèse is known for her charity, and for her living as a "little Child", one who is totally devoted to her Lord.

Thérèse served as Novice Mistress, and she taught the novices her same virtues. She also desired to go to the missions, but her poor health did not allow it. Her life in Carmel was short. She developed tuberculosis and complications related to this illness. After a long trial of physical and spiritual suffering, Thérèse Died on September 30, 1897 at 24 years of age.



Her "little way" of spirituality can be summed up in one of her quotes:

"For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy ... I do as a child who has not learned to read, I just tell Our Lord all that I want, and He understands."

**Blessed Archangela Girelli  
Feast Day: January 29**



Eleonora Girelli was born into a noble Italian family in 1460. As a youngster, she was sent to the Benedictine nuns for her education.

From an early age, she demonstrated a strong will, along with a great piety towards God. Her father wanted her to marry, but she wished to consecrate her virginity to God.

Her original intent was to join the Benedictine convent where she was educated. Legend has it that on her way to the Benedictines, her donkey stopped and refused to go any further. Eleonora took that as a sign that God had something different in mind for her.

Another biographer wrote that Eleonora entered a convent, but did not remain there because the location, close to her family, was not to her liking.

Eventually Eleonora entered the Carmelite monastery in Parma. She took the name Archangela. Shortly after her profession, she was elected prioress. After several years, she was sent to the newly opened Carmel in Mantua.

Many stories tell that Blessed Archangela experienced ecstasies and levitation. But she was better remembered for her gentleness and patience. She is known for her devotion to the Holy Trinity.



## Saint Teresa Margaret Redi of the Sacred Heart Feast Day: September 1

Anna Maria Redi was born on July 15, 1747 into a devout family in Arezzo, Italy. She was baptized the next day, July 16, the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She was the second of thirteen children. She was considered to be a beautiful child, fair with delicate features. She was also known for her fiery temperament.

Both of her parents were of the lower Tuscan nobility, but they were not considered affluent.

Anna Maria's mother was not a physically strong woman, and being the oldest girl, she had to help care for her brothers and sisters.

Her parents were quite devout. Seven out of eight children entered religious life or the priesthood. She responded to the environment in her home. At an early age, she developed a devotion to the Sacred Heart, a devotion that would remain with her throughout her lifetime.

As a teenager, she felt a call to religious life. Originally she intended to join the Benedictines nuns who had her in school. She prayed for guidance. On September 1, 1764, just before she turns 17, she entered the Carmel in Florence. She took the name Sister Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart.

Early on in her formation, she began to care for the sick. This remained one of her tasks throughout her life in Carmel. As a postulant, she developed an abscess in one knee. It healed, but later returned. A year after she became a novice, she was scheduled to profess her vows. The abscess returned. She saw it as a sign that she should now make her vows. She prayed for guidance, and the abscess disappeared. She professed her vows.

After vows, Sister Teresa Margaret lived only four years. During this time, she served as assistant sacristan, and continued her work in the infirmary. No work was too menial for her. She was a gifted infirmarian. Her care was filled with compassion, gentleness and healing. It was as though she knew what her patients wanted before they did. Spiritually, she offered anything she suffered to the suffering Christ. She never complained of any physical discomfort, she never complained when she was falsely accused. She was always charitable towards her sisters in community.

Her death came quickly. One day she was fine, and on the next she was dying. It is unsure exactly what caused her last illness. Throughout the 24 hour period, she held her crucifix, and kissed the five wounds of Jesus. She prayed to Jesus and Mary as she was dying. She died on March 7, 1770.

## Blessed Titus Brandsma Feast Day: July 27

Anno Sjoerd Brandsma was born in the Protestant province of Friesland in the northwest corner of the Netherlands on February 23, 1881. He was the fifth child of devout Catholic parents. Five out of the six Brandsma children entered religious life, two became priests, and three became sisters.

Early on, Anno joined the Franciscan Friars formation program. His health was not strong enough, and he had to return home.

While his health was weak, his desire was strong. He continued with his studies, and eventually he joined the Carmelite Friars. He was ordained a priest in 1905.

His interest in writing grew. He developed a small newspaper that eventually became available to all Dutch Catholics. He continued his studies and became a university professor and was appointed rector of a university.

As years went on, Europe became threatened by Adolph Hitler. The Netherlands, Father Titus' homeland, braced themselves for Hitler's onslaught. Father Titus wrote in 1942: "He who wants to win the world for Christ must first have the courage to come in conflict with it." He spoke out on radio and public gatherings against Adolph Hitler and Nazi practices, particularly in the treatment of the Jews. He wrote articles, and he taught in college classrooms, he spoke from pulpits—always against the evils of Nazism. He insisted that it was the responsibility of all Catholics to oppose Nazism. For that, he was placed on the Gestapo's list. Hitler himself called Father Titus "that dangerous little friar."

Father Titus' bishop called him in with a request. Since Father Titus was chaplain to Catholic newspaper editors of Holland, the bishop asked Father Titus to go and speak to the editors and tell them not to publish Nazi propaganda. There was no doubt in the



minds of the bishop and Father Titus about the repercussions of this action. Father Titus accepted the assignment of the bishop. He said "The day will come when The Hague will expect us to become the propagandists of Nazism. No, my friends, we must give way no further; there are limits and we have reached them." By the time of his arrest in January 1942, Father Titus had already spoken to 14 editors. His mission was successful, the Catholic editors did not publish Nazi information.

He was arrested and brought to Sheveningen. From there he was taken to Amersfoort. His last stop was Dachau. He was used for medical experimentation, and on July 26, 1942, he was injected with a lethal drug and died.



## Blessed Aloysius Rabata

Feast Day: May 8

Aloysius Rabata was born mid-fifteenth century, in Erice, a village near Trapani in Italy.

He joined the Carmelites, and eventually became the prior of the reformed Carmel in Randazzo.



Blessed Aloysius was willing to take on any task in his community, even the humblest. He went from door-to-door, begging for bread to help support his house of friars, as well as to help others who were in need.

He was known for his generosity. Poor people would beg and ask him for food, and Aloysius would give them the food that he had begged for and received.

According to tradition, in 1490 he was attacked by bow and arrow, and received a mortal head wound. Before he died, he refused to name his attacker for fear that the attacker would be punished.

## Saint Nuno Alvares Pereira

Feast Day: November 6

Nuno Alvares Pereira was born in 1360, near Lisbon, Portugal. He was one of thirty three children, he married at 17 years of age, and by 25, as the Constable of the kingdom of Portugal, he led the Portuguese army, though seriously outnumbered, in their successful war of independence against Spain.

Nuno was known as a man of God, a man for the poor. As a soldier, he would kneel down on the field of battle to pray. He most usually did not accept the spoils of battle, and what he had, he shared with the poor.

During his lifetime, Nuno established several monasteries and convents. At 63, after the death of his wife, Nuno joined the Carmelite Order as a lay brother. He entered Carmel at the monastery of Lisbon, a monastery that he had founded himself years before. He took the name Nuno of Saint Mary because of his tremendous devotion to the Blessed Virgin.



This devotion to Mary led him to spreading the devotion to the Rosary and the Scapular throughout Portugal.

Nuno was an acclaimed national hero of Portugal. The King, John I, considered Nuno his best friend. Nuno was the founder of the House of Bragança. He was known as the Holy Constable. While these honors were all great, he chose the simple life of a Carmelite Friar.

He was recently canonized by Pope Benedict XVI, and on the general calendar of the Church his feast day is celebrated on November 6. On the Carmelite Calendar, his feast is on April 1.

