

THE CECILIAN

A NEWSLETTER TO HONOR ST. CECILIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR
AND A CHRONICLE OF MICHAELA SASSE'S DISCERNMENT AS A CONSECRATED VIRGIN LIVING IN THE WORLD

ISSUE NO. 7 | AUGUST 9, 2026 | 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



QUEENSHIP OF MARY - AUGUST 22ND

I recall when I encountered St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross for the first time. During the summer of 2019, I lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, where I completed an externship for optometry school. While in Lincoln, I attended an exhibition of saint relics called “Treasures of the Church.” I remember Fr. Carlos Martins telling those in attendance to be mindful while viewing the relics as there may be a saint who wished to befriend us. When I reached the second-class relic of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, I became keenly aware that God was giving me a new friend and a powerful intercessor in Heaven.

Over the past seven years, my relationship with St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross has grown. She loved learning, contemplation, and accompanying women; in a sense, she has served as my mentor. She has taught me much about the dignity of women and my own vocation. She once stated, “Each woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfill her vocation, no matter if it is in marriage, in a religious order, or in a worldly profession.” Especially in serving as Director of Consecrated Vocations, her advice has shaped how I view each person’s unique path to Heaven. There are as many pathways to holiness as there are people.

Truly, our lives only make sense through the lens of eternity. Every vocation images a reality of Heaven, and while there is much we can learn from each person’s journey to eternity, ultimately all of us are called to intimacy with Christ. God makes His love known to us through different callings, and we all need each other in the ecosystem of the Church. Someone who remains celibate for the Kingdom of God points toward eternal union with Jesus Christ and is a reminder of the transient nature of this life. Consecrated women are an image of the Church, the Bride of Christ, of whom we are all members. Abiding in the love of their Divine Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, they become spiritual mothers after the example of Our Lady. At a priest’s ordination, men are configured to Christ and image His sacrificial love. In union with Him, their entire lives are offered as a gift of love to the Bride, the Church. With Christ, priests share in and reveal God’s fatherhood. Lived out in the heart of the Church, sacramental marriage is an icon of the love between Christ and His Bride, the Church, as married persons lay down their lives in service of one another. Holy marriage stands as a sign of humanity’s great calling to enter into the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.¹

Of course, holiness is a universal call and not limited to those who publicly profess vows. Jan Tyranowski was a Polish Catholic layman who worked as a tailor for his father’s business. In 1935, Tyranowski had a profound conversion at the Salesian St. Stanislaus Kostka parish in Krakow’s Debniki neighborhood. During a Sunday sermon, Tyranowski was inspired by a priest who said: “It is not difficult to be a saint.” Tyranowski took a vow of chastity and made a rigorous daily schedule for his spiritual life. He prayed and meditated for up to four hours a day and examined his conscience twice daily. Although he only had an eighth-grade education, Tyranowski immersed himself in the writings of the Carmelite Church doctors, Saints John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. He was instrumental in the formation of Karol Wojtyła, the future St. John Paul II. The late Father Mieczysław Malinski, a friend of Karol Wojtyła’s from their Debniki days, told papal biographer Jonathan Kwitny the following about Tyranowski: “I can safely say that if it wasn’t for him, neither Wojtyła nor I would have become priests.”²

How is God calling you to live in intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom? Your life, your “yes” to God, matters.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- For Sr. Mary Solanus May, a former K-State student, who made her first profession of vows with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George in Alton, Illinois on August 1st
- For those celebrating the anniversary of their profession of religious vows, including, Sr. Benedicta Hawkins (July 24th), Sr. Serena Deters (August 8th), Sr. Mary Monica and Sr. Veronica Marie (August 15th), and Sr. Rose Marie (August 20th)
- For Bishop Vincke as he celebrates the eighth anniversary of his ordination as Bishop of the Diocese of Salina on August 22nd, the Memorial of the Queenship of Mary

ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

Virgin and Martyr

Saint Edith Stein was born as the youngest of 11 children into a prominent Jewish family in Breslau, Germany on October 12, 1891. That year her birthday coincided with Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement and the holiest day of the Hebrew calendar. Although her father died when she was young, her mother worked hard to keep the family business afloat. From an early age, Edith was a gifted scholar, scoring high marks in almost every subject. She loved learning for its own sake. One teacher said of her, "Strike the stone [Stein] and wisdom will spring forth."

Although she had hunger for knowledge, Edith became a solid atheist when she was thirteen. She continued her search for truth at different universities, obtaining a doctorate of philosophy from the University of Freiburg in 1916. One night in 1921, while on vacation, she came across the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila. She was captivated by the truth of what she read and stayed up all night to finish the book. After completing it, she knew she had to enter the Catholic Church. She was baptized on January 1, 1922.

Edith desired to enter religious life soon after her conversion, but out of the fear of grieving her mother, she decided to wait. She began to teach at a Dominican nuns' school and continued deepening in her faith, love, and pursuit of the truth. A brilliant philosopher and writer, she lectured both in Germany and across Europe on the dignity and vocation of women, and many of her writings later influenced St. John Paul II and his understanding of the feminine genius. She taught that, as women, "The nation... doesn't simply need what we have. It needs what we are." Throughout this time, however, she longed to give herself completely to God for the sake of her people.

In 1933 at the age of forty-two, her dreams of entering a Carmelite monastery were finally fulfilled. She took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross at Our Lady of Peace Monastery in Cologne, Germany. Even as a cloistered nun, she continued her philosophical and theological writings. She shared her intellectual gifts with her sisters, giving them conferences while they taught her how to sew. "God is there in these moments of rest and can give us in a single instant exactly what we need," she said. "Then the rest of the day can take its course, under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace. And when night comes, and you look back over the day and see how fragmentary everything has been, and how much you planned that has gone undone, and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed: just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with Him. Then you will be able to rest in Him — really rest — and start the next day as a new life."

The growing threat of Nazism, however, loomed over Germany, and gave Edith a sense that her life would be offered in sacrifice for her Jewish people. She was then transferred to a Carmel in the Netherlands in hopes of safety. Out of retaliation against the Dutch bishops, the Nazis rounded up all Catholics of Jewish descent, arresting Edith and other religious. In August of 1942, they were sent a transit camp by train before heading to Auschwitz.

In a camp that was filled with despair and utter chaos, Sr. Benedicta held an extraordinarily peaceful composure. One witness said, "Edith Stein went among the women like an angel, comforting, helping, and consoling them. Many of the mothers were on the brink of insanity and had sat moaning for days, without giving any thought to their children... She washed them, combed their hair, and tried to make sure they were fed and cared for."

Edith and her sister Rosa, also a Catholic, died in the gas chambers on August 9, 1942. Pope John Paul II canonized St. Edith Stein as a martyr on October 11, 1998.³

REFLECTION

"One cannot desire freedom from the cross when one is especially chosen for the cross." – St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

If there were a way other than the cross, would not the Lord have chosen differently for Himself and for each of us? The cross *is* the way; it is the way to share in Christ's divinity; it is the pathway to Heaven. It does not mean that we will always understand the reasoning for the cross; our dear Lord cried out from His cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mt 27:46). Suffering leads to dependency on God and ultimate surrender to His will. The prophet Isaiah tells us: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways" (Isaiah 55:8-9). May we have the faith to trust God is always working toward our redemption, particularly in the midst of deep sorrow as we bear our individual crosses.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, pray for us.



OFFICE OF CONSECRATED VOCATIONS UPDATES

- Thank you to everyone who attended the Meet and Greet for religious sisters and seminarians at the Eucharistic Conference. The outpouring of love was tremendous and a taste of heaven!
- Friends of the Bridegroom, founded by Fr. John Burns and Sr. Miriam Heidland, invited me to attend their Culture of Vocations Cohort this fall to discuss renewal of women's religious and consecrated life. Prayers are appreciated!
- The St. Bernadette Fund for Consecrated Vocations was selected by Bishop Vincke to receive \$3,000 from the Bishop's Grant Fund. So very grateful for this gift! Please let me know if you desire to make a contribution to the fund.

THE FEMININE GENIUS OF ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

"Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that he charges you with, and he will give you the power to accomplish it."

"The woman's soul is fashioned as a shelter in which other souls may unfold."

"Anyone who seeks truth seeks God, whether or not he realizes it."

"Those who remain silent are responsible."

"The world doesn't need what women have, it needs what women are."

"We will always find fundamentally the compulsion to become what the soul should be."



ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

Patron saint of Europe, converted Jews, loss of parents, martyrs, and World Youth Day

¹ Friends of the Bridegroom. (n.d.). <https://www.renewreligious.org/>
² Mazurczak, F. (2017, March 25). *This Holy Man Aided John Paul II's Vocation*. <https://www.ncregister.com/features/this-holy-man-aided-john-paul-ii-s-vocation>

³ St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. The GIVEN Institute. (2022, October 25). https://giveninstitute.com/saint_stories/st-teresa-benedicta-of-the-cross/

Images are public domain unless cited

CHARISM CORNER

The Spiritual Gift of Celibacy

Jill Simons writes in *Living Your Charisms: A Practical Guide for Catholics*, "The charism of celibacy empowers an individual to be most fulfilled by remaining unmarried in devotion and obedience to Christ. This charism always comes in conjunction with other gifts and creates a freedom to use and pursue those gifts totally" (p. 65).

I went on my last date around three years ago, and I remember crying out to the Lord, "Why does it never work out?" A still, small voice responded, "I desire to spend more time with you." This invitation led to a deepening of my prayer life, and I realized in prayer that I found the intimacy I craved. By spending time with the Lord, I received the revelation that I possessed the charism of celibacy, and that no relationship would ever bring me more peace and fulfillment than my relationship with Jesus Christ. There is such freedom in following God's will.

In the words of my spiritual director, the charism of celibacy lends itself to radical availability. Some may think a celibate life is a lonely life, and nothing could be farther from the truth. I have been blessed with many friends and serve as a mentor for several women. I am able to spend a lot of time with the Lord in prayer, and this gives me great joy. In a typical day, I pray the Liturgy of the Hours and the Rosary, attend Mass, and spend around an hour praying with Scripture or being in the presence of our Lord in the Eucharist. Praise God for knowing what is best for me!

St. Paul discusses the charism of celibacy: "I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction." ¹ Corinthians 7:32-35

Another powerful text on this charism is Fr. Thomas Dubay's book *And You Are Christ's: The Charism of Virginity and the Celibate Life*. I highly recommend this resource for anyone discerning consecrated life or if you would simply like more information regarding the witness a celibate person provides to the reality of the Kingdom of God.