

# Avila House



House Feast Day – 15<sup>th</sup> October

Yellow / gold

Doctors of the Church

## Who was St Teresa of Avila?

Born in Avila, Spain, on March 28, 1515, St. Teresa was the daughter of a Toledo merchant and his second wife, who died when Teresa was 15, one of ten children. Shortly after this event, Teresa was entrusted to the care of the Augustinian nuns. After reading the letters of St. Jerome, Teresa resolved to enter a religious life. In 1535, she joined the Carmelite Order. She spent a number of relatively average years in the convent, punctuated by a severe illness that left her legs paralyzed for three years, but then experienced a vision of "the sorely wounded Christ" that changed her life forever.

From this point forward, Teresa moved into a period of increasingly ecstatic experiences in which she came to focus more and more sharply on Christ's passion. With these visions as her impetus, she set herself to the reformation of her order, beginning with her attempt to master herself and her adherence to the rule. Gathering a group of supporters, Teresa endeavored to create a more primitive type of Carmelite, faithful to the original lifestyle. From 1560 until her death, Teresa struggled to establish and broaden the movement of *Reformed Carmelites*. During the mid-1560s, she wrote the *Way of Perfection* and the *Meditations on the Canticle*. In 1567, she met St. John of the Cross, who she enlisted to extend her reform into the male side of the Carmelite Order. Teresa died in 1582.

St. Teresa left to posterity many new convents, which she continued founding up to the year of her death. She also left a significant legacy of writings, which represent important benchmarks in the history of Christian mysticism. These works include the *Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle*. She also left an autobiography, the *Life of Teresa of Avila*.

She was beatified in 1614, and canonized (made a saint) in 1622 by Gregory XV, the feast being fixed on 15 October.

She was made a Doctor of the Church in 1970 – one of the first two female Doctors of the Church.

"Doctor of the Church" is a title given to those whose writings are deemed to be in accord with the doctrine of the church and which the church believes can be used as teachings. Her writings are available on the web today.