

# BRINGING THE CARMELITE SAINTS ALIVE

NINETH EDITION



IN THIS MONTH OF DECEMBER, WE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTING  
ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS WHOSE FEAST DAY IS ON DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>



St. Teresa of Jesus considered him “one of the purest and holiest souls that God had raised up in His Church.” This “half friar” of slight build was great in faith a bastion of the Discalced Carmelites, and of the Counter-Reformation.

## SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS AND HIS LOVE FOR OUR LADY

Saint John of the Cross is widely known for his spiritual writings. He is a Doctor of the Church, master of prayer, and expert of the spiritual life. His writings cover a wide range of subjects and themes. St. John of the Cross (Juan de Yepes) was born in 1542 in the small village of Fontiveros, nestled in the wide plains of Castile. His Father, Gonzalo de Yepes, was a member of the Toledo nobility who renounced the prerogatives of his origin to marry Catarina Alvarez, a humble weaver. Three children were born of this union, the last of whom was John. The cross – which John

would one day charmingly choose as his name would be present to him from his earliest years. Successive failures in the paternal business led the household to a situation of extreme poverty, which was only partially remedied by the couple's weaving work. However, the greatest misfortune came with John when he was two years old, when his father died of a painful illness. The widow, with no other recourse than the protection of Providence, launched into a superhuman struggle to support the family. However, precious memories remained from these trying years: Mary's great care for those who were destitute prevailed.

It is in the life of the Saint that we find substantial proof of the centrality of Mary in his mind and heart. As a young boy, John was playing near a lagoon when he fell into the muddy water and began to drown. He soon resurfaced, but was submerged again and, as he struggled to get up, he noticed that a Lady of heavenly beauty was smiling at him and offering her arm to rescue him. But seeing how dirty he was, he didn't want to tarnish the Lady's whiteness and refused to lean on her. In the end, a local farmer held out a branch, to which he clung and was able to be pulled to shore. Later, he would recall that this beautiful lady, whom he later identified as Our Lady, came to his aid. Several years later, another incident happened that John fell into a deep well but was pulled out without injury. This miracle, too, he would attribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary. John's early biographers also affirm that his decision to enter the Carmelites was largely influenced by the Marian character of the Order and his great love for Our Lady. When he planned to leave the Order to join

the Carthusians, St. Teresa of Avila is said to have convinced him to stay and become the co-founder of her reform by appealing to Mary's special patronage over the Carmelites. John was also known to attribute his miraculous escape from prison to the strength given to him from the Mother of God. Brother Martin of the Assumption, a regular traveling companion of St. John of the Cross, testified following John's death: "He was so devoted to Our Lady that every day he prayed the Office of Our Lady on his knees." Also, Martin added that, during their many journeys together, John would sing hymns to Our Lady. Finally, at the hour of his death, upon hearing the bell for Matins, John of the Cross said, "And I, too, through the goodness of the Lord, will have to say them with Our Lady in Heaven."

This is only a brief piece of who St. John of the Cross is. There is so much more to this beautiful pure soul, Spanish Carmelite of the 16th Century, companion and reformer with St. Teresa, contemplative and spiritual master, Saint, Poet and Writer of the Highest quality, Doctor of the Church, Systematic thinker and Theologian. He has written so many beautiful Poems like, The Spiritual Canticle, The Dark Night of the Soul, The Living Flame of Love, The Spring, The Young Shepard, On the Trinity and The Incarnation, On Psalm 137 and so many beautiful works like The Ascent of Mount Carmel. Take the time to get to know him and read his works. I promise you will grow even more deeper into your Carmelite vocation. St. John of the Cross, pray for us!

#### OUR CARMELITE MISSION

MAY WE EMBRACE MARY'S PURITY OF HEART (PURITAS CORDIAS), HELPING US TO PONDER THE LAW OF THE LORD DAY AND NIGHT, HELPING US TO BE CONTEMPLATIVES AND TEACHING US TO LISTEN. WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHER AND LEADER, ST. ELIJAH WITH HIS FLAMING ZEAL AND COURAGE. "HIS PROPHET SPIRIT IN COMBATING THE EVILS OF HIS DAY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CARMELITE LIFE."

MAY OUR LADY'S MANTLE WRAP YOU ALL WITH HER PRECIOUS LOVE.

ALL THROUGH THE IMMACULATE & SORROWFUL HEART & TEARS OF MARY IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, YOUR SISTER IN CARMEL,

LINDA

