

**JOHN OF THE CROSS | 24 June 1542 – 14 December 1591**



**Key Designation:** Doctor of the Church | Mystical Doctor

**Key Background Information:**

- Born Juan de Yepes y Alvarez into a new Christian convert family in Fontiveros to Gonzalo and Catalina; His father died when he was 3 years old
- He was rejected by his family and forced to work with his wife as a weaver
- Received early childhood education of Christian doctrine in Medina
- Studied humanities at a Jesuit school – The Society of Jesus
- Attended Salamanca University and studied Theology and philosophy

**Key Events:**

- Ordained a Priest in 1567
- John had a vision of the crucified Christ and created the drawing of Christ from “above”
- His drawing inspired Salvador Dali’s 1951 work | Christ of Saint John of the Cross
- Taken captive and imprisoned in 1577 by a group of Carmelites
- Joined a reform at Almodovar del Campo “Discalced Carmelites”
- Appointed superior of El Calvario
- Established a convent for Discalced nuns in Malaga in February 1585
- Traveled 25K km and founded 7 new monasteries
- Dies of erysipelas on 14 December 1591
- His corpse limbs were dismembered and spread across Ubeda and Segovia
- Declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI

**Key Ideas:**

- Believed in the transformative power of divine love and the importance of mystical union with God through a process of spiritual purification and self-emptying.
- Emphasized the possibility of a profound, intimate union between the soul and God, achieved through a journey of spiritual growth and self-denial.
- Described a path of spiritual purification, or "purgation," where individuals shed attachments to worldly things and self-centered desires to make room for God's presence.
- Believed that true union with God requires a willingness to empty oneself of self-centered desires and attachments, a process that mirrors Christ's self-emptying on the cross.

**Key Works:**

- John's key literary works were written between 1578 and 1591
  - Writings were first published in 1618 by Diego de Salablanca
1. ***Spiritual Canticle***: Considered an eclogue where the bride (soul) searches for the bridegroom (Christ); There is joy upon their reunion.
  2. ***Dark Night of the Soul***: The journey of the soul from its home in the body to its final resting place and union with God; This journey takes place in the dark amongst worldly difficulties and hardships as a detachment from the world takes place and reaches unity with God the Father our Creator. John explored the concept of a "dark night of the soul," a period of spiritual dryness and darkness, as a necessary stage in the journey toward union with God.
  3. ***The Ascent of Mount Carmel***: A soul seeking union with God; the first two stanzas of the poem begin as a commentary on the Dark Night. It is suspected to have been composed between 1581 and 1585.
  4. ***Living Flame of Love***: A soul responds to the love of God; four stanza work initially written at Granada between 1585-1586 within a two-week span.