

# ICONOGRAPHY OF ST. TERESA OF JESUS

*A Selection of Portraits*



## Introduction

Pope Benedict XVI, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote with exceptional insight and sensitivity:

“The only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely the *saints* the Church has produced and the *art* which has grown in her womb. Better witness is borne to the Lord by the splendor of holiness and art which have arisen in the community of believers than by the clever excuses which apologetics has come up with. ...If the Church is to continue to transform and humanize the world, how can she dispense with beauty ... that beauty which is so closely linked with love and with the radiance of the Resurrection? No, Christians must not be too easily satisfied. They must make their Church into a place where beauty –and hence truth—is at home.”

With such a clear orientation set before us, we would be amiss to underestimate the importance of the collection of artwork which is proper to Carmel –of its history, its saints and in a particular way, of its Foundress, our Holy Mother St. Teresa—has for each one of us. And this for three reasons.

### 1. The value of memory

Who has not experienced the heart-warming joy found when someone in the family pulls out the “family” photo album? And is it not a sign of a deepened intimacy and special confidence when the moment comes to share the “family” photo album among newly acquired friends? Its treasure and appeal lie in all the cherished memories those neatly arranged photos stir up within us. A true heirloom of our personal history and identity.

Our Holy Fathers, from St. John Paul II to Pope Francis, have emphasized the importance and value of conserving “memory” on a larger scale, such as a community, as an equal means for preserving one’s identity. Speaking in Poland about the importance of memory, Pope Francis stated: “Memory is the hallmark of this people. [This] consciousness of one’s own identity ... is indispensable for establishing a national community on the foundation of its human, social, political, economic and religious heritage, and thus inspiring social life and culture in a spirit of constant fidelity to tradition and, at the same time, openness to renewal and the future.”

Words which can be so appropriately applied to our beloved Order of Carmel.

Significantly, memories –and thus identity –is conserved in a special way through *images*. It is through images that we often best represent experiences and values that can defy the multiplicity of words.

As an Order, we too have *images*, artistic representations, that both signify and express our Carmelite identity. For this reason, these images are well-conserved and promoted. And the closer the image represents the authenticity of our identity, the greater its value and estimation.

### 2. The development of the thought and the impact of our Carmelite heritage through history

Referring once again to the symbol of the “family” photo album, often the arrangement of pictures in our albums occur along the lines of the *growth and development* of the family itself: from wedding pictures, to the first child, to school events, etc. So it is with those images that represent our identity. They too manifest a development of the thought and impact that our Carmelite spirituality has had throughout the years.

In the case of our Holy Mother, St. Teresa, for example, we can see a gradual progression in both the knowledge of her persona and her legacy, as well as the extension of her influence on societies and peoples.

### 3. Transmitting a message through art

“Art not only presupposes religion, it also bears witness to it, or, rather, it somehow bears witness to the God whom religion worships” (John Saward). Carmelite spirituality is eminently contemplative and apostolic. For the contemplative nun, this apostolic dimension has a unique form of expression. It is not primarily direct, rather it reaches out to man *through* God. Art, particularly sacred art, is also eminently contemplative and apostolic. Through the sacred image which the beholder sees, contact is made with the God who cannot be seen. And though many years ago, our Holy Mother, St. Teresa did not appreciate having her portrait painted, certainly she rejoices now knowing how much she is able to convey to others through these images of hers.

## Our present work

What you have before you is a small attempt to lead you to experience these three elements just briefly touched upon which are neatly tucked into so much of the Carmelite iconography. It is by no means an exhaustive representation of the same, but simply a *little taste* of what will hopefully become for you a most succulent banquet of delights. It is our desire that with this little introduction to the artistic heritage of our beloved Carmelite Order, and in this case, specifically to our Holy Mother, St. Teresa, you may begin to look anew, and with a totally distinct approach, at any and all Carmelite images that cross your path. And that with a new gaze you find in them *our family memories...* our identity, our history and our particular witness of God's presence among us.

The images of St. Teresa displayed here are taken from a presentation given by representatives of the internationally renowned Museum of Prado in Spain. Each image is accompanied by brief factual references.

*Carmelite Monastery of Rochester  
New York*

*"I had such little ability to represent things with my intellect that if I hadn't seen the things, my imagination was not of use to me, as it is to other persons who can imagine things and thus recollect themselves. I could only think about Christ as He was as man, but never in such a way that I could picture Him within myself no matter how much I read about His beauty or how many images I saw of Him. I was like those who are blind or in darkness; they speak with a person and see that that person is with them because they know with certainty that the other is there (I mean they understand and believe this, but they do not see the other); such was the case with me when I thought of our Lord. This was the reason I liked images so much."*

*St. Teresa of Jesus  
The Book of her Life 9, 6*

## ORIGINAL PORTRAIT OF ST. TERESA

- **June 2, 1576:** By Fray Juan de la Miseria, Discalced Carmelite
- St. Teresa was 61 years old and was at the Convent of St. Joseph in Seville
- Done at the request of Fr. Gracian
- Kept in the Carmelite Monastery of Seville



- **1588** : First printed image of St. Teresa
- Found in the first published edition of her writings
- Image is simply a representation of the work of Fray Juan de la Miseria, OCD
- Kept in the National Library of Spain



- The first biography of St. Teresa was done by Fr. Francisco de Ribera in 1590
- In **1602** it was translated into French in Flanders by Karel van Mallery (the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the book)
- This print is from the French edition.
- Kept in the National Library, Spain



- **1599** : First translation of the works of St. Teresa into Italian includes this print.
- Some new representations are found: the spinning wheel, book and the dove depicting St. Teresa as a writer inspired by the Holy Spirit.



- **1609**: one of the first images of the transverberation of St. Teresa
- By Fray Juan de Jesús María
- This theme played a role in her canonization
- Kept in the National Library of Spain

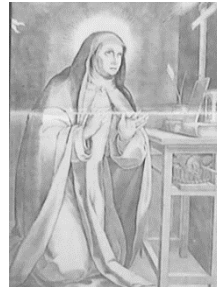


- **1613** : This print is new representation that includes new elements from St. Teresa's life: she is in her cell, her writing desk, light coming through the window.





- **Early 1600's:** Print of a series of events in the life of St. Teresa
- Requested by Ven. Anne of Jesus & Fr. Jerome Gracian
- The objective was to make St. Teresa's life known in view of her beatification/canonization.
- Ven. Anne of Jesus choose the themes herself
- Includes many direct quotes from her writings and life
- Kept in the Carmelite Monastery of Medina del Campo Spain



Close-up of the center

- **1614:** year of the beatification of St. Teresa
- Lovely print by Italian Luca Ciamberlano
- In the close-up (2<sup>nd</sup> image): we see St. Teresa before the cross (immediately before the experience of the transverberation)
- Part of a private collection



- **1615:** Another print representing a vision St. Teresa had of Our Lord
- By Italian Luca Ciamberlano
- Dedicated to Cardinal Borghese, nephew of Pope Paul V
- This print shows how St. Teresa had already become well-known in Rome



- **1614 – 1622**
- Two prints of the transverberation by the Flemish Anton Wierix
- In the image on the left it is the Child Jesus who pierces St. Teresa's heart
- Brussels, Belgium



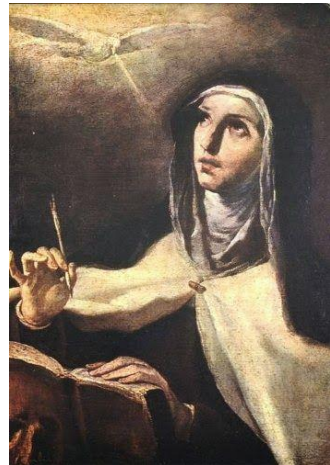
- 1622: This print was for the canonization of St. Teresa (she was canonized along with 4 other persons)
- Canonized **March 12, 1622** in St. Peters Basilica by Pope Gregory XV, particularly for their involvement in the Counter-reformation efforts
- Commemorative printing by Italian engraver Matteo Greuter

- **1752**: first series of prints done in Spain
- By Spanish artist Juan Bernabe Palomino
- A series of eight prints, highlighting different themes taken from the letters of St. Teresa



## PAINTINGS

Many of the paintings of our Holy Mother, St. Teresa were done at the request of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers. They were usually patterned on the original portrait of Fray Juan de la Miseria, OCD. For this reason, many of the images contain the same elements. For example, in almost all of the paintings, St. Teresa is found wearing the full Carmelite habit (mantle included).



On the left:

- **1630:** (Naples) second painting done of St. Teresa
- By Spanish artist Jose de Ribera
- Shows St. Teresa as an inspired writer (with the light coming from the Holy Spirit.) The skull signifies the passing realities of the things of this world.
- Kept in the Museum of Fine Arts in Valencia, Spain

On the right:

- Painting attributed to Spanish artist Diego Velazquez, done according to his own inspiration

- **1628-1629:** Two images of St. Teresa's vision of Christ
- By the Spaniard Alonso Cano
- Kept in National Museum of Prado (Spain)



- **1630-33** Work of Flemish artist Peter Pablo Rubens
- (Left) Painting depicts St. Teresa praying for the souls of purgatory, including Bernardino de Mendoza (see *Foundations* 10, 7)
- (Right) Portrait of St. Teresa / Kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

- **1650:** St. Teresa as writer
- By Spanish Francisco de Zurbaran
- Kept in the Principal Sacristy of the Cathedral of Seville



- **17<sup>th</sup> century:** by Spaniard Vicente Berdusan
- Represents an important moment of St. Teresa's Reform: when she receives from Our Lady and St. Joseph a golden necklace
- Kept in the Capuchin Convent in Tudela, Spain



- **17<sup>th</sup> century:** by Spanish artist Francisco Rizi
- Represents St. Teresa in ecstasy in the kitchen of the monastery as narrated by Mother Isabel de Sto Domingo during the process of beatification

- **Late 17<sup>th</sup> century:** By Spanish Juan Martin Cabezalero
- Represents St. Peter of Alcantara giving Holy Communion to St. Teresa with St. Francis of Assis and St. Anthony of Padua serving as deacons
- Kept in the Museum Lazaro Galdiano in Madrid





- **1735:** From a series done on the life of St. Teresa
- By Spanish Juan Garcia de Miranda
- An unusual image depicting the saint in her youth
- There are 4 paintings in this series, this being the most well-known
- Kept in National Museum of Prado (Spain)



- **1947:** By Sr. Isabel Guerra (Trappistine nun)
- Depicts the death of St. Teresa in arms of Bl. Anne of St. Bartholomew
- Kept in the Museum of Prado, Spain

**CARMELITE MONASTERY OF ROCHESTER**