

Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross



Date of birth: October 12, 1891
Birthplace: Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland)
Date of death: August 9, 1942, *martyred*
Canonization: May 1, 1987 by Pope St. John Paul II
Feast Day: August 9

Patron Saint of: Europe, loss of parents, converted Jews, and martyrs

About St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross:

Edith Stein, born into a large Jewish family, embraced agnosticism by age 14 despite her mother's devout upbringing. Always a bright girl, she decided at age 19 to pursue a doctorate in philosophy. Her dissertation on empathy was put on hold during the outbreak of World War I as Edith volunteered her time as a wartime Red Cross nurse. She continued her studies in 1916, receiving her doctorate with honors.

In the summer of 1921, Edith read the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, prompting her conversion to Catholicism. She was baptized on Jan. 1, 1922, and despite desiring immediate entry into the Carmelite order, she taught at a Dominican school until 1933, when Nazi persecution forced her resignation. She finally entered the Carmelites the same year, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Her sister Rosa converted and entered the Carmelites, and together, the sisters were transferred to the convent in Echt, Netherlands in an effort to escape persecution in Cologne.

Resuming her teaching role in Echt, Teresa Benedicta prepared herself for the Nazi invasion in 1940, anticipating the trials of a concentration camp. In 1942, following the Dutch bishops' condemnation of racism, the Nazi government retaliated, ordering all remaining Jewish Christians to be arrested. Teresa Benedicta, along with 243 other baptized Jews, was arrested on August 2, 1942. On August 7, she and other Jews were deported to Auschwitz. It is believed that Teresa Benedicta died in a gas chamber on August 9, 1942.

Following the miraculous healing of a young girl suffering from a Tylenol overdose after her family asked for Teresa Benedicta's intercession, Pope St. John Paul II canonized her on Oct. 11 1998.

A word from St. Teresa Benedicta:
"God is truth. All who seek truth seek God,
whether this is clear to them or not."

Find out more:

Books: *Edith Stein and Companions on the Way to Auschwitz* by Fr. Paul F.W. Hamans;
Life in a Jewish Family: an Autobiography by Edith Stein

Formed.org: Edith Stein: The Seventh Chamber