

Lives  
of  
Saints

# St Edith Stein

1891 - 1942

Feast day: 9th August



“O my God, fill  
my soul with holy  
joy, courage and  
strength to serve  
you.”

**St Edith Stein**

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S O C I E T A S  
D O C T R I N Æ  
C H R I S T I A N Æ

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I was born in 1891 in Breslau, Germany, (now Wroclaw, Poland). My father died suddenly when I was not yet two years old, leaving my mother to raise the seven remaining children and to manage the family business. By my teenage years, I no longer practiced my Jewish faith and considered myself an atheist, but I continued to admire my mother's attitude of total openness toward God.

I was awarded my doctorate in philosophy at the age of 25, and I came to Christianity through the study of philosophy. My philosophical studies encouraged my openness to the possibility of transcendent realities, and my atheism began to crumble under the influence of my friends who had converted to Christianity.

During the summer of 1921, at the age of twenty-nine, I read the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, founder of the Carmelite Order. There and then, I realised that the Catholic faith was the true faith. I was baptized the following January, but my desire immediately to enter the Carmelites had to be delayed for some time.

After my conversion, I spent my days teaching, lecturing, writing and translating. Some of my writings are about the dignity and the vocation of Women.

While on a trip during Holy Week of 1933, I stopped in Cologne at the Carmelite convent. I entered this Carmel community in October, just after my forty-second birthday, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

I remained in Cologne for five years, participating in the life of the community with great joy while continuing my scholarly work. In November of 1938, the nuns in Cologne feared for my safety and decided to send my sister and myself (secretly) to the Carmel in Echt, the Netherlands. When Holland fell to the Nazis, Rosa and I were in danger again, and plans were made to move us to Switzerland. But, before these could be finalized, we were arrested. The date was August 2, 1942. We were deported to Auschwitz and executed just a week later. I was fifty years old. My canonization took place in October 1998.