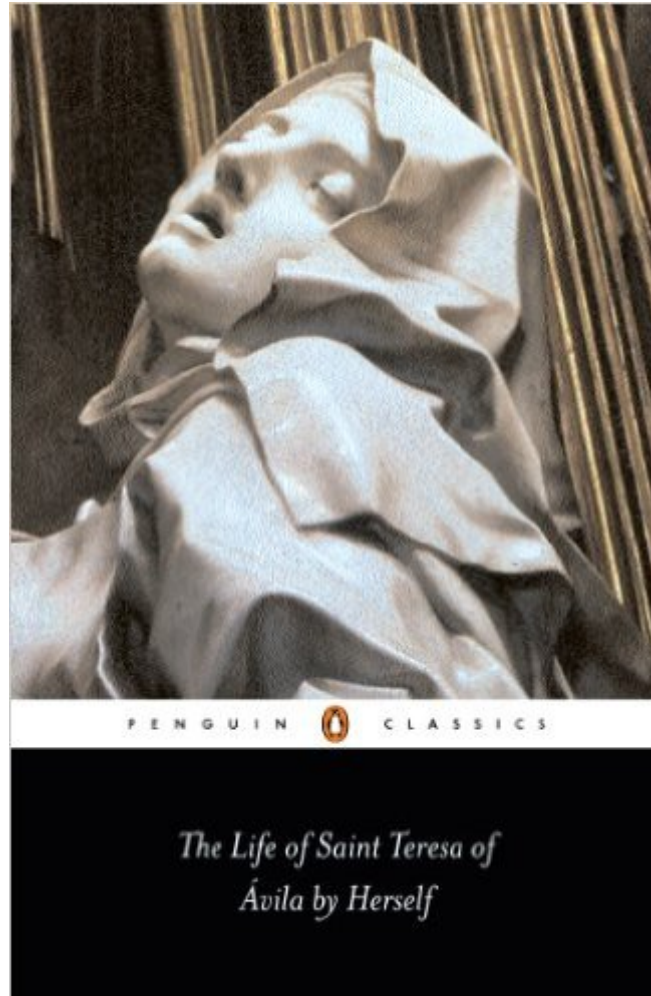


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The Life Of Saint Teresa Of Avila By Herself (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Born in the Castilian town of Avila in 1515, Teresa entered the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation when she was twenty-one. Tormented by illness, doubts and self-recrimination, she gradually came to recognize the power of prayer and contemplation—her spiritual enlightenment was intensified by many visions and mystical experiences, including the piercing of her heart by a spear of divine love. She went on to found seventeen Carmelite monasteries throughout Spain. Teresa always denied her own saintliness, however, saying in a letter: "There is no suggestion of that nonsense about my supposed sanctity." This frank account is one of the great stories of a religious life and a literary masterpiece—after *Don Quixote*, it is Spain's most widely read prose classic. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Let me say right off that this was my first experience reading any of the writings of Teresa de Jesus (her chosen name) so I can't compare it to others. Teresa's writing style was a mixture of the style of the time (full of disclaimers and self-deprecation) and the romantic language of the books of chivalry she loved as a child (she referred to God as "His Majesty", and used images such as castles and

jewels). The result, flowing from her pen in an often (I should say usually) disorganized fashion, is fresh and touching. I particularly enjoyed her description of the soul as a garden: the Lord plants it, but we are to cultivate it in order that our Lord may take His delight in walking in it. She describes prayer as the water that nourishes that garden: first through great labor drawn from a well, but later as a free gift from God showering down from heaven. Her more developed description, covering four stages of prayer, is remarkable. HOWEVER, this does not make it the best starting place for beginners who want to learn how to approach contemplative prayer (they might do better with Brother Lawrence, Thomas Keating, or some of Thomas Merton's work). I respect this translator, who included an excellent description on the decision-making process used in producing the translation, along with many footnotes referring to alternate interpretations and original Spanish text for concepts difficult to translate. A personal quirk of mine which should influence no one (but I have to say it) -- I hated the cover art. While it communicates Teresa's vivacious personality, it is frankly ugly, and all who knew Teresa agreed that she was in fact physically beautiful.

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