

# It Is Not Difficult to Be a Saint

*Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila*

## What We Found

Holiness is not a specialty for professionals. The command "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2) is addressed to the whole people of God, Jesus deepens it into a perfection of love that does not stop at friends (Matthew 5:43-48), and St. Paul states it without fine print: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Holiness begins as God's gift and grows by our consent. The same God who wills your sanctification gives his Holy Spirit to accomplish it (1 Thessalonians 4:8; Philippians 2:13). Its growth is embodied in love and concrete conduct; St. Paul turns explicitly to brotherly love in the next breath (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).

The Church says this to everyone: all the baptized "are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (CCC 2013), a path that tends toward real union with Christ (CCC 2014). This study walks that path with two sure guides, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross.

## Voices of the Church

### ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

St. John opens his first great work with a grief, not a technique. He teaches, in substance, that many souls remain at the beginnings of the spiritual life not because God withholds anything, but because they do not understand the road, or lack guides, or shrink back when God begins to lead them beyond what is comfortable. God, he insists, desires to bring souls on to deep union with himself. The tragedy he writes to prevent is not ambition; it is settling.

Summarized from the prologue to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

### ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa tells her sisters that those who set out on the road of prayer must travel it with what she calls "a very determined determination": a resolve to keep going and never stop until they reach the end, come what may, whatever the labor, whoever complains, whether they reach the end or die on the road. She is not describing grim willpower; she is describing what a person does when they actually believe the destination is real.

*The Way of Perfection*, ch. 21.

### ST. JOHN PAUL II

Writing to the whole Church at the close of the Jubilee year 2000, St. John Paul II asked that all pastoral planning be set "in the perspective of holiness," and called holiness "the high standard of ordinary Christian living." Not the heroic exception to ordinary life: the standard of it. He learned that conviction young, and from a layman, as this study will tell.

*Novo Millennio Ineunte* 30-31.

### MY GUESS (SEALED UNTIL SESSION 6)

Before next week, write your honest answer to this question, fold this sheet closed, and bring it back every week. We will open it together at Session 6.

*When God feels absent in your prayer, what do you think is actually happening?*

Write here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Live It This Week

- Pray five minutes a day this week, at the same time each day if you can. No method required yet: just show up, read the memory verse slowly, and tell God honestly that you want what he wants for you.
- Once this week, when someone irritates you, silently pray for them by name before you respond. That is Matthew 5:44 in street clothes.
- Write your sealed guess on the Take-Home sheet tonight, fold it, and bring it back every week.

### MEMORY VERSE · 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

*Before next session:* Read Mark 10:17-31 slowly once this week. Notice what Jesus asks the rich man to give up, and how the man feels about it.

*Catechism references for this session:* CCC 2013, 2014, 2015.