

Vox Populi

7 October 2026

Next Thursday, 15 October, the Church celebrates the Memorial of the first female Doctor of the Church, Saint Teresa of Jesus, also known as Saint Teresa of Avila.

The foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, she lived during what has been called the golden age of Spain in the latter half of the 16th century and is recognised as a prominent Spanish mystic and spiritual reformer.

She is also the only woman founder of an order of men, as well as women, and she did this at a time when women had few rights in society.

She entered the Carmelites and made great progress in the way of perfection and was granted mystical revelations.

Over the course of twenty years, she travelled tirelessly across Spain, often in poor health and under difficult conditions, founding seventeen convents for women and supporting the establishment of monasteries for men.

The writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo, especially his Confessions, helped her understand that even those who struggle can become saints.

Her autobiography, The Life of Teresa of Jesus, recounts her journey of conversion and prayer. In The Way of Perfection, she offers practical guidance for those seeking to grow in holiness while the acclaimed The Interior Castle, describes the soul as a castle with many dwelling places, leading ultimately to union with God at its centre. Through these works she teaches that prayer is not reserved for a few but is the path by which every soul can encounter the living God.

Forty years after her death on 4 October 1582, she was canonised by Pope Gregory XV, and centuries later in 1970 Pope Paul VI declared her a Doctor of the Church – recognised not only for her holiness, but the enduring wisdom of her teaching.