



Blessed Be

April 2024

Welcome to this edition of Blessed Be. If you have anything you wish to contribute to Blessed Be, or any suggestions you'd like to make, please contact me at helenmacauley@gmail.com

Edith Stein, 1891-1942, was born to a devout Jewish mother, who was determined to see her children well-educated. Edith lost her religion when in her teens. She studied at the University of Freiburg under Edmund Husserl, and gained her doctorate *summa cum laude*, but, as a woman, was unable to take up a teaching position at university. About this time she read Teresa of Avila's autobiography and converted to Catholicism. She wanted to join a Carmelite monastery, but was persuaded not to, instead teaching in a Catholic school. In 1932 she finally was appointed to a teaching position in Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Münster, but due to Nazi restrictions, was forced to resign a few months later. She then joined the Carmelites and was transferred to a monastery in Holland. After the Nazis invaded Holland, the Catholic bishops sent a joint letter protesting against Nazi racism. In response, the Gestapo rounded up all the Jews who had converted to Catholicism (244), transferred them to Auschwitz and killed them. It is believed that Edith, known then as Sr Teresia Benedicta a Cruce, died on 9th August 1942. She was canonised by Pope John-Paul II in 1998. Throughout her life, Edith regarded herself as both Jewish and Catholic, and related her sufferings to Christ's sufferings on the Cross, and as such were for the salvation of her people.

Here are some of her thoughts:

~Things were in God's plan which I had not planned at all. I am coming to the living faith and conviction that—from God's point of view—there is no chance and that the whole of my life, down to every detail, has been mapped out in God's divine providence and makes complete and perfect sense in God's all-seeing eyes.

~Every time I feel my powerlessness and inability to influence people directly, I become more keenly aware of the necessity of my own holocaust.

~I had given up practising my Jewish religion when I was a 14-year old girl and did not begin to feel Jewish again until I had returned to God.

~During the time immediately before and quite some time after my conversion I ... thought that leading a religious life meant giving up all earthly things and having one's mind fixed on divine things only. Gradually, however, I learnt that other things are expected of us in this world ... I even believe that the deeper someone is drawn to God, the more he has to 'go beyond himself' in this sense, that is, go into the world and carry divine life into it.

~ Human activity cannot help us, but only the suffering of Christ. It is my desire to share in it.

~I understood the Cross as the destiny of God's People, which was beginning to be apparent at the time (1933). I felt that those who understood the Cross of Christ should take it upon themselves on everybody's behalf. Of course, I know better now what it means to be wedded to the Lord under the sign of the Cross. However, one can never comprehend it, because it is a mystery.

~I keep thinking of Queen Esther who was taken away from her people precisely because God wanted her to plead with the king on behalf of her nation. I am a very poor and powerless little Esther, but the King who has chosen me is infinitely great and merciful. This is a great comfort (31 October 1938).

~Even now I accept the death that God has prepared for me in complete submission and with joy as being his most holy will for me. I ask the Lord to accept my life and my death ... so that the Lord will be accepted by his people and that his kingdom may come in glory, for the salvation of Germany and the peace of the world".

~One can only gain a scientia crucis (knowledge of the cross) if one has thoroughly experienced the cross. I have been convinced of this from the first moment onwards and have said with all my heart: 'Ave, Crux, Spes unica' (I welcome you, Cross, our only hope).

~Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that he charges you with, and he will give you the power to accomplish it.

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*The founder of the Brigittines, **Bridget of Sweden**, 1303-1373, was first married and had eight children, six of whom survived infancy. One daughter is now venerated as St Catherine of Sweden. When she was in her forties her husband died, leaving her distraught. God spoke to her and told her to be his bride. She joined the Third Order of St Francis, and then went on to found the Brigittines (the Order of St Saviour). Both men and women joined the order, living in separate quarters, and were ruled over by an abbess. They were required to live a poor life and give surplus earnings to the poor, although they were allowed as many books as they wished. Throughout her life, beginning around the age of ten, she had visions of Jesus, especially his death and also his birth. In 1391 she was canonised by Pope Boniface IX.*

*Here are some words from her:*

~The world would have peace if only men of politics would follow the Gospels.

~Let a man fear, above all, me, his God, and so much the gentler will he become toward my creatures and animals, on whom, on account of me, their Creator, he ought to have compassion.

~The source of justice is not vengeance but charity.

~O Sweet Jesus! Pierce my heart so that my tears of penitence and love will be my bread day and night; may I be converted entirely to Thee, may my heart be Thy perpetual habitation, may my conversation be pleasing to Thee, and may the end of my life be so praiseworthy that I may merit Heaven and there with Thy saints, praise Thee forever. Amen.

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*Many of us have seen the Father Brown series on television. The original Father Brown stories were written by **Gilbert Keith Chesterton**, 1874 –1936, who was an English author, philosopher Christian apologist, and literary and art critic. He was baptised at one month into the Anglican Church, although his parents were Unitarians. As an adolescent he dabbled in the occult before returning to high church Anglicanism. He later converted to Catholicism. In 1934, Pope Pius XI invested him as Knight Commander with Star of the Papal Order of St. Gregory the Great.*

Of the resurrection he said:

~On the third day the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realized the new wonder; but even they hardly realized that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but of the dawn.

Some other quotes from Chesterton:

~Jesus promised his disciples three things—that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble.

~To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.

~It is absurd for the Evolutionist to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into everything. The Universe is the most extraordinary masterpiece ever constructed by nobody.

~God is like the sun; you cannot look at it, but without it you cannot look at anything else.

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A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act. **Mahatma Gandhi**

*Rabia Basri, 716-801, was a Muslim saint, mystic and poet. Little is known of her, but she was perhaps the first Sufi poet. Here are two of her poems:*

O Lord,  
If I worship You  
From fear of Hell, burn me in Hell.  
O Lord,  
If I worship You From hope of Paradise, bar me from its gates.  
But if I worship You for Yourself alone  
Then grace me forever the splendour of Your Face.

### **In My Soul**

In  
my soul  
there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church  
where I kneel.

Prayer should bring us to an altar where no walls or names exist.

Is there not a region of love where the sovereignty is  
illuminated nothing,

where ecstasy gets poured into itself  
and becomes  
lost,

where the wing is fully alive  
but has no mind or  
body?

In  
my soul  
there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque,  
a church

that dissolve, that  
dissolve in

God.

