

Maria Teresa of St. Joseph -- Decree of Heroic Virtue
Foundress of the Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus

(In the world: Anna Maria Tauscher van den Bosch 1855-1938)

Given at Rome on December 20, 2002.

Jose Card. SARAIVA MARTINS

Prefect

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Titular Bishop of Luni

Secretary

(translated from the Latin)

"Always praise and glorify God!"

This is the exhortation that the Servant of God, Maria Teresa of St. Joseph, gave to her Sisters shortly before her death. It can also serve as a summation of her teaching, her life and her mission in the Church and in the world. Lovingly meditating on the Heart of Jesus, she walked the paths of holiness, by which she praised Him and zealously promoted His glory and His Kingdom without ceasing.

The Servant of God was born of devout Lutheran parents on June 19 in the year 1855 in the town of Sandow, near Frankfurt, Germany. Hermann, her father, was the pastor of that town. Her mother, Maria Pauline van den Bosch, cherished a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin and therefore wanted her daughter to be named Anna Maria at her baptism. The girl grew up in peace, making progress in the ways of God. In 1862 she moved with her parents to the city of Arnswalde and three years later to Berlin. From 1870 - 1872 she resided with the Morawischen Brothers (Herrnhuter) as a student, and there she began to doubt her Lutheran faith. In 1874 she lost her mother and since she was the oldest of the eight children, she had to take on responsibility for the household. When her father remarried in 1879, the Servant of God could give herself to works of charity and above all to helping the abandoned youth. Impelled by Christian charity, she undertook the management of an institute for the mentally ill in Cologne. Meanwhile, despite her father's disapproval, each day she yearned more intensely to enter the Catholic Church, in which she was received on October 30, 1888. The following month on December 8 she was nourished with the Holy Eucharist, and in the following year she was anointed with the oil of Confirmation. For these reasons she relinquished her work and the support of her father who was completely against the decision of his daughter. In this predicament she was received by the Augustinian Sisters as a domestic worker. She then moved to Berlin to be a companion to a lady.

In prayer she came to the conclusion that she should consecrate herself to God as she had long desired. Upon reading the biography of St. Teresa of Jesus, she embraced the spiritual teaching of the Carmelites. Since it was her desire to found a new religious Order so as to carry out the works of charity, she opened a small St. Joseph's Home in Berlin on August 2, 1891 to shelter poor children. Shortly thereafter she opened a second Home and began a new work to the benefit of the priests, the families, and also the Italians living in Berlin. As is often the case with the friends of God, Maria Teresa had to suffer various hardships and endure difficulties, even to discrimination coming from the very spiritual leaders who had previously helped her with their counsel and support. Nevertheless strengthened by her confidence in God and in the belief that

the trial came from Divine Providence, she did not give up. To significantly strengthen the foundation of her work, she asked in 1897 in Rome to be aggregated to the Order of Discalced Carmelites of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Since the difficulties persisted, the Servant of God transferred the seat of her Order to Sittard in the Netherlands, and then to the city of Maldon in England. On January 3 of the year 1905, Cardinal Franz Satolli, Bishop of Frascati, signed the decree by which the Congregation of the Carmelites of the Divine Heart of Jesus received approbation and at the same time permission to erect both the Motherhouse and Novitiate in the city of Rocca di Papa. In the following year on January 3, 50 young postulants were invested with the habit of the Order. On the same day the Servant of God made her first profession and took the name of Maria Teresa of St. Joseph. On January 3, 1909, she professed her perpetual vows which she very fervently and faithfully kept.

In 1924 the new Motherhouse was begun in the city of Sittard, where she resided until her death. From here she fostered the asceticism and the spread of the Order over Europe and America and formulated clear guidelines for the formation of her Sisters, to whom she showed a constant example of holiness in humility. The Servant of God was characterized namely by her sanctification and perfection of the Christian virtues, which she practiced with great intensity, perseverance and holy joy. As a true follower of Christ, she gave full faith to the Gospel and to the teaching of the Church. Her faith, nourished by prayer and the Sacred Scriptures, accompanied her on her search for the truth, when she consecrated herself to God, at the foundation of this new congregation, in the performance of the works of the apostolate, and even as she led her daily life.

That she loved Christ was evident in her very person: she patiently carried her own cross (cf. Mt. 16.24); she obeyed the Will of God and the authority of the Church; she kept the evangelical counsels and the Rule of her Order, she proved herself hard-working, and with generous love she suffered much for the salvation of souls. She showered the poor, the sick, the elderly, her Sisters, and all who sought her counsel and assistance with motherly care, help, and consolation. She herself and through her Order performed the corporal and spiritual works of mercy: she was lenient with her enemies; she challenged her spiritual daughters to observance of the Rule, apostolic zeal, and sisterly harmony. As the situation called for, she showed herself to be firm as well as gentle, persistent and meek, just and merciful, sensible and ardent. Led by genuine love, she endeavored to engrave the face of Christ both in herself and in her Sisters.

In order to accomplish this, the Holy Spirit was given to her. She fostered her interior union with God as well as devotion to the Eucharist, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Mother of the Redeemer, St. Joseph, and St. Teresa of Jesus, who was her mother and teacher. Since she was always interiorly united with Christ, her Spouse, she kept her heart free from the lures of the world and from affection for earthly things. Indeed even more so did she set all her hope in the help proceeding from God's Divine Providence and concerned herself with heavenly things. When her Order fell into a severe financial crisis, she in no way abandoned her trust in God, but rather strengthened her Sisters, saying that after her death all would be paid. Her death occurred on September 20, 1938.

The call to holiness, which she benefitted from in her lifetime, was confirmed after her death and expanded further. For this reason the Bishop of Roermond initiated the process for beatification and canonization and led the diocesan information process which was held from the years 1953 to 1957. With the decree of May 15, 1987, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints verified the juridical validity of this process. After the appearance of the *Positio* it was discussed whether

the Servant of God had practiced virtue to a heroic degree. On June 25 of the year 2002 the Congress of the Theological Commission passed a favorable judgment. The Cardinals and Bishops who gathered in a planned meeting on October 1 of the same year, of which the spokesman was His Excellency Lino Fumagalli, Bishop of Sabina, declared that the Servant of God had practiced the theological virtues, cardinal virtues and the other moral virtues to a heroic degree.

When at the conclusion of these acts, a detailed report was given to the Holy Father, John Paul II, by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, his Holiness accepted, confirmed and pronounced on the recommendation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, that the decree of heroic virtue be written.

Today, after all had taken place in due order, the Holy Father called to himself the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, as well as the Postulator of the Cause and me, the secretary of the Congregation, and all others required. In their presence the Holy Father solemnly declared: It has been determined that the Servant of God, Maria Teresa of St. Joseph (in the world: Anna Maria Tauscher van den Bosch), Foundress of the Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus, of whom we now speak, practiced the theological virtues of faith, hope and love both of God and neighbor, as well as the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude and the moral virtues to a heroic degree.

The Holy Father also added that the decree was to be published and given to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

(posted with permission of Reverend Mother Superior of the Order, Mother Angelina, Mother House of the Order of CARMELITE SISTERS OF THE DIVINE HEART OF JESUS, Rotterdam, Netherlands)