



TASTE Reflection Questions
5 February 2026

**“In this World. . .to Serve”
Empathic Saint Edith Stein**

Fr. John Sullivan

Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry. ~ Padre Pio



1. What did you think was most significant about this talk?.

2. Regarding Saint Edith Stein's **PRE-CONVERSION**:

- What did you think about what she said at only 19 years old, “We are in this world to serve Humanity.”
- What supported her conversion from Judaism to Christian faith?
- Has recognizing something as truth caused you to grow in faith or to enter the Catholic Church? Explain.
- Have you ever read St Teresa of Avila's autobiography? What impact did it make on you?

3. Regarding Saint Edith Stein's **POST-BAPTISM**:

- How important is it for teachers to have Christ's spirit within themselves? What difference does it make?
- What did you think about her ability to uncover the philosophical thought of St Thomas Aquinas.
- Saint Edith Stein wrote & hand-delivered a letter to Pope Pius XI requesting defense of the Jews in Germany. Have you ever written to any religious or political leader requesting their support? Describe.
- She spent time reminiscing with her mother to write “Life in a Jewish Family.” Have you ever sat down with a family member to capture important historical information?

4. Regarding Saint Edith Stein's **LATER YEARS**:

- She was a prolific writer. What did you think about the extent of her writings?
- Do you think she will ultimately be called a Doctor of the Church? Why or why not?
- In one of her writings, she said, “Prayer is a communication of the soul with God. God is love & love is goodness giving itself away.” What does that mean to you?
- What did you think about her time as a prisoner and what she did to support the other prisoners?
- What can you do to increase your resolve and resilience of hope?

SUMMARY OF HER LIFE

- Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross is better known as Edith Stein.
- She was born in 1891 and died in Auschwitz in 1942.
- Her set of writings reaches 28 volumes in the original German edition.
- She wrote an autobiographical volume — Life in a Jewish Family.
- She had a thirst for truth and earned a PhD in Philosophy.

PHASE 1: PRE-CONVERSION

- 1891 — Born into an observant Jewish family in Prussia (now Poland).
- 1910 — At age 19, she said “We are in this world to serve Humanity.”
- 1916 — Passed her doctoral exam and received summa cum laude.
- She suspended her private life and drafted her thesis during WWI by volunteering as a LPN.
- Within the next year, she published 3 chapters of her thesis in a book, On the Problem of Empathy.
- Her thesis director appointed her as his assistant at the University of Freiburg.
- Contacts with other of his students who converted from Judaism to the Christian faith were influencing her thinking and yearning for more meaning from life.
- 1922 — Received Baptism in a Catholic Church in Germany at age 31 after recognizing it would be a rich spiritual home & after reading St Teresa of Avila’s autobiography which she saw as truth.

PHASE 2: POST-BAPTISM

- She could not get a university teaching position because she was a woman.
- She took a teaching job at a Catholic middle school and Teachers Training Institute — She taught German and Literature and shared in the counseling work provided for the young women.
- “The most important thing is that the teachers should really have Christ’s spirit in themselves” ... It is also their duty to know the life into which the children are going.... to help them a little.”
- She included formative consultations beyond the series of lectures she would develop and deliver.
- While at Saint Magdalena’s between 1923 and 1931, she uncovered the philosophical thought of St Thomas Aquinas. Knowing Latin, she translated his volume of Disputed Questions on Truth.
- Intellectual leaders invited her to give public lectures to the German-speaking people of Austria & Switzerland.
- In 1932 in Munich, she gave an address “Questions about the Maternal Art of Rearing Children.”
- She wrote & hand-delivered a letter to Pope Pius XI requesting defense of the Jews in Germany.
- She wrote “Life in a Jewish Family” and was awarded the Best Spiritual Book of the Year in 1987.
- In 1933, Nazi Policy deprived her and all Jews in Germany of any professional employment.

PHASE 3: THE LATER YEARS

- In Oct. 1933, she entered the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Cologne & professed vows in 1935.
- Along with the scholarly treatises, Finite and Eternal Being, The Ways to Know God, she also wrote On the History and Spirit of Carmel; Love for Love: the Life and Works of St. Teresa of Jesus.
- Prayer is a communication of the soul with God. God is love & love is goodness giving itself away.
- She wrote: The Prayer of the Church; Conversation at Night; Poems: St. Joseph Help!; Tecum iuxta Crucem (To stand with you by the Cross); a poetic addition to the Carmelite hymn, and more!
- “Draw your daughters’ hearts to that sweetest and gentlest of hearts....help us mightily, Our Queen!”
- She worked on “The Science of the Cross” a study of the life and works of St. John of the Cross.
- She gave touching witness to prayer on the train trip to Auschwitz during the last week of her life.
- As a prisoner, she was given the chance to send a brief note to her monastery of exile where she wrote: “I have been able to pray so far, marvelously well”.
- Attempts to get admittance to neutral Switzerland for her & her older sister, Rosa who became a Catholic herself, but that did not come until after they were sent to their deaths in Auschwitz.
- Some fellow Jews escaped death and 1 of them published a recollection of her that shows how even when destined inhumanely for death, Edith still was contributing to the well-being of others.
- “Unbroken resolve,” that is what she showed throughout her life. Resolve based on a true sense of ‘resilient’ hope that the Providential God would see her through life’s difficulties & disappointments.