

# Saint John of the Cross

1542-1591

*The Christian tradition* tells us that the sources of temptation are three. The most terrifying, of course, is the one from the devil.

Next, we have the world, society around us. And finally there is the “flesh,” our very selves. St. John of the Cross insists that of these three temptations, the most dangerous is the last one, which is us – ourselves. For each of us, the worst enemy is our own self. Before attributing temptations to the devil or the world, we need to think about ourselves. There we will also find the importance of humility and of discernment. The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of discernment and preserves us from pride and trusting too much in ourselves.

Saint John of the Cross was born at Fontiveros in Spain, in 1542. Upon his father’s death he became an orphan, and so he was forced

shepherds, not only do they bring to God our messages, but they also bring God’s messages to us. They nurture our souls with their sweet aspirations and with divine communications; as good shepherds, they protect us and defend us against the wolves, that is, against the devils.” And also: “Amongst their secret aspirations, the Angels obtain for the soul the highest knowledge of God, they inflame it this way with a flame of love more alive for Him; they succeed even at leaving it totally wounded with love. The same divine wisdom that in Heaven brightens the Angels and purifies them from all ignorance also brightens men on earth and purifies them from their errors and imperfections; this goes from first hierarchy of



to find his own way to secure an education. In 1563 at Medina he joined the Carmelites. When he completed his studies in Philosophy and Theology at Salamanca, in 1567 he was ordained a priest. The same year he encountered Saint Teresa of Jesus who persuaded him to support the reform. On the 28th of November 1568 in Duruelo he took part in the first group of the newly born Discalced Carmelites. From 1572 to 1577 he was confessor for the Nuns at the monastery of the Incarnation in Avila. For eight months he was unjustly imprisoned in the convent’s jail of the Toledo, from which he was able to escape. He endured many painful trials because of the hostility certain Fathers had towards the reform of the Discalced (Carmelites). He died in Ubeda, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 1591. He was beatified by Pope Clement X in 1675 and proclaimed a Saint by Benedict XIII in 1726. In 1926, Pius XI declared him a Doctor of the Church, and John Paul II declared him the Patron of the poets in the Spanish language.

Among his numerous spiritual and ascetic works, in the book “Warnings and Rulings” we find written, in chapter VII: “The Angels are our

the Angels to the last, and by means of them it arrives to man.” “The light of God illumines the Angel by penetrating it with His splendor and embracing it with His love, since the angel is a pure spirit completely disposed to this divine participation, but ordinarily it does not brighten a man from an obscure, sorrowful and painful state, because man is impure and weak.”

“When God gives favors to a soul through the intermediation of the good Angel, he usually allows the devil some knowledge of this and he opposes this with all his power in a measure conformed to justice, so that the triumph is esteemed to a higher price, and that the soul victorious and faithful in the temptation obtains a recompense of greater reward.”

“Keep in mind how vain, perilous, and deadly it is to rejoice in other things that are not in the service of God, and consider what a disgrace it was for the Angels who rejoiced in and congratulated themselves for their beauty and their natural gifts, since it is for that reason that they, stripped of every beauty, were precipitated into the deep pit of the abyss.”