

## Sunday, March 7, 2021 – Third Sunday of Lent



*"Stat crux dum volvitur orbis"*  
(*"The Cross remains fixed while the world turns"*)  
~Motto of the Carthusian Order

Greetings!

How is it possible for a person to live for forty years without eating, drinking, or sleeping?

Humanly speaking, it's not. But the Creator of human nature is not limited by human constraints. He sustains all things by His grace and chooses certain unique individuals throughout history to be **living signs of His ongoing sustenance of the world.**

**Therese Neumann** was one such person. She was a miracle of grace who lived her whole life in a little village named Konnersreuth in Bavaria, the southeastern section of Germany.

She is not a canonized saint, but she was by all accounts a holy person. **She was a stigmatist**, which means she bore the wounds of Christ in her flesh. And yes, she was the person who did not eat or drink (and only rarely slept) for her entire adult life.

Therese Neumann existed solely on the Eucharist, which she received each day in the little parish church that stood across the street from her house in the village.

### The stigmata

We have to ask why God would actually *make* certain people suffer, when in most cases we believe that God only *allows* suffering due to His respect for free will. It is a legitimate question and one that is not easy to answer.

The shortest answer also has to do with free will. **Some are chosen to share Christ's redemptive suffering on the Cross in a direct way**, and like all vocations, a stigmatist voluntarily responds in grace to God's calling. No one ever becomes a stigmatist against his or her will.

The stigmata – in the very flesh of a living human being – is a mystical sign of the redemption that Christ won on the Cross. It seems to be God's way of saying to the world, **"If you miss this, you miss everything."**

### A mystical calling

Maybe it comes from my own partial-German heritage, but I've been fascinated with Therese Neumann from my youth. She was the oldest of eleven children of a fervent Catholic family, minimally educated, and what we might describe as a simple peasant.

As if God wished to emphasize a certain point about her vocation in life, **Therese was born on Good Friday of 1898**. As a young woman, she had great aspirations to be a missionary in Africa, but God had other plans for her life. Suffering was to be her calling.

She ceased to eat food in 1922 and, after several years of inexplicable illnesses and healings, received the sacred stigmata in Lent of 1926 at the age of 28. These marks remained on her body even after her death in 1962.

## The wounds

Regarding her wounds: these were not just superficial or decorative marks of Christ's crucifixion.

The catalogue of the wounds of this German peasant girl **reads like the Passion narrative of the Good Friday liturgy**. These included:

- Two piercing wounds through the hands, and two through the feet;
- A large wound in the heart that bled out of her side;
- Eight or nine crown of thorns wounds;
- A shoulder wound;
- Wounds on both knees;
- And about thirty scourge marks.

In all, her body exhibited **at least forty-five distinguishable marks of the Passion**— which she bore for nearly forty years.

It's important to note that none of these wounds had a natural origin, and they were certainly not self-inflicted.

Believe it or not, there is a very long history of people who claim *false stigmata* too, but suffice it to say that everything about Therese's wounds was **put to the test by Church authorities** in conjunction with medical science.

These were real wounds. They all bled. And all of them were painful. Yet, despite her union with Christ's Passion on a daily basis, she was recognized by all as a deeply virtuous, healthy, authentic, and even joyful person.

## Spiritual gifts

When a person accepts a life of great suffering, God usually endows that person with **other gifts of a supernatural origin**. God wants to show how fruitful the Cross can be for the internal life of our souls.

In the case of Therese Neumann, the mystical gifts that accompanied her stigmata were immense.

In addition to her lack of food and sleep – which were miracles in themselves – she had numerous other spiritual gifts such as

- The odor of sanctity (a perfumed aroma that emanated from her)
- **The ability to read souls**
- A mystical sensitivity to holy objects and persons (such as relics and priests)
- Bilocation
- **Mystical visions and apparitions**, and
- The gift of prophecy.

Those who are familiar with **the more famous modern stigmatist, Padre Pio** (whose life virtually paralleled that of Therese), will recognize Therese as a person whose life had the same mystical character as the great Italian Capuchin.

## Hitler's bane

I wasn't kidding when I said that Hitler hated Therese Neumann, but it's more accurate to say that **the whole Nazi regime hated her**. Her very visible union with Christ represented the antithesis of the diabolical ideology and occult practices that fueled their destructive agenda.

Without even the slightest involvement in politics, she was one of the greatest inspirations behind **the German Catholic opposition to Hitler**, particularly among members of the press and clergy.

The Nazis first tried to defame and ridicule her through a propaganda campaign. Then they claimed that

she was an ardent supporter of Der Führer, although it was well known that she had once been presented with a postcard of Hitler, and **she threw it down with the words, “Smoke and fire of hell!”**

Finally, the Nazis tried numerous times to arrest and kill her, but she was always protected by the villagers, and by God. The evil regime felt – and feared – the power of the Cross in a simple peasant such as Therese Neumann.

In 1945, just five days before the Second World War ended, **German Panzer tanks ravaged little Konnersreuth**, destroying a good portion of the structures in the village.

Hitler killed himself very shortly after that episode. But Hitler's Bane lived for another twenty spiritually-fruitful years of guiding souls to Christ.

**One of our featured articles** below goes into a bit more detail about the life of Therese of Konnersreuth, and I hope you take the time to read it and contemplate the example of the sacred stigmata during your Lenten pilgrimage.

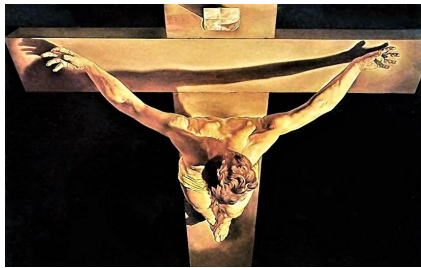
Lent is a time to remind ourselves of those unique souls in the life of the Church who never forgot the value of the Cross.

---

## **Our Feature Articles**

---

### **The Living Crucifix of Bavaria**



### **St. Ephrem's Marvelous Sermon on the Cross of Christ**



---

## **~ Announcement ~**

---

### **A New Book on Angels!**

I'm pleased to announce that my new book, *Natures of Fire*, **will be published on Easter Sunday** (April 4<sup>th</sup>) – less than a month from now. I'm very excited about this book! Of the ten I've written this is my favorite so far.

**The book's mission** is to challenge the prevailing (and often incorrect) notions about angels that most of us absorb from our culture or from bad catechesis. This book will teach you:

- **Nine myths about angels** that you should stop believing right now;
- That angels were not created to save you from car accidents (although they do that at times);
- Why angels don't actually sing;
- The reason why there are no female angels;
- The two classes of angels that have wings (and the seven that don't);
- **Why you must avoid one type of angel if you value your life;**
- Angel art throughout history: the good, the

### ***Natures of Fire: God's Magnificent Angels***



bad, and the ugly.

My special email list friends can **pre-order the book at a discount** beginning this week.

**Pre-Orders / Download Sample Chapters**

*Natures of Fire* also has an accompanying *Study Guide* for deeper reflection and for book discussion groups and clubs. The Study Guide will be available next week on my website.

---

**Visit the Newsletter Archives**

---

**Thank you and God bless you during Lent!**

*Peter Darcy*

*PS-1 – Remember: I post one article a week on the Sacred Windows website and send out this newsletter every two weeks – both on Sundays.*

*PS-2 – Please forward this email to any friends, colleagues, or family members who may be interested in an ongoing discussion about Beauty, Truth, and Goodness.*



---

**TO CONTACT PETER:**

Email: [peterdarcy@sacredwindows.com](mailto:peterdarcy@sacredwindows.com)

Author's Website: [www.petedarcywriting.com](http://www.petedarcywriting.com)

Strength of Soul Books: [publisher@strengthofsoulbooks.com](mailto:publisher@strengthofsoulbooks.com)

---