

SAMPLE COPY

SEEKER OF TRUTH

Edith Stein


Endon



Edith Stein *Seeker of Truth*

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Endon

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*Prayer of Saint Nicholas of Flüe,
1417–1478, Switzerland*

“O Lord God, will to give me

All that leads me to you.

O Lord God, take away from me

All that diverts me from you.

O Lord God, take me, also, from myself

And give me completely to yourself.”

A favorite prayer of St. Edith Stein

Introduction

Why Edith Stein?

Pope John Paul II Canonizes Edith Stein

✱ (Read Appendix 1: Canonization of Edith Stein and Homily, #1–5)

On a bright October morning in Rome, the faithful sat hushed in St. Peter's Square. His Holiness Pope John Paul II was about to pronounce the words of canonization for a remarkable witness to the faith: a modern saint, a convert from Judaism, a woman, and a martyr. She had been known in religious life as Sister Teresa Benedicta a Cruce, literally Teresa Blessed by the Cross. Making her mark in the secular world as Edith Stein, a brilliant German philosopher, teacher, and lecturer, she had completed her years as a cloistered Carmelite with a heart consecrated to Christ Crucified. She died in the death camps of Birkenau-Auschwitz, a living witness to the Truth which had so defined her life's journey of faith.



As Pope John Paul II pronounced the words of canonization, on October 11, 1998, entering Edith Stein into the list of saints in heaven, he commented on her significance for the modern world, a world in search of the Truth:

For a long time Edith Stein was a seeker. Her mind never tired of searching and her heart always yearned for hope...Eventually she was rewarded: she seized the truth. Or better: she was seized by it. Then she discovered that truth had a name: Jesus Christ. From that moment on, the incarnate Word was her One and All. Looking back as a Carmelite on this period of her life, she wrote to a Benedictine nun: "Whoever seeks the truth is seeking God, whether consciously or unconsciously"...This woman had to face the challenges of such a radically changing century as our own. Her experience is an example to us.¹

This remarkable woman, and new member of the **Church Triumphant**, was subsequently named by the Holy Father as a *Co-patroness of Europe*, on October 1, 1999, at the Inauguration of the Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops. Stein was named as a special intercessor for the needs of the Church and modern Europe, along with St. Bridget of Sweden and St. Catherine of Siena. Referring to Edith Stein on

Church Triumphant: The Church of all those in heavenly glory who have triumphed over their evil inclinations, the seductions of the world, and the temptations of the evil spirit.¹

1. John A. Hardon, S.J., *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life, 2001), 106.

1. Pope John Paul II, "Homily at the Canonization of St. Edith Stein," published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 14, 1998.

DID YOU KNOW?

The discipline of **phenomenology** may be defined initially as the study of structures of experience or consciousness. Literally, phenomenology is the study of “phenomena”: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. The historical movement of phenomenology is the philosophical tradition launched in the first half of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, et al. In that movement, the discipline of phenomenology was prized as the proper foundation of all philosophy — as opposed, say, to ethics or metaphysics or epistemology.¹

this occasion as “the symbol of the dramas of Europe this century,”² John Paul II emphasized her role as an example and guide whose prophetic witness at the close of the 20th century has great significance for the Church setting out into a new millennium. This emphasis encourages investigation of Stein’s contribution to Catholic life and thought in diverse and significant arenas.

Seeker, Scholar, Saint

✿ (Read Appendix 1: Canonization of Edith Stein and Homily, #6)

St. Edith Stein’s appeal and significance lie primarily in her life’s story, a story which we will come to appreciate through this Endow Study Guide as we journey through her life and thought. Throughout her life, Edith can best be recognized for her identity as a seeker of the Truth, a scholar of the highest caliber, and a saint and

Martyr: A person who chooses to suffer, even to die, rather than renounce his or her faith or Christian principles. After the example of Christ one does not resist one’s persecutors when they use violence out of hatred or malice against Christ, or his Church, or some revealed truth of the Catholic religion. (Etym. Greek martyros, witness, martyr).¹

1. Hardon, S.J., *Dictionary*, 335.

martyr who gave her life at the hands of Nazi persecutors who put her to death “in odium fidei,” in hatred of the faith.

As we walk with Stein through her life, we will see her constant search for absolute Truth, which she ultimately finds in Christ and His Gospel. She will turn away from her family’s faith heritage of Judaism at a young age, proclaim herself an atheist, and search the annals of psychology and then philosophy for the answers she seeks. Her brilliant mind will be fed along the way by the best that German scholarship has to offer in the Phenomenological Movement of the early 20th century. Ultimately, she will encounter Christ through the be-

Discalced: Barefooted. A term applied to religious congregations of men and women who are unshod and wear sandals, such as the Discalced Carmelites, Augustinians, and Clerks of the Holy Cross. It was introduced into the West by St. Francis and St. Clare as a form of austerity. (Etym. Latin discalceatus, unshod, barefoot).¹

1. Hardon, S.J., *Dictionary*, 160.

lievers who cross her path, and through the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, 16th century woman reformer

of the **Discalced Carmelites** and a **Doctor of the Church**.

Doctor of the Church: A title given since the Middle Ages to certain saints, whose writing or preaching is outstanding for guiding the faithful in all periods of the Church’s history. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–82), Spanish Carmelite and nun and mystic. First woman doctor.¹

1. Hardon, S.J., *Dictionary*, 167–8.

In finding the truth, Pope John Paul II pointed out at her canonization, she also found Love Himself:

In our time, truth is often mistaken for the opinion of the majority. In addition, there

is a widespread belief that one should use the truth even against love or vice versa. But truth and love need each other. St Teresa Benedicta is a

2. Pope John Paul II, “Solemn Inauguration of the Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops: Homily”, October 1, 1999. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio, Proclaiming Saint Briget of Sweden, Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Co-Patronesses of Europe, October 1, 1999.

1. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology>

witness to this. The “martyr for love”, who gave her life for her friends, let no one surpass her in love. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth! One without the other becomes a destructive lie.³

It was this relationship with Love Incarnate which would prompt Edith Stein to embrace the Catholic faith and leave the world to become a cloistered Carmelite nun. This same love would strengthen Edith as she witnessed the Nazi persecution of her Jewish people and her own family. She would eventually offer the ultimate sacrifice of love in her martyrdom in the gas chambers of **Auschwitz**.

Auschwitz: The largest of the Nazi German concentration camps. Located in southern Poland, it took its name from the nearby town of Oświęcim (Auschwitz in German), situated about 50 kilometers west of Kraków and 286 kilometers from Warsaw. Following the Nazi occupation of Poland in September 1939, Oświęcim was incorporated into Germany and renamed Auschwitz.

Model for Women: Universal Call to Holiness

✿ (Read Appendix 1: Canonization of Edith Stein and Homily, #7, 8)

So, why St. Edith Stein? Why this particular saint, at this particular time in history? The answer is that Stein’s life speaks to many audiences. Her journey of faith, her own dark night of the soul in search of the truth, her heroic giving of her life for her beliefs, are a model for us all. She speaks to those victims of the modern malaise who believe there must be something more to life than the “me” culture which pervades our society. She speaks to converts, who seek ultimate Truth even at great personal cost, and who, as Stein put it, “in seeking the Truth, are seeking God, whether they realize it or not.”⁴ She speaks to Catholic scholars who, like Pope John Paul II himself, understand Stein’s legacy to be of particular significance for the Church in the 21st century. She speaks to members of the Jewish faith interested in the positive impact which Stein’s witness and legacy can have upon Jewish Christian relations. Lastly, and most importantly for Endow women, she speaks to advocates of the unique dignity and vocation of woman, interested in learning what Stein, a significant modern voice on the topic, has to offer through her own unique life story and her philosophy. Edith Stein is one of the most important Catholic philosophers of the twentieth century, partly because she was able to synthesize contemporary phenomenology with the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. She also offers an original philosophy of woman’s identity, which influenced Pope John Paul’s teachings on the nature and dignity of woman.

As Stein’s religious name, “blessed by the Cross,” denotes, her journey of faith and love will also entail a heroic embrace of the Cross in suffering. Pope John Paul II notes:

Faith and the Cross proved inseparable to her. Having matured in the school of the Cross, she found the roots to which the tree of her own life was attached...St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross is offered to us today as a model to inspire us and a protectress to call upon. We give thanks to

3. Pope John Paul II, “Homily at the Canonization of St. Edith Stein.”

4. Ibid.

God for this gift. May the new saint be an example to us in our commitment to serve freedom, in our search for the truth. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, pray for us!⁵

We ask the woman at the heart of this Study Guide, St. Edith Stein, to serve as a model for all of us in the universal call to holiness. May this modern saint intercede for us and may this model for women assist each of us in our own personal journey of faith and love.

Discussion Questions

1. In his canonization homily, Pope John Paul II urges us with St. Edith Stein: "Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth! One without the other becomes a destructive lie." Comment on any ways you have seen this to be true in your own life and in dealings with others.
2. How has this insight been manifested in religious, social, or political situations throughout history?
3. Have any of the martyrs of the Church or any of the female saints had an impact on your faith? In what way does Edith Stein seem similar or different from these saints?

Points for Personal Meditation:

Be true guardians of the message and life's witness of Edith Stein.

Pope John Paul II

*Love is life in the highest perfection. For everything that
is infinite is unending love, consuming fire.*

Edith Stein

5. Ibid.

"Breslau was a city that lay between two worlds. In the far-off distance towered the outline of the Riesengebirge, while from the other side the Slavic world flowed in with the waters of the Oder. The melancholy enchantment of the eastern cities, formerly the province of the templars, lay upon the brick-work gothic churches, while the old stone gothic churches and the city hall with its fanciful tower pointed toward Danzig."

Paul Fechter, *The City Between Two Worlds*



Yom Kippur: the "highest" of the Jewish holy days, also called the Day of Atonement, on which an emphasis is placed on correcting past sins and seeking reconciliation (at-one-ment). The day is observed by fasting and prayer.

"My mother was a merchant's daughter, with the innate gifts of a merchant: an excellent head for figures, a true business sense, the courage and decisiveness to act at the right moment, and sufficient prudence to keep her from taking excessive risks. Above all, she possessed to a preeminent degree the gift of getting along with people. Step by step, she managed to lift herself up. It was not an easy matter to keep eleven children fed and clothed. We never went hungry, but we did learn to live as simply and sparsely as possible. Some of that has stuck with us to this day."

Edith Stein,
Life in a Jewish Family

Chapter 1

The Early Years

Family Life

The journey of Edith Stein's life, which culminated with her canonization in Rome on October 11, 1998, began a great distance away in Breslau, Germany, (now Wroclaw, Poland)¹ at the heart of a profoundly loving Jewish family. Edith was born on October 12, 1891, on the Jewish Feast of Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. Stein was the youngest of seven surviving children (four had died), the beloved baby of the family.

Sadness struck early in Edith's life when her father died of heatstroke at work one hot July day, when Edith was not yet two years old. Instinctively bright and sensitive, she may have had a childish premonition of her father's passing. As the story goes, little Edith kissed her father goodbye from her mother's arms in the household doorway on the morning of the fateful day. As her father walked down the front path, Edith called him back to embrace her once again before he set out. Siegfried Stein was found lying dead later that day on the side of a walking path. He had gone to inspect timber for his family's lumber business, but he never returned.

The burden of the household and the running of the family business fell to Stein's mother, Auguste Stein. Frau Stein soon gained a reputation as a shrewd businesswoman, establishing the lumber business as one of the best in Breslau. The older children were called upon to help with both the business and the household, and Frau Stein worked into old age as the manager "par excellence," providing her family with every necessity.

You cannot imagine what it means to me to be a daughter of the chosen people.

Edith Stein, as quoted in *Edith Stein: Victim of the Shoah*

Edith's mother was truly the "heart" as well as the head of the home. A devout Jew all her life, Frau Stein took her faith seriously, and she was committed to the practice of Jewish prayer and worship. Frau Stein was also a loving mother. She allowed her children, especially the young Edith and her closest sibling in age, Erna, to play for hours in the lumber yard, a child's paradise. Games were devised with friends and cousins that included hide and seek, see-saw, and building makeshift forts.

Edith was an obedient child but also extremely headstrong. Her earliest mem-

1. After World War II, the borders of Germany and Poland were changed.

ory, as she relates in her autobiographical work *Life in a Jewish Family*, was standing behind a locked door demanding to be allowed to go to her older sister on the other side. Although enrolled in kindergarten, Edith put up a daily fuss of protest against the arrangement, which she felt to be beneath her dignity. Headstrong and extremely bright, Stein announced on her sixth birthday that she wanted to be enrolled in primary school immediately. The school year was already at the half-way point, but Stein was allowed to join the class. She worked her way through the curriculum, and finished the year at the top of her class.

Stein also loved to take part in the family frolics which were led by her older siblings. She recounts a characteristic scene shared with her older brother Paul, when she was not yet six years old:

While I clutched his hair, he could carry me around a room on his shoulders by the hour, tirelessly singing student or folk songs to me. To amuse us both, he used to show me all the pictures in his bulky history of literature and asked me who or what was being represented; in his zeal he would cover the captions although at the time I was still unable to read.²

Such stimulants were certainly not wasted on Edith's bright and active young mind. Jean de Fabrègues tells us in *Edith Stein: Philosopher, Carmelite Nun, Holocaust Martyr*, "When the family played the game called 'Dichter-quartett' (Author-Quartet) the child of four amazed the guests because she knew the names of the authors and could match them with their works."³

Likewise, her sister Erna notes that Edith "had an excellent memory and retained everything. Many of our numerous uncles and aunts would tease or try to confuse her by telling her that *Maria Stuart* was written by Goethe, or the like. This misfired with deadly certainty."⁴

Edith's childhood was active and happy. Her extended family often came to fill the large house on the Michaelisstrasse. Special family days were often celebrated with short skits and poetic recitations, usually created by Stein herself, even into her adulthood. Her niece, Susanne Batzdorff, refers to Edith's comic skit for the family celebration of the wedding of Stein's sister:

Wolf (Batzdorff's cousin) also remembers how he and his cousins, Gerhard and Erika, participated in a playlet which their aunt Edith had written as entertainment for my parents' wedding celebration in December 1920. Gerhard played the stork, who was attempting to per-

DID YOU KNOW?

Goethe (pronounced Gher—tuh) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) is renowned as probably the best known and most influential German writer of all time. He was an important philosopher, poet, and dramatist; in addition he was trained in the law and science and politics. His body of literary work is extensive; his best known work is *Faust*, a two part drama.

Life in a Jewish Family: (Collected Works of Edith Stein, Volume I). A presentation of authentic Jewish life in the face of growing intolerance towards the Jewish people in Germany in the years leading up to the Second World War. Intended as a biography of her mother, this work becomes quite autobiographical in nature, and is considered Stein's life story. The work was left unfinished upon Stein's arrest and death, in fact, it was lying open on her desk the day she was deported.

**I always dreamed of a brilliant
future for myself, a life of fame
and happiness, convinced that
I was meant for great things
and not the narrow limits of the
bourgeois setting into which I
had been born.**

Edith Stein: *Life in a Jewish Family*

2. Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, trans. Josephine Koepfel, O.C.D. ed Dr. L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, O.C.D. The Collected Works of Edith Stein, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1986), 77–78.

3. Jean de Fabrègues. *Edith Stein: Philosopher, Carmelite Nun, Holocaust Martyr* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1993), 12.

4. Dr. Erna Biberstein, from "Reminiscences" in Editor's Forward to *Life*, 14.

suade two young babies, one male and one female, to accompany him to the newlyweds, Hans and Erna Biberstein, to be their children. The amusing question-and-answer repartee entered into family legend.⁵

Discussion Questions

1. Thinking back to childhood, what role did you play in your family of origin? How do you remember contributing to the well-being of the family community?
2. Discuss other saints who have lost a parent in childhood. How does the sanctity/integrity of the surviving parent influence the child?

Childhood

Along with her love of family revels, however, young Edith had a very sensitive side to her nature. She tells in her autobiography of the deep impression that images and phrases would make upon her. “Within me,” she reflects, ... there was a hidden world. Whatever I saw or heard throughout my days was pondered over there.”⁶ She relates the extent to which this sensitivity shaped her impressions, observing:

The sight of a drunkard could haunt and plague me for days and nights on end...Should anyone speak of a murder in my presence, I would lie awake for hours that night, and, in the dark, horror would press in upon me from every corner. Indeed, even a somewhat coarse expression which, in irritation, my mother once used in my presence, pained me so deeply that I could never forget this minor incident, an argument with my eldest brother.⁷

She also describes the manifestation of this sensitivity in her reaction to the content of a dramatic work:

When I was about five years old, my sister Frieda was reading *Mary Stuart* in school and was then allowed to go to see the stage play with my mother. Before they went, there was a great deal of talk about it; and, as usual, I picked up far more than was intended for me. While the two were at the theater, my feverish fantasies began and I cried out, over and over, in great excitement, ‘Oh, *do* cut off Elizabeth’s head!’

I recall what a sequel there was to this incident. The following year, when I went to school and had arrived at barely managing to read words in print, I searched out the proper volume of Schiller’s works in our bookcase at home, took it to the kitchen and asked my mother whether I might read to her out of *Mary Stuart*.

5. Susanne M. Batzdorff, *Aunt Edith: The Jewish Heritage of a Catholic Saint* (Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 1998), 121.

6. Stein, *Life*, 74–75.

7. *Ibid.*, 74.

Very solemnly she said: ‘Go ahead, read.’

How far I got at that time, I cannot remember. But it is easy to surmise that such sudden outbursts alarmed my relatives. They called it ‘nerves’ and tried, as much as possible, to shield me from overexcitement.⁸

Although aware of her sensitive nature, Edith did not often express such perceptions outwardly, a situation which increased her inner turmoil, as she relates:

I never mentioned a word to anyone of these things which caused me so much hidden suffering. It never occurred to me that one could speak about such matters. Only infrequently did I give my family any inkling of what was happening: for no apparent reason I sometimes developed a fever and in delirium spoke of the things which were oppressing me inwardly.⁹

Stein notes, in fact, that as she reached the age of reason a “great transformation” took place within her, explaining, “Gradually my inner world grew lighter and clearer. Whatever was heard, seen, read, or experienced offered my active fantasy material for the most intrepid constructions.”¹⁰

Ever a support and confidante throughout Edith’s childhood and youth was her sister Erna. Closest in age to Edith, Erna was a beloved companion, with whom Edith could study, play, and share companionship. She and Edith were referred to as “the children” in their large family, and both were doted on by their older siblings. As Edith and Erna grew into adulthood their friendship would continue to be one of the strongest of Edith’s life. Erna and Edith would be some of the first women to attend university in Germany, and Erna would go on to have a successful medical career, while Edith chose the path of philosophy and teaching.



Edith (right) and Erna Stein, circa 1900

Discussion Questions

3. What type of temperament does Edith have as a child? How is this both a blessing and a struggle for her?
4. Discuss the impressionability of children. What effect can exposure to disturbing images and situations have on a child? On the contrary, how much of an impact does a positive environment have?
5. Do you have a special sibling relationship? Have you thanked God, and that person, for the gift they are to you?

8. Ibid., 74–75. Stein’s interest in this literary work continued into her teaching years, as evidenced by the specific references which she makes to it in the Aufsatzthemen, or “Essay Themes,” which she wrote for her teacher preparation courses.

9. Stein, *Life*, 74.

10. Ibid., 75.

Renunciation of Belief

As Edith entered her teenage years, she made a very abrupt and remarkable decision. Although an outstanding scholar, and consistently at the top of her class, she decided to discontinue her schooling in 1906, at the age of 14. In her autobiography, she recounts the freedom which her mother gave to her in this decision, which was entirely her own. “Leaving school was anything but difficult for me...A healthy instinct was the decisive factor. It told me I had been sitting on a school-bench long enough and needed a change.”¹¹

Leaving her school bench behind, Edith headed to Hamburg, to serve as a mother’s helper for her older sister Else, who was married and expecting her second child. As Stein remarks, “Leaving home was no more difficult for me than bidding farewell to school and friends had been.”¹² Her work consisted of helping with the domestic chores and preparing her brother-in-law’s midday meal. Edith was never gifted in household skills, but she worked with good humor and diligence. She was able to use her free time for reading, which suited her active mind very well.

While certain aspects of life in Else’s home were agreeable to Edith’s development, there was an undeniable void as well, and the situation in Hamburg was to have a lasting impact on her which was not soon to be repaired. Stein’s sister and brother-in-law did not practice faith of any kind. This was the first time that she had been removed from a faith environment. In her decisive temperament, Stein made a life changing decision. She comments, “Max and Else were totally without belief; religion had no place whatsoever in their home. Deliberately and consciously, I gave up praying here.”¹³

Although her visit was meant to last for only six weeks, her family allowed her to stay in Hamburg for ten months. The inner change in Edith, and the environment in which she had lived, made a lasting impact on her. She returned to Breslau ready to return to school, but she would never again practice the faith of her Jewish family. Edith would remain an atheist for the next ten years of her life. This conscious decision to give up prayer was the beginning of Stein’s inner search for conviction and belief.

But Edith was not all seriousness—far from it. She counted outdoor activities among her favorite pastimes during her youth. She recalls numerous hiking trips, toboggan parties, and tennis matches with friends and family. Her interests were social, and she enjoyed interacting with cousins and classmates alike. Edith also loved dancing, and often enjoyed dancing with family friends while her sister Erna played the piano. Edith had a zest for life, a lively sense of humor, and an intellect which enthusiastically tackled the challenge of re-



Edith and Else Stein
pictured with Else’s
second child, Werner

11. Ibid., 75.

12. Ibid., 147.

13. Ibid., 148.

turning to school.

Stein returned to school in 1908, after studying rigorously with a half-year of private tutoring to prepare for her entrance examination to the *Obersekunda*. The return to vigorous study agreed with Stein, as she comments, “This half-year of intense work I have always remembered as the first completely happy time of my life...to have my mental powers fully engaged in a task for which they were eminently suited.”¹⁴ Edith the academic was emerging from Edith the child.

Discussion Questions

6. What triggered Stein’s renunciation of faith? What lessons can we learn from this?
7. Discuss individuals, both saints and everyday acquaintances, who lacked faith in their early years, and later converted to deep faith. What triggered their conversion? Discuss the effects of living in a nurturing, faith-filled environment versus a faithless one.
8. Would you say you have traveled a journey of faith? Was there something that caused you to lose your faith? How did you recover or discover it?

Academic Gifts and the Arts

Once Edith returned to school, she continued to excel in academics throughout her life. In all of her writings, in fact, she recalls her curriculum, teachers, lectures, discussions, and examination material from her courses with clarity and detail. She even comments on specific exam questions, and shares anecdotes from tutorial sessions. Clearly, academics were a strong part of her identity.

When she reached college age, she had to make a decision regarding her future coursework. Family discussion centered around Edith’s mathematical, artistic, literary and philosophical gifts. She wanted to pursue studies in both literature and philosophy, but these subjects were not considered practical, especially for a female in her time.

In fact, when Edith embarked upon her university career in literature, philosophy, and history, just two years after Prussian universities began admitting women, both the prudence and practicality of such a decision were ques-

DID YOU KNOW?

Obersekunda: Equivalent to the upper level of American high school, or the upper second in the British system. The average student age in the Obersekunda is 16 years.

Atheist or Agnostic—Which is which? The word atheist is derived from Greek, meaning “without a god.” An atheist rejects, denies, or disbelieves the existence of God. Agnostic, also a word with Greek roots, means “without knowledge.” An agnostic holds that the answer to whether or not God exists is simply not knowable to the human person.

¹⁴. Ibid., 155.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gregorian Chant: the forms of musical worship, as revised and established by Pope Gregory I. It is without definite rhythm and was probably accumulated from Jewish sources. It is accepted as the oldest chant in present day use. Its revised present form is due largely to the energy and inspiration of the monks at the Benedictine Abbey at Solesmes in northwestern France.¹

tioned within her extensive family circle. She explains in *Life in a Jewish Family* that at this important juncture in her life, it was ultimately her mother who stood unwaveringly behind her academic aspirations and played a decisive role in supporting what was considered to be a controversial vocational decision. Stein relates:

No one interfered with my choice of profession. My mother's protecting hand shielded it....She wanted me to have full freedom of choice.

'No one has a right to tell you what to do. After all, no one's making us a contribution toward it. Do whatever you think is right for you.'

So, without a care, I was able to pursue my goal.¹⁵

For her State Board examination at the end of her studies, Stein underwent what she describes as a rigorous "stroll" from Livy and Plato through the Middle High German epics, folk literature, Faust, and Romanticism, with great agility. Passing the daunting exams with highest honors, she received from her impressed examiners one conclusive remark, "The lady is well informed in general."¹⁶

The Stein household was a very cultured one, and Edith benefited greatly from such an environment. Along with her academic soul, she possessed a great love of the fine arts. Her favorite cultural activities included a trip to the theater or a musical concert. Here, she relates her soul's joyful response, for instance, at every opportunity to enjoy the dramatic arts:

Even more than reading, I enjoyed going to the theater. During those years, every time the presentation of a classical drama was announced, it was as though I had been tendered a personal invitation. An anticipated evening at the theater was like a brilliant star which gradually drew nearer. I counted the intervening days and hours. It was a great delight just to sit in the theater and wait for the heavy iron curtain to be raised slowly; the call bell finally sounded; and the new unknown world was revealed. Then I became totally immersed in the happenings on the stage, and the humdrum of everyday disappeared.¹⁷

Evidence of Edith Stein's profound appreciation of the musical arts, moreover, is seen in the account which she provides of her various operatic and classical tastes:

I loved the classical operas as much as I did the great tragedies. The first I heard was *The Magic Flute*. We bought the piano score and soon knew it by heart. So, too, with *Fidelio*, which always remained my favorite. I also heard Wagner and during a performance found it impossible wholly to evade its magic. Still I repudiated this music, with the sole exception of *Die Meistersinger*. I had a predilection for Bach. This world of purity and strict regularity attracted me most intimately. Later when I came to know Gregorian chant, I felt completely at home for the first time; and then I understood what had moved me so much in Bach.¹⁸

15. Ibid., 173.

16. Ibid., 314.

17. Ibid., 171–2.

18. Ibid., 172.

1. Hardon, S.J., *Dictionary*, 239.

Under the strenuous burden of teaching and academic work, Edith often turned to the world of the poetic imagination in order to draw renewed strength for her tasks at hand, as she observes:

If anything could sadden (my mother) in those days it was the enormous workload I was carrying. Upon coming home from school, I put all my school matters aside and took up my doctoral work. The family got to see me at the evening meal; but as soon as it was over, I withdrew again. Only at about ten at night would I begin preparing the following day's classes. If, while doing so, I became so fatigued that I could no longer grasp anything, I would read a bit of Shakespeare. That so renewed my vitality that I was able to begin again.¹⁹

If we pause to consider that when Edith read Shakespeare for refreshment, she was doing so as a native German speaker!—our admiration for her intellect can only increase.

She also recalls a significant instance in which exposure to classical music cured her of a bout of depression:

It was probably the summer of 1912 when I read the controversial novel, *Helmut Haringa*. Portraying student life, it portrayed in frighteningly vivid color the deplorable conditions in the fraternities with their senseless drinking requirements and the consequent moral aberrations. I was filled with such aversion that it took weeks before I recovered from it. I had lost all confidence in the persons with whom I associated daily; I went about as one unbearably burdened; and I was beyond finding enjoyment in anything at all. What cured me of this depression is highly significant. That year a great Bach Festival was given in Breslau. Bach was my favorite, so naturally I had a ticket for each of the performances: an organ concert; chamber music; and a gala evening of orchestral and vocal music. I no longer recall which oratorio was being presented that evening. I only know that Luther's defiant hymn "A Mighty Fortress" was included. I had always liked singing it in our school devotions. When, in stirring battle cry, the verse was sung:

'And though this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us
We will not fear,
...truth will triumph through us'

my pessimistic outlook vanished completely. True, the world might be evil; but if the small group of friends in whom I had confidence and I strove with all our might, we should certainly have done with all 'devils.'²⁰

Edith Stein is but one among many blessed individuals who can appreciate the ability of beauty to make the human heart soar. In fact, she has this in common with Cardinal Ratzinger (later known as Pope Benedict XVI) who wrote movingly of a similar experience he had when music stirred him to a profound appreciation of Divine Truth:

...The encounter with the beautiful can become the wound of the ar-

19. Ibid., 396.

20. Ibid., 216–217.

row that strikes the heart...For me an unforgettable experience was the Bach concert that Leonard Bernstein conducted in Munich after the sudden death of Karl Richter. I was sitting next to the Lutheran Bishop Hanselmann. When the last note of one of the great Thomas-Kantor-Cantatas triumphantly faded away, we looked at each other spontaneously and right then we said: 'Anyone who has heard this, knows that the faith is true'. The music had such an extraordinary force of reality that we realized, no longer by deduction, but by the impact on our hearts, that it could not have originated from nothingness, but could only have come to be through the power of the Truth that became real in the composer's inspiration.²¹

And so we see the youthful seeker, Edith Stein, as she journeyed through life—involving herself in all manner of activities suitable to a girl her age—and always ready to pause in her busyness to drink in the beauty around her. As Stein's intellectual gifts matured she looked for answers to the larger questions of life. What Being controls the universe? What is the underpinning of all human experience? To find these answers she would progress to graduate studies in Psychology and eventually Philosophy. This next chapter of her life took her to new places and shaped her life forever.

Discussion Question

9. Education and the arts were vital to Stein's development. Reflect with your group on the policy many schools have adopted, forbidding any religious references from being included in music programs?

21. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Beauty and the Truth of Christ," published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 6, 2002.

Point for Personal Meditation:

To admire the icons and great masterpieces of Christian art, in general, leads us on an inner way, a way of overcoming ourselves; thus, in this purification of vision that is a purification of the heart, it reveals the beautiful to us, or at least a part of it. In this way we are brought into contact with the power of truth. I have often affirmed my conviction that the true apology of the Christian faith, the most convincing demonstration of its truth against every denial, are the saints, and the beauty that the faith has generated. Today, for faith to grow, we must lead ourselves and the persons we meet to encounter the saints and to enter into contact with the Beautiful.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Beauty and the Truth of Christ"



Endow Adult Studies

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II COLLECTION



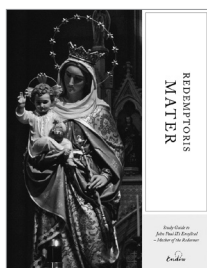
LETTER TO WOMEN | Study for John Paul II's Letter Addressing Women

Navigate the complexities of modern life with faith and clarity through our most popular and foundational study grounded in the timeless wisdom of Pope St. John Paul II. In an age marked by confusion about what it means to be a woman and how we are called to love, *Letter to Women* offers insights rooted in Divine Revelation. Written for the 1995 Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, this letter uncovers profound reflections on human dignity, the vocation of women, and timeless truths revealed through Christ's love. *Letter to Women* helps you rediscover the beauty of your unique vocation and the power of your feminine genius.



MULIERIS DIGNITATEM | On the Dignity and Vocation of Women

Discover the profound insights of Pope St. John Paul II's apostolic letter, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (*Mulieris Dignitatem*), with Endow's comprehensive study. His timeless 1988 letter reflects on the divine purpose of men and women and calls us to emulate Our Blessed Mother, Mary. Through Christ's interactions with women in the Gospels, the Pope illuminates the sacred vocations of spiritual and physical motherhood. By the study's end, you'll gain an appreciation for the Church's unwavering support for women, empowering you to become a joyful, faith-filled evangelizer in words and actions.



REDEMPTORIS MATER | Mother of the Redeemer

Ignite your unique feminine genius through Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Pope St. John Paul II calls our Blessed Mother, Mary, the "most excellent expression of the feminine genius." His presentation of Mary in *Redemptoris Mater* gives each of us a model to follow in navigating our personal vocation. This study helps you connect with Mary as a sister, a companion, and above all, a mother who awakens hope and confidence in God's infinite mercy and love.



ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE | The Most Holy Rosary

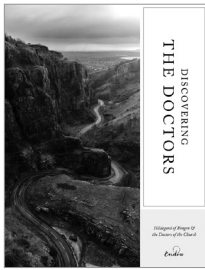
Bring countless blessings into your life and the lives of those around you by growing in devotion to our Blessed Mother. Pope St. John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* invites you into deeper prayer with Jesus through Mary. Whether you have never prayed the Rosary or pray it daily, this study will draw you closer to Christ by meditating on His life and mission. Through *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, you will develop a deeper devotion to praying the rosary and reignite your relationship with Mary, who will lovingly guide you along your spiritual journey.



SALVIFICI DOLORIS | On the Christian Meaning of Suffering

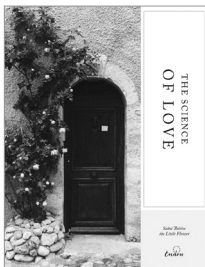
Reconciling the world's beauty with the weight of human suffering is a problem almost as old as the world itself. Every age and culture has attempted to understand the meaning of human suffering. In this study, you will meditate upon the words of Pope St. John Paul II, explore the various ways we experience suffering, and reflect on how suffering can serve as pathways to personal sanctification. Through this study, you will examine your own heart, mind, and actions, seeking to find the meaning in your own walk through 'the Valley of Tears.'

FEMALE SAINTS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH COLLECTION



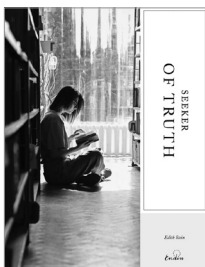
DISCOVERING THE DOCTORS | *St. Hildegard of Bingen and the Doctors of the Church*

The title “Doctor of the Church” is a rare and prestigious honor, celebrating intellectual brilliance and profound spiritual depth. Explore the meaning of this revered title before diving into the life of St. Hildegard of Bingen. A Benedictine nun, composer, playwright, preacher, healer, and prophet, Hildegard’s extraordinary story includes providing spiritual guidance to popes and monarchs and leaving a legacy in music and theology. Discover Hildegard’s multifaceted life then reflect on how God works in your own journey. This study challenges you to deepen your spiritual understanding and embrace the rich inheritance and community of the esteemed Doctors of the Church.



SCIENCE OF LOVE | *St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower*

Encounter St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who offers the modern woman a fresh perspective on happiness, discipleship, and sainthood. She presents her “Little Way” with a striking simplicity that continues to challenge conventional norms. Thérèse’s singular aspiration was clear: to become a saint. This study explores Thérèse’s own writings as well as the writing of numerous experts, including Pope St. John Paul II. Through this study you will encounter St. Thérèse—a remarkably original woman brimming with dreams, authenticity, and freedom—in a whole new way.



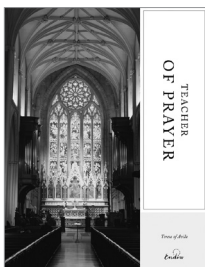
SEEKER OF TRUTH | *Edith Stein*

Uncover the extraordinary journey of Edith Stein in *Seeker of Truth*. Raised in a devout Jewish family, Edith drifted from her faith and became an atheist, but her relentless search for truth as a young German philosopher led to her conversion to Catholicism. Embracing a life of deep faith, she became a Carmelite nun and ultimately gave her life in martyrdom at Auschwitz. Her profound insights on the dignity and vocation of women deeply influenced Pope St. John Paul II’s understanding of the feminine genius. This study explores Stein’s life, writings, and witness, revealing God’s guidance at every step. Let Edith Stein’s unwavering faith and courageous witness inspire you to step out of your comfort zone and pursue truth with passion.



SETTING THE WORLD ABLAZE | *St. Catherine of Siena*

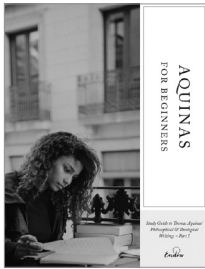
In an age when women were expected to either marry or retreat to the cloister, St. Catherine of Siena lived large in the world. She counseled rulers, reprimanded bishops, and advised popes. Despite her brief 33 years on earth, St. Catherine’s profound impact earned her the distinguished title of Doctor of the Church. Through this study, you will get to know St. Catherine as a friend, teacher, and sister in Christ. Her witness and wisdom will draw you closer to Jesus, helping you to follow the advice that Catherine both gave and completely embodied: “Be who God made you to be, and you will set the world ablaze”.



TEACHER OF PRAYER | *St. Teresa of Ávila*

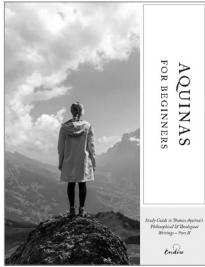
At the heart of this study lies the passionate, unrelenting love of St. Teresa of Ávila, the renowned sixteenth-century Spanish nun who became the first female Doctor of the Church. With her feminine heart and deep spiritual wisdom, St. Teresa leads us on a sacred journey that unfolds within our souls. This study guides women through Teresa’s “Interior Castle,” where Christ abides in the center of our being. Teresa of Ávila’s profound insights on prayer will lead you to a deepened interior life, empowering you to confront the challenges of our modern world.

WISDOM OF THE CHURCH COLLECTION



AQUINAS FOR BEGINNERS, PART I

Unlock the wisdom that has shaped centuries of thought with *Aquinas for Beginners, Part I*. This study introduces you to St. Thomas Aquinas' foundational philosophy, revealing the profound truths about what it means to be human, made in the image of God. Through Aquinas' writings, you will uncover his five compelling reasons for the existence of God and gain a deeper, more enriching understanding of the human person as a union of body and soul. Explore these timeless insights and strengthen your faith with clarity and purpose.



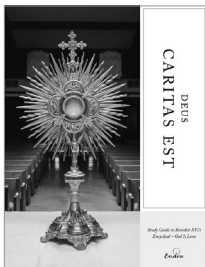
AQUINAS FOR BEGINNERS, PART II

Aquinas for Beginners, Part II builds on the foundation of Part I by examining the powerful virtues that shape a joyful, purposeful, and deeply fulfilling Catholic life. Through a detailed exploration of each virtue, you'll uncover their true meaning and learn how to cultivate them daily, transforming your actions and relationships and becoming a source of light and hope to those around you. This study will inspire you to live with greater intention, deepen your faith, and build a life rooted in empathy, understanding, and moral strength.



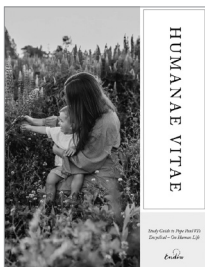
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

A call to action for every woman to inspire meaningful change, *Catholic Social Teaching* is not a mere collection of principles, but a divine narrative inviting us to restore harmony within humanity. As women, we are uniquely called to lead this mission to share God's love through the gift of femininity. With insights and the wisdom of Mary, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and others, discover how to heal our broken world—starting in our hearts and radiating outward as instruments of God's peace.



DEUS CARITAS EST | God Is Love

Reclaim the true meaning of love with Pope Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*. In this study, Pope Benedict XVI confronts how modern culture has distorted the word 'love' and invites us to rediscover its authentic, Christ-centered essence. By delving into this profound encyclical, you will gain insight into how true love is expressed in your relationships—with God, with family, and within your community. This understanding empowers you to bring Christ's transformative love into every aspect of your life, enriching the world with a deeper, more meaningful love.



HUMANAE VITAE | On Human Life

Pope Paul VI's prophetic encyclical explains the Church's teaching on the beauty of marriage, the sanctity of human life within the marital bond, and the problematic nature of contraception. The document's key message is understanding the inseparable dependency of authentic love and truth in human relationships. This study addresses many questions modern Catholics face regarding human love. *Humanae Vitae* is a valuable resource for understanding God's role in procreation and why the Church so strongly guides us toward honoring our dignity within intimate relationships.



LUMEN GENTIUM | Light of the Nations

Transform your understanding of the Church's divine mission with *Lumen Gentium* — *Light of the Nations*. This pivotal Vatican II document reveals the Church as the 'sacrament of salvation'—a living expression of Christ's presence in the world. This study invites you to reflect on essential questions: What does the modern Church look like? What are we supposed to be to the world in our current culture? By embracing these teachings, you'll discover your unique role within the Church and become a powerful bearer of Christ's light in your community and beyond.

Studies for Middle and High School

Endow Youth Studies guide young women on a journey to discover their true identity as daughters of God. Through engaging readings, group discussions, dynamic activities, and prayer, young women explore how their gifts and purpose contribute to their relationships, the Church and society. These studies enhance faith understanding, cultivate virtue, and foster a vibrant interior life, aiming to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, the source of their dignity.



Magnifica
por Endow
Spanish Language Studies

Many Endow studies are available in Spanish through our affiliate, Magnifica Grupos.

<https://magnificagrupos.org/>

*Visit www.endowgroups.org
to browse and purchase all studies.*

About Endow

Endow (Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women) is a Catholic apostolate that calls women together to study important documents of the church. Through Endow groups, women encounter their identity as daughters of God, enabling them to grow in their faith and ultimately discover their mission in life.

Mission

Endow seeks to educate women toward a deeper, more profound understanding of their God-given dignity. Rooted in the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, Endow affirms the genius of women—the feminine genius—and empowers them to fulfill our culture's desperate need for an authentic feminine presence in every aspect of life and society.

Endow attracts women of all ages, races, nationalities, and vocations and brings them together in small group communities of faith and friendship. We encourage women to recognize and cultivate their unique feminine genius through the study of papal and magisterial documents, as well as the lives and writings of the saints. Endow group members encounter the Catholic intellectual tradition together, sometimes for the very first time, and learn how to live the fullness of their feminine genius in their families, workplaces and communities.

History

Endow was founded in 2003 when three women—Betsy Considine, Marilyn Coors and Terry Polakovic—encountered the writings of Pope St. John Paul II on the new feminism. They quickly realized the impact of these life-changing truths and wanted all women to learn them too. With the help of Archbishop Charles Chaput, Archbishop José Gomez, and renowned Catholic scholar Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., they began writing studies for use in small groups. These studies have enabled our participants—wives, mothers, single and consecrated women—to encounter the beauty and depth of the Church's teachings on womanhood. From its humble beginnings as a lunch-time conversation in Denver, Endow has grown into an international apostolate present in over 130 dioceses, impacting over 40,000 women worldwide.

Contributions

To keep Endow studies accessible to as many women as possible, our registration costs are supplemented by the generous gifts of our many supporters. Endow operates as a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Please consider joining our mission by donating at www.endowgroups.org/give. We would not be able to exist without our generous donors. *Deo gratias!*