



Know why Jesus blessed the pure in heart.
Reflect on the presence of God within you.

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

Jesus says that the pure in heart are blessed for they shall see God. The pure in heart are those who become aware of the presence of God within them and who try to live in a way pleasing to Him. Edith Stein's extraordinary life may help us to understand this great beatitude.

St. Edith Stein (1891-1942)

Edith Stein was born into a Jewish family in Breslau, Germany. Her father died when she was only two. By the time she was a teenager, she had become an atheist and no longer believed in God.



Edith was very intelligent and, when she went to university, she studied philosophy. Some of her student friends were Catholics and gradually she became interested in their religion. She was inspired by reading the New Testament. One night, she began to read the life of St. Teresa of Avila, a Carmelite nun. She was so fascinated with this book that she read all night and, in the morning, she was convinced that she must become a Catholic. She was instructed in the Catholic faith and before long was baptised. Her mother was very upset when she heard this, but Edith knew she had to follow her conscience.

At this time, the Nazis were in power in Germany and they wanted to get rid of all the Jews. Terrible things were happening as they were being arrested and taken to concentration camps to be exterminated. Edith felt that, as a Jewish-Christian, her life was in danger too. One day in prayer, she spoke to Jesus and told him that she realised it was his Cross that was being laid on the Jewish people and she was willing to offer her life, if Jesus would show her what to do.

She felt called to religious life and entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany. Once again, her mother was very upset and wept bitterly as she felt Edith had abandoned them. She took the new name of Sister Teresa Benedicta.



In 1938, the war against the Jews was declared openly. Edith believed that her presence in the convent put the lives of the other Sisters in danger, so she was smuggled out of the country to a Carmelite convent in Holland. However in 1940, the Nazis occupied Holland. Within a short time all Jewish Catholics,

including members of religious orders, were under arrest. The Gestapo arrived for her on 2 August 1942. She placed all her trust in Jesus and instead of thinking about herself, concentrated on trying to care for the terrified children and mothers who were on their way to Auschwitz.

On 9 August, Edith died in the gas chamber. She was canonized on 11 October 1998 by Pope John Paul II.

Your task:

Sometimes it is hard to believe that Jesus is with us.

1. Identify the times you think Jesus was with Edith Stein in her life.
2. Recall a difficult time in your life, or in the life of someone you know. Write a prayer to thank Jesus for the ways he helped.