

A Conversion from Atheism

Edith Stein came from a large, faithful Jewish family in an area of Germany that is now Poland. Her father passed away when she was two years old, but her mother worked to ensure that she and her siblings received a good education. By her teenage years, though, she had begun to have doubts about God's existence.



After high school, Edith went to college, where she studied philosophy under a famous professor. Eventually she decided to become a philosopher herself. She earned her doctorate degree, started teaching alongside her professor, and wrote books. She was firm in her belief that God did not exist.

However, Edith underwent a conversion after three experiences that left a deep impact on her.

One day, she saw a woman enter an empty cathedral to pray. Edith watched her pray and was amazed at the woman's faith.

Later, Edith met the widow of a friend who had passed away. Despite this woman's sadness at the loss of her husband, she continued to believe in and love God. This had a tremendous impact on Edith.

Lastly, Edith read a biography of Saint Teresa of Avila. By reading this, Edith came to believe the truth of God's existence and the Catholic faith.

Edith saw truth and beauty in what each of these people believed, and she was determined to live her life in the same way. She was baptized in 1922 and went to teach at a convent school and later at a Catholic college.

However, Edith soon faced challenges. Sadly, due to Nazi persecution of Jewish people, Edith lost her job teaching at the college. These difficulties did not lessen her faith. She went on to join a Carmelite monastery in 1934 and took the name Teresa, in honor of the saint whose biography had inspired her to faith in God.

Teresa and her sister Rosa, who also had converted to Catholicism, were moved to a Carmelite monastery in the Netherlands to be kept safe from the Nazis. However, they were captured in 1942 and sent to the prison camp at Auschwitz, where they were killed. Teresa was declared a saint in 1998 by Pope Saint John Paul II.

Journal Reflection

Teresa was helped in her conversion by the witness of faithful people. ***What is one way you can be a witness to others when they doubt God's existence?*** Write your answer on the journal page. Journal pages are available on the parent and student portals.