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Biographia

THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX, *Story of a Soul: Study Edition*, (trans.) JOHN CLARKE, O.C.D, (ed.) MARY FOLEY, O.C.D. 2005, pp. xxiii, 459. ICS Publications, 2131 Lincoln Road NE, Washington DC 20002-1151, U.S.A. (www.icspublications.org). ISBN 0-935216-38-3. \$ 18.95.

According to the blurb on the back cover of this study edition of the autobiography of St. Thérèse, its purpose is 'to assist contemporary readers to apply the spiritual insights of the *Story of a Soul* to their lives. Those wishing to do so now have an admirable tool to aid them. Marc Foley takes the autobiography chapter by chapter. At the end of each, the background and context are presented, followed by reflections and questions. There are a number of reflections for each chapter, and each reflection has its own set of questions. The author puts to good use here the insights of psychology and spirituality, both ancient and modern. The author finds parallels to Thérèse's thought, and examples to illustrate it, in a variety of well chosen extracts from authors as diverse as Julian of Norwich, Victor Frankl, John Cheever, Emily Dickinson, William Blake, the Brontë sisters, St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great and many more. The essence of Thérèse's thought is extracted and placed alongside this rich and varied selection. Shown in this new light, her writings are seen to have a timeless quality and universal application. The notes at the end of each section shed further light on the saint.

To anyone who finds St. Thérèse's language and style difficult to read, even in a translation of the original manuscripts which is faithful to the text exactly as it left the pen of the saint, it would present no problem to read the study sections first. This would surely entice the reader to go back and savour what Thérèse actually wrote. This might make the reluctant reader better able to move beyond the mode of expression and the cultural conditioning of Thérèse's writing to the extraordinary spiritual insights, and insights into human nature, which have moved the Church to declare her to be one of her doctors, a special guide to the faithful on their path to God.

Directly after the conclusion of the study section, there is an epilogue recounting the last months of St. Thérèse's life, which makes illuminating background to the autobiography, especially to the final section. This is followed by the texts of the letter she carried on her heart, her *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love* and her explanation of her coat of arms. These appendices are followed by a comprehensive chronology of the important dates and events

in the life of St. Thérèse helpfully divided into sections. A posthumous chronology containing the notable dates after her death, in the development of her cult and the popularity of her writings, brings the reader right up to the centenary celebrations and the publications which were prepared for that important occasion. In fact, everything has been thought of, even to the supplying of blank pages at the end of the book for notes.

This study edition is based on the translation of the autobiography by John Clarke, O.C.D., and his introduction to the first edition of his translation is reproduced at the beginning, following an introduction to the third edition by Stephen Payne, O.C.D., the editorial director of I.C.S. publications. Finally there is a prologue giving the family background and a list of St. Thérèse's family and cousins presented by Marc Foley, this very modest author who appears only as a name at the conclusion of the study section and before the epilogue and appendices. He writes by way of conclusion: 'As we go our separate ways, let us pray for one another with the belief that prayer is an act of love and that it is love alone that helps us on our journey home to God. *Oremus pro invicem.*' He deserves our grateful prayers for this fine book.

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SYLVIE GERMAIN, *Etty Hillesum: Una vida*. 2004, pp. 167. Sal Terrae, Santander. ISBN 88-209-2267-3.

Este libro es la traducción española de una breve presentación de la vida y del pensamiento de Etty Hillesum, publicada en francés (Pygmalion, Paris 1999) de la escritora y ensayista francesa Sylvie Germain, autora también de novelas como *Livre de nuits* o *Jours de colère*.

Etty Hillesum es -digámoslo sin ambages desde el principio- uno de los personajes más atrayentes del siglo XX, si bien se trata de una mujer difícilmente "etiquetable" (¿escritora? ¿filósofa? ¿teóloga? ¿mística?). Su figura intelectual y espiritual (conocida a través de su Diario y de sus cartas desde el campo de concentración de Westerbork), sigue cautivando hoy a los que se acercan a sus escritos. Esta obra de Sylvie Germain nos introduce en esta biografía espiritual en el marco de los terribles acontecimientos que se iban sucediendo en la Holanda ocupada. La presión *in crescendo* de las fuerzas de ocupación iba provocando también un crecimiento interior y una maduración espiritual insospechada en la joven Etty.

Como introducción a la figura de Etty Hillesum, la autora toca los principales temas de su universo religioso: el Dios débil que se convierte en víctima y al que tenemos que ayudar y salvar; lo que podríamos denominar su "triple conversión" que la lleva -animada por Julius Spier- a pronunciar el nombre de Dios (en el momento en que hacerlo parece más escandaloso), la conversión hacia el prójimo en una actitud ética y fraterna sobrecogedora, y