

Saint Teresa of the Andes  
(Juanita Solar y Fernández)  
Born 13 July 1900, Santiago, Chile  
Died 12 April 1920 Los Andes, Valparaíso, Chile

Brilliant, vivacious and hot-tempered, Juanita Solar shocked her wealthy family when she announced that she was becoming a Carmelite nun. This was a girl who rode horses high up into the Andes and who loved active sports, especially swimming and tennis.

At fourteen, Juanita read *The Story of a Soul* by Thérèse of Lisieux, and three years later she read the words of Elizabeth of the Trinity. While still a student, Juanita wrote a prize-winning essay describing the struggle between the forces of light and darkness. She concluded that although the struggle will never end, "*While the children of the shade demolish, the children of the light regenerate.*" Soon Juanita received revelation: that, like Thérèse and Elizabeth, she too would become a Carmelite. She gave herself over completely to prayer, and began to record her spiritual journey. On 7 May 1919, she was admitted as a novice and given the name Teresa of Jesus. Her abbess allowed her to maintain an extensive correspondence with the outside world. This was a highly unusual privilege for a novice, and it was fortunate because Teresa did not have long to live. Felled by a sudden attack of typhus, she received the last rites. On 7 April 1920, she was allowed to make her religious profession although she had not yet completed her novitiate. (This is called *articulo mortis* - "in the event of death" - and if the postulate recovers she must complete the novitiate.) After Teresa's death, the nuns and her family were surprised at how many strangers came to venerate the little saint. Soon miracles were reported at her tomb. Canonised in 1993, Teresa became Chile's first saint.

**The Genius of Teresa of the Andes:**

What could this mere girl accomplish in her brief lifetime? The answer: she lived, she loved, and she believed that "*Love is the function of two souls in one in order to bring about mutual perfection.*"

**Reflection:**

*"You were once in darkness, but now you are the light in the Lord. Live as children of lights, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."*

Ephesians 5.8-9

Gallick, Sarah, [The Big Book of Women Saints](#), p. 210