Celebrate the holiness of St. Teresa of Avila

On October 15, we celebrate the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church and founder of the Discalced Carmelites. (Extra credit: Who knows what "discalced" means?)

Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in Ávila, Spain, in 1515. Teresa's father had three children by his first marriage. After he was widowed, he remarried, and Teresa was the third of nine children of the new marriage.

"I had a father and mother who were devout and feared God," the saint wrote in her autobiography. "My father was a man of great charity toward the poor, and compassion for the sick, and also for servants; so much so that he never could be persuaded to keep slaves … My mother also was a woman of great goodness, and her life was spent in great infirmities."

When Teresa was a child, she loved to read the lives of saints, and one day she and her brother decided to run away in order to seek martyrdom among the Moors in Africa – only to be stopped by an uncle who took them home. When she was 13, her mother died, and at 16, her father sent her to an Augustinian convent school. After a little over a year away, she returned home, ill.

Desiring the safest way to avoid hell, she resolved to enter religious life when she was 18. After her father refused his consent, she and a brother ran away from home one night – he to seek admission to a Dominican friary and she to enter a Carmelite convent. The Carmelites sent her father word that she was with them, and he finally gave his consent.