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# Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 110 NO. 3 ■ THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1998 ■ 75¢ ■ 16 PAGES



## Saint Edith

Edith Stein always knew she was destined for something big.

"In my dreams I always foresaw a brilliant future for myself," she wrote in *Life in a Jewish Family: Her Unfinished Biographical Account*. "I was convinced that I was destined for something great and that I did not belong at all in the narrow bourgeois circumstances into which I had been born."

Her dreams probably never foresaw, however, that she'd become a Catholic saint. On Oct. 11 Pope John Paul II canonized her Saint Teresa Benedicta, the modern church's first saint who was a Jewish convert.

Her canonization, however, was cause for Cardinal William Keeler, the U.S. bishops' moderator for Catholic-Jewish relations, to update an advisory for Catholics. It centered on lingering Jewish concerns that Catholics will attempt to convert Jews in the name of Saint Edith, and that Catholics might view the Holocaust, which wiped out two-thirds of European Jews, as more a Christian tragedy than Jewish. The advisory first came out when Stein was beatified in 1987.

Born Oct. 12, 1891, in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland), St. Edith earned a doctorate in philosophy. Unable to obtain a university position because of her gender, she worked for many years as a translator, writer, schoolteacher and lecturer. Raised Jewish, she was for a time an atheist, but in 1922 became a Catholic. She wanted to become a nun, but delayed that out of sensitivity to

her Orthodox Jewish mother. Finally, in 1933, after the Nazis banned Jews from teaching posts, she joined the Carmelites. She was later arrested at a convent in Holland, and died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz on Aug. 9, 1942.

Pope John Paul II has urged Catholics to use Aug. 9 - now, in the church calendar, Edith Stein's feast day - as a day to remember not only St. Edith, but all Jews killed in the Holocaust.

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### Stein family recalls aunt

Frank Stein's family never talked much about his Great-aunt Edith while he was growing up in Philadelphia - until her beatification in 1987.

"My father never talked about any of this stuff," explained Stein, now a Fairport resident. "He was in a concentration camp himself, in Auschwitz."

Stein surmised that most of the rest of his family hardly understood, much less approved, of her conversion.

That conversion, and her subsequent death in a concentration camp, led to Edith Stein's canonization Oct. 11 in Rome. Frank Stein was invited to the ceremony, but could not go because he and his wife had to attend a wedding. His son, Mark, went instead.

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