

'Miracle' girl attends Mass

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With his wife and 12 children looking on, Melkite Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy concelebrated Mass with Pope John Paul II and pondered the mystery of how St. Edith Stein has touched his family.

The McCartneys attended the Oct. 11 Mass during which Pope John Paul canonized Edith Stein, who was born Jewish and died as a Carmelite nun in the gas chamber of Auschwitz in 1942.

The youngest McCarthy, 14-year-old Teresa Benedicta, and her mother received Communion from the pope during the Mass.

Benedicta, as she is called, almost died as a 2-year-old after eating a lethal dose of Tylenol. Her full recovery was accepted by the Vatican as a miracle attributed to the intercession of Stein, who took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross when she entered the Carmelite monastery.

"Being at the Mass was a very, very powerful experience," said Father McCarthy.

For the priest, who lives in Brockton, Mass., "The Mass was more than two hours of meditation on the mysteries of the life of Edith Stein and of our family," he told CNS the next morning.

Father McCarthy said he just could not stop thinking about "how all these things — just small details — entered into our lives and led to this."

He was ordained to the priesthood in Syria on the 1981 anniversary of Stein's death, although he didn't realize it at the time. He began reading about Stein and, in 1984, he and his wife named their newborn daughter after her. Then, in 1987, as Benedicta lay dying, he and his family and friends prayed for Stein's intercession.

While Father McCarthy said he is awed by St. Stein's life — "intellectually, spiritually and humanly," — he said his wife approaches her more as a close friend who has always been there when needed.

One of the McCarthy sons has studied "Stein the philosopher" and the oldest daughter studied St. Stein's life and spirituality in preparation for painting the icon of the new saint that adorns the Carmelite monastery near Auschwitz.

"The whole time Benedicta was sick the whole family was aware of whom she was named after and who Edith Stein was. They prayed with her; it's natural for a Catholic family to teach their children to pray with Mary and the saints," Father McCarthy said.

Pontiff canonizes St. Edith Stein

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — While honoring Edith Stein as a Catholic saint, the church must never forget the millions of her Jewish brothers and sisters who died with her in the Nazi death camps, Pope John Paul II said.

During an Oct. 11 Mass in St. Peter's Square, the pope canonized the Carmelite nun, who was raised Jewish, became Catholic at the age of 30, and entered the monastery 14 years later, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Deported by the Nazis from the Netherlands, where she and her sister were given refuge, she died Aug. 9, 1942, in the gas chamber at Auschwitz.

Each year on her Aug. 9 feast day, the pope said, Catholics must remember the Holocaust, "that savage plan to eliminate a people which took the lives of millions of Jewish brothers and sisters."

"For the love of God and of humanity, once again I raise a heartfelt cry: May there never again be repeated a similar criminal initiative against any ethnic group, any people, any race in any corner of the earth," the pope said.

Throughout his homily, the pope emphasized St. Stein's Jewish roots and prayed that her witness would make "the bridge of mutual understanding between Jews and Christians even more solid."

While objections to the canonization were not as many nor as vocal as objections to her 1987 beatification, some Jewish leaders continued to insist that Stein was killed because she was Jewish, not martyred for her Catholic faith. Pope John Paul said he was honored "to solemnly present before the whole world this eminent daughter of Israel and faithful daughter of the church as a saint."

"Because she was Jewish, Edith Stein was deported along with her sister Rosa and many other Jews from the Netherlands to the Auschwitz concentration camp where, together, they found death in the gas chamber," he said.

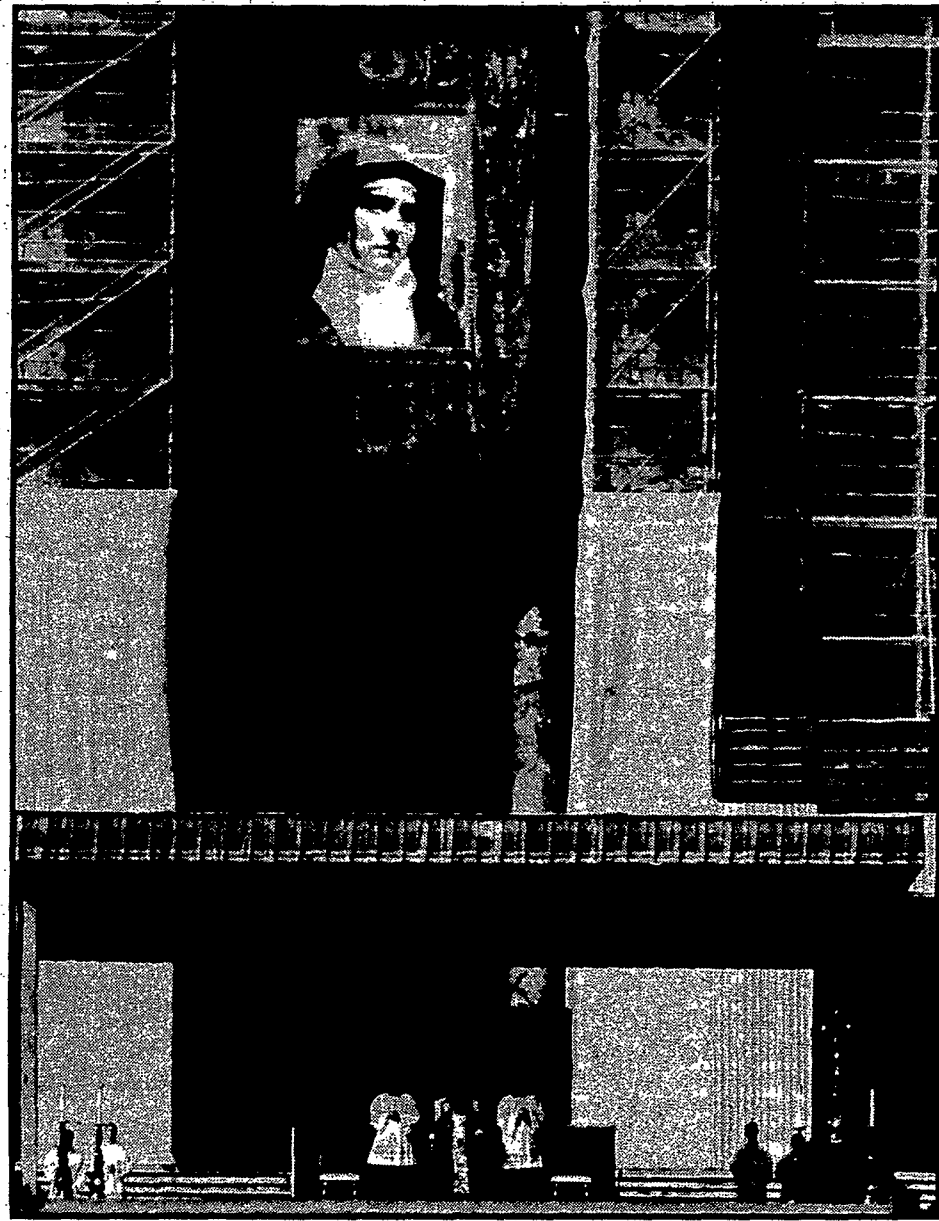
"We remember them all today with profound respect," the pope said.

Pope John Paul said St. Stein had refused offers to help her avoid the deportation because she was a nun.

He said her response was to ask, "Doesn't justice perhaps exist in the fact that I do not take advantage of my baptism? If I cannot share the fate of my brothers and sisters, my life is, in a sense, destroyed."

Hundreds of cardinals, bishops and priests concelebrated the Mass, including Melkite Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, father of the U.S. girl whose healing was accepted as the miracle needed for St. Stein's canonization.

Teresa Benedicta McCarthy, whom Father McCarthy and his wife named after St. Stein, was 2 when she ate a lethal dose of Tylenol. As her enlarged liver failed,



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II leads a canonization ceremony Oct. 11 for Edith Stein, a convert from Judaism who became a nun and died at Auschwitz in 1942.

her parents, family and friends began praying to Stein for a cure. Doctors said there was no natural or medical explanation for the fact that her liver returned to its normal size and function.

Benedicta's 11 brothers and sisters were in the congregation during the Mass in St. Peter's Square. The family belongs to the Melkite Catholic Church, which has retained the tradition of ordaining married men to the priesthood.

In his homily, the pope also emphasized St. Stein's work as a philosopher before and after her conversion. Her philosophy, theology and efforts to improve the status of women were the topics of an academic conference hosted by the Carmelites in Rome the week before the canonization.

Leaving aside her Jewish faith, St. Stein went in search of what she thought was freedom and truth, the pope said.

"She wanted to count only on herself, preoccupied with affirming her own freedom in the choices of her life," he said.

In her academic research, the pope said, "she followed the arduous path of philosophy with passionate fervor and in the end she was rewarded: she conquered the truth, or rather, she was conquered by it."

"In fact, she discovered that truth had a name, Jesus Christ, and from that moment on the Incarnate Word was everything for her," the pope said.

At the Oct. 7-9 international conference on St. Stein's work, the superior general of the Discalced Carmelites said, "Edith Stein followed the journey of researching the mystery of God and once she found it, she experienced Auschwitz."

The nun's death, said Carmelite Father Camilo Maccise, is a sign that "in the midst of absurdity and human wickedness, God is present and near; he helps us carry the weight of the cross in the dark night of the faith; and he makes us capable of speaking about him and witnessing to his presence in the heart of people and of the world."

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