

1-7 After four years, or it may be a little more, a Religious of the Order of St. Francis came to see me, his name was Fray Alfonso Maldonado, a great servant of God, having the same desires as myself for the good of souls; but he was able to accomplish them, for which I envied him extremely. As he had not long come from India, he began to tell me how many millions of souls were lost there, for want of instruction, and he gave us a sermon on the subject, exhorting us to do penance, and then he departed. I became so distressed at the loss of so many souls that I could not contain myself. I went to one of our hermitages, and there, with many tears, cried out to our Lord, beseeching Him to give me the means whereby I might be able to gain some souls to His service, since the devil had carried away so many, and that I would have no other purpose. I envied those greatly, who for the love of God were able to do this work, though they should suffer a thousand deaths. When we read in the Lives of the Saints how they converted souls, this excites within me more devotion, more tenderness and envy, than all the martyrdoms they suffered. This is a feeling our Lord has given me, thus showing me that He values one soul which we gain through His mercy by our prayers more than all the services we can do for Him.

1-8 One night, while I was in prayer (with this great pain), our Lord presented Himself to me in the manner He was accustomed and showed me much affection, as if He wished to console me. He said — "*Wait a little, daughter, and you will see great things.*" These words remained so fixed in my heart. I could not drive them away; and though I could not imagine, nor see any ground to imagine what they meant, though I thought much on the matter, I was greatly consoled. I felt certain the words would become true, but by what means never entered my imagination. Almost another year passed it seems when the following took place.

2-1 Our Generals always reside in Rome, and none of them was ever known to come to Spain, so that for anyone to come now, seemed impossible. But whatever our Lord wills is sure to be done. His Majesty ordered that to happen now what had never happened before. When I heard of his arrival, I appeared to be much troubled, because (as I related when speaking of the foundation of the convent of St. Joseph) that house was not subject to the Carmelite Order, and therefore I feared two things: one, that he would be displeased with me, for not knowing how matters were going—he had just reason; the other, that he would command me to return to the monastery of the Incarnation, where the rule is mitigated. This would have been a great affliction to me for many obvious reasons: one was, that I could not observe the primitive rule there, and the other was that there were over a hundred and fifty nuns. I knew that where there are only a few nuns, it is quieter and more conformity to the rules. But our Lord directed this matter better than I could have imagined. The General was only His holy servant, very prudent and learned, he saw it was a good undertaking; for the rest, he was not severe with me in any way. His name was Father John Baptist Rubeo of Ravenna, a person much esteemed in the Order, and deservedly so.

2-2 Having arrived in Avila, I invited him to visit St. Joseph's. The bishop wished that the same attention should be paid to him as to any person. I gave him an account of the foundation with all truth and simplicity because it is my desire to act like this with my superiors, come what may, since they stand in the place of God. I do the same with my confessors, for if I did not, I think there would be no peace in my soul. So I gave him an account of both the monastery, and of my whole life, though it has been so wicked. He consoled me greatly, and assured me he would not command me to leave the monastery.

2-3 He was very pleased to see our way of living, an imperfect image of our Order when it began, as we observed the primitive rule in all its rigor. This was not the case in any other monastery in the Order. As he had a great desire that this beginning should go forward, he gave me several letters allowing the foundation of more monasteries, with an injunction that none of

the provincials should prevent me. I did ask him for these letters, but he knew my manner of proceeding in prayer, and my great desire to be the means of enabling souls to grow closer to God.

2-4 But I did not ask him how to bring about his plan. It appeared to me madness because I well knew that a worthless woman like myself without any power could do nothing. But when these desires come into the soul, it is not in her power to reject them. But through her love to please God, and her confidence in Him, His Divine Majesty makes it all possible. This is not obvious to natural logic. So when I saw the great desire our very reverend Father General had that more monasteries should be founded, it seemed to me as if I saw them already established and remembering the words our Lord had spoken to me, I now perceived a beginning of that which before I could not understand.

Questions:

What are the obvious contradictions that Teresa finds herself in fulfilling her duties as a cloistered nun in the first part of the text?

What is the role of Providence in this episode of Teresa's life? In your life?

In the light of this text, how could you --practically speaking-- understand the idea of obedience?