

Pt. 3 9-12

CARMEL CLARION

JULY - DECEMBER 2010 † VOLUME XXVI, NO. 3



Edith Stein
St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

The saint endured these struggles for fourteen years without ever wavering in her faithfulness. Holy Week of the year 1554 brought her release.

One day as I entered the oratory I saw before me an image of the Savior that someone had placed there for an upcoming feast day.

This image showed our divine Master covered with wounds and with such a peaceful expression that I was moved by it. More than before I apprehended what the Savior had suffered for us. At the same time I experienced my own lack of thankfulness so bitterly that it seemed my heart would break. I fell at the feet of my divine Master and through a stream of tears pleaded with him to give me the strength not to offend him any more. I called on the presence of the holy Magdalene whom I already loved fervently and whose conversion I revered. She came to my help. Without trusting my good intentions, I put my whole trust in God. If I still remember this correctly, I said to him I would not get up until he had heard my plea and I knew for certain that he wanted to grant it. For on that day true life began for me and I never stopped improving. [L, 9, 1-2]

Soon afterward this operation of grace was reinforced by a second similar one.

Someone gave me the Confessions of St. Augustine. God granted this, for I never thought of requesting it nor had I ever read it. I had hardly opened this book than I thought that I saw myself in it. With all my strength I commended myself to this great saint.... I had always loved him very much, first because the monastery in which I had been raised followed his rule, and secondly because he was a poor sinner for a long time. I believed that, because God had forgiven him everything, I could also receive my forgiveness....

I cannot describe what happened in my heart when I read the description of his conversion and followed him into the garden where he heard the voice of heaven. It seemed to me as if God were speaking to me. Overcome by regret, I remained dissolved in my tears for a long time. The Lord be eternally praised. He led me from death to life again. My renewed strength made me recognize that he had heard my call and that my tears led him to have mercy on me. [L, 9, 7-9]

9. God Alone

Teresa had completed the fortieth year of her life when the Lord rewarded her faithful perseverance and drew her to himself anew, this time forever. According to a comparison that she herself used in her Life to portray the various ways of praying, in her view she had up to now operated in her prayer life like a gardener who draws up the water for his garden from a deep well with a great deal of effort. She was most fond of conceiving of the Lord with the help of the imagination [Phantasie] — she especially enjoyed seeking him out at the Mount of Olives—and had tried to stay close to him. Now God came to meet her. Like the gardener who has a sufficient supply of water to let it stream forth, she could rest from her efforts. Intellect and memory could cease their activity. In this prayer of quiet, “the will alone is active and, without knowing how, it delivers itself to God like a prisoner for him to chain to himself through his love.”

The soul that surrenders to the divine attraction by this way of praying is raised above its own suffering and receives some knowledge of heavenly glory. It grows, draws near to God, and so becomes stronger. It loses its pleasure in earthly things. Why? It clearly sees that it could not for even a moment enjoy this supernatural joy on earth, that no kingdoms, no realms, no honor, no joys can offer it for even a moment this true happiness that is absolutely the only thing that can satisfy....

Since it has known nothing to surpass this joy, it cherishes no other wish. With complete justification it will say along with St. Peter, “Lord, let us make our home here.” [L, 15, 1]



God Alone

Soon the Lord himself takes over the role of gardener. The soul is raised from quiet (theologians usually call this contemplation) to union.

In my opinion, this way of praying is a clear union of the entire soul with God. The only leeway God leaves to the faculties is the freedom to recognize the great work he is doing in them. Their only activity is to be occupied with him without being able to do anything else. None of them dares to move. Strong measures would be required to divert them from their divine preoccupation, and, even so, such efforts would never succeed in tearing them away completely. The soul, entirely beside itself and moved by the sweetest rapture, would like its voice to intone hymns of praise, that everything in it could extol the superabundance of its happiness. [L, 16, 2-3]

Often enough, such hymns of praise have streamed from the lips of the saint.

At the beginning of her mystical life the duration of the union was very short, Teresa says hardly as long as one Hail Mary. But its effect was astounding.

By one single visit, no matter how short, God changed the face, the appearance of the mystical garden.... Unaware [of what happened] the soul sees itself transformed. It finds I do not know what powers to do great things. At the same time it recognizes that it could not in many years acquire those virtues that the Lord has just given it, and it feels a humility beginning in itself that is much more profound than anything beforehand....

When God the Lord raises a soul to this stage of prayer, he requires nothing more from her than a simple consent to the graces he is giving her and a full surrender to the will of his divine wisdom. He intends to dispose of her as he does of his property. [L, 17, 1-3]

Frequently the union increases to rapture. Overpowered by the force of grace and supernatural joy, the soul loses the use of its lower powers and the control of its own body.

During rapture it is almost always impossible to resist the supernatural power of attraction. The soul must have more decisiveness and courage than in the prior states. For when it is in these raptures, one feels oneself carried away without knowing where one is going or what is going to become of one, and our weak nature feels during this otherwise so delightful moment I cannot say what dread. Not only is the soul carried away, but sometimes the body also itself follows this movement, so that it no longer touches the floor. Should I want to be on solid ground again, I would feel under my feet astounding powers lifting me up against my will. It was a dreadful struggle. I remained as though annihilated and in fact I saw clearly that if God wills something, all resistance to his omnipotence amounts to nothing.

The effects of such an extraordinary favor are great. First, it demonstrates to us God's omnipotence and teaches us that we are the masters of neither our bodies nor our souls, but that we have a divine Master who does what he wants with them. The other effect is a rare detachment that I have no words to describe. One truly feels like a stranger to things here below. Because they are vying with each other, promises and heroic resolutions come from these things; lively desires, frank aversion to the world; a clear glimpse into its nothingness. Finally, this prayer leaves behind in the soul such great love that it could perish, not from pain, but from the tears of joy that it pours out.

...One hour's ecstasy or even shorter is sufficient to make the soul the mistress of itself and of all things and to give it a freedom in which it no longer recognizes even itself....

What power is comparable to the power of a soul that has been raised by God to these heights, and sees beneath it the things of the world without in the least being governed by them! How confused it is about the time when it clung to them! How amazed it is by its blindness! How greatly is it concerned over those who still live in the same darkness! It would like to raise its voice to show them their error. It would like to break their chains and tear them from the prison of this life where it itself had been locked up. But then when it looks at itself, it not only sees



the cobwebs or the great sins, but also the tiniest dust specks or the tiniest spots.... If on the one hand it contemplates the endless holiness of its God, it is blinded by his light. On the other hand, if it looks at itself, its eye seems to find her who is covered with the mud of her misery.... O happy, a thousand times happy, the soul whom God through ecstasy raises to the knowledge of the truth, [see L, 20, 3-8; 20, 25-29; 21, 1]

These recollections reveal to us the whole nature of the saint: the sensitivity of her conscience that with bitter regret accused itself when no one else could find a spot on her; the ardor of her love that made her ready to make any sacrifice for the glory of God; her concern over souls whom she wanted with all her might to rescue from ruin and to lead to the peace of the Lord. But before she was permitted to do great things as God's chosen instrument, she still had to taste the most bitter pains. ☩

In Remembrance

Elizabeth Hauss, OCDS, who made Vows on October 13th 1998, began eternal life on August 14, 2010. She was a member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Community in Columbus, OH.

Mary Floyd, OCDS, *Marie Teresa of the Cross*, who made Vows on January 20, 1996, began eternal life on April 6, 2010. She was a member of the Mary and Joseph Community in Danvers, MA.

Rita, of the Holy Trinity, Bernatowicz, OCDS, who made Vows on September 22nd 2002, began eternal life on July 16, 2010. She was a member of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel & Saint Joseph Community in Elysburg, PA.

James Faba, OCDS, *Joseph Mary of Jesus*, who made Vows on February 11, 2007, began eternal life on June 10, 2010. He was a member of the St. Joseph Proctor Community in Harrison Township (previously Mt. Clemens), MI.

Kelly Gibson, of the Assumption, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on November 17, 1991, began eternal life on May 3, 2010. She was a member of the St. Joseph and the Prophet Elijah Community in Moline, IL.

Mary 'Gertrude' Thompson, OCDS, *Ann of St. Joseph*, who made Definitive Promise on February 9th 2002, began eternal life on July 8, 2010. She was a member of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Owensboro, KY.

Lisa Wardell, OCDS, *Elizabeth of the Passion*, who made Definitive Promise on June 5th 2005, began eternal life on July 25, 2010. She was a member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Community in Philadelphia, PA.

St. Teresa of Jesus Community in Raleigh, NC reported the death of members **Myra Gettys, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on November 4, 1990 and began eternal life on June 2, 1992; and **Ellen Weiss, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on November 19, 1994 and began eternal life on September 17, 1995.

Dawn Miller, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on February 16th 2010, began eternal life on February 20, 2010. She was a member of the Holy Innocents Community in Rockford, IL.

Joan Gauger, OCDS, *Mary Jude of the Blessed Sacrament*, who made Definitive Promise on May 10th 1997, began eternal life on October 18, 2010; and **John O'Donnell, OCDS**, who made Definitive Promise on December 9, 1978. Both were members of the Our Lady of Mercy Community in Schenectady, NY.

St. Joseph's Community at Port Tobacco, MD recently had several members' who entered into eternal life: **Francis Garvey, OCDS** on May 18, 2010, **Dorothy Womaski, OCDS** on June 23, 2010, and **Ruth Bristow, OCDS** on July 16, 2010.

Eileen Scanlon, OCDS, *Mary Carmel of the Infant Jesus*, who made Definitive Promise in June 1960, began eternal life on June 12, 2010. She was a member of the Our Lady of Divine Providence Community in St. Paul, MN.

Delma, of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Ramsay, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on October 14th 1990, began eternal life on July 11, 2010. She was a member of the St. Joseph's Community in Washington, DC.

Dorothy Ellis, OCDS, who made Definitive Promise on November 14th 1993, began eternal life on September 21, 2010. She was a member of the Our Lady of the Annunciation Community in Virginia Beach, VA.

EDITORIAL CORRECTION: Arleen Gifford, OCDS was a member of Our Lady of Mt. Calvery in Utica, NY.

CARMEL CLARION

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Love for Love:

The Life and Works of St. Teresa of Jesus

By St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Part 3 in a 3 Part Series

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is with deep gratitude to Br. Robert in the Washington Discalced Carmelite Monastery that we are able to share pictures taken during the pilgrimage of our own friars in the early 1990s. We hope you enjoy them and take the opportunity to reflect on each as the special gift that they are intended to be.

10. New Tests

The first difficulty arose from her own ignorance of mystical theology. In her deep humility, she could not imagine how an unworthy person (as in her opinion she was) could be so richly laden with such extraordinary favors. Of course, as long as the favors during prayer lasted she could not doubt their authenticity. But in between she was plagued by fears that these mystical states were deceptions of the devil. On the basis of her experience, Teresa later said again and again how necessary it is for a soul that is going the way of the interior life to have the guidance of a learned and enlightened spiritual director. Fr. Vicente Barren, who had so charitably stood by her after the death of her father, had been called away from Avila some time earlier. In her need, upon the advice and through the mediation of a dear friend, the pious nobleman Francisco de Salcedo, she turned to Caspar Daza, a priest who was considered throughout the city to be as holy as he was learned. His evaluation was devastating. He interpreted all of her favors during prayer as deceptions of the devil and advised her to cease entirely what she had been doing up to now. The saint fell into the utmost distress—showered by favors from heaven while at the same time, according to the theological expert, in the gravest danger, and directed to pull back from the supernatural influences! There appeared one more way out of her distress. A short time earlier a college of the Society of Jesus had been started in Avila. Teresa, who had the greatest admiration for the new order, heard this with joy, but up to now had not dared to speak with one of the greatly renowned fathers. Now she took refuge in them, and this was her deliverance. Fr. Juan de Pradanos completely reassured her about the origin of her mystical states and advised her to continue on this path. He only found it necessary that she make herself worthy of the favors by strict mortifications. As she said, “mortification” was at that time a word virtually unknown to her. But with her characteristic decisiveness, she took up the suggestion and began to accustom herself to severe penances. Recognizing that her weak health would not be able to stand such a severe life, P. Pradanos easily helped her with this. “Without doubt, my daughter,” he said, “God sends you so many illnesses in order to make up for those mortifications that you do not practice. So do not be afraid. Your mortifications cannot hurt you” [see L, 24, 6].

And in fact Teresa's health improved because of this new lifestyle.

Even though her new spiritual director had no doubt about the heavenly origin of



her favors during prayer, he still thought it a good idea to impose on her some constraint in her manner of meditating and to instruct her in resisting the stream of favors. But even this restriction was soon to be lifted again. St. Francis Borgia visited the Jesuit college and to get his evaluation, Fr. Pradanos asked him to speak with Teresa. She herself writes about this:

I let him...know the state of my soul. After listening to me, he told me that everything happening in me came from the spirit of God. He called my behavior good so far. But he said that in the future I should offer no more resistance. He advised me always to begin my prayers by meditating on one of the mysteries of the passion. If then without my assistance the Lord transported my spirit into a supernatural state, I should surrender to his guidance.... He left me completely consoled. [L, 24, 3]

If the saint herself was calmed by such weighty testimony, it was not so in her surroundings. Despite of the testimony of St. Francis Borgia, and despite the sympathetic guidance she found, soon after the recall of Fr. Pradanos, in his very young but saintly confrere, Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, her devoted friends did not stop worrying about her. They asked others for advice, and soon everyone in the city was talking about the unusual phenomena at the Monastery of the Incarnation and warning the young Jesuit not to let himself be deceived by his penitent. Even though he placed no credence in these voices, he did think it advisable to pose Teresa some difficult tests. He denied her solitude, and once withheld Holy Communion from her for twenty days. She submitted to all orders. But it was no wonder that unrest once more arose in her heart also, since everyone else doubted her or appeared to doubt her. Her deliverance was the goodness of the Lord who calmed her again and again, who enraptured her right in the middle of the mandatory conversations, since solitary prayer was taken from her. Above all, he strengthened her to persist faithfully in the way of obedience no matter how hard it was. Her reward was new, continually greater favors. She felt the presence of the Savior by her side often for entire days. At first he came to her invisibly, but later also in a visible form.

The Savior almost always appeared to me visibly in risen form. When I saw him in the holy Host, he was in this transfigured form. Sometimes when I was tired or sad, he showed me his wounds to encourage me. He also appeared to me hanging on the cross. I saw him in the garden; finally, I saw him carrying the cross. When he appeared to me in such a form, it was, I repeat, because of a need in my soul or for the consolation of various other persons; still his body was always glorified. [L, 29, 4]

These appearances increased Teresa's love and strengthened her in the certainty that it was none other than the Lord who was visiting her with his favors. So it must have been all the more painful to her when, in the absence of Fr. Alvarez, another confessor ordered her to send the "evil spirit" away each time it appeared by making the sign of the cross and a gesture of contempt. She also obeyed this command. But at the same time she fell at the feet of the Lord and pleaded with him for forgiveness: "Oh Savior, you know when I act like this toward you that I do it only out of love for you because I want to submit obediently to him whom you have appointed in your Church to take your place for me." And Jesus calmed her. "Be comforted, my daughter, you do well to obey. I will reveal the truth" [see L, 29, 6].

In this obedience toward the church, the saint herself had always seen the surest criterion that a soul was on the right way.



Statue of St. Teresa of Jesus facing the town square outside the walls of Avila

I know for certain that God would never allow the devil to delude a soul that mistrusts itself and whose faith is so strong that it was prepared to endure a thousand deaths for the sake of one single article of faith. God blesses this noble disposition of the soul by strengthening its faith and making it ever more fiery. This soul carefully tries to transform itself so that it is completely in line with the teachings of the church and for this purpose asks questions of anyone who could elucidate them. It hangs on so tightly to the church's creeds that all conceivable revelations—even if it saw heaven opened—could never make it vacillate in its faith even in the most minute article taught by the church...

Should a soul not find in itself this powerful faith or its delight in devotion not contribute to increasing its dependence on the holy church, then I say that the soul is on a path filled with danger. The spirit of God only flows into things that are in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. If there had been the slightest deviation, I would have been convinced that these things came from the author of lies. [L, 25, 12-13]

That after each new favor she grew in humility and love must have pacified the saint herself, and must also have been an unmistakable sign to the enlightened men of the spirit of the disposition of her soul.

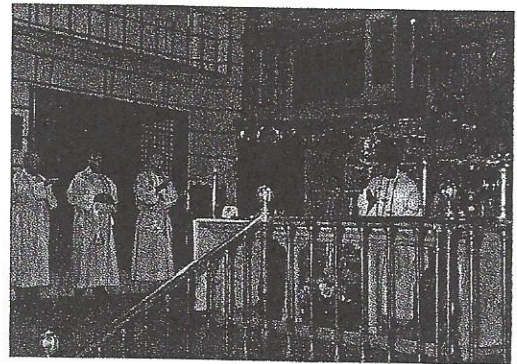
During that time of unusual demonstrations of grace and of the most severe tests, Teresa also received a visible sensory image of the glowing love that pierced her heart.

"I saw beside me at my left side an angel in a physical form... Because of his flaming face, he seemed to belong to that lofty choir made up only of fire and love... I saw a long golden dart in his hands the end of which glowed like fire. From time to time the angel pierced my heart with it. When he pulled it out again, I was entirely inflamed with love for God" [L, 29, 13]. The heart of the saint, which has been preserved in the monastery of Alba and remains intact to this day, bears a long, deep wound.

11. Works for the Lord

One who loves feels compelled to do something for the beloved. Teresa, who even as a child showed herself to be boldly decisive and ready to act, burned with the desire to show the Lord her love and thankfulness by action. As a nun in a contemplative monastery, she seemed to be cut off from all outer activity. So she at least wanted to do as much as possible to make herself holy. With the permission of her confessor (Fr. Alvarez) and her highest superior in the Order, she took a vow always to do what would be most pleasing to God. To protect her from uncertainty and from qualms of conscience, the text was later changed to read that her confessor was to decide what would be perfect at any given time.

But a soul so full of love could not be satisfied with caring for its own salvation and making the Lord happy by its own perfection. One day she was transported into hell by a horrible vision. "I immediately understood that God wanted to show me the place that the devil had reserved for me and that I deserved for my sins. It lasted hardly a moment. But even if I live for many more years, I will never be able to forget it" [L, 32, 1]. She recognizes what God's goodness has preserved her from. "The superscription for my life should read 'the mercy of God.'" But countless other people are constantly subject to the dangers that she herself had escaped. "How could I find one day of rest with such an



Mass at Alba de Tormes; Tomb of St. Teresa is above the Main Altar

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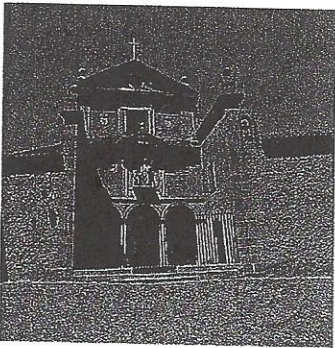
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outlook? How could I live in peace while so many souls were being lost?" It was at the time when Germany was torn by schism, France was tearing itself to pieces in wars of religion, and all Europe was confused by false doctrines. "Brokenhearted, as though I could do something or as if I myself were someone, I embraced the feet of the Lord, shed bitter tears, and asked him to remedy such evil. I would gladly have sacrificed a thousand lives to save one of these misguided souls. But how could a poor woman like me serve the cause of her divine Master?" [W, 1, 2]. During such reflections, there occurred to her the thought of freeing herself from the mitigated Rule of her monastery:

... so that she could rest entirely in God like the saints, the hermits who had preceded her. Since she could not, as she would have liked, extol God's mercy throughout the entire world, she at least wanted to gather some selected souls around her who would dedicate themselves to poverty, withdrawal, constant prayer, and the strictness of the primitive Rule. Already full of this thought, which was not simply fantasy but a firm decision, she conceived of how she would surround herself with a small band of noble souls who were ready to join her in doing what was most perfect. She considered how she might pray day and night to be a constant support to those destined to save souls... It seemed to her as though she were already in the situation, which appeared to her as paradise. She saw herself already living in a little house clad in sackcloth, enclosed behind the walls, only occupied with prayer, and hurrying with her companions to serve the most Beloved.¹

It was not to be too long before this lovely dream was to become reality.

12. Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform



St. Joseph's Monastery (1615)

A small group of nuns and visitors present for worship on the feast of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel on July 16, 1560, were discussing the obstacles to a life of prayer presented by the large number of nuns living in the monastery and the many visitors. Maria de Ocampo, a young relative of the saint and a celebrated beauty, suggested that someone should establish a monastery in which the life of the ancient hermits could be revived. In all seriousness she offered her dowry for this. The next day Teresa told her trusted friend Dona Guiomar de Ulloa (a young widow who like her led a life of prayer under the strict direction of Fr. Baltasar Alvarez) of this conversation. Dona Guiomar enthusiastically took up the idea. But what was decisive was that the Lord himself was calling for the project.

"He assured me that he would be very well served in a monastery I might found, that this house would become a star shedding the brightest light. God added that, even though they had lost some of their earlier enthusiasm, the orders were nevertheless of great service to him. What would the world be if there were no more monasteries?" [see L, 32, 11]. According to the will of the Lord, the new house was to be consecrated to St. Joseph.

Now Teresa no longer hesitated. First she turned to her confessor. He made his consent dependent on the consent of the provincial of the Carmelites, Fr. Angel de Salazar.² This

1 Oettingen-Spieberg, *Geschichte der hi. Teresia* [Biography of St. Teresa], Regensburg: Habbel, vol. I, p. 313f.

2 Probably an error by Edith Stein. The provincial at that time was Fr. Gregorio Fernandez (1559-1561). Fr. Angel de Salazar was prior in Avila in 1541. He was provincial from 1551-1553. [Ed.]

consent was easier to get than expected because of the mediation of Dona Guiomar. Three very devout religious, whose advice Teresa sought, gave encouraging replies: Jesuit Francis Borgia, Dominican Luis Beltran, and Franciscan Peter of Alcantara. Now the next task was to find a house. But before that could happen the public scented Teresa's plans, and this aroused a storm of indignation against her and her friends. One can certainly understand that the nuns of the Monastery of the Incarnation would take it as malicious arrogance for one of their own to want to leave their house to live in greater perfection than the community in which she had been formed. And people in the city shared this view. The two women received their first strong support from the scholarly and highly respected Dominican, Fr. Pedro Ibanez. When the provincial withdrew his consent under the pressure of Teresa's sisters and compelled the saint to inaction, her friends continued with the work of preparation: Dona Guiomar, directed by Fr. Ibanez, Don Francisco de Salcedo, and Caspar Daza (the two who had once by their doubt caused her so much soul searching, but were now entirely won over to her). A little house was discovered. Her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, the husband of her youngest sister Juana, who herself had been raised in the Monastery of the Incarnation and loved Teresa greatly, bought it and moved in to protect it until it could be given over to its real purpose.

It seemed like a great hindrance to her plans when the saint received the surprising order from her Father Provincial to go to the palace of Duchess Luisa de la Cerda in Toledo, because this influential lady sought the comfort of the saint in her grief over the death of her husband. Teresa's friends hated to see her leave Avila. But the stay in Toledo was to be richly blessed. Dona Luisa became a powerful and faithful patroness of the reform. In the circle of women and girls that gathered around Teresa at the palace to seek her advice, there was someone soon to be one of her strongest supporters, the young Maria de Salazar (later Maria of St. Joseph, prioress of Seville). Above all, Teresa found the leisure here to write the story of her interior life, a project given to her the previous year by Fr. Ibariez. This book was to make her name known in all Catholic lands, and down through the centuries would become a guide for countless people.



Toledo

Even in regard to her foundation in Avila the time was not wasted. In the house of the Duchess de la Cerda, she was sought out by Maria of Jesus, a Carmelite from Granada, who had reform ideas similar to Teresa's and wanted to talk them over with her. She also found occasion for a consultation with St. Peter of Alcantara, who on an earlier occasion had tested the state of her soul and consoled her greatly. Now he encouraged her to found the Monastery of St. Joseph without an income, as the primitive Rule prescribed.

Teresa was permitted to return to Avila only in June of 1562, after a six-month stay. Good news that came on the day of her arrival awaited her there: the papal brief that permitted Dona Guiomar and her mother to establish a Carmelite monastery according to the primitive Rule, placing it under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, giving it the same rights as other monasteries of the same order, and prohibiting anyone from disturbing it in any way. Teresa's name was not mentioned in the document. By a lucky coincidence,

Peter of Alcantara was just then in Avila—for the last time, for he died shortly thereafter. His efforts succeeded in winning the bishop of Avila, Don Alvaro de Mendoza, for the foundation. From then on the bishop was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the reform.

The illness of her brother-in-law, Juan de O valle, resulted in her gaining the permission of her provincial to move into his house, her future monastery, to care for him. This gave her the opportunity to supervise the construction personally. When the workers left the house, the patient was also healed and the monastery could become what it was meant to be. Now the most important thing was to find suitable living stones for the new foundation. There were four postulants about whom the Holy Mother herself said, “My first daughters were four orphans without dowries, but great servants of God. I found just what I had wished for, because my most ardent desire was that the first to enter would by their example be suitable building blocks of the spiritual edifice, would fulfill our intentions and lead lives



Carmelite nun and novice

of contemplation and perfection” [see L, 36, 6]. On August 24, the feast of St. Bartholomew, these first four Carmelites of the reform arrived at the little monastery where the saint awaited them. The friends who had helped to make the foundation made their appearance. By commission of the Bishop of Avila, Caspar Daza celebrated the first Mass and reserved the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. Thereby the foundation was completed. Then Teresa clothed her daughters in the robe of the discalced Carmelites (“discalced,” or “without shoes,” because instead of shoes they wore the footwear of the poor, sandals made of hemp).³ Their habits and scapulars were made of coarse brown frieze; the mantles of white frieze; the toques of linen; and over them for the time being they wore the white novice’s veil. Overjoyed, the mother remained behind with her daughters in the quiet of the holy place when the visitors departed. But people did not leave her in peace for long. The rumor of the accomplished foundation quickly spread to the entire city. The opposition stirred up all the townspeople. A monastery without any income would consume the alms of the poor. The prioress of the Incarnation, pressured by the indignant sisters, sent Teresa an order to return to her monastery immediately. The Saint obeyed at once. She left the four novices behind under the protection of St. Joseph and the direction of the oldest, Ursula of the Saints. On August 26 the city’s municipal judge summoned the mayor and the cathedral chapter to a meeting in the city hall. The consensus was that the monastery was to be suppressed, and the municipal judge himself went there. But Teresa’s young daughters did not allow themselves to be intimidated. When threatened with force, they answered through the grille, “...You may use force. But...such actions are judged here on earth by his Majesty Philip II, and in heaven by another judge, whom you should fear a great deal more, the almighty God, the champion of the oppressed.” The city magistrate left without doing anything and called another, larger gathering for the next day. In an inflammatory speech he explained

³ It is said that our Holy Mother at first wore only sandals that left the feet uncovered, as our friars still do today. It was when her dainty feet were admired once during a trip that she introduced [leggings with the] hempen sandals called “alpargatas.” [Ed.]

that this foundation was an innovation and as such suspect. The maintenance of the nuns would excessively burden the nobility of Avila. Opening the house without the permission of the city was illegal. Therefore, one must conclude that it be suppressed. The speaker already had the majority on his side when a Dominican asked to speak. It was Fr. Domingo Banez who had only been in Avila for a short time, but was famous for his scholarship. He did not know Teresa, but his love for justice impelled him to become a spokesman for her cause.

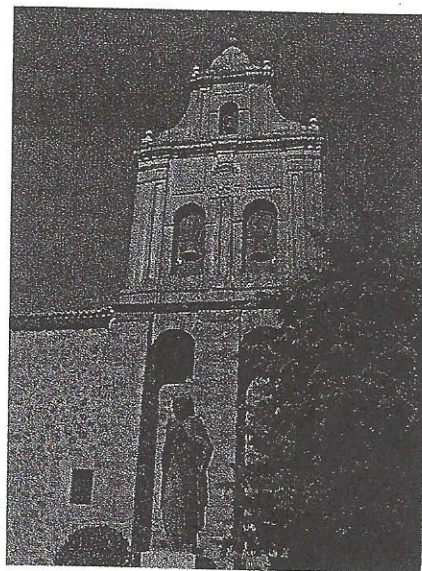
Is it a sufficient reason to destroy something because it is new? Were not all societies of orders innovations when they arose from the bosom of the Church? And when our Lord and God founded the Church, did his work not bear the mark of innovation? ...This newly founded monastery of Carmelites is a reform of the ancient community. It picks up what has fallen. It renews a weakened Rule. It strives for the formation of people for the glory of the holy faith. For these reasons it must not only be tolerated by the powers of the state and of the city, but favored and protected.

...How can anyone believe that poor women confined in a corner who pray to God for us could become such a heavy burden and a danger to the people? ...The frightening specter that is the entire cause of the disturbance in Avila is that of four humble, peace-loving Carmelites living at the outermost end of a suburb.... It seems to me of little use to Avila to call a council for such an insignificant reason.

The existence of the monastery is inviolable, since the Most Reverend Bishop Alvaro de Mendoza has taken it under his protection and the Holy See has given its approval in a brief, against which all of Avila can do nothing.... [cf. L, 36, 15]

In response to his speech, the gathering broke up and the little monastery was rescued. However, it took several more months of negotiations and the sacrificial efforts of all the friends to overcome the rest of the hindrances. Finally, on December 5, 1562, the provincial Angel de Salazar⁴ gave Teresa permission to go to her daughters. She was even allowed to take along four nuns from the Monastery of the Incarnation. In overflowing thanks to the Lord, she once again consecrated herself and her little religious family to his service. Now she and those accompanying her put on the rough habit of the reform and exchanged their shoes for coarse sandals. At the same time, in order to bury all reminders of rank and status in the world, they gave up their family names and chose a noble title that came from heaven. From that day on, Teresa de Ahumada was called *Teresa of Jesus*.

The chaplain, Julian de Avila, the first confessor at St. Joseph's and a faithful assistant to the saint in the work of reform, wrote a history of the founding of this house after the saint's death. He gives us a picture of heavenly life in this solitude: "God wanted...to have a house where he could recreate, a dwelling for his consolation. He wanted a garden with flowers, not those flowers that grow on the earth, but those that unfold in heaven... a flower garden with these selected souls in whose midst he could take his repose, to whom he could disclose his secrets and open his heart." "Because our Lord and Savior has so many enemies and so few friends, at least the latter must be very good," said the saint herself [see W, 1, 2]. And she educated the young souls entrusted into her hands to be such good friends of the Lord. Girls of youthful beauty, rich and sparkling with talent, rushed to



Monastery of the Incarnation

⁴ See note 2. [Ed.]

St. Joseph's in order to discard all finery, in order to consecrate themselves to the Lord in unlimited self-forgetfulness and humble submission. Postulants also came without any dowries and were received just as joyfully, in fact, even more lovingly. For the Holy Mother was concerned with having the real spirit of the order in her house, not with external goods. Soon the number reached thirteen, which Teresa originally did not want to exceed. (Later it was raised to twenty.) She regulated life in the house with the greatest wisdom.⁵ Each sister received an office in which she served the requirements of the little monastic family. The day was strictly apportioned between work and prayer. And this work, which was to contribute support, had to be simple and modest, not giving rise to pride, and thereby preserving their recollection in God. The work was carried out in solitude and silence. Only during the hour of recreation did the sisters come together in heartfelt and spontaneous conversation. Teresa made this hour into a required practice and set great store by it, to allow the spirit the relaxation that nature demands and to give sufficient opportunity for the practice of sisterly love. But even during this hour of recreation there was no idleness. During lively conversation or joyful song, busy hands raced as fast as they could.

Her little family's spirit was Teresa's greatest reward for all her efforts and sacrifice. She herself stood in wonder before her daughters:

Oh how I recognize all the superiorities of these sisters over me! No sooner had God given them some understanding, some love, than for his sake they disdained the lives to which they used to be attached and sacrificed themselves for him. They find their delight in solitude. All their happiness lies in thoughts of making progress in serving God. Their blessedness is to live alone with him. Many of them spent their youth in the vanity of the world. They intended to find their happiness there and to make decisions according to the world's standards. But precisely these are the most joyful. God rewards them with true joy for the false delights they have left for him. I cannot say how much comfort I feel living in the company of such innocent souls who have renounced everything, [see L, 35, 12]

The saint also had no other desire than to live in this separation from the world with her little family, to lead them ever more deeply into the spirit of prayer, into the heroic exercise of virtues—humility, obedience, complete giving of oneself, poverty, the most heartfelt love for God and for people—and to consecrate with them this whole life of prayer, sacrifice, voluntary penance (on which, however, she set a wise limit and so obviated an unhealthy enthusiasm) to the glory of God and his church, for the salvation of souls and as a support for priests who were doing battle with the great errors of the time. But she was not to conclude her life in the quiet of St. Joseph's.

13. Spread of the Reform

Again, it was her burning desire for the salvation of souls that led Teresa to new action. One day a Franciscan from the missions visited her and told her about the sad spiritual and moral condition of people in heathen lands. Shaken, she withdrew into

⁵ After she had discovered and tested the most appropriate regimen in living with her daughters, she wrote her "Constitutions," which—except for a few minor changes—today continue to contain the valid rules of her Order. They are contained in her writings. [See *Collected Works of St. Teresa*, vol. 3, pp. 319-333.—Tr.]