

**Chapter 30:** Returns to the account of her life and tells how the Lord removed many of her trials by bringing to the city in which she lived the saintly Friar Peter of Alcantara, of the order of the glorious St. Francis. Discusses the great temptations and interior trials she sometimes underwent.

1- Aware then of the little...I could do to avoid these **impulses**... I didn't understand how **suffering and happiness** could go together... such **excessive spiritual pain** with such **very great joy**—this bewildered me. I still didn't stop trying to **resist**...and protected myself with the cross ... I saw that no one understood me...

2-The Lord was pleased to remove a great part of my **trial**—and then all of it—by bringing to this city the blessed Friar Peter of Alcantara...

3-Well, that widow, the servant of God and friend of mine, knew that so great a man was here; and she knew of my need... His Majesty desired to enlighten her... Sometimes the Lord shared with her the favors He granted me ...  
...she obtained permission from my provincial that I stay at her house for eight days so that I might be able to talk to him more easily... I gave him a **summary account of my life** and manner of proceeding in prayer...and **discussed my soul with him**.

4-Almost from the outset I saw that he understood me through **experience**, which was all I needed... afterward God enabled me to **understand and describe the favors** that His Majesty granted me...and Friar Peter greatly enlightened me...

5-...He told me not to be grieved but that I should praise God and be certain that all was from the **Holy Spirit**...Since he saw...that I had so much courage, he was glad to talk to me. For anyone the Lord brings to this state finds **no pleasure or consolation equal to that of meeting someone** to whom he thinks the Lord has begun to grant these desires ...

6-He took the greatest pity on me. He told me that one of the **worst trials on earth was the one I had suffered**...and that I had still a long way to go; for I was always in need and there was no one in this city who understood me. He said he would speak to my confessor and to the one who troubled me the most...this married

gentleman...who waged the opposition...Friar Peter... spoke to both of them...and gave them reasons for ... not disturbing me any more...

7-We agreed that from then on I would write to him about what happened to me ... He left me with the **greatest consolation and happiness** and the **ability to feel secure in my prayer** and **not doubt** that it was from God; he also said that if I had **doubt** about anything ... I should make it known to my **confessor**, and that in this way I would **live safely** ... I wasn't able to feel this assurance completely as the **Lord led me by the way of fear** ... and though Friar Peter consoled and calmed me ... I wasn't totally without fear

...

8- It sometimes happened ... that I had **bitter trials of the soul together with severe bodily torments**...the trial was so severe that I was very much afflicted. All the favors the Lord had granted me were forgotten. There only remained the memory... they were like a **dream**. For the intellect became so stupefied that it made me walk in ... **doubt and suspicion**... It seemed to me that I was so evil ...

9-This was a **false humility** the devil invented to **disquiet** and **try me** and bring my soul to **despair**. I have so much **experience** now to know when something is from the devil...that he doesn't torment me in the way he used to. He is recognized clearly by the **disturbance and disquiet and agitation** the soul feels along with the **darkness and affliction** he places in the soul and by **dryness and the disinclination** toward **prayer** or toward any **good work**... **True humility** though doesn't come to the soul with **agitation and disturbance**... Rather, **true humility consoles** and acts in a completely opposite way: **quietly, gently, and with light**. From another point of view, this **pain** gives the soul **comfort**...it grieves for its offenses against God...and His **mercy** lifts its spirits...it praises God for having put up with it for so long. In that other **humility caused by the devil**, there is **no light** for anything good...the devil represents **justice** to the soul, and although it has faith that there is mercy...it receives **no consolation** from this faith...

10-This is one of the most painful...inventions of the devil...What I have understood is that the **Lord desires and permits** this and gives the devil license to tempt us as He did when the devil tempted Job...

11-...It comes especially during Holy Week when prayer is my delight. What happens is that **my intellect** is suddenly **seized** by things sometimes so **trivial**...The devil makes the soul upset in every way he wants and shackles it

there without it being ... able to think of anything else... these thoughts have almost no importance, neither do they bind or loose. He only binds the soul to oppress it...It happened to me, and it seemed the devils were playing ball with my soul...what the soul suffers is indescribable. It seeks relief, but God doesn't permit it to find any... Let us leave aside the fact that the **Lord holds it in His hands**, which is what matters.

12-**Faith** is then deadened and put to sleep as are all the other virtues—although not lost ... it seemingly knows **God** almost as it does something it **hears far in the distance**. Love becomes **lukewarm** that if it hears someone speaking about God...there is no memory of what it has experienced within itself. Going to prayer or remaining in solitude means nothing but more anguish...the **torment** it feels within ... is unbearable ... the experience is a kind of **copy of hell** ... the soul burns within itself ...Should it want to remedy the situation by reading, it would feel it didn't know how to read ...

13-To carry on a **conversation** is worse, for the devil gives a **spirit of anger** so displeasing that it seems as if I wanted to **eat everyone up**, without being able to help it ... the Lord keeps the soul in His hands lest it say or do anything against its neighbors that might hurt them and offend God. With regard to going to my **confessors**, though very holy, they spoke harshly and scolded me...and though at other times I was glad and ready to suffer such mortification, during the time of this experience all was a **torment** to me...everything made me **afraid**...

14- Sometimes...**after receiving Communion** I was at **peace**. And sometimes in approaching the Sacrament I felt at once good in soul and body...It seems that in only a moment all the darkness of the soul dispersed; and once the sun out, the soul recognized the **foolishness** in which it had been held. At other times, by **one word** the Lord spoke to me ... I was left completely **cured** ... This suffering was well repaid, for almost always afterwards, the **favours** came in great **abundance**. I think the soul comes out of the crucible like **gold**, more refined and purified, so as to **see the Lord within itself**. Afterward these **trials** that seem unbearable become **small**, and one wants to **return to suffering** if the Lord will be more served by it...though there may be more tribulations and persecutions, if undergone without offending the Lord...everything will be for greater gain...

15- At other times the experience...happens **all of a sudden**... the body and soul feel completely useless and weighed down... I myself felt **displeased** ... I tried to perform **good exterior works** ... the little a soul amounts to when **grace is hidden** ...

16-At other times I find that I can't even form a thought about God ... or practice prayer, even though I am in solitude ... it is the **intellect and imagination** that does me harm here, for the **will** is all right...and disposed toward every good. The **intellect** is so wild...a **frantic madman** no one can tie down ... sometimes ... I look at this madman and leave it alone to see what it does... and it surprisingly enough ... turns to **indifferent things**... I then know better the tremendous favor the Lord grants me when He holds this madman **bound in perfect contemplation**... "**When, my God, will I finally see my soul joined together in Your praise, so that all its faculties may enjoy You? Do not permit Lord, that it be broken any longer in pieces, for it only seems that each piece goes its own way.**"

I often undergo this **scattering of the faculties** ... and frequently recall the harm **original sin** did to us; this is the **source**, I think, of our being **incapable of enjoying** so much **good in an integral way**...

17- I also suffered another **great trial**. Since it seemed that I understood all the books I read that treat of prayer and that the Lord had already given me such favors, I thought I had no need of these books ... but only read the **lives of the saints** since I felt so lacking in the way they served God ... I thought it showed very **little humility** to think that I had attained these favors of prayer ... it grieved me much ... blessed Friar Peter of Alcantara told me not to worry about it. I see clearly that I haven't begun to serve God ... I am imperfection incarnate, except in desires and in loving ... **the Lord favored me so that I might serve Him in something**. It really seems to me that I love Him, but my works and the many imperfections I see in myself sadden me.

18- At other times there comes a **foolishness of soul** ... I do neither good nor evil, but **follow the crowd** ... it doesn't seem that the soul feels anything ... the soul in this state must not remain without nourishing itself on some great favors from God ... it endures life with equanimity; but feels no movements or effects by which it might understand itself.

19- It seems to me now that the soul is as though **sailing with a very calm wind**...In the **other kinds of favours** the **effects** are so **pronounced**

that the soul almost immediately sees its **improvement**...the **desires** are **restless** and the soul is **never satisfied**. This is the experience of those to whom God gives the great **impulses of love** ... love is always **stirring and thinking** about what it will do ... for by reason of the love it has it doesn't rest in or contain itself. It is already soaked in this water; it would want **others to drink**...so that they might **help it praise God**...How many times do I recall the **living water** the Lord told the Samaritan woman about! I am so fond of this gospel passage ... as a little child, I often begged the Lord to give me the water. I always carried with me a painting of this episode of the Lord at the well, with the words, inscribed: *Domine, da mihi aquam*. 20- This **love** also seems like a **huge fire** that always needs something to burn so as not to go out ... souls to whom God ... gives abundantly this **fire of His love suffer no small trial** in lacking bodily strength to do something for Him. It is truly a **great suffering**. The soul lacks the strength to throw some wood on this fire and is dying lest the fire go out, I think within itself it is being consumed and turned to ashes and dissolved in tears and burnt up; this is a **terrible torment**, although a **delightful one**.

21-Let the soul who has reached this state praise the Lord... such a soul doesn't know or understand the blessing it has unless it has experienced a taste of what it is to be **unable to do anything in the service of the Lord**, and yet to always **receive a great deal**... May the angels give Him Glory, amen.

22- I don't know if I am doing well in writing about so many **details** ... I'm dealing clearly and truthfully with what I remember, I can't help but leave a lot out...

**Chapter 31:** Deals with some exterior temptations and representations of the devil and the torments he inflicted on her. Treats also of some matters very beneficial for advising persons who journey on the path of perfection.

1-...I've mentioned some **interior, secret temptations and disturbances** the **devil** caused me, I want to **tell about others** he caused **almost publicly** and which one could not be mistaken that he was the source.

2-I was once in an oratory, and **he appeared** to me in an abominable form at my left side...He told me ... that I had really freed myself from his hands but that **he would catch me** with them again...**I blessed myself** ...he disappeared, but returned right away... There was some **holy**

**water** there, I threw it in that direction; he never returned again.

3-**Another time** I was tormented for five hours with **terrible interior and exterior pains and disturbances** ... when bodily pains and sickness become intolerable ... I make **interior acts of supplication to the Lord** ... He wanted me to understand it was the devil because **I saw beside me a black, very abominable little creature**, snarling like one in despair that where he had tried to gain he had lost. **When I saw him, I laughed and was not afraid**... I was striking myself hard on the body, head, and arms... I wasn't able to feel calm of any sort. I didn't dare ask for holy water lest I frighten my sisters...

4-I often experience that there is nothing the devils flee from more—**without returning**—than **holy water**. They also flee from the **cross** but **return**. The power of holy water must be great. There is a **particular and noticeable consolation my soul experiences** upon taking it... the relief is like that coming to a person, very hot and thirsty, when he drinks a jar of cold water. I consider everything ordained by the Church to be important, I rejoice to see the power of the words recited over the water so that its difference from unblessed water becomes so great.

5-Since the torment didn't stop, I said: "If you wouldn't laugh, I'd ask for holy water." They brought it, sprinkled it on me but it didn't help. I threw somewhere the devil was, and instantly he went away and all the illness left me...except that I remained weary as if beaten by a stick... It made me eager to be freed from such dreadful company.

6-Another time...the same thing happened...I called for **holy water**, and those who entered after the devil had already gone...smelled a **foul stench** like that of brimstone...Another time I was in the choir, and there came upon me a **strong impulse toward recollection**... I left the choir...but heard the striking of loud blows...and some coarse words next to me... I was so **absorbed in prayer** ... that I had **no fear**. It happened almost every time the Lord granted me the **favor** of persuading some soul to **advance in perfection**.

7-...A person came to me who had been in **mortal sin** for two and a half years. It was one of the most abominable I've heard of ... he hadn't confessed or made amends; and he was saying **Mass**. Although he was confessing other sins, of this one he asked how he could confess something so ugly. He had a great desire to give it up, but he wasn't able to help himself... I promised him I would beg God very much to

liberate him... And so it happened that after receiving my first letter he went to **confession**. For God desired...to grant this soul **mercy**... He wrote to me that he was so much better ... but that the torment the temptation gave him was so intense it seemed ... he was in **hell**; he asked me to commend him to God. I recommended him to my sisters too ... who took the matter to heart ... I begged His Majesty to mitigate those torments and temptations and that those devils would come to afflict me, provided I would not offend the Lord in anything. As a result, for a month I suffered severe torments; it was during this time that **two things happened**.

8-The Lord was pleased that they leave him; he wrote to me ...that he was left **completely free**. He didn't have enough of thanking God and me...the reputation I had from the favors the Lord granted me, benefitted him. He said when he found himself very distressed he read my letters, and the temptation left him...The prayer of those who serve Him ... can do much... 9-Also one night during this time I thought devils were choking me; after much **holy water** had been sprinkled, I saw a great multitude of them go by, as though they were being thrown down a precipice... **so little is the fear I now have of them, seeing that they cannot stir unless the Lord allows them to...**

10-May what was said be of help and that the true servant of God pay no attention to the scarecrows the devils set up to cause **fear**... each time we **pay no attention** to them they are weakened, and the soul gains much more mastery. Some great **benefit** always remains...I shall tell what happened to me the night of All Souls; While ...in the oratory ... a devil appeared on my book so that I couldn't finish a prayer. I blessed myself, and he went away. When I began again to recite the prayers, he returned...I believe it was three times I began again, and until I threw **holy water** at him, I couldn't finish. I saw some souls left purgatory at that instant...I wondered if he had aimed at preventing this...

11-...one day on the feast of the Trinity, being in the choir...in **rapture**, I saw a **great battle of devils against angels**... In less than fifteen days it became easily understandable... it was about a **conflict between people of prayer and many who were not**...At other times I saw a large **multitude of devils around me**, and it seemed that a **great brightness encircled me** that prevented them from reaching me. I understood that God was watching over me so that they couldn't get me to offend Him... The powers of devils are nothing if they do not find souls

cowardly, and surrendered to them. It is with such souls that they show their power. Sometimes, it seemed to me that all the **vanities and weaknesses of the past** were again awakening within me... yet it seemed to me that there shouldn't be even the first stirrings of a bad thought in one **receiving so many favors** from the Lord...my **confessor** put me at peace. 12-...seeing that I was **esteemed** ... caused me to **suffer** a great deal. I look at the life of Christ and the saints... and saw that they didn't advance except through **contempt and insults**... When I thought these **favors** the Lord grants me would become **known publicly**, the **torment was excessive**...I was more willing to be buried alive than to have these favors known publicly. So when these experiences of recollection or rapture began, which I couldn't resist even in public. I was left so ashamed...

13-...the Lord asked me why I feared since only **two things could happen**; they would either **criticize me or praise Him**... and that either outcome would be advantageous to me...The temptations reached the point that I wanted to leave that place...but my confessor never allowed me to.

14-These **fears** took away to a great extent my **freedom**...and didn't come from **genuine humility**... The Lord taught me this truth: **I should be determined and certain that His favor was not some good thing belonging to me but to God** ... and that I should not be sorry that His works be shown in me.

15-...also when it appeared to a person there was some good in me, I prayed that His Majesty would make known to him my sins so that he might see how these **favors** were **bestowed without any merit** on my part... My **confessor** advised me against this prayer...and that until recently, if I saw that a person thought highly of me...I got him to know of my sins...my **confessor** also disapproved of this way of acting...

16-Such feelings derived...not from humility but from a **temptation**. It seemed to me I was deceiving everyone...I understand now that all these little fears and pains and this appearance of humility came from **serious imperfection** and from **not being mortified**. A **soul surrendered into God's hands** doesn't care whether they say good or evil about it... Let the soul trust in Him who bestows the favor, for He will know why He makes the favor known; and let it be prepared for **persecution** ... because there are a thousand eyes ready to turn on a soul receiving such favors, but on a thousand souls of another kind, there's not even one eye ready to turn.

17-... a soul that God permits to advance in this way before the eyes of the world can prepare itself for **martyrdom** at the hands of this world; because if it doesn't want to die to the world, the world will put it to death. I don't see anything in the world that pleases me other than its intolerance of faults in the good, forcing them to be **perfect** through its criticisms. If someone is not perfect, more **courage** is necessary to follow the **path to perfection** than to suffer a quick martyrdom. Perfection is not attained quickly, unless the Lord grants ... a special privilege. Seeing the soul begin, the world wants it to be perfect... so again, great **courage** is necessary because the poor soul has not begun to walk, and they want it to be flying; it still hasn't conquered its passions, and they want it to be strong in great occasions of sin... What it undergoes ... is something to praise the Lord for ... **many souls turn back** since they don't know how to help themselves...

18-...**many souls want to fly before God gives them wings**.... they begin with ... **determination** to make progress in **virtue** ... they see in all the books written on prayer and contemplation the things we must do to mount up to this dignity...and they become **dejected**. These **virtuous actions** would be, for example: not caring at all if others **speak badly** of us but rather being happier than when they speak well; little esteem for **honor**; a **detachment** from relatives so that if these relatives don't practice prayer one wouldn't desire to speak with them but would rather grow tired of doing so; and many other things which God must give these souls ... these **virtues** are **supernatural goods**, or against our **natural inclination**. Let not these souls become anxious, let them hope in the Lord...His Majesty will bring it about that what they now have in **desires** they shall **possess in deed**. It is very necessary for this weak nature of ours to have great confidence and not grow faint-hearted or start thinking that even if we make efforts we shall still fail to gain victory.

19- ...I have a lot of experience with this ... so don't think ... that **virtue** has already been **gained** if it hasn't been **tried by its contrary**. We must always be **mistrustful of ourselves** and never grow negligent... It seemed to me ...that I was **detached** from my relatives and that they bored me; I felt certain I could bear their conversation ... so when a business matter came about...I went to stay with my sister ... and in conversation with her...I didn't feel any affinity ... so as much as possible I remained alone. Yet I saw that **her troubles grieved and worried me** ... I understood that I wasn't as free

as I thought and that I still had to flee ... so that this **virtue** the Lord had begun to give would **grow**...

20-When the Lord begins to give a virtue, it should be highly esteemed; and we should in no way place ourselves in danger of losing it. This is true concerning our **honor** ... many who think they are **detached**, are in fact not. Let any person who wants to **advance** ... strive to **overcome** this **attachment**, which is like a chain that can only be **broken by God** through prayer and our cooperation... this attachment is a shackle on this road—I am astonished at the harm it does.

I see some **persons holy in their works**...and people marvel...Why is this soul still on earth? Why isn't it at the **summit of perfection**? ... Who detains the one who has done so much for God? ...the **devil** sometimes makes the soul think that it is **obliged to receive honor**.

21- Well...if they don't remove this caterpillar, even though it doesn't damage the tree completely, since other virtues remain, all the **virtues** will be **worm-eaten**. The tree isn't beautiful, nor does it flourish. The **fruit** of the good example it gives is not healthy ... however small the **point of honor** ... the concern for it is like the sound coming from an organ when the timing is off...it does **damage to the soul** in all areas, but in this **path of prayer** it is a **pestilence**.

22- We are striving to be **joined with God** through **union**, and we seek to follow His counsels coming from Christ, who was weighed down by ... testimonies against Him, and we desire our **honor** ... to **remain intact**? It is not possible to reach this **union**, for we aren't taking **the same road**. The Lord comes to the soul if we...strive to **give up our rights** in many matters...Some say: "I have not occasion to practice this detachment..." The Lord will not want anyone with the **determination** ...to lose so much good so He will **ordain** so many things by which the soul can gain this **virtue** that it will not want so many. All hands to the task!

23-I want to mention the **trivial**...the things I did when I began...: the little pieces of straw ... that I put on the fire... for the Lord receives all...

Among my **faults**...: Because of pure negligence and involvement in other vanities, I knew little about the Office in the choir and what had to be done...I saw other novices who could teach me. It occurred to me **not to ask** so that they wouldn't find out I knew so little...Such an **attitude** is very **common**. But

once God opened my eyes...I asked the youngest religious.

I didn't know how to sing well. I was so worried when I hadn't studied what they had entrusted to me (not because I wanted to avoid committing a fault before the Lord... as that would have been virtuous but because they were listening to me), ... but afterward when I didn't know the assignment very well, I simply said so... and when I began not to care if they learned that I didn't know, I recited much better, and in an effort to get rid of the **accursed honor**, I came to know how to do what I considered **an honor**

...

24- By means of **trifles** ... one **makes progress** in deeds. His Majesty gives value to the **little things** done for Him, and He gives the help for doing **greater things**. So with respect to humility it occurred to me...to gather up all their mantles when they left the choir. It seemed to me I was serving those angels that were praising God; I did this until...they came to know about it. This caused me no little embarrassment ... not out of **humility** but lest they **laugh at me**, since it was a **trifle**.

25-... I speak of such **lowly beginnings** so that anyone who did great things in the beginning may have hope ... **May it please His Majesty to give me grace so that I might not always remain at the beginning,** Amen.