

Episodes from the Life of St. Teresa of Avila



Session Four

To the First Foundation the Monastery of St. Joseph in Avila



Call to Mission from disciple to apostle



Mission: the Response to Vocation

How does the Lord make His Will Known?

The Lord will use any way. Scripture, tradition and experience show one way He uses often.

First, He gets our attention; then makes His will known; we respond by objecting or refusing to do what the Lord has revealed;

then He reassures us by saying that He will be with us as we accomplish the task.

We will see this pattern in the life of St. Teresa of Jesus.

**We must be ready for His call in our life
Perhaps not as dramatic as with some saints
but be sure His call is just as real**



**November 2, 1536: Teresa, 21, is professed
“Within an hour, Christ gave me such great
happiness at being in the religious state of life
that it has never left me up to this day”.**



The Monastery of the Incarnation



**In 1536, who lived in the Incarnation?
180 nuns and at least 20 others**



At 39, Teresa has a Second Conversion

“I saw a statue that represented the much wounded Christ and I threw myself down with the greatest outpouring of tears.”



A Vision of Hell

**“This experience was one of the greatest favors
the Lord granted me”**



**Transverberation: an angel plunged a golden
dart several times into my heart
Teresa experiences ecstasies and visions**



**Teresa is 45 living at the Incarnation
no thought of renewing
the practices of own monastery,
much less a reform of the whole Order.**



One day the Saint is together with María de Ocampo and other nuns from the Incarnation. Some of them say they should found a little monastery with few nuns .



**“I was thinking about what I could do for God,
and I thought that the first thing was to follow
the call to the religious life by keeping my rule
as perfectly as I could.”**



His Majesty said this new monastery will be founded it; will be called St. Joseph



Teresa talks with her friend Dona Guiomar, who begins to draw up plans to provide the new house with income.



**The house of Doña Guiomar where Teresa prepared the plans her first foundation.
In Avila, near Plaza de los Jeronimos.**



Teresa wants to establish St. Joseph's in Avila with the Primitive Rule. She is helped by relatives, friends, nobility and clergy



Throughout Avila, they talk of a Carmelite in the Incarnation who has ecstasies, raptures and visions. She wants to form a new monastery of discalced nuns.



People gathered near the entrance of Alcazar see a nun and a lady walking across the main square. They are Teresa and Dona Guiomar.



Father Domingo Ibanez

**"If anyone goes against it let them come to me,
and I will convince them".**



**Teresa acts decisively. There are still obstacles
She is sent to Toledo for six months to help
Dona Luisa de la Cerda**



**Dona Guiomar and Father Ibanez
write to Rome and when Teresa comes back they
present her with a Brief from
the Pope Pius IV authorizing the foundation**



**Teresa is 47. 24th of August 1562
St. Joseph's in Avila: the inaugural Mass
led at the chapel altar by Father Gaspar Daza**



**Once Mass has finished, the ceremony of the taking
of the habit takes place
The reform of Carmel has begun**



**The entire city of Avila is agitated.
Life swirls around the new small convent.
Everyone has something to say about
St. Joseph's and Teresa**



**Chief Magistrate orders them out
Four novices won't leave; Teresa brought them
and only she can tell them to leave**



The Avila Council calls a general meeting for August 30. Six days after the founding of the new convent the important men go to the Municipal building.



**The Magistrate and the governors, the notaries
and the bailiffs; the Dean, a canon, the
Precentor of the Cathedral and the Provost of
the Bishop, religious Orders**



The Chief Magistrate presents the case against the Convent of Saint Joseph, newly founded by Teresa. He wants it demolished.



Father Domingo Ibanez: “Let us leave the matter in the hands of the Bishop because this is a matter for the church not for the Council.”



Teresa's defender triumphs. The meeting ends. The distinguished men leave. People stay in the town square, talking about the outcome.



St. Joseph's monastery as it is today



On the day St. Joseph's was founded Teresa is recalled to the Incarnation. She writes the first draft of the Life.



Teresa is there for a year, then she has permission to live at St. Joseph's from Bishop de Mendoza



Teresa is 48. In August 1563, a year after the inauguration of the convent, Teresa walks to the little convent of Saint Joseph.



In the little convent of St. Joseph, they live a holy life, Mother Teresa and her nuns.



They pray for the Church, for priests. Teresa reminds them that these are the objectives of their prayer. After mental prayer, comes the Divine Office, Mass, and work



**A wooden cross is on the main seat in the refectory, and there is a skull on the table.
"God dwells among the pots and pans."**



They leave the dining hall, go to the small garden for an hour of recreation. Teresa gives as much importance to this as to the other most holy and spiritual of exercises. They talk, they sing, they laugh, they work.



**They resume practices of piety:
penances, the choral exercises, the manual
work. Everything they do is simple and joyful;
their spirituality is cheerful, typical of Teresa**



In the afternoon, at three o'clock, after praying Vespers, there is absolute silence in Saint Joseph's. It's because each nun is in her cell.



**They pray Compline; then a simple supper;
another hour of mental prayer, and then
Matins, examination of conscience, and
petitions. Then to their cells to their devotions.**



At eleven, one of them hits wooden blocks together. All the nuns open the cell doors and kneel down. One recites a short prayer. They stay kneeling and Teresa passes by blessing each one. Now they will sleep until the little bell rings, calling them to prayer



Teresa writes these are “the most restful years of my life,” and she means to live at St. Joseph’s the rest of her life



But in four years' time, in 1566, age 52, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God's call, she leaves to make new foundations



That same year she makes her second foundation at Medina del Campo, to be followed before her death by fifteen others.



For Reflection and Discussion

The Lord can direct us as He wants; there seems to be a typical way. First, He gets our attention; then makes His will known; we object or refuse: then He reassures us by saying that He will be with us as we do what He wants. We see this often in the Bible: for example, Moses and the burning bush; the Lord giving the Great Commission. Do you see this pattern in the life of St. Teresa of Jesus? Have you experienced something similar?

For Reflection and Discussion

Teresa was settled in her life at the Incarnation where she had lived for 25 years. What happened to turn her life upside down? What sequence of events drove her to leave her comfort zone? Have you experienced similar tipping points in your life?

Teresa relied heavily on assistance and resources of others in order to carry out God's will. Can you recall times when you did the same?

Any questions or comments?

