

On Founding more Monasteries (ch. 1, 2)

The Book of her Foundations
by Teresa of Avila

Begins with the Foundation of the Carmel of St. Joseph in Medina del Campo.

Chapter 1

On the circumstances surrounding the beginning of both this foundation and the others.

With hindsight, it seems to me that the five years spent at St. Joseph's in Avila were the most peaceful of my life. My soul often misses that calm and quiet. During those years some young women entered whom the world had in its grasp but, the Lord brought them to His house. He endowed them with much perfection. He did this until the number reached thirteen, the maximum number.

2. It was a delight for me to be among souls so holy and pure whose only concern was to serve and praise our Lord. He sent us what we needed without us having to ask. When in need, their joy was greater... I praise our Lord to see so many lofty virtues, especially **detachment** from all but **servicing Him**.

I was convinced the Lord would not fail those who had no other concern than to please Him. When there wasn't enough, no one ate until there was enough for all!

3. With respect to the **virtue of obedience**, to which I am very devoted, ... one day they served us helpings of cucumbers. My portion consisted of one that was thin and rotten inside. To test her obedience, I called a Sister and told her to plant the cucumber in the vegetable garden. She asked me if she should plant it upright or sideways. I told her sideways. She planted it, without the thought entering her mind that it would only dry up. Since she planted it out of obedience, she **blinded natural reason** to believe that what she did was reasonable.

4. It occurred to me to charge one of them with six or seven contradictory duties. She undertook them, remaining silent ... There was a well with bad water, so I called some workmen to dig us a new well, they laughed as though we were wanting to throw away money. I asked the Sisters what they thought. One said it should be tried ... and

observing her great faith and determination, I became certain. The Lord was pleased that we were able to put in a conduit to provide for all our needs.

5. I present this to show the faith of the Sisters ... For through the goodness of the Lord, all of them act this way. ... and those who follow will be inspired to imitate them...

6. These angelic souls ... received favors and detachment from the Lord. Their consolation was their **solitude** ... For them, it was a great torment when others came to see them. ... In considering the real value of these souls and the courage God gave them to serve and suffer for Him... surely, it was meant for some great purpose...

I often felt like one who had a great treasure stored up within but whose hands were bound. During those years, the Lord was granting my soul many favors and I thought I was not putting them to good use.

I tried to please Him and strove that the Sisters do the same... Whoever conversed with them was always edified.

7. Four years later, a Franciscan friar happened to visit me one day... He had recently returned from the Indies and told me of the many millions of souls that were being lost for want of Christian instruction...

I was so grief-stricken over the loss of so many souls, I couldn't contain myself ... I cried out to the Lord begging Him that He give me the means to be able to do something to win souls to His service and that since I wasn't able to do more, that my prayer would do some good.

I was very envious of those who for the love of our Lord were able to be engaged in winning souls... It seems the Lord prizes a soul we gain for Him through our diligence and prayer more than all the services we can render Him.

8. While I was in prayer one night, our Lord represented Himself to me. He showed me much love, and He said: "**Wait a little, daughter, and you will see great things.**" These words remained fixed in my heart ... I remained very consoled and certain these words would prove true. The means by which they did however, never entered my mind. A half year passed, and there took place what I shall now describe.

Chapter 2

How our Father General came to Avila and what followed from his visit.

The Father General from Rome was coming to Spain... I feared two things: **one**, that he would be displeased with me; the other that he would order me to return to the monastery of the Incarnation, where the mitigated rule is observed ...

I would no longer be able to observe the austerity of the primitive rule, the community numbered 150 and there was less harmony and quiet than at St. Joseph's.

The general turned out to be a discreet and learned man. He saw the work as good.

2. When he arrived in Avila, I arranged that he come to St. Joseph's. I gave him an account of my soul and of almost my whole life. He consoled me much and assured me that he wouldn't order me to leave St. Joseph's.

3. A portrait of the beginnings of the order, and how the primitive rule was being kept in all its rigor.

He gave me extensive **patent letters** to allow monasteries to be founded, along with **censures** to prevent the provincial from restraining me...

4. ... In seeing the strong desire of our Most Reverend General that more monasteries be founded, it seemed to me I saw them founded.

I was sad to see him return to Rome ... It seemed to me that with him gone I was left helpless...

5. Some days passed, I was thinking about how necessary it would be if monasteries of **nuns** were to be founded that there be **friars** observing the **same rule**...

I prayed to the Lord and wrote to Father General begging him for permission and giving him the reasons why it would be a great service to God and to our Lady.

She must have been the one who arranged it because he sent me the **permission** for the foundation of two monasteries ... To avoid opposition, he made his permission subject to the approval of both the present and former provincial. As the bishop took up this matter both provincials gave their permission.

6. Having the permission, my concern grew that there was no friar in the province to

begin this work. I begged our Lord to awaken at least one person.

Neither did I have a house or the means to get one.

Here I was, a poor discolored nun ... with no means to get the work started. But, neither hope nor courage failed... Everything now seemed very possible and so I set to work.

7. O Greatness of God! How You manifest Your power in giving courage to an ant! ... Since we are never determined, but full of human prudence and fears, You do not do your marvelous works... May it please Your Majesty that I render You some service and not an accounting of all that I have received, amen.

