

## Medina del Campo

### (ch. 3)

#### The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

### Chapter 3

#### The circumstances surrounding the foundation of the monastery of St. Joseph in Medina del Campo

The thought came to me to ask help from the Fathers of the Society who had guided my soul for many years and, so, I wrote the rector, Baltasar Alvarez, in Medina.

They agreed to do what they could and ended up securing permission from both the bishop and the people. Since the monastery is to be founded in poverty, it is difficult everywhere to obtain permission.

**2.** Julian de Avila went to Medina to attend to the negotiations. His efforts succeeded. I obtained the permissions, but didn't have a house or a penny to buy one with.

The Lord provided a virtuous young lady, who due to lack of space, was unable to enter St. Joseph's in Avila. She requested to enter in Medina and offered enough money to rent a house and help with travel expenses.

And so we found one to rent. With no more support than this, Father Chaplain, Julian de Avila, myself, two nuns from St. Joseph's and four from the Incarnation, we left Avila!

**3.** When our intention became known in the city, much criticism ensued. Some were saying I was crazy and the bishop thought the idea foolish. He didn't hinder me though because he loved me very much and didn't want to hurt me.

I didn't pay much attention to those who were against the project as it all seemed so easy to me and sure to be a true success. Before leaving Avila I asked a Father of our Order in Medina to buy us a house. He spoke of the matter to a lady who had a house in a fine location but that had all but collapsed except one room... The Lord was arranging all. We rented another house while our house was being repaired.

**4.** On the first day, as nightfall was approaching in Arevalo, a priest friend of ours who had found us lodging in the home of some devout women came out to meet us. He told me we didn't have a house because the Augustinian friars, located near our house, resisted our coming. A lawsuit was

inevitable. Since the devil is disturbed, the Lord will be well-served in this monastery. I asked the priest to say nothing of this to not disturb my companions... What we were doing seemed absurd to everyone...

**5.** When we reached our lodging place, I learned that Domingo Banez, a Dominican to whom I had confessed in Avila, was still in town... In his opinion, the foundation was not as troublesome as it appeared. Based on what he had seen in the foundation of St. Joseph's in Avila, everything seemed to him to be very possible. His opinion consoled me and reassured me that all would turn out all right ...

Any delay was hard for me to bear though as I didn't know what to do with so many nuns. The nuns were now aware of the situation and so we passed a difficult night.

**6.** In the morning, Fray Antonio of our order came. He said the house to buy was adequate and had an entrance that if adorned with some hangings could be made into a little church... We moved into the house as I desired to take possession of it before our intentions be made known...

**7.** We arrived in Medina del Campo on the eve of our Lady's feast in August at midnight. We dismounted and proceeded to the house on foot. It was a mercy of God that we were not struck by any bulls being corralled at that hour for the next day's run... the Lord, who always cares for those who seek to serve him, kept us from harm

**8.** When we arrived, we entered the courtyard and saw that the walls looked quite dilapidated... It seems the Lord wanted the Father to be blinded and so not able to see the place was not suitable for the Blessed Sacrament. All we had were some blankets, insufficient for the entire length of the hallway. In addition, the place was also unsuitable for an altar. It pleased the Lord though who wanted the place prepared immediately. The owner had many tapestries and told her butler to give us whatever we wanted, for she was very good.

**9.** When we saw such nice furnishings we praised the Lord but didn't know what to do for nails. We began to look in the walls and with time and effort, a supply was found... We worked quickly, men hanging the tapestries and nuns cleaning the floor. When dawn came, the altar was set up and the little bell placed in a corridor. Mass was said

immediately as it was sufficient to take possession. Not knowing this though we reserved the Blessed Sacrament and through cracks in the door, we attended Mass...

**10.** I was very happy because it was one more church where the Blessed Sacrament was preserved. My happiness was short-lived however as I saw through a window in the courtyard that all the walls in some places had fallen down and would require a lot of time to repair them... And when I saw His Majesty placed in the street, anguish filled my heart.

**11.** ... It seemed impossible for me to go ahead with what had begun ... Had I been alone, I think I could have suffered the situation. But, to think that my companions ... had to return to their houses was a painful thing to bear. It seemed that if this first attempt had gone wrong, everything in the future would not come about.

In addition, came the fear that what I had understood in prayer was but an illusion. This was the greatest suffering. I feared being deceived by the devil.

Bodily sufferings, even though great, are nothing compared with the sufferings of the soul.

**12.** All this anguish kept me truly depressed ... The Society sent a Father to see me who greatly encouraged and comforted me ... I began speaking to him about renting us a house until ours was repaired. I consoled myself in realizing that the many people who came had no thought that what we were doing was foolish. It would however have been right if the Blessed Sacrament had been taken away from us.

But looking back, no one thought of consuming the Eucharist! Had it been consumed, all would have been undone.

**13.** No house for rent was found. This made me suffer more. Even though I had put some men to watch over the Blessed Sacrament, I feared they would fall asleep. So I arose during the night to watch it through the window.

Many people came and were stirred to see our Lord once again in a stable. His Majesty didn't really seem to want to leave it.

**14.** Eight days later, a merchant offered us the upper floor of his house. And a lady living next to the house offered to help with the construction of a chapel for the Blessed Sacrament and an accommodation to allow

us to observe the rule of enclosure. There were others too who gave us food, but this lady helped us the most.

**15.** At last I was able to calm down because we were able to practice strict enclosure. We began to recite the Hours.

The work took two months and we were able to live there in a relatively good manner for several years.

**16.** While in Medina, I was still thinking about the monasteries for friars. I began to speak very confidentially to the prior. He was delighted to learn of this idea and promised to be the first!

He had many qualities but didn't seem to be the one for a beginning like this. He wouldn't have the courage to promote the necessary austerity since he was fragile.

He assured me that for many days the Lord had been calling him to a stricter life and that he had made plans to go to the Carthusians where he had been accepted.

Despite all of this, I just wasn't completely satisfied. I suggested he put into practice what he would be promising. And this he did. A year passed and during this time, he suffered many trials and persecutions. He bore it all very well. It seemed the Lord was preparing him for the new foundation.

**17.** A little later, a young friar, studying in Salamanca, came along with a companion who told me great things about the life this Father was living. His name was Fray John of the Cross. After speaking with him, I praised the Lord. He told me that he too wanted to go to the Carthusians.

I explained to him what I wanted to do and begged him to wait until the Lord gave us a monastery. I pointed out the great service he would render the Lord if he stayed in his own order to improve. He promised he would if he didn't have to wait too long. Happy now to have two friars, though I wasn't completely satisfied with the prior and so I waited a while.

**18.** The nuns were gaining esteem in the town and receiving much affection. They were only interested in how each one could serve our Lord more. In all matters, they lived as if in Avila since the rule and constitutions were the same.

The Lord began to call women to receive the habit. I was amazed at the favors He gave them. In order to love, it doesn't seem that He waits for anything else than to be loved.

