

7th Foundation: Salamanca

(Ch.18)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Treats of the foundation of the monastery of St. Joseph in Salamanca in the year 1570.

Deals with some important counsels for prioresses.

While in Toledo, the rector of the Society of Jesus wrote to me from Salamanca telling me that it would be very good to have one of these monasteries there in Salamanca.

Since the town was poor, I resisted founding a monastery there in poverty. But in Avila, just as poor, the nuns are never in want ... so I decided to make the foundation in Salamanca.

Travelling from Toledo to Avila, I sought to obtain **permission** from the bishop ... who gave the permission without delay.

2. With the permission in hand, the monastery seemed a good as founded. I immediately sought to rent a house from a lady I knew. At the time, it was occupied by students who would only leave when the new occupants arrived.

God, desiring it be founded, did not let the devil cause trouble in the beginning, but the later trials there ... were great, and still not resolved...

3. Well now, with permission and being certain of a house to rent, I left for Salamanca. I trusted in the mercy of God because the house needed a great deal of work.

I only took one nun with me in case there were obstacles as in Medina del Campo, I could undergo the trial alone, with no one other than the one required companion.

We arrived on the vigil of All Saints. The weather was **cold** and I was very **sick**.

4. I am not recording in these foundations the great **hardships** endured in the **traveling**: the **cold**, the **heat**, the **snow**, **getting lost**, **being sick with fever** but His Majesty gave me strength so I could forget about myself.

5. Fear of hardship though, never prevented me from making a foundation, even though I didn't like the long journeys. Yet, I was consoled to see one more church... and that something good comes about for Christianity...

6. Now, concerning the matter of **mortification**. Perhaps, daughters, it will be important for the **prioresses**. Since they have different talents and virtues, they seek to lead their nuns along their own way.

We must be very careful about mortification. We must not order others to do what would be harsh for us.

Discretion is an important part of our **government**, and necessary in these houses. Other prioresses, who are very spiritual, would like to reduce everything to prayer; **In sum**, our Lord leads souls by different paths. The prioresses are not there for the purpose of choosing a path for others ... but to lead subjects by the **path of the rule** and **constitutions of the order** though they may feel urged to do something else.

7. I was once living in a house with a prioress who was fond of penance; she led all the others along this path...

In another, the prioress was more spiritual and absorbed in prayer in chapel, ... She kept the whole community there with her even though it would be much better if the Sisters had gone to bed.

These little sheep of the Virgin keep silent like little lambs; ... The Sisters don't understand, for they are all absorbed in God too.

But, I fear for their health and would want them to **observe the rule**, for with that there is plenty to do; and the rest should be **done in gentleness**. This is especially important in what pertains to **mortification**.

Discretion and **knowledge** of each one's **talents** is very important in these matters. If the prioress is not carefully attentive, she will do the nuns much harm and leave them disturbed instead of helping them.

8. This matter of **mortification** is **not** an **obligation**; though it is necessary for the soul to **gain freedom** and **high perfection**, it is not accomplished in a short time.

Little by little the prioress should help each one according to the **spirituality** and amount of **intelligence** God gives...

9. There is a nun in one of these houses who is a great servant of God. She receives **favors from God** and has a **spirit of penance** and **humility**, yet she doesn't completely understand some points of the constitutions. The accusation of faults seems uncharitable to her...

The prioress must not think she understands a soul at once. Let her leave this to God, for He alone can understand it. Rather, the prioress should strive to **guide each nun** along the way His Majesty is leading that one, provided the nun is not failing in obedience or another aspects of the rule and the constitutions.

10. Now, then, let us return to the subject of **mortification**. The prioress could ask something of a nun in order to mortify her ... and though it may be a little thing ... it may be a heavy burden for the nun.

The prioress should **not** try and make one perfect by **force** but should allow her to proceed gradually until the Lord does the work in her.

For what is done to help her advance, should not cause her **disturbance** and spiritual **distress**, which is a terrible thing, for she will be a very good nun without that perfection.

Observing the others, she will gradually do as they do. And if not, she will be saved without this virtue of mortification.

There is a nun who practiced virtue her whole life, yet she experiences feelings and imperfections she cannot correct. I think God allows her to fall to humble her and to realize she is not completely perfect.

So, some nuns will suffer much from mortification, others will not suffer even little trials; to impose mortifications on these latter would be like loading down a child with two sacks of wheat.

Pardon me, my daughters, but for the things I have seen happen, have caused me to go on at length in this matter.

11. Another counsel I give you ... do not give any order that could be a sin, not even to test obedience ... for the nuns will carry it out immediately since everything seems to them well done if ordered by obedience.

Let subjects be advised that anything that would be a mortal sin when **not** ordered by the superior, would still be one if the superior orders it...

But something like jumping into a well is wrong to do; however there are many other things in which perfect obedience may be practiced.

12. All the mortification in which these dangers are not present, I praise.

Once a Sister in Malagon asked permission to practice a discipline. The prioress told the

nun not to bother her but to just keep walking.

The nun continued walking for several hours until another nun asked her why she was walking so much. Her response was that she had been ordered to do so. When she was not present at Matins, the prioress was informed of what had taken place.

13. So the prioresses must be careful what they do with souls that are so obedient.

A Sister showed another nun a large worm pointing out how pretty it was. The prioress jokingly told the nun to eat it.

The Sister fried it well to eat it; this she wanted to do. The careless prioress could have done this Sister much harm.

I have to say that I am happy that the nuns go to excess in this virtue to which I am very devoted. The Lord has given the grace for all in general to be inclined toward this virtue.

Amen