

## 8<sup>th</sup> Foundation: Alba de Tormes

(Ch.20)

### The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Treats of the foundation of the monastery, our Lady of the Annunciation, in Alba de Tormes. It was made in the year 1571.

Two months had not yet passed since the feast of All Saints ... ---the day on which possession was taken of the house in Salamanca--- ... when I received an **urgent request** from the Duke of Alba and his wife that a monastery be founded in the town of Alba.

The town was small which meant we'd need an income, so I wasn't too keen on the idea. Father Banez, a former confessor, happened to be in Salamanca at the time and he reprimanded me. He felt that since the Council had already given permission, it would be wrong to not found a monastery there because of a need for an income. He further pointed out that income or not made little difference in regards to nuns **being poor and very perfect**.

Before continuing, let me mention who the foundress of the monastery in Alba was, and how the Lord moved her to make the foundation.

**2.** Teresa de Layz, a daughter of noble parents of pure blood, was the foundress of the monastery in Alba, Our Lady of the Annunciation.

The parents were not as rich as one might have thought though, and so had their house in Tordillos, just outside of Alba.

What a pity that the world is so influenced by vanity. People prefer to remain in these little villages, where there is a **lack of Christian doctrine**, rather than risk their **honor**.

Teresa's parents already had four daughters, and so when she was born, they were greatly distressed to see that she too was a daughter.

**3.** It is something to be wept over that human beings do not know what is best for them and are ignorant of God's judgment.

There are great blessings that can come through daughters and great sufferings that can come from sons.

Rather than leave the matter to God who creates children, people kill themselves over what should be making them happy.

As people whose faith is asleep, they don't realize that God ordains, and so it best to leave all in His hands....

On the day when the truth shall be understood, how many parents will go to hell because of sons, and to heaven because of their daughters.

**4.** To return to what I was saying, on the third day after her birth, Teresa's parents left their baby girl alone and completely forgot about her the whole day!

One thing the parents had done well though, was to have had her **baptized** by a priest as soon as she was born.

In the evening, a woman who cared for the baby and knew the situation, arrived at the house and hastened to see if the baby was dead. Weeping the woman took the baby into her arms complaining of the cruelty of the parents. She asked the baby if she was Christian. **The baby responded she was!**

Those who heard this were amazed.

From then on, the mother cherished the child, often saying she hoped to live long enough to see realized the plan that God had for the child's life. She reared her daughter with high moral standards and taught her all about virtue.

**5.** When the time came for Teresa to marry, she refused. But then, she happened to find out that her **now** husband, also founder of this house, was seeking to marry her.

In hearing his name, Francisco Velazquez, she decided to marry, only if she could marry him, though never having seen him in her life.

Besides being virtuous and rich, Francisco, loved his wife much and sought to please her in everything.

Teresa took care of her household with great diligence. Her goodness was so great that when her husband brought her to Alba, his native town, the duke's housing administrator wanted to place a young man in the couple's house. Teresa was very upset, and began to abhor the town. She could have been victim of evil as the devil placed bad thoughts in the young man's mind.

**6.** Without saying anything to her husband, she simply asked him to take her away from there. He did. He brought her to Salamanca where she lived happily.

The couple had but one sorrow. God had not given them any children. Teresa begged our

Lord for offspring that they might continue to worship Him after her death.

**7.** Living many years with this desire, she was told one night when going to bed to not desire children, for she would be condemned. Though frightened, the desire did not leave her. She continued to beg our Lord.

One day she had a **vision**. She was in a house where there was a well on the patio. She also saw a green meadow with white flowers that was just beautiful. St. Andrew appeared to her near the well. He said to her: **“These are children other than those you desire.”**

She clearly understood that the **vision** was of Saint Andrew and that the Lord wanted her to **found a monastery**.

The vision was both intellectual and imaginary and not a whim or an illusion.

**8.** First, the vision was not a whim; this can be deduced from its **great effect**. From that point on, Teresa no longer desired children. She began to seek how to do God’s will. This was not an illusion either, because the monastery is now where our Lord is much served.

All took place six years **before** the monastery was founded.

**9.** Surprised by this vision, she told her husband that since God did not desire to give them children, they should found a monastery of nuns. Her husband was happy with this idea and began to consider where to found one.

**10.** It was then that the duchess of Alba called him. She ordered him to return to Alba from Salamanca. His wife was very distressed about this as she abhorred Alba. Reassured by her husband that they would not receive guests, she was somewhat appeased but continued to prefer Salamanca. Her husband bought a house in Alba and then sent for her. She came with great weariness. The house was not to her liking and she was very troubled the night she arrived.

The next morning, when she walked onto the patio, she saw the well where St. Andrew had been. She saw everything as it had been shown to her in the vision minus the flowers, the meadow and the saint.

**11.** Seeing these things, she became troubled and resolved to found a monastery there. She did this with great consolation and

tranquility. They continued to buy more houses until they had ample land. Her desire was for the nuns to be few and enclosed. She was advised to do some other good works as she was told, nuns are usually unhappy.

She changed her mind about founding the monastery. She and her husband decided at that point to arrange the marriage of two family members and give them a part of their estate.

**12.** But, our Lord had ordained something else. The nephew died within fifteen days of this arrangement. It seemed to her that God had punished her by taking her nephew that she loved so much.

She was now determined to found the monastery, but didn’t know how to go about it and felt very dejected. All were laughing at her unrealistic plan, especially her confessor, a Franciscan friar.

**13.** This same friar then discovered the monasteries of Our Lady of Mount Carmel while travelling. He returned and told her how she could found the monastery she desired.

She reached out to me but we had much difficulty reaching an agreement. For with monasteries founded with an income, my goal was always for the nuns to have enough to remain independent from relatives, or on anyone, and that food and clothing and everything necessary be given to them in the house and that the sick be very well cared for. Troubles arise when necessities are lacking.

In founding many monasteries in poverty, without an income, I never lack courage or confidence; I am certain God will not fail them. In founding them with an income that is small, all fails me; I find it better they not be founded.

**14.** She and her husband were finally in agreement to offer enough revenue to provide for the number of nuns. What I really appreciated is they left us their own home and moved into a smaller one in very bad shape.

The Blessed Sacrament was reserved and the foundation made on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul in 1571. Our Lord is very well served in this monastery. May He protect it always.

**15.** I have spoken of some nuns, thinking that when this book would be read, those

now there would not be alive, and those who follow would be inspired to carry on the tradition of this good beginning.

I have left out many miraculous things.

Perhaps someone will better tell of these supernatural things that resulted from the nuns prayers.....

The dates on which these monasteries were founded can be corrected afterwards. Dates are not of great importance; it makes little difference if there is some error in them.

Amen.