

11th Foundation: Seville

(Ch.24)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Continues with the foundation of St. Joseph of Carmel in the city of Seville.

When Father Gracian came to see me in Beas, we had never met. I greatly desired to meet him on account of the good reports given me concerning him. But, much greater was my happiness when I began speaking to him ...

2. At that time, I had so many difficulties. When I saw him, it seemed the Lord showed me the good He would do for the order through Father Gracian. I was filled with much consolation and happiness that I surprised myself.

When he was in Beas, the nuncio granted Father not only authority over the friars and the nuns in Andalusia, but now also in Castile. I was so filled with joy, that I could not thank our Lord enough ...

3. The license for the foundation in Caravaca was obtained. It did not correspond at all with my proposal, and so it was once again necessary to petition the royal court ... It cost me a great deal to wait there so long. I wanted to return to Castille.

But, since Father Gracian was there and was the Father Commissary for the whole province of Castile, and nothing could be done without his approval, I talked to him about the monastery.

4. He felt that if I were to leave, the foundation in Caravaca would fail and that, a foundation in Seville would render God great service.

It seemed he knew some wealthy people able to provide a house at once. So, it was arranged that the nuns who were to go to Caravaca would instead go to Seville in Andalusia where I had always strongly refused to found a monastery. Had I known that Beas was in Andalusia, I wouldn't have gone.

I submitted though, as a foundation in Seville was the resolve of my major superior. The Lord granted me the favor of believing the superiors are always right in everything.

5. Preparations were immediately done for the journey as it was getting very hot ... We were travelling in well-covered wagons and

when we reached an inn, we took whatever room was available, good or bad. One Sister received what we needed at the door as no one entered our room.

6. We reached Seville a few days before Trinity Sunday having endured scorching heat. Even though we did not travel during siesta, I tell you, that since the sun was beating on the wagons, getting into them was like stepping into purgatory. Thinking of hell or thinking that something was being suffered for God, the Sisters journeyed with happiness and joy.

The six souls with me had been given fortitude to suffer for Him. They were very experienced in prayer and mortification...

7. The day before Pentecost, I fell ill with fever... they threw water on my face, but being so hot from the sun, the water provided little refreshment.

8. Let me not fail to mention the bad inn we stayed at while I was ill. We were given a very small room with no window or door and the sun poured in from everywhere. The bed was so bad, it was like lying on sharp stones. When we're well we can put up with all sorts of things that seem impossible but when one isn't well that is not the case. We decided to leave, feeling it better to suffer the sun than the little room.

9. What will it be for those in hell? There will never be any change which seems to bring relief somehow ...

10. We also got in a tight spot while trying to cross the river on a barge. When it was time for the wagons to cross, it was not possible to make a straight crossing, we had to wind our way across. Those holding the rope on the other side let go of it and off went the barge and wagon without ropes or oars. The boatman was full of anxiety, we were praying and the others were screaming.

11. A gentleman watching from a nearby castle was moved with pity sent help, for the barge had not yet broken loose and our brothers were pulling with all their strength as the water dragged them along...

His Majesty always gives trials in a compassionate way, so He did here. The boat got stuck on a sand bar and so a rescue was possible. Night had fallen and so someone from the castle came to guide us.

12. A much greater trial happened to us after Pentecost. Hurrying to get to Mass in Cordoba without being seen, we found that

we needed a license issued by the Magistrate to cross the bridge because of the wagons. Since he was not up yet, it took more than two hours.

When the license came, we found our wagons wouldn't fit through the gate of the bridge. We had to saw them down!

When we finally reached the church where Father Julian was to say Mass, it was filled with people....

13. There was a great celebration of an important feast going on in the church. I felt it was better to miss Mass than to enter such turmoil, but we followed Father Julian's decision to go. It was enough for the people to see us with the veils covering our faces, the white mantles and the hemp sandals to get all stirred up...

14. As we entered the church, a friendly man approached us. I pleaded with him to bring us to some chapel. He did so and remained with us until we had left the church...

I tell you, daughters, that this incident was very difficult for me ... I couldn't wait to get out of that place. We took our siesta under a bridge.

15. When we reached Seville, I figured the house Father Mariano had rented for us, had all been done.

Though the archbishop favored the disalced, this didn't stop him from causing me much trouble. He was opposed to monasteries of nuns founded in poverty, and he is right. The trouble was he hadn't been told we were coming. Since Father Commissary and Father Mariano were certain my coming would benefit the archbishop, they didn't inform him...

We thought the monastery would be a great favor to him, as it proved to be, but the Lord desired that no foundation be without a trial.

16. When we arrived at the house that had been rented for us, I thought we could immediately take possession of it so that we could say the Divine Office.

Father Mariano did not want to tell me everything; that is that the license had not been granted... He finally told me that the archbishop, didn't like to grant permission for monasteries of nuns... He didn't like giving a license for a monastery to be founded in poverty. He said he would not do so.

17. This amounted to saying the monastery must not be founded. First, it would have

seemed to me wrong to found in Seville a monastery with an established income, though I could have...

Secondly, not a cent was left from the expenses of the journey, and we hadn't brought anything with us...

For those with us to return, they had to find a way to borrow money. One of our friends did lend them what they needed.

Father Mariano looked for a way to furnish the house, but we had no house. In short, it looked like an impossible situation.

18. We were able to have Mass, but surely only because of Father's insistent pleading. Word, however, was sent that the bell not be rung.

We remained in this situation for fifteen days. Had it not been for the Father Commissary and Father Mariano, I would have definitely returned with my nuns with little regret, to Beas for the foundation in Caravaca.

It was now more difficult to return as the monastery was known in Seville. It would have been much easier if we had left after our arrival.

Father Mariano never allowed me to write to the archbishop, but tried on his own to convince him. He made use of letters of Father Commissary now in Madrid.

19. Mass had been said with the archbishop's permission. This consoled me along with the Divine Office always said in the choir. The archbishop did send a message telling me he would see me soon.

Yet, I was distressed about Father Commissary's anxiety. He was the one who had ordered me to come here.

20. About this time, the calced (or traditional Carmelite) Fathers came to inquire the authority by which this monastery had been made. I showed them the patents from our most reverend Father General. This calmed them down. Had they known what the archbishop was doing, the documents would not have sufficed.

Finally, God was pleased that the archbishop come to see us. He said the monastery could remain and in the way I wanted. From that point on, he always favored and supported us in all.

Amen

