

11th Foundation: Seville

(Ch.26)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Continues the account of the foundation of the monastery of St. Joseph in the city of Seville. Tells some very noteworthy things about the first nun who entered there.

For my part, I was very consoled to see that I was leaving the Sisters in a house that was so good and well-located, the monastery was known, and there were enough new nuns to pay for the greater part of the cost of the house.

In the future, those who want to enter may do so, no matter how little the dowry they bring, and the debt can still be paid off.

I was pleased to have shared in the trials in Seville and when a chance for rest came, I left. The hot weather was beginning and I wanted to be in Malagon before Pentecost.

2. The nuns were sad to see me go as we had been through many trials that year. Besides the first foundation in Avila, none of the other foundations cost me as much as this one; the trials were mainly interior ones. May it please the Divine Majesty that He always be served there, for then everything else is of little importance. His Majesty began to draw good souls to this house. Of the six I brought with me, five remain and I wish to speak now of the first nun who entered since you will enjoy hearing her story.

3. She was the young daughter of Christian parents. At around 7 years old, she went to live with her aunt who had no children. The maids had hoped to acquire the aunt's inheritance but when they realized that she would leave it to the young girl, Beatriz, they conspired to say the girl wanted to kill her aunt.

When the maids told the aunt and the child's mother, both of them believed the three maids.

4. The mother took the child home. Beatriz de la Madre de Dios, told me that for over a year she was spanked, punished and made to sleep on the floor to cause her to confess her evil plan.

The girl denied the accusations which made her mother think that she was much worse because she was stubborn. But, God

sustained her and she continued to uphold the truth. God defends those who are innocent.

He sent two of the three maids a very bad illness. Both of them secretly sent for the little girl and her aunt to beg pardon for their lies. The third maid died in childbirth. So, all three died agonizing deaths in payment for what they had made the innocent girl suffer.

5. After her daughter had become a nun, her mother grieved the bad treatment she had given her once little girl. She told me the whole story of how she had become her daughter's executioner

6. At the age of twelve, the child became very devoted to the saints of Carmel. She promised to become a nun in Carmel and made a vow of chastity. When she could, she devoted time to solitude and prayer. In this solitude, God and our Lady granted her many favors.

She would have liked to have become a nun at once, but didn't dare because of her parents. She didn't know where to find this order either until many years later.

7. When she reached marriageable age, though still a girl, her parents selected a future spouse. She was the only child and the least loved by her parents. All her brothers had died.

When her parents told her their plans, she told them of her vow not to get married and no matter what they did she would not change her mind.

8. The parents had already given their word to the future spouse's family. For her refusal, she received many whippings. They also tried to hang her by choking her. It is a miracle that they didn't kill her.

God desired greater things for Beatriz.

He saved her. In the end, she thought of what St. Agnes had suffered and that she was pleased to suffer something for the Lord. Her parents thought for sure she would die as she remained in bed three months without being able to move.

9. It is strange that the parents would think so much evil of their daughter. She was always holy and virtuous. All that she obtained she gave away in almsgiving.

... The parents came to understand the virtue of their daughter and their former persecutions became tokens of affection. But

she went about troubled because of her longing to be a nun.

10. One day, long before anyone had even heard of the discalced Carmelites, a friar entered their home. He was old with a long silver beard. He went to Beatrice and blessed her saying: “Beatriz, may God make you strong.” Then he left.

They were all stupefied. They went to look for him, but he had disappeared. Beatriz remained very consoled. They all considered that this was something from God and so they began to esteem her highly.

11. She was very weary by the time Father Gracian, barely thirty years old, arrived there ... When she saw the habit, she recalled the one whom she had seen since the habit was the same.

Her joy was so great she almost fainted ... From that day forward, she tried to confess to Father Gratian. She tried more than twelve times but he never wanted to hear her confession. She was young, no more than twenty-seven, and attractive – he avoided conversation with her.

12. Finally, one day while she was weeping in church, a lady asked her what the trouble was. Beatriz explained her desire to confess to Father who was in the confessional at that time. The lady took her to Father and begged him to hear her confession. At last she was able to make a general confession. He was greatly consoled to discover her virtuous soul. He was able to console her as well by saying that should the Carmelite nuns come to Seville, he would arrange for her to be accepted immediately. This is what happened.

He told me to accept her because he was satisfied with her soul. He also insisted her parents not know, as they would prevent her from entering.

Thus, on Trinity Sunday, she took leave of the women who had accompanied her to church. She had arranged with another woman to bring her to the monastery and told the women she had been with that she would return soon.

She put on her habit and mantle of coarse wool. Her only fear was that someone might recognize her behind this heavy habit and stop her.

Since she was no longer concerned about her honor and thought about nothing but how to

realize her desire, so we opened the door at once!

I sent word to her mother who arrived as though out of her mind. But, seeing the favor God was granting her daughter, she overcame it courageously and did not go to the extreme of not speaking to her daughter as other do. She gave us many alms.

13. This bride of Christ began to enjoy the happiness she had so much longed for and was so humble and fond of doing all there was to do that we could hardly get the broom away from her. She found rest in working. In her great happiness she began to put on weight. This pleased her relatives that they were then happy to see her there.

14. In order that she would not enjoy so much good without suffering, she experienced severe temptation two or three months before the time to make her profession. It seemed to her a very serious step to take. She seemed to forget all those years she has suffered to attain this blessing. Yet, she defeated these temptations and made plans for her profession. Three days before her profession, our Lord visited her and consoled her in a very special way. She remained so consoled that during those three days it seemed she was outside herself with happiness...

15. A few days after she entered the monastery her father died. Her mother took the habit in the same monastery and gave all she possessed in alms. Both mother and daughter experience the greatest happiness, edifying all the nuns and serving Him who granted them so wonderful a favor.

16. A year later another young lady entered against the will of her parents. The Lord continues to fill the house with souls who seek to serve Him, for neither austerity or enclosure deters them. May He be praised and blessed forever, amen.

