

## 12<sup>th</sup> Foundation: Caravaca

(Ch.27)

### The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Treats of the foundation made in the town of Caravaca. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved on New Year's Day, 1576. The monastery is under the patronage of the glorious St. Joseph.

While still at St. Joseph's in Avila, preparing to leave for Beas, a messenger arrived with a note from Dona Catalina in Caravaca.

After hearing a sermon preached by a priest from the Society of Jesus, three young ladies went to her house, determined not to leave until a monastery was opened in that town. These young ladies belonged to the most important families in Caravaca and were eventually helped to found the monastery by Dona Catalina. Between the three of them, they had enough resources to bring about such a project.

2. Since I saw both desire and fervor, I was moved to help them. Learning that Caravaca was not far from Beas, I took a greater number of nuns with me than usual with the intention of going there after completing the foundation in Beas.

The Lord thought otherwise. They had obtained the **license** from the council of the Order of Knights in such a way that even though I had made up my mind to go, I had to give up the idea.

3. The truth was that when I learned where Caravaca was, and saw that it was very out of the way and that the road leading to it was very bad which would make visits difficult and so displease the superiors, I had little enthusiasm to make the foundation.

I sent Father Julian de Avila and Antonio Gaytan there to see what the town was like. They both were lukewarm toward the project because Dona Catalina, mainly responsible for the foundation, kept these three ladies in a separate room alone, as if they were already enclosed.

4. These future nuns, especially two of them, knew how to gain the goodwill of the priests. They signed an **agreement** which made both priests very happy.

The priests returned enthused about the two women but never stopped talking about the bad road.

An **agreement** had been made but the **license** had been delayed, so I sent Father Gaytan back there. At this point, both priests were eager that the foundation be made. The real credit for the foundation goes to them because had they not gone there and reached an agreement, I would not have bothered about it.

5. I sent Antonio Gaytan to put up the **turn** and the **grille** in the house where the nuns were going to live until finding another more suitable one. The house belonged to the father of one of the ladies and he willingly allowed them use of part of his house.

6. When the license was obtained and I was getting ready to go to Caravaca, I learned from reading the license that the house would be subject to the **Order of Knights**, and obedience given to them. This was **not acceptable** as we belonged to the **Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel**. Another license was requested ...

I wrote to King Philip who issued me orders that the license be granted, for he favored us in all things. May special prayers be always offered for his majesty...

7. Another license was petitioned, so I departed for Seville. These poor young ladies were enclosed there from February until the following New Year's Day. The license was obtained in short order but I was very far away and involved in many troubles. They wrote to me frequently very distressed.

8. It was impossible for me to go there, so Father Gracian, the apostolic visitor, ordered the nuns with me to go instead. I arranged for someone I trusted to be prioress. They brought with them the necessary provisions and left with two disclated friars of the order. The weather was really bad for it was the end of December.

9. When the nuns arrived in Caravaca, they were received with great joy! They founded the monastery and reserved the Blessed Sacrament. The two women immediately took the habit. The third suffered much from melancholy or depression made worse by being enclosed so she decided to return home.

10. Reflect on the judgements of God and on our obligation to serve Him. His Majesty has

benefited by the good will of this young lady and by her property so that the monastery could be founded. When it came time for her to be able to enjoy what she had so desired, she was lacking in fortitude and became subject to the melancholic humor often blamed for our imperfections and lack of stability.

**11.** May it please His Majesty to give us abundant grace to advance ever in His service. And may He protect and favor all of us so that this excellent beginning not be lost...

In the future, may each one who enters bear in mind that with her the observance of the **primitive rule of the order of Virgin**, our Lady, begins again and that we must in no way consent to any **mitigation** (softening of...) of the rule.

Consider that through little things, the door opens to very big things. Without your realizing it, the world will start entering your lives. Remember the poverty and hardship that was undergone in obtaining what you now enjoy.

If you note carefully, you will see that these houses were **not** founded by men but by the hand of God who is happy to advance His works provided we cooperate. From where do you think a woman like me ...could get the power for such great works.

**12.** In whatever way you look at this, you will recognize that it is His work. It would not be right to undermine it in any way. We must not do so even if it cost us our life, honor, and tranquility.

We have all here. To have life is to live in such a way that there is no fear of death or of life's events ... To enjoy this prosperity that cannot be surpassed when there is no fear of poverty, but a desire for it.

If you always ask God to foster this way of life ... He will not deny you His mercy. Have confidence in Him and courageous spirits you need not fear that He fail you in anything.

Never refuse to accept those who ask to become nuns provided they are virtuous and you are pleased with their desires and talents. Be sure they are not coming to remedy their social situation but to serve God with greater perfection...

**13.** I have never refused to accept anyone because of lack of money, provided I was satisfied with the rest. When I received

those who brought much wealth, I did not feel as great a joy as I did with those I accepted only for God...

**14.** When a person about to enter has wealth, it is good she give it to you as alms. It would seem to be a lack of love if she didn't do this. But, always bear in mind, that those about to enter should dispose of their possessions in conformity with the greater service of God. We gain much more when she does what she ought for God, than from all she brings with her. Let His Majesty be served in all and through all.

**15.** Never in any business related to these foundations did I ever go contrary to the will of God. I proceeded according to what my confessors advised me...

**16.** The Lord knows that my intentions were always good. This good did not come from me, but from God who willed that this work be done. I am telling you this, my daughters, that you may realize how obliged you are and know that so far nothing offensive has been done to anyone.

**17.** We surely have undergone some trials. I have tried not to dwell on them for it would be tiresome. But let me say that on the first day of our journey from Malagon to Beas, with a great distance to cover, I was travelling with a fever and other illnesses. I wondered how I could suffer this and travel. Seeing me so weak, His Majesty suddenly took away my illness... When I had good health, I underwent bodily hardships with joy.

**18.** Putting up with many different personalities caused no small amount of trouble. Leaving my daughters and Sisters when going from one place to another was no small cross. Though detached from other things, God has not given them the gift to be detached from me, and I am not detached from them either. Their love for me is great; it is obvious that it is love that is true.

**19.** Our Most Reverend Father General both gave his permission and ordered me to make these foundations. He used to write to me about the great joy each new house that was founded gave him. It seemed to me that by giving him happiness I was serving our Lord since He is my major superior.

**20.** A general chapter was held. One would think the concern would be about the expansion of the order. This was not the case however, as the defintory (man in charge)

gave me the command to make no more foundations and not to leave the house in which I chose to reside. In other words, it was a kind of prison situation. What made me sad though, was that our Father General was displeased with me based solely on hearsay.

**21.** The strong opposition and criticism I often received while making these foundations gave me great joy. But I don't remember experiencing the joy I felt at this instant. At another time, any one of these three things that came altogether would have been a great trial for me. My main joy came from thinking that since creatures repaid me like this I was pleasing the Creator. He who looks for joy in earthly things or words of praise from men is very much mistaken. Today people will think one thing, tomorrow another.

**22.** I began to write about these foundations by order of Father Ripalda of the Society of Jesus who at the time was my confessor. Because I had many duties, I set the work aside. I didn't want to continue as Father was no longer my confessor and because of the great trials what I had written cost me. Yet, Father Gracian, the apostolic commissary, ordered me to finish the account of these foundations. I responded that the task was very tiring for me on top of all the other things I had to do. Nonetheless, he ordered me to finish them little by little as best I could.

I have finished today, the fourteenth day of November, 1576 in the monastery of St. Joseph in Toledo where I now reside by order of Father Gracian. Father is now the superior for the discalced friars and nuns of the **primitive rule** and is also visitator for those of the mitigated rule (Traditional Carmel).

I beg the Sisters and brothers who might read this to recommend me to our Lord that He might have mercy on me and free me from the pains of purgatory and let me enjoy Him. May the weariness I experienced in writing on these foundations be of some benefit to me after my death.