

14th Foundation: Palencia

(Ch.29)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Treats of the Foundation of St. Joseph of Our Lady of the Street in Palencia. It was made in the year 1580 on the feast of King David.

Having returned from Villaneuva de la Jara, the superior ordered me to go to Valladolid at the request of the bishop of Palencia, who favored whatever pertains to this order.

I could find no basis for founding this monastery, as it had to be founded in poverty, and because the city was very poor this monastery could not be sustained.

2. This foundation had been a subject of discussion for almost a year, but now, in Valladolid, I found many **obstacles**....

3. ... because of my poor health, I had even lost the **confidence** that God usually gives me when I begin one of these foundations. Everything looked impossible to me. Had I met someone to encourage me that would have helped me overcome my faintheartedness.

4. It just so happened that a Father Ripalda from the Society of Jesus came to town. He began to encourage me very much. He told me **my age** was the reason for my cowardice. At the time, I was considering the foundations of Palencia and Burgos together, but I had nothing for either of them. This, however, wasn't the cause of how I felt as I am used to starting with less...

5. His words were not enough to bring me to a decision to go ahead ... It is often made clear, that it is not I who do anything in these foundations, but the work is His, who is all powerful in everything.

6. One day after Communion, I begged the Lord to enlighten me so that I might do His will. The Lord answered: "**What do you fear? When have I failed you? I am the same now as I was before. Do not neglect to make these two foundations.**" I was left with such a **determination** and **courage** that nothing could have opposed me.

7. I took two nuns with me to go and buy the house. Though I had been told that it was impossible to live on alms in Palencia, I knew that His Majesty would provide. The weather was harsh, but a gentleman had given us a house he had rented, where we

could stay from the beginning of the year until the feast of St. John the Baptist in June.

8. I wrote to a canon in this city, convinced he would help us. Our Lord, Himself, chooses someone to help Him in each place.

I requested of him, that he have the house vacated as secretly as possible. I felt it safest to keep the foundation from being known.

9. This man did so good a job that not only did he have the house vacated, but he provided beds and a plentiful supply of things. We needed these things because the weather was cold and the fog intense.

We had little rest until we had a place to say Mass the following day, and before anyone was even aware, we had arrived. I have found that this **quiet way of arriving** is more fitting.

Early in the morning, almost at dawn, a priest who had come with us, said Mass. Another friend lent us the money to furnish the house and assisted us on the journey.

10. There were five of us nuns and a lay Sister who went to Palencia. That night we slept little although the journey had been difficult because of the heavy rains.

11. That morning I sent word to His Excellency, the bishop, who wasn't aware that I was arriving that day. He came at once with great charity. He told us he would give us all the bread we needed and ordered that many things be provided for us. This order owes him so much.

The joy of the people was great. Not one person disapproved. This was surely because of the bishop who was much loved in this place. I rejoice daily at having made that foundation there.

12. Since the house was not ours, we immediately began to negotiate to buy another, as ours was in a bad place. With the help of the nuns who came, it seemed we could buy something. Had God not given us good friends, all would have been to no avail. The two cannons from the town were as concerned about us as if the matter were their own...

13. In that town, there was a **shrine** that inspired much devotion. It was called **Our Lady of the Street**. The devotion to her was not only in the city, but in the region as well. It seemed to all that it would be good for us to be near that shrine which was offered to us as a **gift**.

14. There were two houses near the shrine, but when the owners realized our interest in them, they came to value these houses more. But, we finally decided that these houses, in very bad shape, were not suitable for us. There was however, another house that seemed just right for our needs and near the home of the gentleman who helped us so much. It was felt that this would be a good place for us to make our foundation.

15. That house was not large enough, but they offered us another one along with it. Based on the information I had, I desired to go ahead. But the canons wanted to see the house first, so I went to see them, and also those of our Lady of the Street to make the owner think that we had choices!

Although we found many difficulties, we accepted them even though they were not easy to fix up. To make a church, all the good space for living quarters, would have had to be taken away.

16. It was providential that I trusted little in myself. In sum, we wanted to buy the houses even at an elevated price and to write to the owner who was in another city.

17. That I have gone into such detail about the purchase of these houses may seem pointless until it is seen that the devil's aim was to prevent us from buying those of **Our Lady of the Street.**

End of Part 1