

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.

Part 1

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**.

Part 2: Our Lady of the Street

18. We were determined not to buy any other houses. One day though while at Mass, I became worried whether I was doing the right thing. After receiving Communion, I heard these words; "**This is the one that suits you.**" We then determined to buy those of **Our Lady of the Street**.

But how were we to do this, as the business deal had already been discussed for the other houses? The Lord answered me; "**They do not understand how much I am offended there, and this will be a great remedy.**" I recognized from its **effects** that this locution was from the Spirit of God. Then the Lord said to me at once: "**It is I.**"

19. I felt very peaceful but still had no idea how to remedy what had been done. I was concerned not about the Sisters, who would be agreeable to whatever I might do, but that

the others might see me as vain and unstable. I had changed my mind so quickly, something I abhor doing.

20. My confessor was one of the two canons helping me. I had not been confiding spiritual matters to him as was my custom to then walk a more secure path doing what the confessor advised me.

I decided to tell him under much secrecy, though I could not renounce doing what I had heard without much distress.

In the end, I told him I trusted that our Lord would do what I had seen at other times, for His Majesty **changes the mind of the confessor**, who is of another opinion so that what He wants gets done.

21. I told him how the Lord was accustomed to teaching me in this way. From things that happened it was understood that these experiences were from His Spirit. I then told him that I would do what he thought, though perhaps painful for me.

Although he saw that there would be unfavorable comment, he decided not to go against what he had heard. We decided to wait for the messenger.

Even though we had agreed to all the owner had requested, he asked for another three hundred ducats. In this we saw God's hand.

22. What he did helped matters very much but not completely. I told my confessor that if he thought we should buy the house of **Our Lady of the Street**, he shouldn't worry about my reputation, but that he should tell his companion, the other canon, that I was determined to buy it. His companion seeing so quick a change surely suspected something about my experience and did not press me further.

23. Afterward, we all saw clearly the big mistake we would have made in buying the other house. We are surprised to see the great advantages the one has over the other, not to mention the main advantage, that our Lord and His Mother are served there, and many occasions of sin are being removed. Many night vigils were held there and since nothing more was there but the shrine, many things could be done that the devil was sad to see removed.

We should not have considered any other house. The devil was causing blindness in many matters for there are many conveniences in **Our Lady of the Street** that would not have been found elsewhere.

The townspeople were overjoyed for they had been desiring the monastery be there.

24. ... It seems our Lord desires me and all others to know that it is only His Majesty who does these works, and that as He gives sight with mud to the blind man, He wants someone as blind as I, to do something worth more than mud.

25. These holy canons immediately made haste to negotiate a contract for the houses. In my opinion, they got them for a low price. They worked hard to get the house ready. They also gave money for it, because I didn't have any, and thus they became the guarantors too. They had to trust the Lord, for I didn't have a cent.

But, thanks to His Majesty, no one has ever lost anything by being a guarantor for me, nor was there any failure to pay back in full.

26. The owners of the houses were not satisfied with the two guarantors. The two sought out the administrator of the diocese, who was very charitable with us, for we owed him much and still do. He asked the two where they were going; they told him they wanted him to sign the guarantee which he did sitting on his mule! Consider that!

27. I cannot understate the charity I found Palencia. I felt like we were part of the early Church. Not only did we not have any money and so had to be provided with food, but they felt God was doing them a favor to have this foundation in Palencia. Just to have one more church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved is a great deal!

28. As time goes on, it is clear that our Lord is served by the fact that the foundation is in this town. Since many people went there for the night vigil, and the shrine was in an isolated spot, not everyone went there out of devotion. Now though, the situation is improving. The statue of our Lady had been displayed with very little reverence but now the bishop had a chapel made in the shrine for it. Little by little, things are being done for the honor and glory of the Virgin and her Son.

29. When the house was ready to be occupied by the nuns, the bishop wanted this to take place with solemnity. He came from Valladolid, joined by the religious orders, and all the people of the city in a procession. There was much music. We were wearing our white mantles and veils covering our faces and went in procession from the house

where we were staying to a parish close to our Lady's house. The statue was brought there to meet us and from there we took the Blessed Sacrament and had it reserved in the church with a great and well-organized solemnity. It cause much devotion. Other nuns on their way to the foundation in Soria came with us, all carrying candles. I believe the Lord was very much praised that day.

Part 3 Discalced form their own Province

30. While in Palencia, God willed that the discalced Carmelites be separated from the calced. This was done by letting the discalced form their own province, for the sake of our own peace and tranquility.

The Catholic king, Don Philip, requested a brief from Rome. The chapter was held in Alcala. The king paid the expenses. And so with much peace and harmony, the chapter was held in the College of St. Cyril. Father Gracian de la Madre de Dios was elected provincial.

31. The Fathers will write about what took place. I mention it only because it took place while I was engaged in this foundation. Our Lord brought to conclusion an endeavor that was so important for the honor and glory of His Mother. It is her order. She is our Lady and Patroness. This was one of the great joys and satisfactions of my life.

It would take a long time to tell of the trials, persecution and afflictions I have undergone in the past twenty-five years. Only those who know the trials can grasp the joy that came to my heart at seeing the conclusion of the matter. Had it not been for the king, the devil was so cunning that everything would have collapsed.

32. Now we are all at peace, **calced** and **discalced**; no one can hinder us from serving our Lord. Hence, my Brothers and Sisters, since His Majesty has heard your prayers so well, let us make haste to serve Him.

Let those who are eye-witnesses, consider the favors He has granted us and the trials from which He has delivered us.

And let those to come not neglect anything relating to perfection.

Now we are beginning, strive to advance always from good to better. Beware, for the devil through very small things drills holes through which very large things enter. May it not happen that those to come say: "**These**

things are not important; don't go to extremes." Oh, my daughters, everything that helps us advance is important.

33. For the love of our Lord, I beg you to remember how soon everything comes to an end. Remember the favor our Lord has granted us in bringing us to this order and the great punishment that will befall anyone who might introduce mitigation.

Fix your eyes always on the ancestry from which we come, those holy prophets. How many saints we have in heaven who have worn this habit! Let us adopt the holy presumption that with the Lord's help we will be like them. The battle will be brief, my Sisters, and the end eternal. Let us set aside things that in themselves are nothing, using only those that lead us to this end without end, so as to love Him and serve Him more, for He will live forever and ever, amen, amen. Thanks be God.