

15th Foundation: Soria

(Ch.30)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Begins to treat of the foundation of the monastery of the Blessed Trinity in the city of Soria. It was founded in 1581. The first Mass was said on the feast of our Father St. Elisha.

While in Palencia, they brought me a letter from the bishop of Osma. I had consulted and confessed to him all the time that I was in Toledo, which was quite a while.

2. This letter was written from Soria where the bishop was at that time. A lady had spoken to him about making a foundation of our nuns there.

I was very happy because the place was good for a foundation and I wanted to see him and tell him some things about my soul. I had grown to love him very much because of the great progress my soul had made under his guidance.

3. The lady who wanted the foundation had been married for some years, but had no children. She was very wealthy and had it in mind to provide for a monastery of nuns. She was very pleased after talking to the bishop about us and urged him to have the foundation made.

4. She was a mild-mannered person, generous and penitent, a great servant of God. She owned a good house in a good location in Soria and told us that she would give it to us along with all that was necessary for a foundation. In addition, she offered us a good sum of money.

The bishop promised to give us a very good church with a vaulted ceiling. Though it was a parish church, we were able to make use of it by means of a **covered passageway**. He gave me an account of all of this in his letter. I then discussed the matter with Father Provincial who happened to be in Palencia at the time.

5. I would bring seven nuns with me in addition to my companion, a lay Sister and two discalced Fathers. Someone came for us in a stagecoach.

Father Nicolas de Jesus Maria, a man of great perfection and discretion, was over forty when he received the habit. He

advanced far in a short time. He had no office, so little attention was paid to him. God allowed this, that there might be some help left for me. With respect to the other friars who could have helped, they were either exiled or imprisoned.

6. ...Hence it can be seen what need the order was in, since so much attention was paid to me for want, as they say, of good men. It was during this time that I experienced his perfection and discretion. I love him much in the Lord and esteem him highly.

7. He and his lay brother companion accompanied us. He had little to do on this journey, for the brother sent by the bishop in Soria was a great help in finding good inns. The weather was fine. The daily journeys were not long. Little hardship was suffered on this trip; rather it was a happy one. We arrived in Soria at around five in the afternoon. The bishop blessed us from the window of his house as we passed by.

8. That lady or the foundress, was waiting for us at the door of her house, where the monastery was to be established. We were anxious to get inside because of the crowd. Although it was nothing new, everywhere we went there was much curiosity. The world is so fond of novelty. But, with our veils, we can put up with them.

The lady had decorated the large hall in which Mass would be said, as the covered passageway we would use leading to the church, had yet to be constructed.

9. The lady had prepared everything we needed including use of the hall for recollection while waiting for the passageway to be built.

The first Mass in the church was said with great solemnity and in the presence of a large congregation. A Father from the Society of Jesus preached the sermon.

The bishop was out of town at the time. His health was not well and he was losing sight in one eye. He said that this caused him no more distress than if it had happened to his neighbor. He sometimes reflected that it would not grieve him to lose sight in the other eye as well as this would allow him to live in a hermitage serving God with no other obligation.

He told me that before becoming a bishop, he had always felt called to be a hermit and

had almost decided to give up all and go off to become one.

10. When he became bishop, His Majesty told me that He would be very much served by him. Despite his many very painful illnesses and his every day work, he fasted four days a week, and did other penances as well. When he made his visitations, he always went on foot, as he had little trust that important work could be handled by his administrators, so he did it all himself. In the beginning, he underwent savage persecutions, but the good he was doing throughout the whole diocese was becoming known, so these persecution have had little effect. He bore all of this with much perfection. He did good to those who persecuted him and always found time for prayer.

11. I have said all of this that it be known who is in fact responsible for the foundation of the Blessed Trinity in Soria. Although he did not provide the income, he gave us the church and inspired this lady with the idea of the foundation.

12. Once we had taken possession of the church and prepared what was needed for the enclosure, I needed to go to St. Joseph's in Avila and thus I departed immediately in very great heat along a road unfit for wagons.

13. I did not want anyone else except the one person who came along with me from Soria. The less noise there is on my journeys the better off I am.

I paid well for the good trip I had in going to Soria. We hired guides that led us along the good roads and then abandoned us just before we came to the bad ones.

Before arriving at the inn, we had suffered from the hot sun and all the other incidents in which the wagon turned over.

My companion being rooted in virtue never expressed anger, which amazed me. When one is rooted in virtue, the occasions of sin are of little consequence. I praise the Lord for how He was pleased to bring us safely through that journey.

14. We arrived at St. Joseph's in Segovia. We were delayed because the roads were so bad. But, the nuns provided us with every comfort, for God never gives me a trial without repaying for it immediately. I rested for eight more days. Since the foundation was made with so little hardship, there is no

reason to pay any attention to the hardships of this return journey because it was nothing. My hope is that Soria is a place where God will be served. May He be blessed and praised for age to age, amen. Thanks be to God.