

16th Foundation: Burgos

(Ch.31)

The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Begins to treat in this chapter of the foundation of the glorious St. Joseph of Saint Anne in the city of Burgos. The first Mass was said April 19, the octave of Easter, in 1582.

For over six years, members of the Society of Jesus, told me that our Lord would be greatly served if a house of our order were founded in Burgos. The reasons they gave, made me begin to desire it. On account of the many trails within the order, there had been no opportunity to attempt a foundation in Burgos.

2. In 1580, while I was in Valladolid, the Archbishop of Burgos passed through. I asked the bishop of Palencia to ask him permission to make a foundation in Burgos.

3. The archbishop granted **permission** because he knew how our Lord was served in them. The bishop of Palencia told me that the **license** needed could be considered as granted.

4. I don't know the reason for feeling so much **repugnance** as I then did. After I saw what was to take place, the cause seemed to be the devil. Each time there was a trial, the Lord has helped me with **locutions** and **deeds**. In this situation, He immediately began to encourage me. The Lord told me to not fail to make these two foundations (Palencia & Burgos). All hesitation left me.

5. It seemed better to make the foundation in Palencia first since Burgos was so cold. But then a request for a foundation in Soria came and it seemed better to go there first and then to Burgos.

The bishop of Palencia thought an account should be given to the archbishop in Burgos of what was taking place, and I begged him to do so. The archbishop wrote to me saying that the people of Burgos had to give their consent in order to make the foundation.

6. In short, his conclusion was that I should go to Burgos to discuss the matter with the city. If they said no, he would override them and give his permission as he was not going to let them tie his hands. He, most of all, wanted to avoid the turmoil and opposition that had taken place in Avila over the

foundation of the monastery. He felt it not suitable to found a monastery unless with an **income** or the **consent** of the city.

7. The bishop of Palencia considered that the deed was as good as done and the archbishop of Burgos had sent word for me to come. Yet I felt he lacked enthusiasm. I felt it best to obtain permission from the city although I knew it would be difficult. I felt it best to let the matter rest for now as winter approached, so I headed to Avila.

Part 2 Catalina de Tolosa

8. There lived in Burgos a holy widow, Catalina de Tolosa. She had given two of her daughters as nuns to our monastery of the Conception in Valladolid and two others to Palencia.

9. Her daughters seemed to be no less than angels. She gave them good dowries for she is very generous as well as rich. She came to Palencia and so we were certain of the **permission** and asked her to look for a **house** for us to **rent**. The thought never occurred to me that she would spend as needed for her own, but only lend to me. She desired the foundation so much that she was sad to see it delayed.

And so, I returned to Avila, as I have said. I was very relaxed and unconcerned about the foundation, but she wasn't. Thinking all we needed was **permission** from the city, she began to try to get it from the city.

10. She had two neighbors, a mother and a daughter, who wanted the foundation as well. The mother asked her son, a magistrate, to seek permission from the city council. He asked about the **financial backing**, saying that without it, they wouldn't give permission.

Catalina de Tolosa stated that she would **provide a house** and **ensure the food**.

The son then succeeded in obtaining **permission** from the magistrates and from the archbishop and brought Catalina the **license in writing**.

She then wrote me that she had begun negotiating the foundation. I thought she was joking as I know how difficult it is to obtain permission for a monastery founded in poverty. She neglected to mention that she had obligated herself to pay for it.

Part 3 The Lord's Words

11. I felt the foundation could be made if the license could be obtained. I couldn't bear the thought of going to a place as cold as Burgos maybe the prioress of Palencia could go in my place.... as all was in order and there was nothing left to do.

While I was thinking about this, determined not to go, the Lord said the following words:

Don't pay attention to the cold weather for I am the true warmth. The devil uses all his strength to hinder that foundation; use yours with my help so that it may be realized and do not fail to go in person, for great good will be done.

12. With these words, I changed my mind again. Although my human nature finds these trials distasteful, my desire to suffer for this great God does not lessen.

There was cold weather and snow at that time. It was my lack of health that daunted me more than the cold, for when I have my health all seems easy.

Part 4 Opposition

13. Within a few days, I had the **license**, along with **letters** from Catalina de Tolosa and her friend Dona Catalina, urging me to hurry. There were many other orders seeking to make foundations there too. The charity of the city was seen as all obtained licenses too. The archbishop opposed these other foundations thinking that they would be harmful to the orders founded in poverty. Yet, God brings about great blessings wherever there are many monasteries, that He has no trouble sustaining.

14. The **locution** I had heard implied that there would be much **opposition**. I could not understand from where it would come for we had a **house** and the **city** was in accord along with the **archbishop**. I never doubted though the words heard from God.

15. In short, Father Provincial asked me if I had obtained the archbishop's permission **in writing**. I wrote about this to Burgos. They answered that he was pleased about the permission and so it didn't seem that there was any reason to doubt.

Part 5 Journey to Burgos

16. Father Provincial accompanied us on this journey to look after me and to visit Soria not far from Burgos. The roads were so flooded with heavy rains, that he was also needed to pull the wagons out of the mire. Though daring, the Lord had told me that we could make this trip without harm that He would be with us. There was special danger in a river crossing near Burgos called Paso de los Pontones. The rain had flooded the bridge and it could not even be seen. In sum, it was very imprudent to cross there especially with wagons.

17. We had hired a guide in an inn who knew that crossing. And, oh! The inns! There was no possibility of making a full day's journey in one day because of the bad roads. The wagons usually got stuck in the mud needing other mules to help pull the wagons out.

The Fathers who came with us underwent a lot because the muleteers we had hired were young and careless. Father Provincial took care of everything. What was difficult, he made easy except the crossing of the bridge. We were eight nuns; five were to remain in Burgos. My illnesses prevented me from enjoying the good things that happened during the journey. All the nuns were very happy and once the danger was over, they found recreation in talking about it. For those who usually practice obedience as do these nuns, it is a great thing to suffer in obeying.

Part 6 Entering Burgos

18. It was through this rough journey and heavy rain that we reached Burgos. Before entering the city, our Father wanted us to go first to visit the holy crucifix and recommend our foundation to the Lord. It had been decided that the foundation be made immediately.

19. The next day, the whole city council came in a body to see me. If we had had any fear, it was of the city. Thus, we considered that now everything would go easily. Although no one knew of our coming, we had thought of making it known to the archbishop so the first Mass could be said at once but because of the very heavy rain, we did not do so.

20. That night we rested in the great comfort that this holy woman provided for us. The large fire proved troublesome for me. The next day, I couldn't raise my head and had to speak to visitors through a veiled grate; it was a day in which I had to attend to business matters, I was very embarrassed.

Part 7 The Archbishop

21. Early that morning, Father Provincial went to seek the blessing of His Excellency. He found the archbishop very angry because I had come without his permission. He was acting as though he had never ordered me to come or had never discussed anything of the foundation. When he finally conceded that he had ordered me to come, he said he meant that I should come alone, but that I had come with so many nuns! The bishop of Palencia had told me that there was no reason to ask permission of the archbishop who had already said how much he desired the foundation.

This is the way the things happened, and they did happen in this was because God wanted the house to be founded. Afterward, the archbishop acknowledged that had we openly informed him, he would have told us not to come. He ended the visit with Father Provincial by telling him that if we did not have an **income** and our **own house** he would not grant the **license**; and we could easily return to where we came from.

22. Lord, how certain it is that anyone who renders You service soon pays with a great trial! And what a precious reward a trial is for those who truly love you if we could at once understand its value! But we did not then want this reward because it was making all impossible. The archbishop made still more demands: that what would be used for income and buying the house could not be taken from what the nuns had brought with them. All seemed lost, but I was certain that all was working for the best.

Father Provincial returned very happy nor was he annoyed with me for not having secured the archbishop's permission in writing as he had told me to do.

Part 8 Mass

23. Some of the friends and relatives to whom Canon Salinas from Palencia had

written on our behalf thought we should secure the archbishop's permission to have Mass in the house. We were never able however to obtain his permission to have Mass there even though two canons begged him. The most they got from him was that once we had an income, the foundation could be made, there in that house, until we bought a house. Further, he said that to buy a house, we would have to have guarantors who would pay and that we would have to leave the place where we were staying. We found the guarantors at once and Catalina de Tolosa provided the income for the foundation.

24. It took more than three weeks to decide on the amount of money, how and from where it would come. During this time we could not hear Mass. Catalina de Tolosa did all so well.. She was so generous and showed so much good will. She provided us all with food for a month as though she were our mother.

Father Provincial and his companions were given lodging at a friend's house, Doctor Manso. Our provincial was very impatient about being detained for so long, but he did not know how he could leave us.

Part 9 The Administrator

25. Once an agreement was reached about the guarantors and the income, the archbishop ordered that documents be given to his administrator and that the matter be taken care of at once. After we had spent almost a month trying to meet the demands of the archbishop, the administrator sent me a note saying that until we had our own house, the license would not be given. He did not want the foundation to be made in the house in which we were staying because it was damp and there was too much noise in the street. It was as if we were just beginning the whole process! The archbishop also felt the house had to meet his approval.

Part 10 Paradise --- It was Like a Dream

26. When Father Provincial understood that any house selected had to meet the archbishop's approval, he was very upset as were all the nuns. To buy a site for a monastery obviously requires much time,

and he was annoyed to see us have to go out for Mass.

At this point he felt we should go back, but as the Lord's instrument, I was certain it would be made and so nothing caused me distress. I was very sorry he had come with us. Our Lord spoke these words to me: "**Now Teresa, hold fast.**" With these words, I tried to get Father to leave and let us remain as Lent was approaching and he had to go to preach.

27. He ordered that a few rooms in the hospital of the Conception be given us as the Blessed Sacrament was reserved there and Mass was said there each day. But, there was no small struggle in getting one of the rooms, a large one, as the owner, a widow, didn't want to grant permission. In addition, the hospital confraternity feared we would take over the hospital. We had to sign before a notary that if they told us to leave, we would do so at once.

28. We were given two rooms and a kitchen. But a great servant of God, the hospital director, gave us an additional two rooms. The postmaster of this city also showed us great charity.

29. These two men were our first benefactors. Catalina de Tolosa earned the title of founding benefactor. She paid for the house, she bore all the cost of the rebuffs by the archbishop. Her deepest affliction was that the foundation not be made. She never tired of doing good for us.

30. Though very far from her house, Catalina visited us almost daily at the hospital and sent us all we needed. She, however, was greatly criticized by the people, but she never lost her courage. She always answered them with prudence and suffered the remarks in such a way that it seemed God was teaching her. He gave her the courage to put up with everything.

31. So once Father Provincial had us in a place where we could hear Mass and observe enclosure, he would leave for Valladolid where he was to preach. He, however, was distressed that the archbishop had not given any hopeful signs of a license. Though I insisted it would be granted, he could not believe this.

I was relieved to see him gone, because it was hard for me to watch him suffer. He told us to find a house we could buy, something very difficult to do in Burgos. Our friends,

especially those of Father Provincial's, were given charge over us, and all agreed not to speak a word to the archbishop until we had a house. The archbishop always said he desired this foundation more than anyone. And I believe it, yet he demanded things that seemed impossible to comply with.

32. There were so many obstacles that we couldn't buy any of the houses for sale. I was told of one house owned by a gentleman that had been up for sale for many days but no religious found it suitable. Some really regretted this now. Since so many had spoken badly of it, I paid no attention to it, thinking it would be unsuitable.

33. One day, however, while speaking with a friend of Father Provincial, I remembered the house I had disregarded, as it seemed that there was nothing appropriate in the whole city. I thought that even if it was as bad as they say, our present needs would be taken care of and we could then sell it. I asked Father's friend to go and see it.

34. To him, this didn't seem to be a bad plan and he wanted to go there at once. The little he was able to see, the current tenant had no desire to show the house, pleased him greatly. The owner was absent, but the power to sell it belonged to a priest who was inspired to sell it to us and deal with us very honestly.

35. I arranged to go to see the house. It pleased me so much I would have paid twice for it and it would have seemed cheap to me. The next day our friends went to see the house and were ready to sign the contract when they found out the price.

We met on the vigil of St. Joseph before Mass and I felt we should meet again after Mass and come to a decision.

36. During Mass the Sisters prayed to St. Joseph that they might have a house by his feast day. He heard their prayers. And thus, it was done. There was a notary waiting for us at the door with a witness---as if ordained by God. It was an opportune time to sign the contract. The sale was concluded, in accord with all legal demands.

37. No one thought the house would be sold for so little. The news spread. It was being said that the priest practically gave the house away and that the sale should be nullified because of the great fraud.

The owners who were from the nobility were very happy to learn that their house was being made into a monastery.

The deed was drawn up the next day and a third of the price was paid. We accepted everything in the agreement exactly as requested by the priest.

38. It may seem pointless to spend so much time telling about the purchase of the house. But many who considered the transaction in detail, felt it no less than a miracle for two reasons: first, the price made the house seem like a gift; and, the fact that other religious orders were blinded after seeing the house and did not want to buy it.

Those who saw it called the other religious fools. Two monasteries of nuns along with a wealthy person had recently looked at it. They all let it go, and now they are very sorry.

39. Such was the outcry of the city that we saw clearly how right the good Doctor Aguiar was to keep the whole matter secret. After God, we can say that it was he who gave us this house. Good intelligence is a great help in all. God brought this work to completion through him. For more than a month, he advised us how to adapt the house with little cost. It was as though our Lord had kept it for Himself, for almost everything seemed to be already done. It was as if the house was made to order for us. It was like a dream. By bringing us to such a paradise, our Lord repaid us generously for what we had suffered. Because of the garden, the view, and the water, the property is nothing else but a paradise, May He be blessed forever, amen.

Part 11

40. The archbishop learned of the purchase of the house immediately and rejoiced in our success, thinking that his obstinacy had been the reason for the delay, and he was very right. I wrote to him to let him know that I would hurry to adapt the house so that he could give his final permission. We moved in at once though an occupant was still living in the house. This made the archbishop very angry. He was also angered learning that the grates and the turn had been installed for he thought that I wanted to go ahead at all costs. I reassured him that these are customary items for those living a life of recollection.

Notwithstanding all the good will I showed, there was no way of getting him to grant the **license**.

41. He came to see the house and was very pleased but did not give us the permission. There were still contracts to be made with Catalina de Tolosa. Although there was a chapel in the house, the bishop never allowed Mass to be said for us in the house. On feast days and Sundays we had to go to a church nearby to hear Mass. It seems there was no other explanation than that our Lord wanted us to suffer.

42. In drawing up the contracts, there was a good amount of trouble too. One administrator was very hostile towards us. In this, the archbishop was not so much to blame. If in God's providence it had not been necessary for this administrator to go on a trip and for another take his place, it seems we would never have obtained the license. Oh, what Catalina de Tolosa had to suffer is hard to say! She bore all with a patience that amazed me, and she never tired of providing for us. She gave all the furnishings we needed to set up the house, such as beds and many other things. She desired so much to see the work completed that all she did toward this end seemed to her little.

43. Seeing so much delay, I wrote to the bishop of Palencia begging him to write to the archbishop again. The bishop was disgusted with him. What is amazing is that the archbishop never thought he was offensive to us in anything.

The bishop sent me an open letter for the archbishop that had I given it to him we would have ruined everything. It was very courteous but it spoke some truths that given the temperament of the archbishop, were enough to annoy him, though they were close friends. The bishop used to tell me that just as through the death of our Lord, enemies had become friends, so through me, friends had become enemies.

44. I begged the bishop to write another friendly letter to the archbishop to remind him of the service the monastery would render to God. He agreed and saw that the letter was for the service of God. This letter was so effective, that the archbishop gave us the license. On this day, the Sisters and Catalina de Tolosa were very distressed. It seems the Lord at the time when He was

about to give us the joy wanted to afflict us more. May His name be blessed without end.

45. The archbishop gave Doctor Manso permission to say the first mass the next day and to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. The Dominican Prior of San Pablo, said the high Mass with much solemnity proved by musicians who came unrequested with their wind instruments.

All were very pleased. Many were very critical of what the archbishop had been doing. The joy of the good Catalina de Tolosa and of the Sisters was so great that it inspired me with devotion and I said to God: “Lord, what do these your servants seek other than to serve you and see themselves enclosed for You in a place they will never leave?”

46. No one but those who experience it will believe the joy felt in these foundations once we are enclosed where no secular person can enter. There is a great consolation in finding ourselves alone. It seems to me comparable to taking many fish from the river with a net; they cannot live until they are in the water again. So it is with souls accustomed to living in the running streams of their Spouse. When caught up in worldly things, they do not truly live until they find themselves back in those waters. This I always observe in each of these Sisters and in myself.

Nuns who see in themselves the desire to go out among seculars and converse with them a great deal should fear that they have not discovered the living water of which the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman and that their Spouse has hid it from them, since they are not satisfied in being with Him.

I am afraid that this stems from two causes: either they did not embrace the religious state for Him alone; or, after having embraced it, they do not recognize the great favor God had granted them in choosing them for Himself and freeing them from being subject to a man, often the death of them and perhaps even the death of their souls.

47. Let us not tire of praising so great a King and Lord, who has prepared for us a kingdom without end in exchange for some little troubles which will end tomorrow and which come wrapped in a thousand joys. May He be blessed forever, amen, amen.

48. A few days after the house was founded, it seemed to Father Provincial and myself

that in the endowment Catalina de Tolosa had provided for this house there were certain difficulties that could have given rise to a lawsuit and caused her some worry. And we wanted more to trust in God than to be the occasion for giving her any suffering. We, thus, nullified the contracts in the presence of a notary concerning the money she had given us and returned to her all of the documents.

This was done in great secrecy so that the archbishop wouldn't know of it, for he would have been hurt. But doing this also hurt the house. When it is known that a monastery is founded poverty, there is nothing to fear because everyone helps out. But when people think it has an income, to be without one is dangerous.

Catalina de Tolosa has provided for a remedy that will become possible after her death. She has arranged that her two daughters, who were to make profession in our monastery of Palencia, transfer to this house their inheritance that would have been promised to Palencia at their profession. And to another daughter, who desired to receive the habit here, she had left the family estate which amounts to as much as the income she wanted to provide.

The only drawback is that these goods cannot be used at once, but I have always held that we will not be in want. The Lord who provided that alms be given to our other monasteries founded in poverty will awaken some to give them here or will provide the means by which nuns can support themselves.

49. While I was thinking about this one day after Communion, the Lord said to me: “**Why do you doubt? Everything is now finished; you are free to go.**” He thereby let me know that they would not lack what was necessary. These words so impressed me that I have no more worry than I would have if I had left the nuns with a very good income. I immediately began to plan my departure, for it seemed to me I was no longer doing anything else here than enjoying myself in this house, for it suited me perfectly, and I could have been a greater help, although with much more hardship, in other monasteries.

The archbishop and the bishop of Palencia remained good friends. Soon the archbishop began to show us much kindness and gave

the habit to Catalina de Tolosa's daughter and to another nun who within a short time entered here. Our Lord will not allow His brides to suffer if they serve Him as they are obliged. May His Majesty give them the grace for this through His great mercy and goodness.