

On Making the Visitation

by Teresa of Avila

Introduction

This work, as does the greater part of the Teresian writings, is a response to an obedience and reveals the customary repugnance toward beginning the work. Once finished though, Teresa thought that the result of her effort would prove to be beneficial.

It would seem that Gracian, Teresa's first provincial, is the one who gave her the order to write this treatise. It is not known when the order was given, all we can say for certain is that the order was given before Teresa wrote the final part of her

Foundations.

In her mind, her task was finished after the foundation in Caravaca in 1576 since the prior general began to oppose any new Teresian Carmels.

What seems certain then is that this little treatise was written in Toledo during the summer of 1576 as she wrote to Gracian in October of that same year telling him she was going to begin writing about the other foundations.

This work did not appear in the first edition of St. Teresa's works published in 1588 by Fray Luis de Leon. Today the original copy is in Escorial, the library of the King Philip II.

It was published for the first time in 1613. No mention was made of Gracian who was still alive and passages referring to him were modified. This edition of Padre Alonso served as the model for others until the last century. A faithful rendering of the text did not appear until 1919.

In this work, Teresa offers to visitators the fruit of her experiences in religious life and of her understanding of the feminine psyche. She presents a series of practical counsels and suggestions so that a visitation might amount to something more than a mere formality. Her short treatise reveals solid common sense and realism as well as some keen powers of observation and insight into human nature.