

P. Pablo Hernandez SJ, 4th October 1578, No. 269 [259 or 260]

Teresa is at San Jose in Avila during one of the most difficult years of her life. She is informed that her friend P. Pablo Hernandez SJ is in Madrid and she writes this letter asking for his help. The letter will be “hand delivered” by **Roque de Huerta**, the King’s chief forester and one of Teresa’s most trusted friends [read the next letter to Roque which was written at the same time].

Pablo Hernandez SJ was born in Santiago de Compostela in 1525. He entered the Jesuits in 1552 and went on to hold many positions of responsibility in the Order. He first met Teresa in 1562 when she was in Toledo at the home of Dona Luisa de la Cerda. Later he helped her with the foundations of Malagon and Toledo [In Foundations 15:1 Teresa tells us that Fr. Pablo Hernandez “was very eager that one of our monasteries be founded in Toledo” and see also letter no. 15.] In Spiritual Testimony No. 58 [Relations 4] written for the Inquisition of Seville Teresa names Fr. Pablo among her Jesuit confessors [“Doctor Pablo Hernandez of Toledo who was a consultant to the Inquisition”]. Only two letters of their extensive correspondence have come down to us.

To get a sense of the esteem to which Teresa held Fr. Pablo read letter No. 8, written to Dona Luisa de la Cerda [especially paragraphs 5 & 12]. Pablo left written testimony of his regard for Teresa’s prudence and holiness: “Mother Teresa of Jesus is an expert in the affairs of this world and an even greater expert in the affairs of the heavenly world”.

The context of this letter is that in August 1577 Cardinal Filipe Sega arrived in Madrid as the new Papal Nuncio [read Foundations 28:3 for Teresa’s summary of this change of fortunes for her reform]. Teresa’s concern at this time is the very false and damaging information Sega has received about her activities and the serious consequences this will have for her nuns and friars and especially for the leaders of her friars. About six weeks before this John of the Cross escaped from prison. She has become aware of how badly he was treated and she fears that others will suffer the same fate, especially Fr. Gracian.

She is asking Fr. Pablo to help her in two specific ways:

1. She asks him to speak with the president of the Royal Council Antonio Mauricio De Pazos {the most influential person in the kingdom} who is a friend of Fr. Pablo. She assumes that he has been misinformed also and that Pablo is the right person to properly brief him because he knows Teresa so well and has been involved in her work from the beginning.
2. She asks Pablo, if he thinks it appropriate, to speak with the Nuncio’s confessor: *“give him my regards and inform him about the whole truth so as to oblige him in conscience not to publish things so injurious without first investigating and tell him that despite me being so wretched, I wouldn’t dare do what they are saying”*.

It will be another year before the intervention of Pablo and other friends will bring about a favourable change in fortunes for Teresa and her reform: *“May God who favours the truth be praised! And this is what happened here, for since our Catholic King, Don Philip, knew of what was going on and was informed of the life and religious observance of the discalced, he took the initiative to favour us”* [Foundations 28:6 read whole paragraph].

For reflection/discussion

Teresa’s teaching about suffering is sometimes misunderstood. We learn so much from letters like these: *“Let us do our part, and God will then do what He wills. This is God’s cause and all will end*

well. My hope is in Him; do not be distressed". [Letter to Roque de Huerta 270:3]. Teresa applies this principle to every aspect of suffering: For example: health – Teresa is an expert in 16th century medicine, everything possible must be done for the sick and no expense spared. Finance – Teresa is an expert in finance, she knew how to raise money, spend it well and did not spare money when it needed to be spent. Opposition to her work – again she does everything possible to put the situation right and this letter is a good example of this.

Teresa is never passive in the face of suffering or adversity. Suffering and pain are realities of human life and realities of the spiritual journey but they must be understood properly and not in an immature or naïve way. Suffering does not make a person more holy but suffering and dealing with suffering is an unavoidable part of the journey to the fullness of human and Christian maturity. It is love that is important and all true love involves pain – Jesus is the measure and the greatest expression of this. Teresa spent her life entering more deeply into this mystery – **How do we understand it in our lives?**