

## To Padre Domingo Banez, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1574: No. 61 [57 or 60]

**Teresa** is prioress of the Incarnation in Avila but is now in Salamanca trying to sort problems associated with the purchase of a house for the nuns. She is planning a foundation in Segovia and would like to make more foundations[paragraph 5].

**Domingo Banez** is a well known Dominican priest and theologian. He held many teaching positions including two Chairs in Salamanca. He plays a very important part in Teresa's life from 1562 until her death and indeed for many years afterwards. We first hear her speak of him in Chapter 36 of the book of her Life: *"Only one member, a Presentado of the Order of St. Dominic...said it wasn't something that had to be suppressed...what he said was very helpful."* The occasion was a meeting of the Town Council of Avila to discussing the suppressing of her new foundation of San Jose.

Banez has a connection with all four of Teresa's writings:

1. **Life:** He is almost certainly one of *"the five of us who at present love each other in Christ"* [Life 16:7]. Later he is appointed Censor for the book and writes an extensive judgement which is in general favourable.
2. **Way of perfection:** We find his name at the beginning and end of this book – *"I received permission from the Father Presentado, Friar Domingo Banez, of the Order of the glorious St. Dominic, who at present is my confessor, to write some things about prayer....if I should be mistaken, the Father Presentado, who will be the first to see this book, will either make corrections or burn it,"* [prologue]. *"Those who have reached this fount will find that book [Life] very beneficial and receive much light from it. You may get it from Father Dominic Banez, a Presentado of the Order of St. Dominic, who as I said is my confessor and the one to whom I give this book. [42:6*  
  
{Domingo Banez said in 1591 that he never read the Way of Perfection!}
3. **Foundations:** He helps her with the foundation of Medina del Campo [Foundations 3:5], he gives the crucial advice that enables her to found in Malagon [9:3] and is involved in a number of other episodes.
4. **Interior Castle:** It appears he preferred the book of the Life to the Interior Castle – see letter no. 324:9. Teresa does not agree!

Domingo Banez is both an important advisor and a very close friend to Teresa throughout the last 20 years of her life. The opening paragraph of this letter gives testimony to this: *"My love for Fray Domingo is such that whatever seems good to him seems so to me and what he wants I want as well"*.

{The title "Presentado" was a title given to Domingo Banez by the General Chapter of the Dominicans, recognising his special position of teacher within the Order}.

Teresa knew the Dominican monastery of St. Thomas in Avila from a young age. She had many friends in that Order and received much support and advice from a variety of Dominicans. In this letter we hear of another distinguished Dominican **Melchor Cano**. The high praise that Teresa gives him is very justified.

Teresa was not the only Carmelite nun that Domingo Banez helped and supported. In 1604, shortly before he died he wrote: *“I had dealings with and was confessor to Mother Teresa of Jesus for a period of twenty years and in addition I knew all the important religious of her Order”*. In this letter we hear about two postulants that Fr. Banez has sent to Teresa.

**Maris de Jesus Pardo Cifuentes** [known affectionately in the Order as La Parda]: She made her profession in Salamanca 19/9/1575. In 1581 she went with Teresa to the foundation of Soria where she spent the rest of her life. She died in Soria 20/5/1616 with a reputation for holiness. We see in this letter that Teresa thought very highly of her.

**Maria de los Santos Diaz**: Teresa is not so impressed with this postulant and calls her the “whimpering one”. She made her profession in Salamanca 30/9/1576 and lived the rest of her life in that Carmel. In 1592 she wrote an extensive declaration in the process for Teresa’s beatification. She died 5/9/1618.

Only four letters of Teresa to Domingo Banez have come down to us. As usual this is only a tiny proportion of the vast correspondence between them: *“The Master, Fray Domingo Banez (who is now consultant to the Holy Office in Valladolid) was her confessor for six years, and she always kept in contact with him by letter when something new presented itself”*.

[Spiritual Testimony for Inquisition in Seville 1576].

This letter gives us a precious glimpse into one of the key relationships of Teresa’s life. It is also a sample of her correspondence with all the main “learned men” in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Church. Teresa did not have the possibility of formal education or university study but through these “learned men” who were her friends, advisors and confessors she had direct access to their wisdom and knowledge. These “learned men” play an essential role in making Teresa an expert in theology, scripture, spirituality and mysticism. She is a doctor of the Church today, not least because of their help, generosity and support.

We see in the last paragraph how her relationship with Fr. Banez, and with the other spiritual directors, was never a “one way” relationship. She helps, advises and supports them also – *“May God make you as holy as I desire”*.

### **For reflection/discussion**

- The importance of key friendships for our human and spiritual growth.
- The relationship between study and the spiritual life.
- We can learn a lot in this letter about Teresa’s understanding and appreciation of the gift of vocation and her respect for the uniqueness of each person’s vocation.