

To Madre Maria Bautista Ocampo OCD, Valladolid [14th May 1574] No. 63 [60]

Teresa is in Segovia, having made her foundation there. She arrived in Segovia March 18th [accompanied by John of the Cross] and the foundation was made March 19th.

Maria Bautista is the daughter of Teresa's cousin and in 1561 [aged 18], though she did not want to be a nun, she went to live at the convent of the Incarnation with Teresa. She is part of the group of sisters that used to meet in Teresa's cell and it is she who makes the suggestion that they form a community [See **Life** 32:10]. May 5th 1653 she enters the newly founded S. Jose and makes her profession 21st Oct 1564. She is the sister of "*greater intelligence and gifts*" that Teresa speaks about in **Foundations 1:3** [episode of the cucumber!]. She accompanies Teresa on her first foundation outside Avila, Medina [1567], and the following year she moves to Teresa's fourth foundation, Valladolid, where she will spend the rest of her life, being Prioress many times. She dies in Valladolid 10th August 1603. Teresa and Maria were very close and we get a sense of this closeness from the 18 letters from Teresa to Maria that have come down to us. However history records a dark cloud over their relationship – the cold welcome Teresa received in Valladolid on her last journey caused by a family lawsuit in which Teresa and Maria are on opposite sides.

Beatriz de la Encarnacion Onez is the "saint" referred to in paragraph two of this letter. Teresa gives us the account of her life in Chapter 12 of **Foundations**.

Casilda de Padilla's story is told by Teresa in Chapters ten and eleven of **Foundations**. Teresa's opinion of Casilda is best summed up in these words: "*Sr. Casilda de la Concepcion amazes me. Certainly I don't find anything in her, exteriorly or interiorly, that would keep her from becoming [with God's assistance] a great saint. What He is doing in her is clearly seen. She is very talented [beyond all possibility for her age] and deeply prayerful, for since she took the habit the Lord has favoured her. Her happiness and humility are remarkable; it's a strange thing.*" [Letter to Don Teutonio de Braganza 2/1/1575 – written by Teresa while on a visit to Valladolid].

In 1581 Casilda left the Carmel in complex and unedifying circumstances [read Teresa's reaction in her letter of 17/9/1581].

The book of **Foundations** was first published in Brussels in 1610: in this edition, and in many subsequent editions, the second half of Chapter 10 and all of Chapter 11 were omitted. The reason? The idea that Teresa could be so spectacularly mistaken in her assessment of a person is totally incompatible with the image of Teresa as Saint and Foundress which the Order was trying to promote!

Teresa is constantly writing both to the communities she has founded and to individual sisters. Approximately 25% of the letters of Teresa that have come down to us are written to Carmelite nuns. These give us privileged access to the lives of these sisters and their communities. The vast majority of these letters are written to Prioresses. The formation, guidance and support of her prioresses was a constant concern to Teresa. Each community is a world of its own: with its unique story, problems, challenges and crisis. However Teresa is constantly emphasising that the good of the Order comes before the good of individual communities. Through these letters she is building a community of communities, she herself is intimately involved in the lives of each community and she is encouraging them to help and support each other. No community must be allowed to become isolated or inward-looking.

For reflection/discussion:

1. **Humour:** *“The letter you sent....made me laugh” – “I am writing him a humorous letter”.* As we become more familiar with Teresa’s letters we get to know her sense of humour and also how important humour is to her in her relationships [unfortunately much of this is missed in translation but we still get a sense of it]. Teresa was a natural entertainer and liked to entertain her friends. However there was also a serious purpose to this – humour was necessary for a healthy and life-giving spiritual life. [Her nurse and companion on many journeys, Ann of St. Bartholomew wrote; “She was not drawn to dour people, neither was she one herself and she did not wish to travel in their company. She used to say: *God, free me from gloomy saints.*”]

2. **Mistakes/failure:** How do we react or cope when someone we admire [someone we put up on a pedestal] gets it wrong, makes mistakes or acts in a way that is incompatible with our image of that person? How could Teresa be so taken in by Casilda de Padilla? Why did Teresa not remove those chapters from the book of **Foundations** before she died [she could have and almost no one would have known!]. These questions greatly troubled the early editors of **Foundations** and many other friends and admirers of Teresa also.

3. **Breakdown of relationships:** Teresa is considered an expert in friendship yet her relationship with Maria, her close relative, friend and fellow Carmelite, very seriously and painfully broke down shortly before Teresa’s death.

4. **“I am not bothered that he cares little for me”.** Teresa had many friends and valued these friendships very much. However she was always struggling with people who did not like/admire her and despite what she says here it did pain her very much [in the case of Padre Medina they did become friends later on].

5. **“This desire you have for solitude is better than having the solitude”.** This is a very important principle for Teresa’s understanding of the spiritual life. This is explained very well in Chapter 5 of **Foundations** which would have been written a few months before this letter.

6. **“You must become a saint”.** This is what Teresa desires for all her friends. In every letter she writes we meet Teresa as she accompanies another person on his/her struggle with life. She is constantly supporting, challenging, admonishing and encouraging – whatever she sees is necessary so that this goal of sanctity can be arrived at.