

The Way of Perfection

*By Mother Teresa of Jesus, founder of the monasteries of
Discalced Carmelite nuns and friars of the First Rule.*

Saint Teresa of Ávila

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Preface

This edition is not an academic study of *The Way of Perfection* by Teresa of Ávila. Rather, it is the fruit of a long and intimate relationship with the text, cultivated through years of attentive reading, deep reflection, and spiritual resonance. It arises from a deep admiration for the clarity, courage, and transformative power with which Teresa communicates her message, and from the personal impact her words have had on my own inner path.

What the reader holds here is a modernized English version of Teresa's work, translated from a contemporary Spanish edition based on the original 16th-century text. The aim is to bring Teresa's voice closer to modern readers—regardless of their background or previous exposure to mysticism—by preserving the vitality and depth of her message while rendering it in accessible, resonant language.

This volume forms part of a trilogy of Teresa's major works—*The Book of Her Life*, *The Way of Perfection*, and *The Interior Castle*—presented without commentary, in a carefully updated and modernized form. The purpose is to allow readers to engage directly with the essential voice of Teresa, free of scholarly or interpretive mediation.

Alongside this trilogy, I have also prepared a **parallel annotated edition**, where each of these texts is accompanied by a detailed commentary that draws on years of study and reflection. Those editions include not only a deep exegesis of Teresa's spiritual teaching, but also extensive historical, cultural, theological, and bibliographic notes to guide readers through the richness of her thought and context.

In a world increasingly marked by speed, distraction, and superficiality, Teresa's voice remains radically countercultural. *The Way of Perfection* calls us back to what truly matters: simplicity, detachment, a life of prayer, deep humility, and authentic love. To reclaim this work not only as a historical document but as a spiritual guide is, today, a quiet yet powerful act of resistance and renewal.

The historical backdrop of this work was one of profound religious transformation. The Protestant Reformation had shaken the structures of Western Christianity, and the Catholic Church responded with a process of internal reform known as the Counter-Reformation, whose major milestone was the Council of Trent (1545–1563). In Spain, this reform took a particularly orthodox and tightly monitored form under the watchful eye of the Inquisition. Yet it was also a time of extraordinary spiritual vitality,

marked by figures such as Ignatius of Loyola, Luis de Granada, and, in a singular way, Teresa of Ávila.

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in 1515 into a noble and devout family. From an early age she showed a strong spiritual inclination, though her life also reflected the tensions of her time: attraction to worldly matters, family struggles, illness, and a long inner journey marked by both fervor and doubt. She entered the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation at twenty, remaining there for decades in a large but spiritually lukewarm community. A decisive mystical experience in 1554 marked the beginning of her true transformation.

From then on, Teresa committed herself to a life of deep prayer and ever more intense mystical experience. She came to understand her mission as one of reform: to renew the Carmelite Order from within. The founding of the Convent of Saint Joseph in Ávila in 1562 was the first concrete expression of that call. Her path was far from easy, as she faced ecclesiastical opposition, social criticism, and constant inquisitorial scrutiny. But she pressed on, convinced that she was following divine guidance.

It was during this foundational period that Teresa wrote *The Way of Perfection*, between 1562 and 1564, at the request of her first spiritual daughters—the nuns of Saint Joseph—who asked her for a practical and heartfelt guide on how to live a life rooted in prayer, humility, detachment, and sisterly love. Although originally intended for her own community, the manuscript soon circulated more widely. The first printed edition appeared in Évora in 1583, one year after her death.

Far from being a set of monastic rules, *The Way of Perfection* is a living work of spiritual insight, born from experience and grounded in practice. It can be read as a personal and luminous response to the needs of her time—but also as a bold and inner “Counter-Reformation”: not one of doctrine, but one of soul. Where the Church sought renewal through structure and orthodoxy, Teresa offered a reformation of the heart.

Her conviction is clear: true change begins within. Instead of confronting error with theological weapons, she invites us to live from a place of interior freedom, silence, prayer, and charity. Her small, poor, cloistered communities embodied this vision: places where women could become, in her words, “strong friends of God.” Her message remains as radical and liberating today as it was in her own time.

As part of this unannotated trilogy—alongside *The Book of Her Life* and *The Interior Castle*—this volume offers the practical and communal dimension of Teresa’s teaching. It shows us how to live what we pray, day by day, with perseverance and love.

May these modernized editions help new readers approach the heart of Teresa's message—and may those who wish to delve deeper find in the annotated editions a companion for the journey of understanding, practice, and transformation.

At www.gongarola.com, extensive excerpts from all these works—both the annotated and unannotated editions—are available for free download.

Essential Timeline of the Teresian Carmel

1535 – Entrance into the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation (Ávila)

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada enters the monastery of the Calced Carmelites of the Incarnation, where she will live for over twenty years. She witnesses the comfortable and socially stratified convent life of her time.

1554 – Definitive Inner Conversion

During Lent of this year, Teresa undergoes a profound experience of spiritual transformation before an image of the wounded Christ. This marks the beginning of her active mystical life and her desire for reform.

1562 – First Foundation: Saint Joseph of Ávila

Official beginning of the Carmelite reform: a small community, without dowries, focused on prayer and austerity. Teresa assumes the spiritual and organizational leadership of the community.

1567–1568 – Authorization to Found More Convents and Encounter with Saint John of the Cross

The Carmelite General, Giovanni Battista Rossi (Juan Bautista Rubeo), approves Teresa's project. Shortly afterward, she meets Fray Juan de Santo Matía, the future Saint John of the Cross, with whom she initiates the reform of the male branch of Carmel.

1568–1575 – Expansion of the Reform

Numerous houses are founded across Castile, despite economic, social, and ecclesiastical challenges. Teresa balances governance, writing, and travel with a life of deep prayer.

1571–1574 – Prioress at the Monastery of the Incarnation

Teresa returns as prioress to her former monastery, now with a reformist perspective. She implements reform from within, with spiritual authority and without coercion.

1576–1580 – Internal Conflicts within the Order

Strong tensions arise between the Calced and Discalced Carmelites. Teresa and her followers face persecution and resistance, but remain steadfast. John of the Cross is imprisoned by the Calced Carmelites.

1580 – Official Approval of the Carmelite Reform

The Holy See approves the creation of the Province of Discalced Carmelites. The reform initiated by Teresa is institutionalized and her spiritual and organizational legacy is solidified.

1582 – Final Foundation and Death

Teresa founds the convent in Burgos (May), and shortly afterward travels ill to Alba de Tormes, where she dies on October 4, having founded 17 women's convents and inspired the reformed male branch.

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1588 – First Edition of the Complete Works

Father Luis de León publishes the *Works of Saint Teresa of Ávila* in Salamanca, including *The Book of Her Life*, *The Way of Perfection*, *The Interior Castle*, *Foundations*, along with many letters and poems. This edition canonizes her literary style and consolidates her authority as a spiritual writer.

1614 – Beatification by Pope Paul V

Teresa is officially beatified by Pope Paul V, a little over thirty years after her death. Her reputation for holiness is already widely recognized throughout Europe.

1617 – Official Celebration of Her Feast Day in Spain

Her feast is celebrated for the first time as a Blessed in the liturgical calendar of the Spanish Church.

1622 – Canonization by Pope Gregory XV

Teresa of Jesus is canonized along with Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Isidore the Farmer, and Saint Philip Neri. She is recognized as a universal saint.

1627 – Proclaimed Patroness of Spain

Teresa is declared co-patroness of Spain alongside Saint James the Apostle, although the official patronage will later rest solely with Saint James. Nonetheless, her figure remains rooted as the spiritual mother of the nation.

1670–1735 – International Expansion of the Teresian Carmel

The Discalced Carmel spreads across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Teresa becomes a spiritual reference figure in France, Italy, Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines.

1811–1820 – Carmelite Resistance during Suppression

During wars and liberal reforms, many convents are suppressed, but the Discalced Carmelites resist underground. Teresa's work remains alive even in secrecy.

1915 – Critical Edition of Her Works by Silverio of Saint Teresa

A thorough and rigorous edition of the saint's writings, marking the beginning of a new phase of philological and theological studies.

September 27, 1970 – Proclaimed Doctor of the Church

Pope Paul VI declares Saint Teresa of Jesus a Doctor of the Church, the first woman ever to receive this title. Her spiritual and theological teaching is officially recognized as authoritative.

1982 – Fourth Centenary of Her Death

Numerous celebrations, conferences, and reissues of her works commemorate the 400th anniversary of her passing. Teresa's figure is rediscovered by new generations of readers.

2015 – Fifth Centenary of Her Birth

The Teresian Jubilee Year is celebrated. A multitude of academic, liturgical, and cultural activities highlight the relevance of her message. New critical editions are published and the digital presence of her works is strengthened.

The Way of Perfection



Saint Teresa of Ávila

INTRODUCTION

This book contains admonitions and counsel that Teresa of Ávila addresses to her religious sisters and spiritual daughters in the monasteries which, with the help of our Lord and of the glorious Virgin Mother of God, our Lady, she has founded according to the Primitive Rule of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It is directed especially to the sisters of the Monastery of Saint Joseph in Ávila, which was the first she founded and where she served as prioress at the time of writing these words.

In all that I say in this book, I submit myself to the teachings of the Holy Roman Church, and if in anything I deviate from them, it is out of ignorance. Therefore, I ask, for the love of our Lord, that the theologians who review it examine it thoroughly and correct any error, as well as the many other faults that will no doubt be found in various parts.

If there is anything of value in what is written, may it be for the glory and honor of God and in service of His most holy Mother, our Patroness and Lady, under whose habit I have the blessing to live, though I am most unworthy to wear it.

PROLOGUE

1. The sisters of this Monastery of Saint Joseph know that I have received permission from Father Presentado Fray Domingo Báñez, of the Order of the glorious Saint Dominic and currently my confessor, to write some things about prayer. It seems I might be able to say something of value, since I have been in contact with many spiritual and holy people. They have urged me so persistently to speak on this subject that I have decided to obey them. I believe the great love they have for me will make them receive with kindness the little and poorly expressed things I may write, more than books well composed by those who truly know what they are saying. I trust in their prayers, and perhaps, through them, the Lord will help me say something useful and suited to the way of life we lead in this house. If I do not do it well, Father Presentado, who must review it first, will correct it or burn it, and I will lose nothing for having obeyed these servants of God. This will show clearly how little I can do on my own when His Majesty does not assist me.

2. I intend to propose some remedies for those small temptations that the devil places before us and that, because they are so slight, often go unnoticed. I will also include other matters that the Lord may grant me to understand or that come to mind. Since I do not yet know what I will say, I cannot organize it well, and I believe it is best not to try, for it is already unsettling enough that I am undertaking this task. May the Lord place His hands upon all I do, so that it may conform to His holy will. That has always been my desire, although my works—like myself—are so imperfect.

3. I know that I am not lacking in love or in the desire to help in whatever way I can, so that the souls of my sisters may grow in the service of the Lord. This love, combined with my experience of various monasteries and the years I have lived, might help me offer more useful insights in small matters than theologians can. They, being occupied with more important affairs and being strong men, often pay

little attention to details that may seem insignificant. Yet for us, who are more fragile, anything can harm us, for the devil has many tricks to deceive those who live so enclosed, and he uses new weapons to attack us. I, being so wretched, have not defended myself well, and for that reason I wish for my sisters to learn from my experiences. I will say nothing that I have not experienced myself or seen in others.

4. A few days ago, I was ordered to write an account of my life, where I also spoke of prayer. It is possible that my confessor will not wish for you to see it, and so I will include here some of what I wrote there, along with other things that seem necessary. May the Lord place His hand upon this, as I have begged Him to do, and direct all for His greater glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

She explains the reason that led her to found this monastery with such austerity.

1. When this monastery was being founded (for reasons I have already mentioned in this book, along with some great favors from the Lord that showed how much He would be served here), it was not my intention to impose such strict external austerity or to do without income. On the contrary, I thought there would be sufficient resources so that nothing essential would be lacking. In the end, since I am weak and wretched, even though my intentions were good, I was also seeking my own comfort.

2. Around that time, I became aware of the terrible harm being suffered in France and of the devastation caused by the Lutherans. I saw how that accursed sect continued to grow, and this caused me immense sorrow. I wept before the Lord and begged Him to bring remedy to such great evil, as though I were someone who could do something or who mattered. It seemed to me I would give a thousand lives if only to save a single soul from among the many being lost there. Seeing myself as a woman, lowly and incapable of serving the Lord as I wished, I felt a burning desire—as I still do—that since He has so many enemies and so few friends, at least those who are His friends might truly be such. I then resolved to do the little that was within my power: to follow the evangelical counsels with all the perfection possible, and to ensure that the sisters of this house would do the same.

I placed my trust in the infinite goodness of God, who never abandons those who resolve to give up everything for Him. I thought that if they became, by His grace, what I imagined in my desires, their virtues would make up for my failings and we might please the Lord. All devoted to constant prayer for the defenders of the Church, for preachers and theologians, we could help, in whatever small way, this Lord of mine, so cruelly mistreated by His enemies. He has done

them so much good, and now it seems they would put Him on the cross again and not even leave Him a place to lay His head.

3. O my Redeemer! I cannot think of this without my heart breaking. What has become of today's Christians? How can it be that those who owe You the most are the ones who cause You the greatest suffering? You, who have bestowed so many blessings upon them, who have chosen them as Your friends, who have communicated Yourself to them through the sacraments—are the torments You endured for them not enough?

4. Truly, my Lord, it is no great thing for someone to withdraw from the world today. If You, who have done so much for them, are held in such little esteem, what can we expect? Do we deserve better treatment than You? Have we done greater works than Yours, that we should be repaid with friendship? What is this, Lord? What are we waiting for, we who, by Your mercy, are free from this pestilence? Those who already belong to the devil have rightly earned their punishment, and with their pleasures have purchased eternal fire. Let them have it! Still, it breaks my heart to see so many souls lost. But more than lamenting the evil already done, I would rather prevent more souls from being lost each day.

5. O my sisters in Christ, help me beg the Lord, for this is why He has brought you together here. This is your purpose, your calling, and this is where your desires, your tears, and your prayers should be directed. No, my sisters, do not concern yourselves with the affairs of the world. At times I laugh, and at others I am grieved, when people come to ask us to pray for rents, money, and other material goods. Some of them, rather than asking for such things, should pray that God take them all away. They ask with good intention and devotion, but I am convinced that in these matters God does not listen to me. The world is in flames; they are trying to crucify Christ again with a thousand false testimonies. They seek to destroy His Church, and are we to waste time asking Him for things that, were He to grant them,

might mean one soul less in heaven? No, my sisters, this is not the time to speak to God of such trivial matters.

6. It is true that, were it not for our human weakness, which takes comfort in being supported in everything (and indeed, it would be good to have some resources), I would be glad if everyone understood that these are not the things we ought to beseech God for with such fervor.

CHAPTER 2

On how they should not worry about bodily needs, and on the value and benefit found in poverty.

1. Do not think, my sisters, that because you do not seek to please the world, you will lack food. I assure you, you will not. Do not try to support yourselves through human means, for if you do, you will die of hunger—and rightly so. Keep your eyes fixed on your Spouse, for He will sustain you. If He is pleased, even the least devout will provide for you—this you have already seen for yourselves. And if it should come to pass that you die of hunger, blessed be the nuns of Saint Joseph! Do not forget this, for the love of the Lord. If you have given up possessions, then also give up concern for your sustenance, for otherwise, all is lost. Those whom the Lord calls to have income, let them have it, for that is their calling. But we, sisters, have not been called to such a life, and it would be nonsense for us to pursue it.

2. To worry about others' wealth is like dwelling on the comforts others enjoy. Moreover, your concern will not change anyone's mind or inspire more generosity. Leave that care to the One who truly moves hearts—the Lord, who is master of all wealth and of those who possess it. We have come here at His command, and His word is true: heaven and earth would sooner pass away than His promise fail. Let us not fail Him, and have no fear that anything will be lacking. And if something should be lacking, it will be for a greater good, just as the saints lacked even life itself when martyred—and with that loss, their glory increased. What a beautiful exchange it would be to die soon and then enjoy eternity!

3. Know, sisters, that this is very important. Even if I were to die, I leave it written here. And while I live, I will remind you of it, for I have seen by experience the great gain there is in poverty. The less I have, the less I worry. The Lord knows that I am more distressed when something is in excess than when something is lacking. Perhaps this is because I have always seen how the Lord provides for us

immediately. It would be deceitful to the world if we made ourselves outwardly poor but were not poor in heart. I would feel guilty, for it would be like begging while being rich. May God forbid it. Where there is too much concern over what we receive, we will soon fall into the habit of asking for what is not even needed—perhaps even from those who need it more. And although those who give lose nothing but gain much, we would lose greatly. May God preserve us from this, my daughters. If such a thing were ever to happen, I would prefer that we had a fixed income.

4. I beg you, for the love of God, never to occupy your thoughts with concerns about alms. And if any young sister notices this happening, let her pray to His Majesty and, with humility, inform the prioress, helping her see that she is mistaken. This is a very serious matter, because little by little, true poverty is lost. I trust in the Lord that this will not happen and that He will not abandon His servants. If nothing else, what you have asked me to write may serve as a warning.

5. Believe me, my daughters, the Lord has made me understand something of the riches contained in holy poverty—for your benefit. Those who experience it will understand, though perhaps not as fully as I do, for I was not poor in spirit—even though I professed to be—but rather mad in spirit. Poverty is a treasure that contains within itself all the treasures of the world. It is a great nobility. To have poverty of heart is to hold power over all things, for one who assigns them no value, masters them. What do I care for what kings and lords possess, if I do not desire their riches nor seek to please them at the cost of displeasing God? What do their honors matter to me, if I know that a poor person finds true honor in being truly poor?

6. I believe that money and honor often go hand in hand. One who seeks honor rarely despises money, and one who despises money cares little for honor. This must be well understood. It seems to me that worldly honor always carries with it some concern for wealth or possessions. Rarely is a poor person considered honorable; rather,

even if truly honorable, the world holds them in low regard. But true poverty brings with it such great honor that it becomes unbearable to others. Poverty embraced solely for the love of God needs to please no one but Him. And I assure you, one who has no need of anyone has many friends. I have seen this myself.

7. Since so much has already been written about this virtue, I do not dare go into depth. I would not want to lessen its dignity with my words. I have only shared what I have seen and lived, and I confess that until now I did not understand it well. But now that it has been said, I ask you for the love of the Lord: if we cannot live out exterior poverty as our holy fathers did at the beginning of the Order, let us at least preserve it within. Life is very short, and the reward is immense. Even if there were no other reward than fulfilling what the Lord counseled us, it would already be enough to imitate Him in some small way.

8. These must be the banners we bear: to desire to uphold poverty in everything—in the house, in clothing, in words, and above all, in thought. As long as you do this, do not fear that this Order will fall, for the Lord will be with us. As Saint Clare used to say, the great walls of a monastery are poverty and humility. She sought to enclose her convents with such walls. I assure you that if poverty is truly observed, everything else will be far more secure than with rich and sumptuous buildings. For the love of God and by His precious blood I beg you: keep this, for if you do not, all will collapse.

9. It would be a great disgrace, my daughters, if what belongs to the poor were used to build grand houses. May God forbid it. Let everything be small and humble. We must resemble our King, who had no house but a stable in Bethlehem where He was born, and a cross where He died. Those were indeed places with little comfort. Those who build great buildings may have good intentions, but thirteen poor women like us can manage in any little corner. If, due to the need for enclosure, some land is required to aid in prayer and devotion, with a few hermitages for retreat, that is acceptable. But large

and sumptuous houses—may God keep us from them. Always remember that all this will fall on the Day of Judgment. And who knows if that day is near?

10. A house of thirteen poor women should make no noise when it falls, for true poverty must not make noise. We are called to be humble and silent people, so that others may feel compassion for us. Moreover, how much joy they will feel if they know their alms have saved them from hell! It is possible, for we are bound to pray continually for the souls of those who feed us. Though everything comes from God, He wants us to thank the people through whom He provides. Do not neglect this.

11. I do not know what I was saying, for I have digressed. I believe the Lord has willed it, for I never intended to write what I have just told you. May His Majesty always keep us in His hand and never allow us to stray from this path. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Teresa continues urging her sisters to devote themselves to praying that God give favor to those defending the Church. The chapter concludes with an impassioned exclamation.

1. Returning to the main reason the Lord gathered us in this house, and because I desire with all my heart that we be something to please His Majesty, I say: seeing such great evils—evils which human strength cannot extinguish, this wildfire of heretics spreading so widely—I believe we must act as when, in wartime, enemies have devastated the land and a king retreats to a fortified city. Then it is fitting to fortify that city, for from there one can sometimes strike at the enemy and achieve victory. Often, a few chosen men accomplish more than a large army of cowards. And although the battle might not be fully won, at least they will not be conquered; without traitors, hunger alone may force surrender—but here there is no hunger strong enough to defeat us. We may die, but we shall never be vanquished.

2. Why do I tell you this? So that you understand, my sisters, that what we must ask of God is that in this small fortress of good Christians none be lost, none abandon to the enemy. We should also pray for the captains of this city—that is, the preachers and theologians—so that the Lord makes them spiritually strong. Most belong to religious orders and must advance greatly in perfection and vocation—it is very necessary. I have told you: it is the ecclesiastical arm that must sustain us, not the secular. Since we cannot act directly for our King, let us be such that our prayers support those servants of God who, with great effort, have acquired knowledge and a good life to serve the Lord.

3. You may think I exaggerate in saying we must help those better than us. I will explain: you do not yet grasp how much you owe the Lord for bringing you here, away from worldly affairs, opportunities, and distractions. This is a great mercy. Those I mention do not enjoy

this privilege—nor would it be fitting that they did, especially now. They are the ones who must strengthen the weak and encourage the small. What would soldiers be without their captains? These have to live in the world, deal with people, go to courts, and sometimes adapt externally. My daughters, do you think it is easy to live in the world and yet remain interiorly separated from it, as if angels rather than humans?

4. If that is not so, they do not deserve the name of captains—may the Lord protect them from ever leaving their cells, for they would do more harm than good. It is not the time to tolerate imperfections in those who must teach. If they are not inwardly fortified—understanding what it means to have all earthly things underfoot, to live detached from the temporal and attached to the eternal—then, though they may try to conceal it, the world will notice. Be sure of this: the world will forgive them not one single fault, though it may overlook many virtues—and may not even recognize them as such. More still, what is truly virtue may often be judged as weakness or convenience.

So do not underestimate how much God must aid those who enter this great battle—it must be something great indeed.

5. For these two intentions, I ask that we strive to be worthy to receive God's favor:

First: that many among the learned and religious, of whom there are many, possess the necessary qualities I have described. And that the Lord prepare others who are not yet ready, for one perfect person does more work than many imperfect ones.

Second: that once placed in battle, the Lord uphold them by His hand so they may withstand worldly perils and resist siren calls. If we achieve this with God's help, though enclosed, we will fight for Him. I will consider well-spent all my efforts establishing this small refuge, where I aimed to uphold the Rule of Our Lady and Empress with the same perfection as at its beginning.

6. Do not think it futile to be persistent in this petition. Some believe failing to pray sufficiently for one's own soul is a grave matter—but what greater prayer exists than this? If you worry about purgatory, know also that this prayer will diminish your suffering. And if some remains unpaid, let it be. What does it matter if I remain in purgatory until the final judgment, if by my prayer even one soul is saved? How much more if many souls are redeemed and the Lord is honored! Do not focus on temporary pains when these prayers serve a greater service, one that suffered so much for us. Always seek what is most perfect.

So, for love of the Lord, I ask you to petition His Majesty on this matter. Although I am miserable, I request it—for His glory and for the good of His Church.

7. You may think it audacious that I can contribute to this, but I trust, my Lord, in these your servants gathered here—because I see they seek nothing but to please you. For you they have relinquished all they had and would give more to serve you better. Are you, my Creator, ungrateful, that I should believe you will not answer their pleas? You, Lord, who while on earth did not despise women, but showed them compassion. If we asked you for honor, wealth, or worldly things, do not hear us; but if we ask for the honor of Your Son, why would you not hear us?

8. O Eternal Father! Look upon these countless scourges, injuries, and grievous torments. How can your loving heart bear that what Your Son endured with such ardor and love for You—so as to please You supremely (for it was by Your command He loved us)—now be so lightly regarded? These heretics scorn the Most Holy Sacrament! They strip it of its dwellings, destroy churches, and act as though nothing more remains to be done to please You.

But all is accomplished! Has it been insufficient, Eternal Father, that while He lived on earth He had no place to rest His head and spent His life in suffering? Was it not enough that He fully paid for Adam's sin? And now—having left these homes to receive His

friends, knowing we need such divine nourishment to strengthen our weakness on the journey—would they also take it away?

My Lord, no more! Must this loving Lamb—who already gave so much—continue to pay each time we sin? Forbid it, O Sovereign Judge. Soften Your justice and look not upon our sins, but upon the redemption Your Son purchased, the merits of His sacrifice, those of His glorious Mother, and of the many saints and martyrs who have died for You.

9. Oh Lord, how great is my sorrow—and how reckless I am to make this plea in everyone’s name! How poor an intercessor I am, my daughters—will my audacity provoke your righteous anger further? And rightfully so. But Lord, You are merciful, and I plead that You have pity on this wretched sinner—worm of the earth—who dares speak to You thus. Look upon my longings and tears as I implore You, and forgive my faults. For Your sake, have compassion on the many souls that are perishing, and aid Your Church. Permit no further harm to Christendom, Lord. Bring light to these surrounding darknesses.

10. And you, my own sisters, I ask—love of the Lord—to commend this poor sinner to His Majesty, and to supplicate Him to grant me humility. It is your duty to ask. I need not stress your prayers on behalf of kings, prelates, or our bishop—I see you already pray earnestly for them, which fills me with confidence.

But remember that when future sisters arrive, they must be taught: “a holy prelate makes his subjects holy.” This is so important that your prayers before the Lord must always include it. If your prayers, desires, disciplines, and fasts are not offered for this cause, know that you are failing the very purpose for which the Lord brought you here.

CHAPTER 4

Wherein the observance of the Rule and three essential aspects of spiritual life are encouraged. The first of these—love of neighbor and the harm caused by particular friendships—is explained.

1. You have already seen, my daughters, the great mission we have undertaken. What kind of people must we be so that, in the eyes of God and the world, we do not appear reckless? Clearly, we must make great efforts, and having lofty thoughts will help our deeds to be lofty as well. That is why, if we devote ourselves with great diligence to fulfilling our Rule and Constitutions, I trust in the Lord that He will hear our prayers. I am not asking anything new of you, my daughters, but simply that we be faithful to our vocation, fulfilling that to which we have committed ourselves. Of course, there is a great difference between fulfilling it out of mere duty and doing so with true dedication.

2. Our original Rule commands us to pray without ceasing. If we strive to fulfill this with the utmost care—which is the most important thing—we will naturally observe the fasts, disciplines, and silence that our Order prescribes. You already know that for prayer to be genuine, it must be accompanied by these practices, for comfort and prayer cannot coexist.

3. Regarding this matter of prayer, about which you have asked me to speak, I will share a few things. But in return, I ask that you put into practice what is said here and that you read it often, with an open and willing heart.

Before speaking about what interior prayer is, I want to address some fundamental matters for those who wish to advance along this path. They are so essential that, even if someone does not become highly contemplative, these virtues will help her progress greatly in the service of the Lord. However, if they are lacking, it is impossible

to attain true contemplation. And if anyone believes she has reached it without possessing them, she is gravely mistaken.

May the Lord help and inspire me to say what is fitting, and may it all be for His glory. Amen.

4. Do not think, dear friends and sisters, that I am going to demand too much of you. It is enough to follow what our holy Fathers handed down and practiced, for it was by this path that they came to be called saints. There is no need to seek other ways or learn from other sources.

I will focus on explaining three essential things, which are included in our Constitutions, because it is vital to understand how much our peace depends on them—both inward and outward—the peace that the Lord so earnestly commanded us to seek.

The first is mutual love; the second, detachment from all created things; and the third, true humility. Although I mention humility last, it is the foremost of them all and encompasses the rest.

5. Regarding the first—loving one another deeply—its importance is immense, because true love makes everything bearable among those who love each other from the heart, and something would have to be very serious to cause true discord. If this commandment were kept as it should be throughout the world, I am convinced it would be a great aid to fulfilling all the others. Yet we rarely keep it perfectly.

It may seem that among us there could be no excess of love, and yet, even this can lead to many evils and imperfections. Not everyone understands this, except those who have seen it firsthand. In this area, the devil finds space for his entanglements, and in consciences that are not very sensitive, such faults often go unnoticed and may even appear to be virtues. But those who seek perfection perceive them clearly, because little by little, such disordered affection weakens the will, preventing it from giving itself fully to the love of God.

6. I believe this problem is even more prevalent among women than men, and the harm it causes in the community is quite evident.

From it arise things like loving some more than others, being more affected by offenses committed against our friends, wanting to have something special to give them, finding time to talk with them—and often not to speak of God, but simply to express how much we love them or say other frivolous things. These particular friendships rarely have as their aim to help each other love the Lord more. Rather, I believe that in many cases the devil instigates them to sow discord within communities.

When such friendships are truly founded on the service of the Lord, this becomes immediately apparent. In those cases, the will is not driven by a disordered passion but by a genuine desire to help one another overcome passions and grow in the love of God.

7. Would that there were many such holy friendships in large convents! But here in this house, where we are no more than thirteen and never shall be, we must all be friends, all love one another, cherish and help one another. For the love of the Lord, I implore you to guard yourselves against particular friendships, no matter how holy they may appear. Even among siblings, they can be poisonous, and here I see no benefit in them whatsoever. If they involve relatives, it is worse still—a true pestilence! Believe me, sisters, though it may seem extreme, in this lies true perfection and great peace. In this way, we will avoid many occasions of sin, especially for those who are not yet spiritually strong.

If we feel our will leaning more toward one sister than another—which is natural, as our hearts are often drawn more to what has lesser value if it possesses greater natural charm—we must strive to restrain ourselves so that this inclination does not dominate us. Let us love the virtues and the good that lie within each one, and always be careful not to place undue importance on what is external.

8. Let us not allow, my sisters, our will to become enslaved to anyone but Him who bought it with His precious blood. Be very careful, because without realizing it, we may find ourselves so bound to someone that we are no longer our own. Oh, God help us! The

foolishness that springs from such attachments is endless. And because they are so subtle and seemingly harmless, only those who have witnessed them can truly understand and believe it. There is no need to go into details here, only to note that such behavior is harmful in anyone, but if it occurs in the prioress, it becomes a true poison for the whole community.

9. To avoid particular friendships, it is essential to be very careful from the beginning, before they are allowed to take root. It is better to correct them with love and prudence than with harshness. One effective way to prevent them is not to spend more time together than necessary, nor to speak outside the designated times, as we currently practice. The custom we follow, as prescribed by our Rule, of each one remaining in her cell, is of great benefit. In our house of Saint Joseph, we should avoid having a workroom, for although this custom is quite laudable in other places, here it is easier to maintain silence if each one is alone. Becoming accustomed to solitude is a very beneficial habit for prayer, and since prayer is the foundation of our house, we must learn to love all that helps us attain this goal.

10. Regarding mutual love, it may seem unnecessary to insist too much on it. How could anyone be so insensitive that, living together, constantly sharing without distractions from outsiders, and believing that God loves us and that we love Him, would not be moved to love her sisters? Moreover, virtue itself always inspires love and esteem, and I trust in God that it will not be lacking in this house. Therefore, I believe it is not necessary to dwell too much on this point.

11. What matters is understanding what this love should be like and what virtuous love consists of—the kind I wish to see here. It is also essential to know whether we truly possess it. This virtue is immense, as our Lord left it as the principal commandment and entrusted it with great insistence to His apostles. I would like to say something about it, though with my limited words. If you find a clearer explanation in other books, do not limit yourselves to what I say, for perhaps I do not express myself as I should.

12. There are two kinds of love I wish to speak about. One is purely spiritual, where neither sensuality nor the inclinations of our nature intervene, and it remains clean and pure. The other is also spiritual, but accompanied by sensuality and our weaknesses, as often occurs with the love of relatives or friends. The latter may appear lawful and not evil, but we have already spoken somewhat of it before.

13. Of the purely spiritual love, free from any disordered passion, I want to speak now, for when passion is mixed in, everything loses its order and virtue. Interacting with virtuous people—especially confessors—can be of great benefit if done with prudence and moderation. However, if you detect in any confessor signs of vanity or disordered intentions, you must regard it with caution.

In such cases, it is never wise to engage in long conversations with him, even if they concern good matters. It is best to limit oneself to a brief confession and conclude it promptly. If possible, the most appropriate course is to inform the prioress, telling her that your soul does not feel at peace with that confessor, and to ask that he be replaced, always striving to do this without harming his reputation.

14. In situations like this, or in other complicated cases where the devil might entangle things and you are unsure how to proceed, the most prudent course is to turn to a learned and trustworthy person. If necessary, speak freely, explain what is happening, and ask for counsel. Ideally, you should confess to that person and follow his guidance.

At times, even when action is necessary, if it is not taken with good advice, serious errors may result. How many problems occur in the world precisely for lack of guidance in delicate matters, especially when decisions may harm others! It is not an option to overlook these things, because the devil never begins to meddle with mild intentions—if not stopped early, his goal is to cause greater harm.

Therefore, speaking to another confessor will always be the wisest course, whenever possible. I trust in the Lord that, in such cases, this will be achievable for the greater good and peace of the soul.

15. This is a matter of utmost importance, for it can become a real danger—a veritable hell that harms the entire community. Do not allow the problem to grow; you must confront it from the outset, using all possible means and always acting with a clear conscience. However, I trust in the Lord that He will not permit those dedicated to prayer to be drawn toward anyone who is not a true servant of God.

This is very true, because a confessor who does not understand the language of prayer or enjoy speaking of God cannot be sincerely loved, as he will not be kindred in spirit. And if he were, in a house such as ours, where opportunities for interaction are so few, he will either be too foolish to recognize the harm he could cause, or wise enough to avoid any situation that might disturb both himself and the handmaids of God.

16. Since I have begun speaking on this subject, I will continue a bit further, because the harm the devil can cause in matters such as this is immense. At first, it is often difficult to perceive, and by the time it is recognized, it may already be too late. If the confessor harbors even a trace of vanity in his heart, all will be tainted. The nuns will see the perfection they sought gradually crumble, without even understanding where the fault began. May God, for His own sake, deliver us from such dangers.

Such a situation would be enough to disturb the entire community, for the sisters' consciences would tell them one thing, while the confessor tells them another. And if they are required to remain with a single confessor, they will find themselves in grave inner conflict, not knowing what to do or how to regain peace. The saddest part is that the one who should bring them calm would instead become the source of their distress.

I imagine there must be great afflictions caused by this in some places, and I cannot help but feel deep sorrow at the thought. For this reason, do not be surprised if I insist so strongly on warning you of this danger and on urging you to cut it off at its root before it can spread and cause greater harm.

CHAPTER 5

Continues regarding confessors. It emphasizes the importance of their being well-educated.

1. May the Lord not allow any sister in this house to suffer the hardship I have mentioned, for love of His Majesty: the torment of finding both soul and body in great distress, especially when the superior has a close relationship with the confessor and neither dares to correct the other. This can lead to the temptation of concealing grave sins out of fear of disrupting a false sense of peace. O my God, how much harm the devil can cause through such situations, and how dearly we may pay for this misguided sense of honor! You think that by avoiding a change of confessor, you preserve the monastery's reputation or good name, but the devil takes advantage of this to ensnare souls, as he cannot do so by other means. If you ask for a different confessor, you fear it may disturb the order of the house or even bring dishonor upon it, even if the new confessor is a saint.

2. For this reason, I beg, for the love of the Lord, that whoever is in charge should always, with the support of the bishop or the provincial, ensure that, in addition to the regular confessors, all the sisters may, from time to time, consult and share their souls with well-educated individuals, especially if the confessors lack sufficient formation, though they may be devout. Knowledge is essential to enlighten consciences. There are people who possess both holiness and wisdom, and the more the Lord grants you in prayer, the more necessary it becomes for your actions and spiritual practices to be well-grounded.

3. You know that the first foundation of the spiritual life is a sound conscience, and that you must strive to avoid even venial sins and always follow the more perfect path. One might think any confessor understands this, but it is not always the case. I myself discussed matters of conscience with a confessor who had studied theology, and

by downplaying certain issues, he caused me harm, though unintentionally. He simply did not know better. The same happened with two or three other confessors.

4. To have true clarity in fulfilling God's law perfectly is the foundation of everything. Upon this foundation, prayer is built. Without this solid base, the entire spiritual structure wavers. Therefore, if you are not allowed to discuss your spiritual matters with well-prepared individuals, even when the confessor means well, it will sometimes be necessary to seek a second opinion. It is not just that one person's error should impact the whole community. Of course, all of this must be done without disobedience, as there are proper ways to proceed, and this is greatly beneficial to souls.

5. All that I have mentioned here primarily falls under the responsibility of the prioress. Therefore, I urge her again that, since this house seeks no other consolation than that of the soul, she should ensure this freedom for the sisters. God leads souls by diverse paths, and no confessor can know them all. I am convinced that there will never be a shortage of holy individuals willing to guide and console souls, if the sisters live as they ought. Even if you are poor, the same God who provides for your bodily needs will also move the heart of someone who can enlighten your souls. This evil, which I fear the most, can be easily corrected if the confessor has access to other perspectives. Should the devil tempt him with doctrinal error, consultation with others will prompt reflection and lead him to act with greater prudence.

If we manage to close this door to the devil, I trust in God that he will not be able to enter this house. For this reason, I earnestly ask the bishop who oversees us to allow the sisters this freedom and not to take it away, provided that those chosen are of solid formation and virtue—qualities that are quickly recognized in a place as small as this.

6. All that I have stated here I have seen, understood, and discussed with wise and holy individuals who have deeply reflected on

what is most beneficial for the advancement of this house's perfection. Though dangers will always exist as long as we live, we have concluded that this is the least of them. Therefore, there should never be a vicar with full liberty to come and go, nor a confessor with excessive authority. Their role should be to watch over the recollection and integrity of the house, and the interior and exterior progress of the sisters, informing the prelate if any faults arise. However, they should not assume the role of superiors.

7. This is what is currently being implemented, and it is not merely my personal opinion. The bishop under whose obedience we now live, Don Álvaro de Mendoza—a man of noble lineage, a friend of religious life, and a great servant of God—made this decision after consulting people of formation, experience, and spirit. He gathered them to deliberate on this matter, and this system was the result. It would be wise for future prelates to respect this decision, for it was made by experts after much prayer, seeking the Lord's guidance to choose what is best. So far, the results have shown it to be the best course. May the Lord grant us the grace to continue forward, always for His greater glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Returns to the theme of perfect love.

1. I have lingered quite a bit, but what has been said is so important that whoever understands it will not judge me harshly. Let us now turn to speak of the kind of love that is good and valid for us to have among ourselves, the love I call purely spiritual. In truth, I am not sure I can explain well what I mean, but I believe there is no need to say much about it, for few people possess it. Whoever has received this gift from the Lord should give great thanks, for it is a grace of the highest perfection.

Even so, I would like to share something about this kind of love. Perhaps it may be of help, because when a virtue is presented to us, if we truly desire it and seek to attain it, we may come to fall in love with it.

2. May God grant me the understanding, and even more so, the ability to express it, for I do not believe I truly know what love is genuinely spiritual and when it is mingled with the human. I do not understand how I even dare to speak of this. It is like overhearing a conversation from afar without fully grasping what is being said—that is how I feel: sometimes I do not understand what I am saying, but the Lord wills that it come out well. And if at times I speak nonsense, well, that is only natural for me: missing the mark entirely.

3. It seems to me that, when God leads someone to clearly understand what the world is and the difference between it and eternal life, everything changes. To realize that one is eternal and the other merely a fleeting dream completely transforms the way one loves. Whoever comes to deeply experience what it means to love the Creator rather than His creatures, and to understand what is gained by the former and lost by the latter, begins to see things differently.

This is not merely a matter of ideas or beliefs; it is something lived, something God reveals to those who truly commit themselves to

prayer and whom He chooses to guide. People who reach this understanding love in a manner quite distinct from those who have not attained such insight.

4. Perhaps, sisters, it may seem unnecessary to speak of this, and you may think you already know all that I have said. I hope that is the case and that it is engraved deep within your hearts, for if you truly understand it, you will see that I do not exaggerate in saying that those who reach this point with the help of the Lord develop the very love of which I speak.

These individuals, whom God has brought to this state, are generous souls, noble souls. They are not content to love something as insignificant as bodies, no matter how beautiful or charming they may be. While they may enjoy beholding them and praise the Creator for such wonders, they do not stop there; they do not center their love on such things.

To love for such superficial reasons would seem to them like loving something without substance, a mere shadow. They would be ashamed of themselves and would not feel worthy to come before God and say they love Him, sensing that such affection would be almost a betrayal of what He truly deserves.

5. You might say to me: “Surely such people do not know how to return or appreciate the affection shown to them.”

The truth is, they do not care much about being loved. There may be moments when their human nature finds pleasure in being loved, but as soon as they reflect on it, they recognize it as meaningless—unless it comes from someone who can help them spiritually, either through teaching or through prayer. Any other kind of affection feels burdensome to them, because they know it brings no benefit and might even harm them.

This does not mean they are ungrateful for such feelings, nor that they fail to repay them by entrusting those people to God. Rather, they see it as a burden placed upon the Lord by those who love them,

understanding that such love comes from Him, since in themselves they see nothing worthy of love.

They think they are loved because God loves them, and they leave it to His Majesty to repay that affection. They ask Him to do so, and thus consider themselves free of obligation, because they believe it is not for them to repay such love. And if we think about it, except in the case of people who, as I said, can help us advance toward eternal goods, I myself sometimes wonder what great blindness it is to desire being loved.

6. Notice now that, when we feel love for someone, we almost always seek some benefit or satisfaction for ourselves. However, these souls who have attained perfection have already renounced all the pleasures and goods the world can offer. Their joys are so deeply rooted in God that, even if they wanted to, they could not find delight in anything that is not of Him or does not lead to speaking of Him.

So, what could they possibly gain from being loved?

7. When this truth becomes so clear to them, they laugh at themselves for how much it once mattered whether or not their affection was returned. Even when that affection is good, it is very natural for us to want it reciprocated. But in the end, when that “return” arrives, they find it to be like straw—air, without substance, blown away by the wind. For even if they were greatly loved, what remains of that love in the end?

Therefore, unless that love serves the benefit of the soul, as I mentioned earlier, these souls place little value on being loved or not.

You might think such people are incapable of loving anyone, that they love no one but God.

Quite the contrary! They love far more—more truly, more passionately, and, above all, more fruitfully. It is love in the truest sense. These souls are always more inclined to give than to receive, even with the Creator Himself. This is what happens to them: they prefer to love rather than to be loved. Such love truly deserves the name

“love,” while those lower passions we often experience usurp the name without deserving it.

7. You might also wonder: if they do not love based on what is visible, what, then, draws their affection?

Well, they do love what they see and feel drawn to what they hear—but only if it concerns things they know to be lasting and true. When these souls love, they do not stop at bodies; rather, they move beyond them and fix their attention on souls. They look to see if there is anything in them worthy of love, and if there is not, but they perceive some hint or disposition that, with effort, might bear fruit, they do not hesitate to act. If they feel love for that soul, the effort does not weigh on them.

No obstacle seems too great if it can help that person’s good, because they desire their love to be lasting, and they know full well that if that soul lacks virtue or does not love God, the love cannot endure.

And I say it is impossible, no matter how much one forces it, no matter how much one dies of love, no matter how many good deeds one performs or how many natural graces one possesses. The will does not have the strength to remain steadfast. These souls know from experience what truly has value, and they are not easily deceived. They see that they are incompatible, that it is impossible for such love to be eternal if the other does not follow God’s law. They know that if the other does not, that love will perish, for in the end they must go their separate ways.

9. And this love, which holds value only in this world, for a soul to whom the Lord has already granted true wisdom, does not deserve more esteem than it actually holds—and sometimes not even that. For those who still delight in the pleasures of the world, in its honors and riches, perhaps such love holds some value if the person loved is wealthy or possesses qualities that offer entertainment and enjoyment. But for one who has already left all that behind, who has rejected what is superfluous, it matters little, if at all.

Thus, when these souls love, their sole motivation is to make the other soul worthy of being loved by God. For they know with certainty that if that soul does not achieve this, they will not be able to love it forever. This love is pure sacrifice. They do not tire; they do not cease striving to help that soul grow. They would give a thousand lives, if they had them, for the smallest good of that soul.

Oh, precious love, that follows in the footsteps of the captain of love, Jesus, our greatest good!

CHAPTER 7

Continues on the theme of spiritual love and offers some advice on how to attain it.

1. The depth of this love is astonishing—how many tears it costs, how much penance and prayer. How much concern in commending to God all those who might help that soul, so that they too may pray for it. It is a constant love, one that finds no joy unless it sees that soul improving. And if the soul seems to improve but then falls back, it feels as though life has lost all meaning. One cannot eat or sleep peacefully, always burdened with the fear that the soul so dearly loved might be lost. What matters here is not physical death, for this kind of love cares little for what fades in an instant. It is—as I have said—a pure love, with no self-interest, desiring only that the soul be enriched with the goods of heaven.

2. This is true love—not those disordered affections we find around us. And I am not even speaking of sinful loves, from which God preserve us. Those are not even worth mentioning; they are harmful even to hear about. Sisters, avoid allowing such topics in your presence, whether in jest or in earnest. They do no good and can cause harm even by being heard. I refer instead to those other lawful affections, such as the love we have for one another or for family and friends. In these cases, all we want is that they do not die. If they have a headache, it feels as if our soul aches. If we see them suffer, we lose our composure.

3. But this other love I speak of is not like that. Although our natural weakness may cause us to feel something at first, reason soon leads us to reflect on whether what is happening benefits that soul, whether it will grow in virtue, and how it is bearing its trials. Then we pray to God to grant it patience and make it worthy of its sufferings. If we see that it bears them patiently, we do not feel pain—on the contrary, we rejoice and are consoled. Certainly, we would prefer

to bear those sufferings ourselves to spare them, but not to the point of losing our peace.

4. Again, I say that this love imitates that which Jesus, our Good Friend, had for us. This is why it is so fruitful, for such souls desire nothing more than to bear every hardship so that others may benefit without effort. Those who are fortunate enough to have their friendship gain much. Believe me: they will either improve and begin walking with the Lord, as Saint Monica did with Saint Augustine, or they will pull away from that friendship, because such souls cannot tolerate duplicity. If they see someone going astray, they cannot help but speak up; they cannot hide it or flatter. And since they do not remain silent, the person either corrects themselves or departs.

5. This is the kind of love I would like us to have. Even if it is not perfect at first, the Lord will perfect it. Let us begin with the basics: even if it includes some tenderness, it will do no harm if it is general. At times, it is good and necessary to show tenderness and compassion for the hardships or illnesses of the sisters, even if they seem small. For there are people for whom a small matter causes as much pain as a great one does for others. If you are stronger and such things do not affect you, do not fail to show compassion. Perhaps the Lord reserves other sufferings for you. Let us not judge others by our own measure; let us remember the times when we too were weak.

6. This counsel is very important in learning to have compassion for others' struggles, however minor they may seem. Especially for those souls who already long so deeply to suffer that everything appears too little. We must remember how we once were in our own weakness and recognize that our present strength is not our own doing. If we do not, the devil may cool our charity and make us believe that what is in fact a lack of love is a sign of perfection. We must always be watchful and vigilant, for the devil never sleeps. The more we advance in perfection, the more subtle his temptations become. We do not realize the harm until it is done—unless we are vigilant. So

we must always watch and pray; there is no better remedy for uncovering his traps.

7. Also, make an effort to rejoice and participate with your sisters during recreation, even if you do not particularly enjoy it. If done with good intention, this too is perfect love. It is important that you understand the needs of others and show compassion without losing discretion. If something the prioress commands seems difficult to you, do not show it to the others or complain in their presence. If you truly believe she is mistaken, speak to her with humility. Any other approach can cause great harm.

8. Oh, what true love that sister would show who, setting aside her own gain, devotes herself to helping others grow in virtue and fulfill the Rule with perfection! This friendship is far better than those empty expressions of affection, like “my life,” “my soul,” or “my dearest.” Such words do not belong here. Reserve them for your Spouse, who alone is worthy of such tenderness.

9. It is also a great act of love to relieve your sisters of work and take it upon yourself. Rejoice and give thanks to the Lord when you see the virtues of your sisters grow. This brings great peace and unity among all, as we now see by God’s goodness. May His Majesty preserve it, for the opposite would be dreadful: few, and at odds with one another. May God forbid it.

10. If harsh words ever arise among you, resolve it immediately and pray much. If envy, factions, or desire for status emerge—just thinking of it chills my blood—remember that nothing harms monasteries more. Should this happen, consider that you have cast your Spouse out of the house. Seek remedy at once; confess and receive Communion frequently. Be fearful if among you there is a Judas.

11. The prioress must be very vigilant in not allowing such things, cutting off the problem at its root. If any sister persists in causing trouble, it is better for her to go to another monastery. It is better to lose a branch than to allow the whole tree to sicken. May God

preserve us from a monastery where such evil enters! I would sooner prefer a fire that consumed us all.

In another place, I will speak further on this, for it is a very serious matter and concerns us greatly.