

THE ADMIRABLE LIFE OF
MADRE MARIANA DE JESUS TORRES¹

Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira

- 1790 -

Translation and Footnotes by
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1. The complete Spanish original title of this work is *Vida de la Reverendissima Madre Mariana de Jesús Torres, Española y una de las Fundadoras del Monasterio Real de la Limpia Concepción en la ciudad de Quito*. Its English translation is *The Life of the Most Reverend Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, Spaniard and One of the Founders of the Royal Monastery of the Immaculate Conception in the City of Quito*.

The devotion to Our Lady of Good Success has been approved by the Bishops of Quito since February 2, 1611, when the 8th Bishop of Quito, Salvador de Ribera (1607-1612) blessed the miraculous statue and formally installed her in the Abbess' chair of the Convent.

The process for beatification of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa was initiated by the Archbishop of Quito Antonio J. Gonzalez in April 1986.

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The front cover shows the profile of the statue of Our Lady of Good Success. The back cover includes a close-up of a portrait of Mother Mariana de Jesus painted by Don Carlos Salas in May 1922.



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Mother Mariana Francisca de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa
(1563-1635), one of the Founding Mothers of the Royal
Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, Ecuador.

This Spanish religious received many prophecies about the
future, and especially about the crisis in the Church and society
in the 20th century.



Our Lady of Good Success told Mother Mariana that she would start to be known in the 20th century. She promised her special help - both spiritual and material - to those who invoke her under this title during the great crisis the Church would be suffering in our times.

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FOREWORD

The story and prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success are inseparable from the person of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, a Conceptionist religious who traveled from Spain to the New World at age 13 to help found a convent in the city of Quito, Ecuador. This saintly soul received apparitions of Our Lady with revelations regarding future events, especially the grievous situation of the Catholic Church in the 20th century.

Our Lady told her that in our lamentable times, heresies would abound, the corruption of customs would be almost complete, and the light of Faith nearly extinguished. To atone for the heresies, blasphemies, and impurity of our days, this 17th century nun was asked to become an expiatory victim. The vocation of Mother Mariana links her, therefore, to the crisis in the Church and society that we are experiencing today.

The publication of my two short works, *Our Lady of Good Success: Prophecies for Our Times* (1999) and *Stories and Miracles of Our Lady of Good Success* (2002), has generated a great interest in this admirable Conceptionist sister and these revelations. The broad acceptance for those revelations encouraged me to publish this biography of Mother Mariana, which is the source of the data used in my books.

Also, many questions have been addressed to me. Among other things, readers are asking: Is this an approved devotion? Why are we only hearing about Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres and her prophecies now?

First, let me assure my readers that this is not some new or questionable devotion. The devotion to Our Lady of Good Success has been approved by the Bishops of Quito since February 2, 1611, when the 8th Bishop of Quito, Salvador de Ribera (1607-1612) blessed the miraculous statue and formally installed Our Lady of Good Success in the Abbess' chair of the Convent. Every February 2 for the last 394 years, the Convent and the people of Quito have celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Good Success with the

full approval of the ecclesiastical authority. In 1991, the Archdiocese of Quito petitioned Rome for a canonical coronation of Our Lady of Good Success as *Queen of Quito*, a ceremony that took place on February 2, 1991. The same year, the Church of the Conceptionist Convent was declared an Archdiocesan Marian Sanctuary.

Second, the great virtue of Mother Mariana and the truth of the revelations she received from the Mother of God have been demonstrated by incontrovertible historical evidence. After examining extensive data on her life, Archbishop of Quito Antonio J. Gonzales issued an episcopal decree on August 8, 1986 to initiate her Cause of Beatification. He named Msgr. Luis Cadena y Almeida as postulator for the cause and established an ecclesiastical tribunal to begin the first phase of the process. This decree affirmed that Mother Mariana had practiced all the virtues to a heroic degree, and was distinguished for her devotions to the Passion of Christ, the Holy Eucharist, and the Mother of God. It also acknowledged her supernatural gifts and charismas during her lifetime.²

Since then, Msgr. Cadena y Almeida has compiled an impressive arsenal of documentation, testimonies, and works – many of which he published with ecclesiastical approval – that demonstrate the sanctity of life of Mother Mariana and the truth of the prophecies she received. I have cited material from these works in footnotes of this biography to provide some interesting details and background regarding her life, as well as to show how the prophecies she received have been fulfilled most accurately.³

Included in his compilation of evidence was the 571-page handwritten biography of Mother Mariana written by Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira, O.F.M. in 1790. The work by Fr. Pereira has special value because he based it on primary sources from the Convent archives. Such sources included the *Autobiography* of Madre Mariana, written at the command of Bishop Pedro de Oviedo and

2. The decree and numerous other documents were published in a work written by the Postulator for Mother Mariana's cause, Msgr. Luis Cadena y Almeida, entitled *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria* (Quito: Libreria Espiritual, n.d.).

3. Msgr. Cadena y Almeida dedicated one work specifically to the demonstration of how the prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success have been confirmed by History. It is entitled *Mensaje Profético de La Sierva de Dios Sor Mariana Francisca de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa* (Quito: Libreria Espiritual, 1989).

approved by him, as well as several other early biographies written by Franciscans who knew her.⁴

Volume I of Fr. Pereira's well-documented work is being presented here in its first English translation for the benefit of the growing number of devotees of Our Lady of Good Success in the United States.

Third, the reason why this devotion and these important prophecies only became known some 300 years after they were revealed is answered by Our Lady herself. On February 2, 1634, at the end of her life, Mother Mariana was praying, humbly beseeching Our Lady to hide her name and person. At that moment, the Mother of God appeared to her and assured her that only after three centuries of silence, in the 20th century, would her name and the truth of these revelations become known.

In those days of great calamity, a filthy ocean of impurity would inundate the world and the ingratitude and betrayal of religious souls would compel Our Lord to let His justice fall on a beleaguered world, Our Lady told Mother Mariana. In those difficult times when the Church would be so embattled and suffering from within, Our Lady told her, she wanted to sustain the faithful and be invoked under the title of Our Lady of Good Success. She promised to give good success to those who had recourse to her and fostered devotion to her under this particular title.

Just as Our Lady predicted, the prophecies only became known to the larger public at the end of the 20th century, when the devotion began to spread outside the borders of Ecuador.

Volume I of Fr. Pereira's work relates many details from the early life of Mother Mariana until the year 1594. In these pages, you will find a detailed account of the two deaths and resurrections she experienced, her four unjust imprisonments inside the Convent, and her heroic sacrifice of suffering mystically in Hell for five years to ransom the soul of the "captain," the rebellious sister who led the

4. Fr. Martin de Ochoa was assigned to write an account of the life of Mother Mariana shortly after her death. Fr. Francis de Anguita, her spiritual director and confessor, also wrote a work on her life. In 1650, 15 years after her death, at the mandate of the Royal Audience of Quito, Don Diego Rodríguez Docampo wrote an account of her life and prophetic gift she received. Fr. Pereira also referred to a biography written by Fr. Bartolomé Ochoa de Alcano y Gamboa in 1760.

non-observant faction inside the Convent. It also records the first three revelations of Our Lady of Good Success to Mother Mariana.

I believe that the reader will eagerly anticipate volume II, which Tradition in Action intends to publish as soon as possible. In it, Fr. Pereira completes the story of the marvelous life of Mother Mariana, recounts the history of the miraculous way the statue of Our Lady of Good Success was completed, gives many more prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success, many about our times, and leaves us the stirring Last Testament of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres.

It seems to me an opportune time for the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres to become better known to the English-speaking public. The prophecies she received from Our Lady of Good Success help us understand the enormous crisis the Church is suffering today with the introduction of the errors of Modernism at the turn of the 19th century, and the victory of Progressivism inside her walls at Vatican Council II in the early '60s. This victory marked the beginning of what has been called by its own partisans the "conciliar Revolution," which changed the face of the Catholic Church, her doctrine, her liturgy, her laws, her institutions and customs, and abolished her traditions.

Finally, I should remark that Our Lady of Good Success also gave a message of great hope. She promised her intercession at the very moment when the evil will seem to be triumphant and when the ecclesiastical authority will abuse its power. This would mark, as Our Lady said, "the arrival of my hour, when, in a marvelous way, I will dethrone the proud and accursed Satan, trampling him under my feet and fettering him in the infernal abyss."⁵ These words harmonize perfectly with the message of hope Our Lady delivered to the three shepherd children at Fatima in 1917: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

* * *

5. M. T. Horvat, *Our Lady of Good Success – Prophecies for Our Times*, (Los Angeles: TIA, 2000), pp. 57-8.

Vida Admirable
 de la Rda. Madre
 Mariana de Jesús Ca-
 rtes, española y una de las
 fundadoras del Monasterio
 real de la Limpia Concepción
 en la Ciudad de Quito

Escrita por el Rdo. Padre
 Manuel Sousa Pereira de
 la Orden Seráfica de los Me-
 nores del Convento Máximo de
 S. Francisco de Quito en el Ecuador.

Como Primero

CHAPTER 1

Rev. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was one of the strongest pillars of this Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito and the predestined daughter of the Queen of Heaven. To her, the Heavenly Queen confided ineffable secrets, disclosing to her the mercies of her loving heart toward this Convent, bequeathing to her daughters the precious treasure of the sacred statue of our Mother and Abbess, Our Lady of Good Success. The Rev. Mother Mariana de Jesus was the humble violet that hid its delicate fragrance in the very heart of Mary Most Holy, and she beseeched the Most Holy Virgin that her name be unknown, even in her own Community. And thus it would have remained until the end of time if the Virgin Most Holy had not revealed to her that, after three centuries of mysterious silence, the truth of the apparitions would become manifest in the 20th century, and, only then, would her name become known.

Until that fortunate time when the ineffable caresses of Mary Most Holy to her chosen daughter should be published, we write these lines for the glory of God Our Lord and in devotion to our Mother, Abbess and Advocate, the Most Holy Virgin of Good Success. Moreover, we offer this work in honor of our illustrious angelic sister, the Rev. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, and for the benefit, edification, and love of our successors.⁶

HOMELAND, FAMILY, AND BIRTH OF MOTHER MARIANA DE JESUS TORRES

Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa was born in Spain in the Basque province of Viscaya in 1563. She was baptized in one of the parish churches there, which was consumed by fire

6. Manuel Sousa Pereira was born in 1751 in Sotomayor in the Diocese of Braga, Portugal. A young officer from an illustrious family, he was pursuing a promising military career when Mother Mariana appeared to him in his barracks. She told him to "leave this earthly army and enlist in the army of the Seraphim of Assisi to find a better army under his banner." He traveled to Quito and became a Franciscan priest, and was elected Provincial of his Order in Quito several times. Based on his conversations with the sisters of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, records from the Convent archives, and the biographies written of the lives of all the Founding Mothers, he wrote the story of the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres in 1790. This is volume I of that edifying work.

seven years later. She was the first-born child of Don Diego Torres y Cádiz and Doña Maria Berriochoa y Alvaro, who gave her the name of Mariana Francisca.

The child was the delight of her parents, for Heaven had endowed her with rare beauty, quick intelligence, a sweet nature, and, above all, a strong inclination toward virtue. From infancy, she shunned all the childish games of youth. Instead, she would secretly retire to the church whenever she could, where her virtuous mother would find her prostrate before the Tabernacle.

For the Prisoner of the Tabernacle had already wounded the tender heart of His future spouse, who, unknowingly, was preparing herself in the fire of divine love to become the victim of His most pure flames.

A particularly noteworthy incident occurred in the life of this blessed family when the little girl was seven years old. A fire broke out in the church where she had been baptized. The parish priest was away, and the sacristan, in his carelessness, had left a good quantity of oil in the sanctuary lamp. A slight earthquake apparently caused the ground to tremor. The cords or chains that supported the sanctuary lamp broke, and the fire started. The old church was engulfed in flames. The family of the sacristan and the neighbors all hurried to the site, but it was impossible to extinguish the devouring flames.

OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IS RESCUED FROM THE FLAMES

At the time of this fire, a priest named Fr. Luis Jayme de Berriochoa, the brother of Mariana's mother and the child's uncle, was visiting the home of his sister and her husband, Diego de Torres. Hearing the excitement and seeing the disastrous flames, he intrepidly entered the burning church, crying out, "My Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I cannot allow these flames to consume Thee! Rather should the fire of my priestly love be consumed with Thee!" Taking the Ciborium and the Host used during expositions of the Sacred Species, he said, "We shall die together here!"

But the fire respected the minister of the Lord, and he was able to escape unharmed, carrying with him the Blessed Sacrament. As soon as he was outside the burning building, the altar and church collapsed behind him. The Torres family, unmindful of the

danger to their own house, had followed the priest to the church. Rejoicing that he escaped the flames, they accompanied him to the neighboring parish church where the Sacred Species was safely deposited.

**“GOD GIVETH AND GOD TAKETH AWAY.
BLESSED BE HIS HOLY NAME!”**

Since the house of the Torres family was adjacent to the church, it was also damaged by the fire. The family’s vineyards were ruined, and the building was partly destroyed. Upon their return, the devout proprietors saw what had happened to their property, and, like holy Job, they knelt on the ground with their three children – Mariana Francisca, Diego, and three-year-old Santiago – to give thanks to God for taking their earthly belongings from them during their efforts to save the Sacred Species. They said, “God giveth and God taketh away. Blessed be His Holy Name!”

It grieved Mariana to see her virtuous parents suffer in the poverty to which they had been reduced. But the greatest pain that pierced her tender heart was caused by the absence of her beloved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When He had been their neighbor in the nearby church, it had been easy to make her devout flights to adore Him in the Tabernacle. Now, distance did not permit these frequent visits. Desolate, she suffered greatly to be separated from her steadfast Beloved, Who thus began to habituate His beloved to these cruel absences and desolations, which, throughout the course of her life, this soul would have to suffer to become a heroine of the dolorous martyrdom of love.

* * *

CHAPTER 2

Thus, like a sunflower, Mariana opened her delicate face to follow the radiant light of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Unable to adore Him frequently at the foot of the Tabernacle, she languished and, with agonizing love, longed for the Eucharistic union.

The loving lamentations of the child illuminated the sanctuary lamp like sparks of light, and the sacrifices of that loving heart pierced the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Her Divine Lover, unable to resist the clamors of the enamored virgin, thus disposed matters so that the young girl might have her Beloved in the Most Holy Sacrament.

MARIANA HEARS THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Because of family concerns, the parents of the young girl found themselves obliged to leave Viscaya and to relocate themselves and their three children to Santiago of Galicia. Once established there, Mariana was again able to seek out Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

On one occasion, prostrate at the foot of the Tabernacle, her heart was so inflamed with burning desires to unite herself to Jesus in Holy Communion that she exclaimed aloud, "Oh, my Love! When will that day arrive when I might unite myself to Thee in Holy Communion?" The next moment, she heard a voice coming from the Tabernacle that said, "Whatever day you desire, My daughter, for your heart is even now prepared." This was the first time that she sensibly heard the sweet voice of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The child was inundated in a sea of joy upon hearing the voice of her Beloved! Like a melodious lyre, she intoned sweet Eucharistic canticles. And like the spouse in the *Canticle of Canticles*, she asked herself if her ears had indeed heard the voice of her Beloved calling her from the hidden depths of the glories of the Tabernacle. And seeing her only Love so alone and hidden, the heart of this tender child poured itself out before Him in grief over His abandonment and her desire to be united to Him.

**THE OBSTACLES ARE REMOVED.
MARIANA RECEIVES HER FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

Thus, from childhood, the life of Mariana was permeated by the highly refined myrrh of suffering. After this incident, she went and knelt before a priest of the Order of Saint Francis and unveiled to him her simple, innocent soul. This holy minister of God understood that she should receive Holy Communion and ordered her to prepare herself for this great day.

Filled with joy, Mariana went to communicate this happy news to her mother, but the illustrious matron told her that she was still too young to receive the Holy Host. For, at this time, children generally made their First Holy Communion between their 12th and 14th years, and Mariana was only nine. In face of this refusal, she returned in tears to her confessor to communicate to him her grief. The learned and virtuous priest consoled her, telling her that she would, indeed, soon receive Holy Communion, and that he himself would begin to prepare her, or, rather, to perfume the bed of fragrant lilies that Jesus Christ Himself had cultivated in the heart of this innocent virgin.

Finally, the day of December 8, 1572 arrived when Mariana received Holy Communion for the first time.

**THE FIRST VISION OF OUR LADY:
MARIANA IS DESTINED FOR THE CONCEPTIONIST ORDER**

Upon her first embrace with Jesus, the torrent of divine love in her heart overwhelmed her and she fainted in ecstasy.⁷

In this ecstasy she saw our Immaculate Mother who, captivating the child with her sweet presence, explained to her the grandeur of the vow of virginity. She showed her how she, the Queen of Heaven, had herself taken this vow in the Temple at the tender age of three. She taught the girl the meaning of such a vow and commanded Mariana to make it, for her Heavenly Queen had destined her to be a religious of her Immaculate Conception.

7. The prayer of ecstatic union adds the suspension of the external senses to the prayer of union, where the faculties of the soul and internal senses are intimately united with God. The intensity of the mystical union is so great the body cannot withstand it and falls into ecstasy (Antonio Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, New York: 1987, pp. 483).

She told Mariana that she would give much glory to God by joining this order. From that moment onward, Mariana remained pledged to foster devotion to the ineffable mystery of the Immaculate Conception of her Mother, Mary Most Holy.

HER CELESTIAL BETROTHAL TO THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

Then she saw in the Tabernacle the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and she understood that the Second Person, the Divine Word, in the form of a Child in His Most Sacred Humanity, desired to be betrothed to her.

She also saw Saint Joseph, the most chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and joyfully understood that Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph were going to stand as witnesses for this celestial union.

She pronounced the solemn vow of chastity, repeating the words taught to her by Our Lady. When she had finished, the Eternal Father blessed the union of His Only Begotten Son with the child Mariana de Jesus.

MARIANA LEADS A LIFE MORE ANGELIC THAN HUMAN

This was her first ecstasy, for on her First Communion she enjoyed the delights of her Loving Spouse, Who asked her to walk the road of sacrifice and love. From that moment, she lived only to love the Sacramental Jesus, sustained, as she was, by the divine fire of love. She embraced a life more angelic than human, never losing her baptismal innocence. Her confessor wisely directed her, allowing her to observe in her home the austerities of the monastic life and permitting her to receive Holy Communion twice a week.

On one occasion her mother came upon her at the moment when her director was giving her Communion. This virtuous matron, moved by zeal and fearing that her child was approaching the celestial banquet without proper preparation, approached to reprimand her. But Mariana's confessor realized what the mother was thinking and prevented her from reproaching the child. Calling her aside, he revealed to her the rich reserves of graces and virtues that God, prodigious in His great mercy, had bestowed upon this angelic child.

HER FREQUENT COMMUNION, PRAYER, CONTEMPLATION, AND MORTIFICATION

Thus her mother's displeasure was transformed into admiration and thanksgiving to God Our Lord for the precious jewel that He had confided to her in the person of her daughter. From that time forward, she gave Mariana full liberty to receive Communion often and to practice all the virtues.

Her parents were, then, collaborators with and custodians of this innocent virgin, who began to fly in the ways of perfection in the seclusion and retreat of her oratory. In addition to the practice of the religious virtues, she dedicated herself to prayer, contemplation, and both interior and exterior mortification, transforming her house into a convent in the service of her parents and little brothers.

Carrying out her household duties, she imitated Martha, who prepared the food for Jesus. Like Mary, she found warmth and consolation at His Sacred Feet, where she presented to her Divine Lover the exquisite perfume of her love, her innocent heart being an alabaster vessel of purity and sacrifice.

This young child only knew sin to avoid it and to weep for the offenses of sinners, for, from her earliest childhood she led a life of innocence and penance. Indeed, the tears of this future spouse of Christ even then hastened the moment for the foundation of the Order of the Conceptionist religious in the city of Quito. For, from the moment when the Blessed Virgin communicated to her that she was destined to be a religious of her Immaculate Conception, Mariana's soul was inflamed with an ardent desire to carry out this mission. But, knowing neither when nor where this would take place, she abandoned herself to her fervent devotions, allowing herself to omit no sacrifices or prayers until such time as her desires were satisfied. God Our Lord, attentive to the sighs of His tender dove, was already preparing for her on the soil of Ecuador a nest where her love might find solace.

CHAPTER 3

It was the year of Our Lord 1556. The ladies of Quito, knowing that there was an Order of Religious of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy in Spain and moved by their love for Mary Immaculate, desired that such a Convent of religious sisters should be founded in their city. They understood the great glory this would give to God Our Lord and the immense good it would do for the people of the city.

Toward that end, the leading families of Quito, along with many of the inhabitants of the city, met with a group of friars to petition the King of Spain, humbly entreating him to found the first Convent of the Immaculate Conception of the New World in their colony.⁸

THE KING OF SPAIN SENDS THE FIRST CONCEPTIONISTS TO QUITO

By the grace of God, their petition was heard, and the King himself sent from Spain the first group of founding mothers. He placed at their head the Rev. Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, a descendant of an ancient and noble house of Galicia.⁹ This illustrious, candid virgin was the aunt of Mariana, and she took her young niece on this venture along with the other Founding Mothers.

As soon as this innocent girl heard that a Convent of the Immaculate Conception was to be founded in the New World colony, she understood this to be the voice of her Beloved, which called to

8. Surrounded by mountains covered year round with snow, the City of Saint Francis of Quito was founded by Spanish conquerors of Emperor Charles V on December 6, 1534. In 1566, King Philip II issued the Royal Edict for the foundation of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, dedicated *first* to the praying of the Divine Office, and *second*, to the religious education and formation of the Spanish daughters and *criollas* of the Spanish Colony. The first convent in the newly founded city was formally installed on the corner of the city's main square on January 13, 1577.

9. Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada was related to the royal family, and King Philip II himself chose and named her as Founder for the Conceptionist Convent he wanted to found in the city of Quito in New Spain. When the foundation was made, she was 33 years of age (Luis Cadena y Almeida, *Apariciones de María Santísima del Buen Suceso*, Quito, Librería Espiritual, 1999, pp. 46-7).

her saying, "Leave your motherland and the house of your parents, for the King of Heaven has become enamored of your beauty."

How sweet that voice was to the ears of young Mariana, as her soul heard the call sounding the moment for her heroic sacrifice. She immediately communicated to her parents this divine call, telling them that she must separate herself from them forever on this earth.

APPARITION OF THE DIVINE JESUS

A few days before taking leave of her good parents, upon receiving Holy Communion, in her soul she saw the Divine Jesus at His perfect age. He said to her, "My Spouse, the time has already arrived for you to bid an eternal farewell to your motherland and to your paternal home. Eagerly coveting your beauty, I bring you to My house, where, behind strong walls, you will live far from flesh and blood, hidden and forgotten by all human creatures. For your inheritance and patrimony, you will have, in imitation of Me, the cross and great sufferings. Strength and courage will not be lacking to you. I desire only that your will be always prepared to do Mine."

Mariana accepted from Jesus Christ all that He asked of her and, following His footsteps, offered herself as a sacrifice of love.

MARIANA LEAVES HER PATERNAL HOUSE

The day of her departure arrived, a day most moving to all present, harsh and bitter for her parents and relatives, and also for the innocent child, for her candid heart dearly loved her parents and family. But it was also a sweet and satisfying day, for she was giving to her God an open demonstration of her love. At the same time, God gave her the ineffable consolations that He alone knows how to give to those who belong to Him in their hours of sacrifice.

Mariana was entrusted to the care of her aunt, Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, who offered to act henceforth as mother to the child. Amid tears and embraces, that tender plant, who in America would become a verdant tree whose branches would provide shade and life for so many souls, left the Spanish world.

Oh! My God, how incomprehensible art Thy ways to the eyes of mere men, and how loving dost Thou show Thyself to be to

Thy chosen ones! How painful a struggle for this loving child! Her parents wanted her to become a Carmelite sister in Spain. But to this she would reply, "I am called for the Order of the Immaculate Conception." But why, they argued, could she not become a Conceptionist sister in Spain? Why must her ties to family and homeland be completely severed?

But God desired that the holocaust be perfect! For this reason, the maiden would say, "I desire to cross the seas, and, in distant lands, far from flesh and blood, to consecrate myself solely to the love of my Jesus!"

How great the sword of sorrow that pierced the hearts of Don Diego and Doña Maria to be asked to sacrifice their daughter at so tender an age. And what appeared so cruel humanly speaking was, in fact, for the city of Quito the work of Divine Providence, which transplanted that Spanish lily to Ecuadorean soil at such a tender age. For this lily, with its exquisite fragrance, remindful of God Himself, would perfume the ambience of the Conceptionist cloisters, where delicate flowers and fruits of heroic sanctity would spring forth throughout the centuries.

Love and sacrifice having triumphed in the young girl, she heroically left her grieving parents and little brothers, and began her voyage to Quito. Only souls who have passed through this sacrifice can understand how Divine Love acts in such cases. Like a cruel dagger, He severs the hearts of both parents and child, leaving the victim in a living death so that she might suffer the martyrdom of filial love. With every beat of the heart of the spouse of Jesus Christ, at every moment of her existence, she renews her sacrifice. Immolating herself at the feet of the Tabernacle, she offers practical proof of her love for the Divine Spouse, thus earning for her cherished ones innumerable graces and favors.

* * *

CHAPTER 4

Mariana left Spain in the company of her aunt, Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, and four other professed virgins, who wished to found this Order of the Immaculate Conception under the protection of the Seraphim of Assisi, according to the dictates of the holy Rule.¹⁰

THE TERRIBLE TEMPEST AT SEA

No sooner had they embarked than a tempest of unimaginable fury came over the ocean. The clear sky of day suddenly darkened, being transformed into a most disastrous night. The ship had already begun to sink, and the frightened sailors, their efforts rendered futile, cried out that this terrible tempest would bury them all in the ocean's bottomless tomb.

During this bitter trial, Mariana, weakened by her sufferings and confounded by the sense of her own misery, believed herself to be the cause of the terrible tempest.

She told her aunt, "My Mother, am I not the cause of this tempest, and, like another Jonas, should I not be cast into the sea so that it might become calm?"

"No, my daughter," said her aunt, clasping her niece to herself. "For this we should have recourse to prayer, that it might touch the merciful Heart of God."

10. The names of the six Spanish Founding Mothers were recorded in the Convent's Foundation Book as follows: Doña Maria de Taboada, or Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada from the noble house of Soloriego of Galicia, first Abbess of the Royal Convent; Catalina Rodrigues, called Mother Catherine of the Conception; Doña Francisca de Jaramillo, called Mother Francisca of the Angels; Maria de Torres, called Mother Maria of Saint John; Doña Aldonsa de Castañeda, called Mother Anna of the Cross; and Doña Lucia Jaramillo, called Mother Lucia of the Cross.

The six Quito ladies who were incorporated into the Convent from its founding included Maria Rodriguez, called Mother Maria of the Incarnation in religion, and the novices who later took their final vows: Doña Julia de Castañeda, Doña Magdalena de Valenzuela, Doña Juliana de Arce, Mariana de Torres, and Doña Leonor Tamayo. With the 13-year-old Mariana de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa, the number of the first inhabitants of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception was 13. (Cadena y Almeida, *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria*, pp 16-8).

**APPARITION OF THE INFERNAL SERPENT:
"I SHALL NOT PERMIT THIS FOUNDATION..."**

Then Mother Maria and the young girl saw in the ocean a monstrous serpent with seven heads, which, stirring up the waters of the sea, was attempting to destroy the ship. Upon seeing this horrible sight, Mariana cried out and fainted in a deathlike stupor.

Mother Maria, frightened and fearing for the life of her young niece, directed to God this humble prayer: "Thou knowest, my God, that it is not by my own will that I go to make this foundation, but rather, in obedience to my Lord the King. If it is Thy will that the Order of the Immaculate Conception be founded in this Colony, make the darkness dissipate and this tempest subside."

God answered this entreaty most prodigiously. No sooner had Mother Maria finished her prayer than the young girl opened her eyes. At the same moment, it became day, and they heard a terrible voice that said, "I shall not permit the foundation. I shall not permit that it go forward. I shall not permit it to endure until the end of time, and I shall persecute it unceasingly."

This was the voice of the serpent crying out even as the tempest was calmed. For the Blessed Virgin, coming to the aid of her beloved virgins, had slashed his heads to pieces.

MARIANA SEES OUR LADY IN AN EXTRAORDINARY VISION

The storm having subsided and the daylight returned, Mother Maria turned to embrace her young niece, saying to her, "My daughter, what happened to you?"

"I will tell you when we are alone, my mother," she replied.

At the first opportunity that presented itself, they retired and spoke about what had occurred during that terrible storm. Mother Maria realized that her niece had experienced a remarkable vision when she had fallen into that deathlike stupor. Therefore, she questioned her carefully: "My daughter, tell me what you saw?"

"I do not know in what world I was, my mother, but there I saw a horrible, writhing creature."

"And what was this creature?" asked Mother Maria.

"It was a serpent," replied the child, "larger than the sea. I also saw a Lady of incomparable beauty, clothed in the sun and

crowned with stars, carrying a beautiful Child in her arms. Over the heart of this Lady was a monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament. In one of her hands she carried a large cross of gold, which at its end took the shape of a lance. With this she subdued the enormous serpent with its two-edged tongue. The Lady, who wielded the cross with the help of the Blessed Sacrament and the hand of the Child, struck the head of the serpent with such force that it was slashed to pieces. At that moment, this monstrous serpent cried out that it would not permit the foundation of the Order of the Immaculate Conception.”

Mother Maria understood the profound significance of this vision. When the opportune moment came, she ordered a picture drawn out of this scene of the Blessed Virgin in accordance with this admirable vision. It was made into a cloth medallion, which the Conceptionists wear on the breast of their habits.

Mariana also communicated to her aunt the countless difficulties and sufferings that would be endured so that this foundation might be made in the city of Quito. After its foundation, the Community would suffer even more persecutions and great tribulations throughout the centuries because of the hatred of the serpent; this God would permit for the glory of His Most Holy Mother.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

Mariana was also made to understand many future events that would take place in the Community. She saw the saintly religious who would blossom in this Convent and also the unfaithful souls who would fail to correspond to the grace of their vocations.

Mother Maria, frightened and distressed upon hearing this account, said to her niece, “My daughter, if so much is to be suffered in this foundation, and so much opposition will arise against this Community of Conceptionists, let us not make this foundation. Let us instead return to Spain.”

“No, my mother,” replied the unconquerable child. “It is true that we will have much to suffer and that there will be unfaithful souls, but there will also be saintly religious who, by their interior lives, sufferings, and humiliations, will give glory to God and to His Immaculate Mother, thus preserving this Convent until the end of time.”

“My daughter,” questioned Mother Maria, “will you be one of these souls?”

The young girl, with angelic candor and profound humility, replied, “Yes, my mother, and the day will come when the Queen of Heaven herself will speak to me.”

Without manifesting her admiration, Mother Maria continued her questions: “And will I see that day?” The child responded, “You will witness the first favors that Our Lord and Our Immaculate Mother will grant to me, but, my dear Mother, it will not be for you to see them all.”

And thus was this prophecy later fulfilled.¹¹

It is believed that during these grievous trials suffered while still at sea, God Our Lord granted to Mariana the gift of prophecy. Since the age of nine, her soul had been imbued with a sublime degree of the prayer of quiet.¹²

During this blessed conversation with her aunt, the Angels must have awaited in suspense the *fiat* of Mother Maria for the foundation of the Convent, so that they might carry it aloft to the throne of His Most August Majesty. At the same time, how the demons waged their furious battle to prevent so great a good from occurring!

Convinced by these explanations of her niece, Mother Maria resolved to proceed with the journey to make the foundation in Quito, offering herself as a sacrificial victim of love to her Divine

11. Mother Maria witnessed the first and second deaths of her niece and miraculous returns to life in 1582 and 1588, before she died on the Feast of Saint Francis on October 4, 1593. The first apparition of Our Lady of Good Success to Mother Mariana was one year later on February 2, 1594.

12. The gift of prophecy is one of the most important of the *gratiae gratis datae* [charismas]. It is an intellectual miracle whereby God communicates to an individual the knowledge of future contingent events, although properly speaking, any type of knowledge could be the subject matter of prophetic revelation. The prophetic mind can be instructed by God by either explicit revelation, which gives the prophet absolute certainty about the things revealed; or by a mysterious prophetic instinct, unaccompanied by certainty whether the knowledge is from God or his own mind.

The prayer of quiet is a type of mystical contemplation in which the soul experiences an intimate awareness of God's presence which captivates the will and fills the soul and body with ineffable sweetness and delight. The prayer of quiet begins to give the soul an actual possession and joyful fruition of the Sovereign Good (A. Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 474, 568).

Spouse Jesus and her Immaculate Mother. Then the angels crowned the heads of these two triumphant virgins, while the celestial choirs sang a hymn of love to Mary Immaculate.

Mother Mariana de Jesus was the shield of fortitude that sustained Mother Maria during this difficult battle. She is the honor and glory of the Order of the Immaculate Conception and the strongest column that supports this Convent, which was persecuted by the infernal serpent from the very beginning of its foundation.

The demon caused the ship carrying the acts of the foundation to be shipwrecked so that these documents would not reach Toledo. But, saved by the hands of the Angels, they were nonetheless delivered to Mother Beatrice da Silva, Mother and Founder of the whole Conceptionist Order.

* * *

CHAPTER 5

The trials at sea having come to an end, the travels continued by land. There they hoped for some respite, but new trials lay ahead for them. Again the devil attempted to prevent this foundation, for it was found that there were not enough horses for the journey. It is impossible to express the sufferings of those delicate virgins as they traveled along those rough roads.

The Divine Spouse, who asked these labors from His spouses, thus presented them with sufferings and crosses in order to provide a firm foundation for the beautiful edifice of the Order of the Conceptionists.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONVENT

The illustrious founding sisters arrived in Quito on December 30, 1576. They were received by the Royal Audience and the ecclesiastical government with great manifestations of joy. The noble and pious ladies of Quito showered every kindness on them, lodging them in houses reserved for them. Because the walls of the cloisters had not yet been completed, they were obliged to remain in these quarters living in great poverty for more than a year. However, the Franciscan friars fortified their spirit, instructing them in the religious virtues and angelic poverty. When the preparations were finally completed, the date for the foundation was fixed.

On January 13, 1577, the Convent was founded, the spiritual and temporal government of the religious being entrusted to the hands of the Rev. Father Antonio Jurado, O.F.M. Since the details of this ceremony are recorded in the foundation book and in the chronicles of the Order;¹³ let it suffice to say that on this day the Vicar Provincial of the Franciscan Order received the vows of obedience of the Founding Mothers. Mother Mariana de Jesus was

13. The four houses that occupied the site of the first Royal Convent were donated by the Quito families of Diego Mondragón and Alonso Paz, who purchased the property in 1575 from Lorenzo de Cepeda y Ahumada, the brother of Saint Teresa of Jesus of Avila. The proper arrangements for a monastic establishment were made and a provisory Chapel was constructed on the site of the present-day Church (Cadena y Almeida, *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria*, pp. 35-6).

not yet able to make her profession because of her young age, for at that time she was only a few months past her thirteenth year.

THE CITY CELEBRATES THE FOUNDATION

The whole city of Quito came together to partake in this solemn celebration. In those times, on the occasion of great festivities, the people would celebrate with bullfights, and a wealthy landowner provided a large number of bulls for the games as a token of his joy for the foundation of the first Convent in the Colony.

The inhabitants of the city thus rejoiced in their celebration of this happy event, honoring, loving, and bestowing gifts on these spouses of Jesus Christ.

* * *

CHAPTER 6

After the foundation was established and the Founding Mothers had made their professions, the virgins of Quito, like zealous bees, flew to the garden of the Conception to nourish themselves upon the sweet nectar of the first religious flowers.

These noble and virtuous maidens began their novitiate in the Convent as the first stage of their cloistered life. From the moment she stepped foot on that blessed ground, Mariana redoubled her fervor. Because of her young age, she was separated from the other novices, and, for a year and a half, she helped her aunt in domestic duties and setting up the Community workrooms. In this way, in the temporal as well as spiritual spheres, she became the strongest and most beautiful column of the Convent.

Mother Maria de Jesus used this time to strengthen, or, rather, to perfect her niece in the practice of the religious virtues, wherein Mariana shone as a model of the most perfect observance, for she seemed like an angel nourished solely by divine love.

Since the ongoing construction of the Church and the Convent exhausted its funds, the Community often lacked money for food, and the Divine Spouse exercised them in the practice of angelic poverty. At times, the fare was quite poor and meager, and Mother Maria suffered greatly in her concern for the delicacy and youth of her niece. On one occasion, the young girl sweetly told her aunt, "My mother, do not worry about the younger ones, for our youth sustains us; rather be concerned about those who are older." As this incident demonstrates, she was the consolation of her aunt.

NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION OF MARIANA

On completing her 15th year, Mariana entered the novitiate, beginning her year of probation under the guidance of her aunt and the direction of the Friars Minor.

Her director acted with great discernment in guiding this candid and innocent soul. Seeing the great progress she made in virtue, he considered himself unworthy to direct her. Her companions in the novitiate admired her fervor and would allow themselves to be guided by her counsel; often they witnessed her totally ab-

sorbed in the prayer of quiet.

During the spiritual exercises that she made in preparation for her profession, God Our Lord granted her many graces. On the day before her profession, she passed the whole day in a deathlike state.

The frightened sisters summoned Doctor Sancho, who, after examining her, could only remark in admiration, "I can assure you that this is no natural illness. Leave her be, for I am certain that her state is a supernatural one, and there is nothing I can do for her."

For the doctor understood that she was receiving extraordinary graces from God on this special day, the eve of her profession.

When she returned to her senses, Mariana was questioned by Mother Maria: "What happened to you, my daughter?"

"My mother," she replied, "Our Lord has promised to receive me as His spouse. I was given to understand the difficult times through which our Order will pass. However, throughout the course of time, in this Convent there will be holy religious and, at all times, hidden and unknown souls, who by their sacrifices and sufferings will sustain the Community.

"But there will also be ungrateful and false religious who will be unfaithful and will leave the Convent. Every fifty years Our Lord will purge the Community, separating the chaff from the good wheat. At the end of the 19th century, a religious will suffer from a kind of leprosy, and once again, sanctity will return to this Convent. She will end her days in a place set aside for those dying of this disease.¹⁴ I saw the immense glory she will have in Heaven.

"As long as sacrifices and sufferings are made in this Convent, it will not disappear."

On the long-awaited day of her betrothal, Mother Mariana de Jesus made her religious profession at the hands of her Abbess and aunt, the Rev. Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada.

The act was most solemn, with the friars teaching the cer-

14. Msgr. Cadena y Almeida notes that this sister was an expiatory victim so that the Convent would be protected from the anti-Catholic corruption of that century. *Madera para Esculpir la Imagen de una Santa* (Quito: Libreria Espiritual, 1987), p. 31.

emonies and procedures of the profession.¹⁵ Mother Maria directed a short sermon to the novice, the same sermon which even today [in 1790] is given to the novices of the Community, after which Mariana made her profession.

As she finished pronouncing her vows, she was transported to heaven in ecstasy. Thus, at the same time Mother Maria accepted her profession, Mariana heard the Eternal Father repeating the words of her aunt: "If you are faithful in this, I promise to you eternal life."

She then saw the Person of the Divine Word, the Most Holy Humanity united to the Divinity, the God-Man, as a handsome youth in the very fullness of His Manhood at the perfect age of 33. With ineffable majesty and sweetness, He espoused Himself to her, placing on the finger of her right hand a beautiful ring with four precious stones. On each stone was written both in Latin and in Spanish one of the four vows: poverty, obedience, chastity, and cloister. In the center of the ring, set most exquisitely, was a star engraved with the name of Mary.

At this indescribable betrothal, the Blessed Virgin and her chaste spouse Saint Joseph stood as witnesses. Then her Divine Spouse Jesus presented to her His Cross – with all the pains and sufferings that He had endured in His mortal life.

He addressed her, saying, "My Spouse, I desire for you a life of immolation. Your life will be a continuous martyrdom." He made known to her all the diverse tribulations, temptations, and persecutions that she would have to suffer, promising to preserve her only from temptations against her angelic purity. He told her that she would suffer terrible persecutions from her fellow creatures, even from some who were good, just souls. She saw the spiritual desolations, the abandonment and absences of her Beloved, in short, the prolonged and cruel martyrdom of her life of crucified love. With profound humility, she responded to her Spouse, "I accept with pleasure and with gratitude, as a precious gift, the sufferings with which Thou art presenting me. I willingly offer myself

15. Mariana de Jesus, age 17, made her vows on October 4, 1579 at the hands of her aunt, and in the presence of the officiating Franciscan priest Fr. Antonio Jurado (Cadena y Almeida, *Apariciones*, p. 72).

to imitate Thy life; but I am only a miserable creature, and, although my spirit is willing, I fear that my nature will weaken, and I beseech Thee to help me with Thy grace.”

Her Divine Spouse promised that assistance and let her glimpse the graces He had prepared for her. Once again he gave her to understand in a veiled way that she would receive an apparition of the Blessed Virgin of Good Success. As the days passed, she better understood the significance of all that she had seen in this indescribable ecstasy.

OUR LADY SEVERS A VEIN OF MARIANA'S HEART

The Blessed Virgin spoke to her words of maternal sweetness, “My daughter, my most favored one, you shall live protected not only under my mantle, but also hidden in my heart. So that you are purged of all earthly affections and reserve your love only for my Most Holy Son and for me, I am severing this vein of your heart.” And, extending her hand to the heart of the new spouse of Christ, she cut it. At this, Mariana experienced a pain more acute than she had ever known; this pain remained with her until her death.

Then her heavenly patron, the glorious Saint Joseph, approached her and placed in her heart a white lily. At the same time he told her that she would never have even a thought or inclination against the angelical virtue of purity.

The love of Mother Mariana, severed from all earthly affections, was thus reserved only for God and for her neighbor.

As she returned from this ecstasy, she felt as if the Divine Spouse were removing the ring from her finger, causing her such intense pain that it seemed as if her whole finger were being wrenched from her hand.

During the whole time of her ecstasy, her body remained flexible and active, allowing her to carry out all the ceremonies of her profession. Her face was rosy, illuminated at times with great joy and, at other times, flooded by torrents of tears.¹⁶

16. Although normally a person in ecstasy is insensible and completely immovable, there have been mystics who spoke and described their contemplative visions during the state of ecstasy or who have moved around during the state of ecstasy, as Mariana did on the date of her profession into religion (A. Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 484-5).

Upon returning to herself, she was called by the Abbess, who said to her, "Now that you have made your profession at my hands, I ask you to practice your vow of obedience for the first time. I hereby order you to relate to me all that has happened to you today."

The recently professed sister responded, "Oh, my Mother! How harsh is the persecution of the just and of one's fellow man!" And she proceeded to relate to her what she had seen and what God had communicated to her during that admirable ecstasy which she had experienced at the moment of her profession.

Who can imagine the incomprehensible secrets of divine love that were revealed to this innocent virgin who had just celebrated her betrothal to the Divine Lover! And with what immense stores of graces did He prepare His spouse for her life of immolation and sacrifice!

This heroic Conceptionist virgin received the habit on September 8, 1577, and made her solemn profession on October 4, 1579. May God be praised and glorified for all that He does in His saints!

* * *

CHAPTER 7

Following her profession and after taking the name of Mariana de Jesus, she continued to lead a life more angelic than human. She took flight in the exercise of all the virtues, diligently carrying out all that her Divine Spouse asked of her.

THE ABBESS EXERCISES MARIANA'S HUMILITY

The Abbess, who was also the Novice Mistress, entrusted her niece to help her direct the other novices. The young assistant discharged this command with perfection, for the duties involved therein provided her the opportunity to better practice the virtue of humility.

The Rev. Mother Maria, who desired that her niece progress in virtue, would severely chastise and humble her in public even when she was not at fault. In the refectory, she gave her severe penances and reprimands. Seeing Mother Mariana accept this treatment with so much sweetness and tranquility, the Abbess would be unable to contain her tears and would go to prostrate herself before the Blessed Sacrament. With her forehead on the ground, she would pray: "My Lord, I act thus with this creature because I desire to see her one day raised to the altars, for I know her merits and virtues."

During the two years of her initial period, she was a model religious in the practice of all the virtues and in following the most strict observance of the Rule. On December 8, 1579, the feast of Our Immaculate Mother, Mother Mariana ended her initial period. With profound humility, she prostrated herself in the refectory before the Community to confess her faults and ask pardon for the infractions she had committed during that time. She thanked the sisters for the charity with which they had borne with her, and, with seraphic love, she kissed their feet.

For this innocent dove believed herself laden with faults and imperfections. For this reason, she told her sisters with all sincerity, "Although my initial period has ended, I shall always be the least of all." And, in reality, she was.

HER DIVINE SPOUSE GIVES HER ANOTHER ECSTASY

After this act of humiliation, Our Lord again drew her into ecstasy, leaving her on earth as one dead. This time, however, the religious were not so alarmed, for they knew that she was resting in the arms of her most sweet Spouse.

In this ecstasy, God Our Lord told her the practices she should carry out during the free hours of the Community and the penances she should perform each week; He even gave her the subjects upon which He desired her to meditate.

When Mother Mariana returned to herself, Mother Maria again ordered her to tell her what had occurred. "For all that you do should have my blessing and permission," she explained. When she heard the prayers Our Lord had asked of this soul, she said, "My daughter, do all that God asks of you." But, taken aback by the excruciating penances, she added, "Tell Our Lord that your Abbess fears that you will lose your health from the rigor of these penances."

OUR LORD FORTIFIES MARIANA'S SPIRIT

Mother Mariana obediently delivered this message to her Divine Spouse on the tenth day of December, on which occasion she was again favored by the Divine Majesty. Not wishing His spouse to do anything without the permission and blessing of the Abbess, He kindly responded: "Your health will not suffer from this, my daughter. Performing these penances, you will appear fresh and exuberant like an April rose."

Then the Celestial Spouse, Who appeared to her on this occasion more beautiful than the Heavens at His perfect age of 33, took from His holy Side a drop of crystal clear water. Placing it on the lips of His beloved Mariana, He said, "This will fortify you throughout your life of penance."

Savoring this divine liqueur, Mother Mariana tasted a drink of unimaginable sweetness and her soul experienced unspeakable celestial delights. Only those souls who receive such graces can understand or describe the gifts that God Our Lord gives to those who sacrifice themselves for His love. In this way her body was fortified to practice the excruciating penances asked of her by her Beloved.

CHAPTER 8

The rule of the Conceptionists does not prescribe austere penances, for few young women would want to embrace such a life. However, it permits its loving aspirants to practice such penances according to divine inspiration.

Mother Mariana de Jesus was truly a heroine in the practice of atrocious penances. She wore a hairshirt that covered her whole body, and she placed small iron tacks even on her tongue and in her ears, leaving free only her face and hands, which all could see.

HER SEVERE DISCIPLINES

On every day except Sunday, she used to take the discipline three times, once with a whip made to raise blood. During Advent and Lent, she used to apply the latter discipline three times a day, and the former six times. During Holy Week, she would take nine scourgings a day, and every Friday of the year she would mortify her taste, placing something very bitter in her mouth.

Not satisfied with this self-inflicted rigor, she had herself scourged by the hands of another. For this, she chose a strong, robust woman, Martina Ceferina de la Vega, who lived in the Convent. This young woman, who was taught and catechized in our faith by Mother Mariana de Jesus and received Holy Baptism in the Convent at age 12, was her *confidante* in these severe penances.

APPARITION OF THE HOLY FAMILY DURING THE WAY OF THE CROSS

On Friday nights she would make the Way of the Cross, carrying her large wooden cross through the lower cloisters until the break of dawn. One night, as she entered the lower choir carrying the cross, she saw the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. During this apparition, the Child Jesus presented her with flowers.

On Fridays, she would consume absolutely nothing, for her food passage would close. When the Abbess ordered her to eat

something, in obedience she would put food in her mouth, but she was not able to swallow it. Her confessor, a Franciscan, also ordered her to take some nourishment. Seeing that she could eat nothing, he brought Doctor Sancho to examine her. After a careful examination, the doctor found that her food passage had closed.

He said nothing in the presence of Mother Mariana, but only shook his head. After leaving her, however, he told the Abbess and the confessor, "This is a supernatural thing. Leave her be."

And so she continued her life of sacrifice and penance. Most undoubtedly, the violence of sharing in the Passion of Our Lord prevented her from taking any food on Fridays.

On Saturdays, she felt so keenly the sorrows of the Holy Virgin that nothing could console her. Only with great difficulty could she take even a little water.

Every day she crucified herself for a quarter of an hour on a large cross that she guarded in the privacy of her cell, where she also kept all the instruments of penance and martyrdom that she used on her innocent body. During these crucifixions, she would hang on the cross supported only by some ropes.

Every Friday of the year, after Vespers and Compline, she would lock herself in her cell and wear a hairshirt for one hour, thus accompanying Our Lord when He was scourged at the pillar. She would then spend long periods in imitation of His Crucifixion.

MORE EXCRUCIATING PENANCES

After she had descended from the cross, she would take a scourging or practice such penances as walking on her knees, continuing her martyrdom even during the hour of afternoon rest. It thus falls to some chosen religious to appease Divine Justice by the rigor of their penances. Mother Mariana, an innocent victim, would close herself up in her cell and share the torments of her Beloved. She would accompany Him as Pilate sentenced Him to be scourged, entering the Heart of Our Lord and sharing the grief He had experienced then.

This loving spouse, filled with compassion for her Lord so weakened by suffering, would scourge herself with three types of most atrocious disciplines in imitation of Jesus, Who was scourged

with three of the cruelest of scourges.¹⁷

This innocent dove, her body mutilated and bathed in blood, would spend the whole hour of silence in the highest contemplation of the torments of Jesus. At the tolling of the Vespers bell, she would leave her cell for the choir, her face glowing with happiness and with the spirit of such profound recollection that even the Angels of Heaven looked at her in admiration.

How many chaste embraces and tender kisses this enraptured soul gave to Jesus Christ present in the Sacrament of His Love! Only souls that have savored the delights of mortification can express the richness of the love that Jesus Christ showers upon them!

HER FASTING AND SENSE OF ABANDONMENT DURING HOLY WEEK

The fastings of the Church and of the Rule were rigorously observed by Mother Mariana. On Sundays she would eat everything that was served to her in the refectory, including the fruit that was customarily served on that day, for she rejoiced on that day in the Resurrection of Our Lord. In the same manner that He communicated to her the suffering and afflictions of His Passion, He also allowed her to share the joys of His Resurrection.

During Holy Week, this loving heroine asked her Divine Spouse to take from her all spiritual consolation and leave her abandoned so that she might share in the abandonment and agony that He suffered on the Cross. This favor was granted her, and she spent those days annihilated and weakened by the violence of the sorrow that Our Lord shared with her.

She slept only three hours each night on a hard bed covered with a thin lambskin, for she never knew the comfort of a soft bed and treated her body as if it were her worst enemy. To imitate

17. According to revelations of the Our Lady to Blessed Mary of Agreda, the torturers of Our Lord first scourged the innocent Savior with hard, thick cords, followed by a scourging with hardened leather thongs. The third pair of scourgers beat Our Lord with tough rawhides, afflicting him more cruelly because they were cutting into the wounds already produced by the previous scourgings. Their fury was further incited by the devils, who were filled with new rage at the patience of Christ (*The City of God: The Transfixion*, trans. by Fiscar Marison, Washington NJ: Ave Maria Institute, 1971, pp. 606-7).

her crucified Beloved, she would wear a crown of thorns on her head and chains around her neck, thus captivating God Himself, Who, in His mercy, granted her whatever she asked of Him. Thus does He reward the sacrifices of those who love Him.

The life of Mother Mariana de Jesus was one of continuous prayer. She prayed four hours each day in addition to the two hours of daily prayer prescribed by the Rule: from midnight until one in the morning; from 3 to 4 a.m., and during various other free hours. Our Lord told her that those who foster the devotion of praying at midnight will receive many graces, for they will be accompanied in their prayer at that hour by the Divine Majesty Himself.

* * *

CHAPTER 9

In the ecstasy Mother Mariana experienced during the second year of her profession, Our Lord instructed her to make the following meditations for each day of the week:

- On Mondays, the washing of the feet of the Apostles by Our Lord and the institution of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.
- On Tuesdays, the prayer of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives and the imprisonment of the Savior.
- On Wednesdays, the presentation of Our Divine Redeemer before the Pontiffs and Judges, and the scourging He suffered for love of us while bound to the pillar.
- On Thursdays, the crowning of thorns, the *Ecce Homo*, and how He carried the cross on His shoulders to His crucifixion.
- On Fridays, the holy mystery of the Cross of Our Divine Redeemer, the seven last words, and His death.
- On Saturdays, the piercing of His Side after His death, the grief and tears of His Most Holy Mother, and His burial.
- On Sundays, how the soul of Our Divine Redeemer descended into Limbo, His glorious Resurrection, His apparitions to Our Lady, Mary Magdalene, and His disciples.

Mother Mariana meditated on these points throughout the week, beginning anew each Monday. In this way, she paid homage to the Holy Passion of Our Lord, to which she was so strongly devoted.

Our Lord gave her these afternoon meditations to exercise each day of the week:

- On Mondays, the knowledge of self, the memory of her sins and their gravity.
- On Tuesdays, the condition and misery of human life.
- On Wednesdays, death.
- On Thursdays, the Final Judgment.
- On Fridays, Hell.

- On Saturdays, the blessed happiness of Heaven.
- On Sundays, the divine favors received, both general and particular, and the infinite debt of gratitude owed to Our Most Loving God.

HER PROFOUND INTIMACY WITH HER GUARDIAN ANGEL

Mother Mariana meditated on these points with angelic fervor. God Our Lord also granted to her a great intimacy with her Guardian Angel, who appeared to her as a shining youth of 18 years of age. On his breast was a reliquary imprinted with the holy names of Jesus and Mary. The divine rays radiating from it communicated to Mother Mariana celestial lights of understanding. The Angel appeared as one armed for battle, and the sight of him fortified her against the terrible serpent, who would visibly persecute her. Writhing beneath her feet, this hideous monster would threaten her saying, "I shall not leave you alive!"

The innocent virgin would smile, and her Angel would come to her defense. Often the Devil, in the figure of a serpent, would torment Mother Mariana, but her Guardian Angel always ensured that she emerged victorious in combat, for she fought with the weapons of humility and the practice of the virtues, as well as prayer and penance, which were the swords under which the serpent writhed and recoiled.

As will be seen later, her love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament wounded the infernal monster.

* * *

CHAPTER 10

Mother Mariana's dominant passion was her love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Not content with spending the hours of common prayer before Him, she would hasten there in her every free moment to soothe her enamored soul near her Beloved, confiding to Him all her interior and exterior sufferings. Even her work she would bring to do in His Holy Presence so that in those things also, her Beloved might instruct her.

SHE CONFIDES HER SUFFERINGS TO OUR LORD

This holy religious suffered insults and persecutions from her sisters without ever opening her lips to justify herself or protest. Only at the foot of the Tabernacle did she confide her secret sorrows to her Beloved.

One day, after a particularly bitter incident with one of her sisters, which Mother Mariana suffered in silence, she went to the feet of Jesus Christ, communicating to Him her torment and begging Him for fortitude.

He replied to her, "On the day when I betrothed Myself to you, I carefully tested your will. Your sufferings are reaching their apex."

To this, the innocent virgin responded, "My Lord, my will is ready, but the flesh is weak..."

Our Lord returned, "Strength will not be wanting to you, as nothing is lacking to the soul who has recourse to Me."

At that moment, she heard an overwhelming sound, and saw that the whole Church had become immersed in darkness, as from dust and smoke. Fearful that the building would collapse and uncertain what had happened, for she had not felt the tremors of an earthquake, she asked herself, "What is this?"

Examining her conscience, she could find no fault for which she could accuse herself. Nonetheless, in her profound humility, she believed that she must be guilty of something that was causing this disorder.

**APPARITIONS OF OUR LORD, OUR LADY,
AND SAINT MARY MAGDALENE**

In the darkness of the Church, Mother Mariana looked up and saw the main altar very clearly, as if it were illuminated by full day. Suddenly, before this humble, kneeling virgin, the Tabernacle opened, and Christ Himself emerged, suffering as He had at Golgotha. The Blessed Virgin, shedding tears of pearls, along with Saint John and Mary Magdalene, were at His feet.

The suffering Christ, still without the wound in His Side, began His death agony.

Seeing this, the humble virgin, believing herself to be at fault, prostrated herself on the ground with her arms extended in the form of a cross, exclaiming, "Lord, I am the guilty one. Punish me and pardon your people."

Her Guardian Angel made her rise, saying, "No, you are not to blame. Arise and approach, for God desires to reveal to you a great secret."

She arose, and seeing the tears of the Most Holy Virgin, she addressed her, saying, "My Lady, am I to blame for thy sadness?"

She replied, "No, it is not you, but the criminal world."

Then, as Our Lord agonized, she heard the voice of the Eternal Father saying, "This punishment will be for the 20th century."

Then she saw three swords over the head of Christ. On each was written, 'I shall punish heresy, blasphemy, and impurity.' Then she was given to understand all that would take place in that century.¹⁸

The Holy Virgin continued, "My daughter, will you sacrifice yourself for the people of this time?"

Mother Mariana replied, "I am willing."

Immediately, the swords moved away from the agonizing

18. In later apparitions, Our Lady of Good Success described the great crisis in the Church that would occur in the 20th century. In those lamentable times, she said, heresies would abound, the corruption of manners and customs would be almost complete, purity would be lacking in the clergy and laity, and the light of the Faith would be nearly extinguished. See M. T. Horvat, *Our Lady of Good Success, Prophecies for Our Times* (Los Angeles: TIA, 2000), www.TraditionInAction.org.

Christ and buried themselves in the heart of Mother Mariana, who fell dead from the violence of the pain.

THE DEATH OF MOTHER MARIANA

As she was always the first one at all the Community acts of prayer, the religious went to search for her when she did not appear. They found her body cold and, to all appearances, lying dead in the lower choir. The sisters carried Mother Mariana to her bed, exchanging her lambskin for a soft mattress. Seeing that she did not show any sign of life, the guilty sisters who had persecuted her so cruelly that morning surrounded her bedside, kissing her hands, beseeching her, "Forgive us, Mother Mariana, for we knew not what we were doing."

The holy religious, however, did not respond. The worried sisters summoned the physician, Doctor Sancho. He examined her, distressed, for he could find no sign of life. After he had tried various methods to revive her, he announced, with tears in his eyes, "Mother Mariana is dead. Her beautiful soul has left the lovely abode of her body. Call an artist so that her portrait might be painted before she is buried."

Before taking leave of the Community, he approached the dead sister with profound grief, saying, "Holy virgin, remember those who were devoted to you who yet remain pilgrims on this earth." The doctor then left, making public throughout the city the death of Mother Mariana.

Upset by this news, the people began knocking at the doors of the church, clamoring to be allowed to kiss the hands of their precious treasure. The highest theologians of the Franciscan Order, along with the spiritual director of Mother Maria, hurried to the Convent. When the artist arrived, however, he could not enter, prevented by an inexplicable force.

The Friars Minor, approaching the bed of the deceased religious, tried several tests to see if any life remained in the body of the nun. But she showed not the least sign of life. The guilty sisters also entered to confess their faults. The Father Provincial reprimanded them severely, imposing a heavy penance on them.

While all this was going on, Friar Diego, who had accom-

panied the Franciscan entourage to the Convent and had gone to pray in a corner of the cell, fell into ecstasy. The Father Provincial harshly reproved him for this, ordering him in the name of holy obedience to return to himself. Then he commanded the friar, "Leave this Convent and return to your monastery." Friar Diego humbly complied, after first kissing the hand of his superior.

MARIANA GOES BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Oh! incomprehensible judgment of God, which accepted the sacrifice of this innocent virgin! In fact, Mother Mariana had died, presenting herself before the judgment seat of God. Finding no fault in her, He said: "Come, beloved of My Father, receive the crown that We have prepared for you since the beginning of the world, for in your tender years you heard My voice, and, leaving your fatherland, you traveled to distant lands to sacrifice yourself for My love."

Then she prostrated herself before the throne of the Most Blessed Trinity, and was given to understand something of that ineffable mystery. The Eternal Father rejoiced for having created her, the Divine Son for having redeemed her and taken her for His spouse, and the Holy Ghost for having sanctified her.

In Heaven, the soul of Mother Mariana thus enjoyed those ineffable delights of that blessed place, even while on earth fervent prayers were being made for her life. In particular, Mother Maria implored God's mercy, for she had no one else who could form her novices, and she had placed her hope for the prosperity of the Conceptionists in her young niece. She implored God to restore the precious life of so holy and illustrious a religious.

The sisters were joined in their prayers by the Franciscans, who would not leave her bedside. They placed hot vapors at her feet to try and revive her. Seeing that she did not respond, they redoubled their prayers, especially Friar Diego.

OUR LORD PRESENTS HER WITH TWO CROWNS

Our Lord, Who heard the humble entreaties of His servants, permitted Mother Mariana to see the prayers for her life ascending to the throne of God. He then presented her with two

crowns: one of immortal glory of indescribable beauty; the other of white lilies surrounded by thorns.

He spoke to her, saying, "My Spouse, choose one of these crowns."

With this she understood that if she chose the crown of immortal glory, she would remain in Heaven. If she took the other, she would return to suffer in the world. In response to her Beloved, the humble virgin asked that her Divine Majesty choose the crown that He so desired for her.

"No," Our Lord replied. "When I took you for My spouse, I tested your will. Now, I do so again."

That blessed soul, ecstatic with the happiness of Heaven, was then given to know all the Conceptionist religious who would inhabit her Convent throughout time – even to the last day of the world. She saw their names and the offices they would exercise, the graces they would receive and how they would correspond to them until the last day of the world. She saw that some would hold offices contrary to the will of God and that these religious, lacking the graces to fulfill their duties well, would commit many faults, and she prayed for them.

She also saw the ones who would be unfaithful, and she trembled for them before the throne of God. She saw that some of the Novice Mistresses would be condemned not for their own personal sins, but because of the poor formation they gave to the novices. It was revealed to her that if she returned to the world, she herself would hold this difficult office.

She saw that the Franciscans would be removed from the government of the Convent and all the sufferings the Community would undergo as a result of this.

Thus absorbed in ecstasy, this happy soul was faced with choosing one of the two crowns that Our Lord had presented to her.

Oh! difficult choice, so grave and of such great importance to the Order of Conceptionists!

The obvious choice would be for Mother Mariana to remain in Heaven, thus assured of her salvation, enjoying the reward she had merited by her sufferings on earth, including having endured the persecutions and insults of her own sisters. Why should

she expose herself to new battles and sufferings in this miserable world when she could enjoy the caresses of her Spouse for eternity?

Why should she again be reduced to see her Beloved hidden behind His earthly veil in the Eucharist, when she might contemplate Him face to face in the ineffable delights of the mystery of His Love?

**“I LEFT THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN
AND DESCENDED TO EARTH TO PROTECT MY CHILDREN”**

Oh! sweet heroine! How, then, could you descend from Heaven, dying anew to so much bliss? This seraphic victim, who, drawn by her love for her Conceptionist Order and given to know these ineffable secrets, was thus torn in battle.

To prepare her for this struggle, her loving Mother, the Immaculate Conception, approached her, and said: “My daughter, I left the glories of Heaven and descended to earth to protect my children. I desire that you imitate me in this and return to life, for your life is most necessary for the Order of my Conceptionists.

“Woe to the Colony in the 20th century! If, in Ecuador, already so guilty, there are not souls who by their lives of immolation and sacrifice will appease Divine Justice, fire will rain from Heaven, consuming its inhabitants and purifying the soil of Quito. Until the end of time, one of these sacrificial souls will inhabit this, my Convent, and, imitating you, will appease Divine Justice.”

Knowing this to be the will of God through the message of His Immaculate Mother, the humble religious replied: “My Lady and Mother, may the Divine Will be accomplished in me. Oh! how my soul trembles to see itself again exposed to the imminent danger of being lost by returning to life and carrying out the critical offices of Abbess and Mistress of Novices. As Abbess, I must be a tender Mother as thou art. But, at the same time, I must practice fortitude in not permitting transgressions from the regular observance, which preserves convents, especially the strict silence ordered by the holy Rule. I must do this maintaining unity and charity, which at times will demand even heroism.

“As Mistress of Novices, I ask Thee to help me know the formation I must give to each soul confided to me, as I study each

soul and pray incessantly to understand the degree of virtue to which it is called both here and in Heaven beneath your blue mantle. Let me know which place is right for each one. For this, let me be firmly molded in thy most profound humility, which thou, Queen of Virgins, provided for our example.

“I know that I must practice the virtues - from the lowest to the highest - with each novice according to the spiritual needs of each one, so that, without stain of sin, they might be worthy imitators of their Heavenly Mother.

“So that holy religious might be formed for the preservation of my beloved Convent, I shall pray and offer sacrifices that another of my sisters might hold this office, for they are all better than I. Because of my lack of virtue, I do not consider myself capable of carrying out this office. How, then, Virgin most chaste, shall I form these young souls who have pledged themselves to virginity whom thou will place in my charge as spouses of Our Lord, Who takes His delight amongst the lilies and irises?”

**“YOU WILL NOT BE THE MISTRESS, BUT,
INDEED, I SHALL BE...”**

To this, the Immaculate Virgin replied: “Daughter of M Heart, be not fearful, for you will not be the Mistress, but, indeed, shall be. Using you as my instrument, I shall transform your novices into holy religious. Treat, educate, and form this young woman X, whom Christ has called to His enclosed garden, as you do the others, for she has already wept for her sins, and, like a loving Magdalene, she has thrown herself at the feet of her Divine Master. This soul is well founded in humility and will be a holy religious, one whom my Divine Son loves dearly. Later, when he takes her from earth, He will raise her to Heaven to be reunited with her Conceptionist sisters.”

After hearing these words, Mother Mariana chose with humility and resignation the crown of lilies surrounded with thorns, and returned to the world to suffer.

At that very moment, her spiritual director, inspired by God, approached the bedside of Mother Mariana and said to her, “Mother Mariana, should you be dead, in the name of holy obedience, I order your soul to return to its body so that it might live and that you

render to us an account of what has happened to you.”

At that very instant she breathed a light sigh, opened her eyes still glazed by death, and said, “Father! Why did you send Father Diego away in such disgrace at the very moment in which we were communicating with each other?”

THE RESURRECTION OF MOTHER MARIANA

Doctor Sancho was summoned. Entering the room, he asked, “What has happened here?” Mother Maria replied, “Mother Mariana is alive.”

“No, she is dead,” he returned. Hurrying into the cell, he found her alive with her usual rosy complexion. Frightened, he stepped back, thinking it was an illusion.

The Friars Minor, however, encouraged him, saying, “Mother Mariana is alive. Draw near and see.” Approaching her bedside and examining her, he shook his head in wonder, saying, “My Fathers, there is nothing I need do for her. For her return to life had nothing to do with me, but rather with your prayers.” He only prescribed a fresh drink to cool her parched throat, then took his leave.

Her spiritual director remained alone with Mother Mariana, asking her for an explanation of what had happened while she lay dead. She humbly related all that had occurred. When she reached the subject of how she would one day hold the office of Novice Mistress, she begged the director to forbid her under obedience to tell this to Mother Maria. “For, my Father,” she said, “I fear that this might be an illusion.” In her humility, she feared to bear such a critical office.

The Father granted this request, and he himself told Mother Maria that Mother Mariana would tell her everything save one point that he had forbidden her to reveal under obedience.

Then Mother Mariana addressed the Franciscans, saying, “My Fathers, I thank you greatly for your assistance and all that you did for me. But it is no longer necessary for you to remain here. Return, then, to your monastery.”

The Franciscans immediately took their leave, edified by the delicacy of conscience of this holy religious.

FATHER DIEGO SEES THE GLORIFICATION OF THE SAINT

As soon as they arrived at their monastery, the Provincial went to look for Friar Diego and found him working in his cell. Again he severely reprimanded the friar, asking him how he dared to drift off to sleep in the cloisters, causing scandal to the sisters.

The friar replied, "My father, this was no natural sleep, but a mystical one."

The Provincial only sharpened his reprimand, insisting that it was only a dream. But, in fact, this was no ordinary sleep, for this simple brother was a saint.

Then he imposed a penance on Friar Diego, commanding him to eat bread and water in the refectory and kiss the feet of the religious. This he did with holy joy, being rewarded for his humble obedience with great favors from Our Lord.

The Provincial, who wished to know what the friar had seen in this ecstasy, questioned him further, "Brother, what did you dream about when you fell asleep in the Convent?"

With holy simplicity, the friar replied: "I was pleading with God for the health and life of Mother Mariana. I saw, however, that she had died and that her soul had presented itself before the judgment throne of God. The Lord, finding her pure and stainless, said to her, 'Come, beloved of My Father, receive the crown that We have prepared for you since the beginning of the world, for in your tender years you heard My voice and, leaving your fatherland, you traveled to distant lands to sacrifice yourself for My Love.' Hearing this, she prostrated herself before the throne of the Most Blessed Trinity. The Eternal Father rejoiced for having created her, the Son for having redeemed her, and the Holy Ghost for having sanctified her.

"I saw also the immense glory that this happy soul would enjoy because of her sacrifices and the insults of her sisters that she had borne in silence. In this she imitated Jesus Christ, her Spouse, Who suffered in like manner before the tribunals during His sorrowful Passion.

"I saw the prayers of the Community beseeching her life, especially those of Mother Maria de Taboada, rise to the throne of God. Then I saw Our Lord present her with two crowns: one im-

mortal and most splendid should she choose to remain in this celestial glory, and the other with white lilies surrounded by thorns should she return to life. The Lord asked her to choose, but, at that very moment, Your Reverence called to me, so I do not know what happened next.”

Upon hearing this, the Father Provincial was further assured of the sanctity of Mother Mariana.

As soon as the Franciscan fathers left the Convent, the religious went to embrace Mother Mariana. She extended her arms to each one with a love so ardent that it seemed to have descended with her from Heaven, releasing itself in this fraternal affection she displayed toward her sisters.

Mother Maria then asked to speak with her niece in private. But that prudent virgin replied: “My Mother, before all else, we should give thanks to Our Lord at the foot of the Blessed Sacrament.”

They prostrated themselves before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and made their act of thanksgiving. This concluded, Mother Mariana then retired alone with her superior to give an account of all that had occurred. When she had finished, the Abbess asked, “My Daughter, have you told me everything?”

“Yes, my Mother, save for one matter, which, through obedience, I cannot tell you,” she answered. Distressed, Mother Maria said, “My daughter, a thorn is lodged in my heart, for I fear that I may be lost forever because of my lack of capacity to govern. Perhaps this Convent should close, and we should take steps to return to our native country of Spain.”

Mother Mariana smiled, saying, “No, the matter [upon which I am ordered to silence] has nothing to do with this. It is something pertaining to myself alone, and which you will know when God so desires it.”

To comfort her further, she added, “My Mother, do not worry about the situation of this Convent or allow yourself to think of returning to Spain. For this Convent will never be destroyed.”

CHAPTER 11

After returning to the world for love of her sisters, she dedicated herself with even greater zeal to the practice of the monastic life of sacrifice and charity. She carried out the duties to which obedience bound her with extraordinary promptitude, burning with the fire of her seraphic love.¹⁹ She was given the office of nurse, and, in discharging these duties, she served the sick as if Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself were suffering in each one.

On a certain occasion, one young sister had an accident in which half of her face and all of one arm were scorched. Doctor Sancho arrived to examine the patient, and quickly realized that the burns were mortal, for they had penetrated to the bone. With tears of compassion, Mother Mariana nursed this patient on her knees. Seeing this, Doctor Sancho said, "This woman's life will be saved only if Mother Mariana works a miracle."

In fact, after one month, the burned sister was completely healed and healthy. Even before this miracle, Doctor Sancho had exclaimed: "Mother Mariana is a saint! If the people of Quito realized this, they would take her to the hospitals filled with patients suffering from the plague, and she would cure them all. For just as the shadow of Saint Peter cured the sick, so also would the shadow of Mother Mariana cure all those who drew near her."

Doctor Sancho was well acquainted, indeed, with the virtues of this fragrant lily, for he had witnessed the ecstasies that this angelic creature had experienced since she was but a child. Thus he appreciated the sweet fragrance of her innocent and suffering soul.

Fearing that her young niece might become vain because of this miraculous cure, Mother Maria told her, "How clever Doctor Sancho is in the practice of medicine to have worked this cure!"

19. Mother Maria de Jesus Torres carried out the office of Nurse from 1581 to 1583, Bursar from 1583 to 1585, Sacristan from 1585 to 1587, Porter from 1587-1589, Choir Mistress from 1789 to 1791, and Novice Mistress from 1591 to 1593. In 1593 she was elected Abbess for the first time, and also served for the terms of 1599-1601, 1610-1613, 1616-1619, 1622-1625, 1625-1628, and 1629-1631 (Cadena y Almeida, *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria*, pp. 39-40; 205).

Smiling. Mother Mariana replied, "It was the mercy of God that accomplished this cure."

OFFICE OF BURSAR

Mother Mariana prodigiously carried out the office of bursar. When there was not enough bread for the Convent inhabitants, what they had would be multiplied by her hands. Because of the early poverty of the Convent, the sisters often lacked what was necessary for their sustenance. Then Mother Mariana would prostrate herself at the feet of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, drawing from His abundant wealth what was needed for her Community. Arising from the feet of Jesus Christ, she would always find donations from the populace of the food they needed.

With what gratitude, joy, and humility Mother Mariana received these gifts that her Divine Spouse provided for her sisters! She herself would distribute the food, and, passing through those hands created by God to be an instrument of His mercies, the amount would be sufficient to satisfy all.

Oh! blessed cloisters, witness of so many marvels! Blessed workrooms, sanctified by the heroic virtues of Mother Mariana! Blessed religious, whose hunger and needs were so often satisfied through the miracles obtained by the prayers and penances of their holy provider!

OFFICE OF SACRISTAN

She carried out the office of sacristan like a seraphim.

With what ardent affection, lively faith, and profound humility she served the Prisoner of her love. When she found her angelic enthusiasm burning low, with the confidence that love inspires, she would say to Him: "What do you require of me, my Love? Why do You seem to sleep? For how long? What a deep and heavy sleep it is! Rouse yourself, for You have been sleeping for a long time. I am drowning in an ocean of tribulations, and You are sleeping. Rouse yourself, my Love, and give me succor."

At other times, at the foot of the Tabernacle she would say, "Do you no longer have need of me, my Love?" With this filial confidence she would address the Sacramental Jesus.

When the oil lamp of the Holy Eucharist would go out, she would beg her Guardian Angel to light it, and he would promptly comply. At times when the enamored virgin was sleeping, her Angel would wake her, saying to her, "My sister, the lamp of your Love has gone out." Reproving him, she would say, "Instead of waking me, why do you not light it with your great resplendence?" Then she would hurry to the choir where she would find her Love in darkness, and she would ask her Angel to light the oil in the lamp.

How this humble religious made amends to Our Sacramental Lord! How her heart grew faint from the lamentations of seraphic love that consumed it, and how many sweet soliloquies the Divine Prisoner would have with His beloved spouse!

What happy nights He passed in unspeakable delight within those choir grilles with the humble Conceptionist virgin! Well, indeed, can one exclaim with St. John of the Cross: "O night that has united the Lover with his beloved. O night more lovely than the dawn."

OFFICE OF TURN-BOX KEEPER

She carried out the office of porter like an apostle of divine love. The sinners who came to the turn-box attracted by the benevolent magnetism of her words would leave in compunction and remorse, wounded by the timbre of the words of that charitable virgin, and be converted.

Who can comprehend the miraculous conversions that Mother Mariana worked at the turn-box. The souls that approached there improved. For if the heart of the porter was a burning furnace of divine love, it is not strange than the lukewarm souls that drew near it should become warm, and the ones already afire should increase their ardor.

The holy Porter was all charity. When there was no one to send out to bring what the sisters needed, she would pray to her Guardian Angel to obtain what was necessary. Then the serpent, who would always persecute her, would coil itself up next to the turn-box. Mother Mariana would say to it, "Lazy creature, because you do not have anything to do, you are here contorting yourself." Or she would send it away with other humiliating words, "Get away

from here!" Then she would shut the door, leaving the serpent screeching horribly. When her Holy Angel returned, bringing what was needed, he would tell her where the sisters were who needed the things so she could take it to them.

It is not difficult to understand the peace, charity, and unity in which the Community lived during those blessed times, when all was followed according to the letter of the holy Rule and with Mother Mariana as a model to be imitated in all the offices she exercised.

OFFICE OF CHOIR MISTRESS

Mother Mariana carried out the office of choir mistress with a zeal for Divine Worship that incited the admiration of the Angels. What recollection, humility, and fervor she exacted in the praying of the Divine Office! What punctuality in the recitation of the Hours! For having seen in Heaven how the Angels praised God three times holy, she imitated on earth their divine psalmody.

Once, as she was cleaning the choir stalls in the Convent, she saw various deceased religious who were suffering their purgatory there, atoning for having broken the silence in choir, for succumbing to various distractions in the recitation of the Office, or even for their laxity in prayer. By her entreaties and supplications, Mother Mariana was able to relieve them of their sufferings.

She was a model of perfection in the praying of the divine worship. The Friars Minor taught the religious the music and Gregorian chant, and Mother Mariana, gifted with a melodious voice, would alternate with her sisters in singing and playing the organ. Words cannot describe the loving affection with which this seraphic swan sang to the Sacramental Jesus and His Holy Mother, for this virgin was a most worthy instructress of the divine worship.

This humble religious, who had said that she would always be the least of all, made true her word. On Saturdays, the day reserved for general cleaning, she would sweep as much as four other religious. When Mother Maria protested that she should not work so hard, she humbly replied, "My mother, it is better to work one day in the house of the Lord than to spend many years in the service of the world."

She preferred to sweep the lower cloisters, for it was there that she did her hidden penances by night. The demons, who wanted

to frighten her, would scatter enormous quantities of repulsive worms on the floors she had swept. When she would see these swarming masses of creatures, she would make the Sign of the Cross, and all would disappear, leaving the floors once again clean.

On one such occasion, Mother Maria saw Mother Mariana still sweeping, even though the floor already appeared clean. She asked her, "Is it not already clean?"

Mother Mariana made the Sign of the Cross, and the worms disappeared with a loud roar. Frightened, the Abbess asked, "What was that?"

Mother Mariana, however, responded only with a smile.

Oh! happy cloisters, battleground of so many struggles and victories of this heroine! Oh! rooms made holy by her terrible penances!

In carrying out these various offices of the Convent, from the most humble to the highest, that of Abbess, Mother Mariana always acted with humility and docility, as if she were the least of the novices. Her manner of dealing with others was sweet and smooth, and so prudent, discrete, and affable that the very religious who tormented and persecuted her came to realize the precious treasure that they had in her.

Mother Maria, who knew how much the others had come to esteem Mother Mariana, became quite concerned, and asked Our Lord that her beloved niece not be deprived of persecutions and sufferings, for she understood the immense reward awaiting those souls who suffer united to the Passion of Our Lord. In fact, her Divine Spouse did not fail to bestow on His bride rich treasures of humiliations, sufferings, and abandonment.

CHAPTER 12

The years of her mortal life flew swiftly by, and Mother Mariana de Jesus, like a valiant warrior, continued to fight the battles of Our Lord, accruing triumphs and laurels in each combat. She lived dead to the world and hidden with Christ in God. Her virtue grew continuously, reaching the height of perfection to which God called her.

After the Blessed Virgin had revealed to her in Heaven that she would be the Novice Mistress, the humble Mariana, like a lovely violet, seeing in herself only her lowliness and unworthiness, never ceased to cry out to her Divine Spouse with touching fear, "My Love, take from me this most bitter chalice."

MOTHER MARIANA AS NOVICE MISTRESS

But Christ remained deaf to these pleas, and the time chosen by God having arrived, the religious unanimously elected Mother Mariana de Jesus as Mistress of Novices. Ignoring the sad and plaintive protests of this humble dove, they placed on her shoulders the heavy cross, for this seems to have been the greatest sacrifice to which God had yet subjected her. Having no will other than that of her Divine Spouse, she submitted, repeating His very words: "Not my will, but Thine be done."

On the eve she received into her care the novitiate - three novices and four postulants - she prostrated herself before them, as if to confess her faults, saying with her great humility: "My little sisters, the Community has charged me with this office not because I have merited it, but so that I might come to learn with you the practice of the virtues. I ask that you look to me as a sister and treat me as such, for, indeed, I am your elder sister and thus you can have confidence in me. It falls to me to form your souls so that you will be holy religious.

"However, the day will come when you will see that it is not I who act as Mistress, but rather it is the Most Holy Virgin Herself Who holds this office. I am but her feeble instrument, and I will do only that which She disposes."

Based on this humble rationale, she began to govern the novices, being completely dedicated to each of them, directing each soul to practice the degree of virtue to which it was called. The number of postulants multiplied prodigiously.

She was careful, however, to open her novitiate only to chosen souls, and not permit the entrance of any who did not have a true vocation. Mother Mariana formed her novices in such a way that all of them became excellent religious and, many of them, saints. Thus did this holy Mistress form a generation of religious of such good spirit that even today the precious seed of that fruitful tree of virtues has not been dissipated.

Oh! blessed time when this holy Mother made of her novitiate a paradise of delights wherein the Divine Spouse and His Blessed Mother took their pleasure, served in spirit and in truth!

SHE UNDERSTANDS THE SOUL OF EACH RELIGIOUS

When it came time for the novices to make their profession, the holy Mistress carefully prepared each one, giving advice that suited the spirit of each. On the eve of their profession, she solemnly forewarned each one all that she would have to pass through in accordance with the designs of Our Lord.

She also informed each one how and when she would die.

To those who would leave this earthly life before her, she would say, "My daughter, I shall not leave your bedside until I have delivered your soul into the hands of God Our Lord."

And to those who would die after her, she would say, "My daughters, when my death approaches, do not forget your Mother." In this way she foretold to her daughters what would come to pass, having first exercised them in the practice of the virtues, for she understood the interior of each one.

At times, a sister would conceal from her the faults she had committed during the day. Then Mother Mariana would call her aside, saying, "My daughter, you committed such-and-such a fault today, you broke the silence in such-and-such a place, saying these words ... Let us go now and do penance."

Then she would kneel down together with the novice and ask pardon of Our Lord for the fault. The novices could hide noth-

ing from her. For this reason, they loved her like a mother and venerated her as a saint.

Oh!, happy novitiate, antechamber of Heaven, or, better said, sweet Heaven here on earth, where adoration, praise, and love was given to God through faithful adherence to the observance of the Rule and the practice of a life of sacrificial love! For the saintly Novice Mistress strictly observed even the least rules and practiced holy observance to the Rule of the Community.

Her novices were usually the first to rise in the morning, arriving early with Mother Mariana for the praying of the Little Office of Our Lady at 4 a.m.²⁰ One morning, when the novices were reluctant to rise so early, Mother Mariana went alone to pray before the others arrived. It was her custom, as she drew near the building that housed the choir, to stop and discipline herself for all the Poor Souls. When she finished taking this discipline, she directed her steps to the choir.

As she began to advance, she found herself impeded by a deep and terrible pit that opened up before her. From its depths, she heard terrible cries. Frightened and confused, Mother Mariana had the sense that she was no longer inside the Convent, and she cried out, "Oh my God! Where am I? Oh! my beloved Convent!"

INFERNAL HATRED FOR THE LITTLE OFFICE OF OUR LADY

She then saw the head of a terrifying dragon, as large as the novitiate house, which opened its mouth revealing therein a multitude of souls. This monster cried out in a hideous voice, "I have swallowed all these souls and they are mine, and you also shall be mine!"

Her fright was so great that she fainted. When she returned to herself, she felt herself being supported in the arms of her Guardian Angel, who said, "Spouse of the Lord, why do you fear? You saw Hell! The devil did this to try to impede the recitation of the Little Office."

Then she heard another voice that said, "Bitter times will

20. The Little Office of Our Lady (*Officium parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis*) was an accretion to the Breviary prayed in religious orders. By the 13th century, it had become a favorite prayer also of lay persons everywhere and was included in a separate prayerbook called *The Book of Hours*.

come when the Little Office will be left aside, and the spirit of the Convent weakened! Woe to those who shall have a part in this!"

She realized then that her Angel was transporting her through the air to the choir room. On the step ascending to the choir, she again heard that hideous voice, which cried out: "I shall use all my power to prevent the praying of this accursed Little Office, for, by it, my forces are weakened and I am destroyed."

Advancing several steps, she saw a light that illuminated the whole Convent. Raising her eyes toward the ceiling of the Church, she saw a most beautiful star with the name Mary shining on it. She entered the choir, and the Blessed Virgin met her to congratulate her for her victory and to restore her interior peace.

For when she saw the abyss in the ground, Mother Mariana had become disturbed, losing her customary peace of soul as she asked herself why Our Lord had permitted this and why her Guardian Angel had hidden himself. However, upon reaching the choir, her normal serenity returned when she saw the Blessed Virgin.

The other sisters then began to arrive to pray the Little Office. At that blessed time, the whole Community would rise for this prayer that was recited at 4 a.m. The prayer was obligatory only for the novices and the newly-professed sisters until their sixth year of profession. The others would pray it if they so desired from devotion. The extraordinary fervor with which Mother Mariana prayed the Office that morning can well be imagined.

Since her director, Father Jurado, had ordered her to make known to her Abbess all that happened to her so that posterity should not be deprived of these rich treasures, she went to inform Mother Maria of what had taken place as soon as the Community prayer ended. Both Mothers grieved sorely for what was to come to pass in the 20th century.²¹

Through the centuries, the religious have continued to recite the Little Office of the Most Blessed Virgin, which has never ceased to be prayed in this Convent and thus ensures the happiness of this Community of Conceptionists.

21. Mother Mariana received many more revelations about the great crisis in the Church in the 20th century, which are recounted in detail in Volume 2.

CHAPTER 13

There are facts so stupendous and extraordinary in the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus that except for the fact that they were testified to under oath by the Friars Minor, the doctor, and other sisters, they would not be believed by some people. These include, for example, the prodigious trials and sufferings which God Our Lord gave to her and by which He tested His beloved spouse.

MOTHER MARIANA RECEIVES THE WOUNDS OF OUR LORD

On September 17, 1588, Mother Mariana, who had 28 years of age, was saying her customary prayers at midnight, prostrate on the floor in her room. Suddenly, her whole body shuddered so violently that she could not help but cry out. Mother Maria immediately came to see what had taken place.

“What has happened to you, my daughter?” she asked.

“We must leave here immediately, my Mother, for the whole house is falling down. It is an earthquake,” she replied.

The Abbess embraced her and, trembling in fear for her niece, carried her to her bed. The other Spanish sisters also arose. Mother Francisca of the Angels, who was the Convent nurse, examined her hands and saw that on each palm was something similar to a hole into which something had been driven.

The same was present on the soles of her feet, in the very place where the spikes had been driven into the feet of Our Lord. Upon her heart was a purple bruise and red mark, as if it had been wounded by a sword. Her heart was beating so loudly it could be heard from a distance.

It is believed, because of this, that Our Lord interiorly imprinted upon her His Most Sacred Wounds. During this time, her body was stiff and rigid as a rock; only her eyes and mouth could move. In this state she passed the night in a veritable martyrdom.

SHE BECOMES ILL AS A RESULT OF HER PENANCES

With the morning came the Convent physician, Doctor Sancho, who examined her carefully. Because of her life of penance,

he said, she was completely debilitated, the marrow of her bones dried up, her body paralyzed. The only movement he could find was the beating of her heart.

Mother Francisca said to the Abbess, "My Mother, the Rule requires that we take her to the infirmary."

But Mother Maria responded, "My daughter, how can the dormitory be deprived of its sunshine? Let all of us, then, stay with her in the infirmary."

"No, my Mother," replied the nurse, "for the Rule ordains that the Abbess should sleep in the dormitory."

During the transferal of the patient and her bed, they found a rough hide scattered with bloody tacks that served as her mattress. The Abbess took and treasured this penitential cloth. She wanted to replace it with a soft mattress, but the doctor opposed this, warning her that when persons accustomed to such strong penances changed to a soft bed, they often became worse. Instead, a straw mattress was placed on her bed.

The doctor ordered a warm, spiced bath, but it was to no avail. Mother Mariana remained consumed by the strange illness. Her customary rosy complexion had changed to that of ash. Her face would still become red, however, when they would clean her or apply treatments following the doctor's orders. Then she would weep copiously in humiliation.

Mother Francisca of the Angels would console her on these occasions, saying, "Why are you embarrassed, my dear sister? For we are all sisters of the same Father and daughters of the Seraphim of Assisi. What I do for you now, you will do for me later. Do not suffer, my little sister."

With these and other sweet words, she comforted her patient.

Mother Maria would also vie to perform these services for her niece.

"This work belongs to me, as Abbess," she would say, "for I should be the servant of my subjects."

But Mother Francisca would counter, "This service belongs to me as nurse."

Thus they would lovingly dispute to serve this body that

had become an open wound. They would turn her stone-like body to bathe it and try to relieve it with various powders. She could no longer swallow food, and had to be sustained only by liquids.

During this terrible sickness, she was the victim of atrocious mental trials. Her patience was tested by her Divine Spouse throughout the five months the sickness lasted. During this time, Her Divine Majesty withdrew His heavenly light and consolations and appeared to abandon her to suffer the punishment of a condemned soul.

**“ALL THOSE THINGS WERE ILLUSIONS,
TRICKS, AND LIES...”**

In the figure of a serpent, the devil would approach her when she was alone, for even her Guardian Angel was lost to her sight. He relentlessly tormented her, saying, “All those things of the past were illusions, tricks, and lies. You are mine.” Then he would appear as a terrible cock, threatening her with his cockscomb that appeared as a sharp saw: “With this, I will tear you apart.” He would glare at her with his horrible beady eyes, hopping about the cell.

When the exhausted patient would wake from a sleep, she would find the serpent attempting to climb onto her bed.

The sight of this monster caused the holy patient unbelievable torment. When the Abbess visited her, she would ask, “My daughter, is the serpent here?” (for she could not see him).

When Mother Mariana responded, “Yes, Mother, he is writhing over there,” Mother Maria would become frightened and call for another religious to join her.

In this dark night of tribulation, Mother Mariana never abandoned her midnight and 3 a.m. prayers. At the same time, she suffered more and more each day from interior desolation. She was convinced that she had been deceived, tricked, and lied to her whole life. She saw herself condemned for all eternity. She would look to the Passion of her Beloved, yet it would seem that He was justly condemning her; she would call to the Star of the Sea, her Mother, Mary Most Holy, but since this Moon had hidden herself in the dark night of suffering, it seemed that She also, in Her justice, had condemned her.

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL IS INTENSIFIED

Feeling herself forsaken by Heaven and earth, Mother Mariana suffered without relief. The Friars Minor would enter, celebrate Holy Mass in her cell, and oblige her to receive Holy Communion. Whenever her director would approach her with the Sacred Species, he would find her lips tightly sealed, unable to open. He would then order her, in the name of holy obedience, to open her mouth and receive Communion. Only then and with the greatest pain would she do so.

These Communion increased her torment, for she became convinced that with each one, she had committed yet another sacrilege. The serpent would dance about merrily, taunting her, "I have yet another sacrilege for Hell," which inflicted more suffering on the innocent victim.

At times her director would exorcize the cell so that the serpent would withdraw. Seeing her sufferings, he would weep for her, powerless to relieve her, for when God wants to purify a soul, He alone can give it relief. Because of the high degree of perfection to which God was calling Mother Mariana, she was subjected to great sufferings and trials during this dark night of the soul.

Amid these atrocious sufferings of soul and body, she would call out to God. However, at times, she could not even speak because of the intensity of the torments. Only her tears gave witness to her martyrdom. When she was alone, she composed these verses expressing her cruel desolation:

My love's delight, Jesus of my soul,
Why do you leave me in such bitter pain?
Like a solitary dove do I weep
In the full night of sorrow enchained.

In the depths of my ardent love
I find neither peace nor repose,
Return, I beg, and be with me again.
Oh! Spouse of my soul, sweet Host.

If it is reparation for my faults Thy justice demands,
Then Thy pardon now I humbly implore,
Oh! sweet Lover of the heart that loves Thee,
Like the dust of the earth, I do Thee adore.

Thou hast placed in my soul this emptiness,
My life is but a graveyard dark and vast,
Where buried inside it, My Love, is
Thy memory, Thy beauty, and Thy goodness past.

And although by the light of my ardent faith
Thy immense goodness I still ascertain,
My soul is parched like a withered flower,
Lacking, as it does, Thy life-giving rain.

Amidst this pain comes an alluring hope
Like a messenger bearing Thy love divine.
And hastily turns toward me
To succor me in my sorrows of brine.

Oh! fire of charity, my hidden God!
Let my soul be consumed in Thy divine love.
For neither my sorrows nor Thy apparent forgetfulness
Can estrange me from Thou Who art my love.

I live prostrate on my bed of sorrows,
Awaiting the charity of my sisters' touch,
Oh! Thou Who lives under this one same roof,
Bless these daughters whom Thou lovest so much.

And when I am freed from this burdensome body,
My happy soul to Thee will take flight.
Then open to me, Oh! Beloved of Mine,
The doors of Thy mansion of heavenly delight.

And then, Oh! Mother of Love most sweet,
Oh! then, my celestial Maria of love,
Then Thou Thyself shalt present my soul
To my beloved celestial Spouse above."²²

Mother Maria instructed the saintly nurse, Mother Francisca of the Angels, to write down these touching verses, for Mother Mariana could not so much as move even her fingers. She would recite these plaintive verses aloud, then together they would sing them, for despite her extreme weakness, she still retained her melodious voice. Thus they wounded the Heart of their Beloved, for Mother Francisca was also of a proven holiness, and when she sang with the afflicted victim, it was like a celestial concert.

-
22. Oh! encanto de mi amor, Jesús del alma!
Por qué me dejas en amarga pena?
Cual tortolilla solitaria lloro,
En plena noche de dolores llena.
- Allá en el fondo de mi amor activo,
No encuentro calma, ni el menor reposo,
Vuélvete, dice, a estar conmigo,
Oh! de mi alma celestial Esposo!
- Si de mis culpas tu justicia clama,
Yo, ya humillada, tu perdón imploro;
Y confundida con el polvo yo te adoro,
Oh, fino Amante del corazón que te ama!
- Tu puesto en mi alma está vacío,
Mi vida es un vasto cementerio,
Do se hallan sepultadas, Amor mío!
Tu recuerdo, tu hermosura y tu cariño.
- Y, aunque la luz de mi ardiente fé,
Me hace entrever Tu bondad inmensa;
Mi alma se seca cual una flor marchita,
Faltando el riego del que le dió vida.
- En esto viene la esperanza bella,
Cual mensajera del amor Divino,
Y presurosa hacia mí se inclina,
Para alentarme en mi amarga pena.
- Oh! fuego de caridad, Dios escondido!
Se abrasa mi alma en Tu Divino ardor,
Ni mis dolores, ni Tu aparente olvido
Me alejarán de Ti que eres mi amor.
- Postrada vivo en doloroso lecho,
Esperando la caridad de mis hermanas,
Oh! Tú que vives bajo un mismo techo!
Bendice aquellas a quienes tanto amas!
- Y cuando libre del pesado cuerpo,
Mi alma feliz tienda hacia Tí mi vuelo,
Entonces, ábreme, Amado mío,
De tu mansión las puertas del Cielo.
- Entonces, Madre del Amor hermoso!
Oh! mi bella y celestial María!
Presenta Tú misma el alma mía,
A mi amado y celestial Esposo!

At times Mother Maria would enter and hear these two sacrificial victims singing melodious lamentations, and her heart would dissolve with tenderness. For she was powerless to alleviate the relentless diabolical siege that her holy niece was undergoing. Despite her natural fear of the serpent, this loving Abbess would go and stay with Mother Mariana during all her free moments. Let the readers imagine what passed between these two angelic hearts during those sweetly sorrowful meetings.

It was February 2, 1589. The sun had risen, but the dark night of Mother Mariana had not abated. The charitable nurse had rendered her services and left the patient to assist at Holy Mass and receive Communion, in conformance with the regulations of the Holy Rule. Mother Mariana remained in the company of her Guardian Angel and her Seraphic Father Saint Francis, and under the care of her Heavenly Mother.

Unable to move on her bed of pain, she suddenly heard a dreadful clamor in her cell. Mother Mariana, who had been praying and suffering a great interior bitterness, opened her eyes and saw a hideous serpent writhing and twisting in her cell, crawling frantically on the walls, as if pursued by someone trying to drive him away.

At that moment, the pain of this unconquerable virgin increased and her spirit was overwhelmed with despair. All the heroic acts of her life seemed criminal to her. Her good works appeared as works of perdition, her very vocation an illusion and sham by which she had delivered herself to eternal damnation. In this woeful interior state, when it seemed to her that her soul would detach itself from her body from the violence of her suffering and sink like lead into Hell, she mustered all her strength, crying out:

“Star of the Sea, Mary Most Immaculate, the weak vessel of my soul is sinking. The waters of tribulation are drowning me. Save me, for I am perishing!”

OUR LADY APPEARS AND HURLS THE SERPENT INTO HELL

Before she had pronounced the last word, she saw a celestial light around her and felt a loving hand touching her head. At the same time, she heard a sweet voice that said, “Why do you

fear, My daughter? Do you not know that I am with you in your tribulation? Rise up and look at Me!”

The humble religious raised herself up in her bed and saw a Lady of great majesty and grandeur who breathed sweetness and love. She asked, “Who are you, beautiful Lady?”

“I am the Mother of Heaven whom you invoked. I have come to dissipate the darkness of the night of your soul. You see now what Hell is, for you have experienced it, but you shall remain there no longer. I will place you in Purgatory so that you might finish purifying your soul, for your Lord and God has destined for you great and auspicious things during your lifetime.

“Tell your Mother on earth to prepare herself for her journey to eternity, for the time has arrived when, leaving this earth, she will receive her reward for the many sacrifices and sufferings she has endured over the foundation of this Convent, which I love with all my Heart.

“This Convent will be severely persecuted in the centuries to come, with the persecution reaching such an extreme that attempts will be made against the lives of my daughters.²³ Not succeeding in this, they will strive with infernal tenacity to destroy it, making use of the religious within it and the authority of their superiors. However, man can do nothing against the works of God, and I will have in this house daughters worthy of my love, martyrs of the spirit, who, despised by the world and by their own, will be most beloved by God and the firm columns that will sustain the then-agonizing Community.

“Now, I will impart life to your nerves, veins, and arteries,

23. In 1912, 1916, and again in 1918, the Convent of the Immaculate Conception faced threats from the liberal, anti-clerical government directed exclusively against it, whose property the government wanted. Under the pretense of offering another site on the outer periphery of the city, they tried to evict the sisters and usurp the property. Several times, the lives of various sisters who offered valiant resistance were threatened by civil authorities, who were chastised for their aggression in sudden and unexpected ways, which the Sisters attributed to the hand of God.

In 1918, the inhabitants of Quito made a large penitential procession imploring the protection of Our Lady of Quito and spreading leaflets exposing the government's plan to raze the holy building. This had the desired effect of halting the liberal offensive against the Convent (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 46-61).

and I will dispel the infernal serpent. You will be left in the sweet tranquility that the souls in the place of expiation enjoy.”

As she finished speaking, the enormous serpent emitted a horrible scream of despair and hurled himself into Hell with such a great roar that it caused the earth to tremble throughout the city and the Convent.

Mother Mariana remained lying as if she were dead. She was found in this state by Mother Francisca and the Abbess, who, feeling the earthquake, had rushed to assist her. Praying near her, they saw Mother Mariana coming back to consciousness.

Opening her eyes, she found she was again able to move all the members of her body, which had been dry and lifeless for five months. Directing her gaze toward the two sisters, she said, “Mothers, my whole body can now move. How good is the Queen of Heaven, who has cured and saved me. Let us pray the holy Rosary.”

As Mother Mariana began to pray, her soul was in a profound sadness. At the same time, she had the deep peace and tranquility of the just soul who suffers united to God, without fear of falling into His disfavor.

After they finished reciting the Rosary, they sang the Litany of Loreto. Mother Mariana led with the intonations, while the other two religious responded filled with joy. After this prayer of thanksgiving to the Heavenly Queen, they brought Mother Mariana a bowl of soup with bread and meat, which she was able to eat by herself with no need of assistance. Again, she gave thanks to Our Lord Who gives all good things. Then Mother Francisca retired and she was alone with Mother Maria to give her an account of all that had passed in her soul.

After the Abbess heard all that had taken place, she went to her Father Confessor, telling him, “Father, my earthly sojourn will soon end. Help me to prepare my soul for the great wrenching it will experience as it is taken from time to eternity.”

Her confessor asked how she knew this, but she remained silent.

Later, he went to speak with Mother Mariana. Afterward, he told Mother Maria: “Courage, my daughter, courage. Your Reverence will soon see Heaven. When you are under the blue mantle

of our Immaculate Mother, do not forget your sisters and brothers of St. Francis, those who, throughout time, will assist this Convent of the Immaculate Conception.”

“JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED MUCH MORE THAN I SUFFER...”

Mother Mariana still remained in her bed, suffering indescribably in soul and body, but now with the tranquility of a just soul. She had, moreover, the consolation of being able to move. Throughout the period of this Purgatory, she provided a practical example of how a religious should receive interior trials and physical illness for the edification of our neighbors in the spirit of sacrifice and by the exercise of the virtues of faith, hope, charity, patience, tolerance, and silent resignation.

Although Our Lord had freed her hands, allowing her movement to attend to herself, she continued to suffer the acute pains of her sickness. Doctor Sancho did not know what to prescribe for her, even though he was the most illustrious doctor in the country, sought out by sick persons far outside the city. He told Mother Maria that there was no hope regarding the illness of Mother Mariana, whose condition worsened day by day. He insisted that her death was inevitable and that they would then have a friend, a sister, and a mediator in Heaven.

The physical strength of this angel of sorrow continued to wane with every day that passed. Even after she reached the point where she could no longer swallow any liquids, she never lost her sweet and saintly tranquility of soul.

When the Abbess and her sisters inquired how she was feeling, she would respond with a celestial smile, “Very bad. I believe that my time of exile is coming to an end, but Jesus Christ, the Beloved of my soul, suffered much more than I do, and in Him lies my happiness.”

THE SECOND MYSTICAL DEATH OF MOTHER MARIANA

Mother Mariana remained in this state until September of 1589. On the second Wednesday of that month at 9 o'clock in the morning, her agony began. That morning Holy Mass was celebrated in her presence and she received Extreme Unction with edifying

fervor and the immense joy of one who sees herself at the end of her sufferings. Upon hearing the mournful tolling of the bell announcing the last agony of a member of the Convent, the Community and the Franciscan friars surrounded her bed to pray and accompany her. There they remained until noon, when they all retired for their midday repast, leaving only the holy nurse at her side.

In the afternoon, the sisters and friars returned and prayed at her side until the bell of the Hail-Mary's rang. Then she was ordered, in the name of holy obedience, not to die except in their presence. Assured of the obedience of this exemplary religious, they passed a peaceful night of sleep.

On the next mornings, they found her as before, still agonizing. On Friday at noon, her body was seized by convulsions. Her beautiful face became disfigured, taking on the pale hue and coldness of death.

Seeing her great suffering, Mother Maria and the friars said, "Sisters and Mothers, let us pray fervently that, if it be the will of God, He release this blessed soul from its body, for none of us have the heart to see her suffer like this any longer."

And they began to pray, recommending her soul to God.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, Mother Mariana raised her eyes to heaven, then let her gaze fall to the crucifix that she held in her hands. She clasped it to her heart, shedding tears that fell on it. She inclined her head slightly toward Christ, and breathed her final breath.

Weeping, the friars mourned her passing, saying, "She was our angelic sister; unhappy are we who still remain in this earthly exile."

When they were convinced that she had indeed died, the sisters also began to weep. After intoning the final responsorial over her body, the friars called Doctor Sancho, who testified to her death and left the Convent. The sisters laid out her cold body for burial, arranging flowers around it on the litter they used to transport it, and then carried the body to the lower choir.

The noble and the poor of the city arrived in droves to keep vigil over her body on Friday and Saturday. The people wept and cried to see the body of their Mother, saying, "She died a saint, for she was truly an angel on earth for us." The religious prayed day

and night by the burning candles set around the litter to illuminate her body. They feared that her body might begin to decompose, but when they approached and touched her, they were convinced that no corruption had yet begun in her cold body.

On Saturday night, Mother Maria said to the sisters, "My daughters, our sister no longer has need of us. We are all worn out by our mourning and are tired. Let us take some rest, leaving her under the care of our Sacramental Spouse Who resides alone in the Tabernacle, Whom our sister loved so dearly. Let us regain our strength so that tomorrow we might pray the Little Office, which will always be the mainstay of regular observance and the preservation of the religious spirit for the daughters of the Immaculate Conception. This would be the desire of our holy sister, whom we will bury on Monday."

Sad and tearful, the religious left the lower choir. Overcome by weariness, they fell into deep sleep.

HER RESURRECTION

The next morning, they awoke and directed their steps to the choir to pray the Little Office. When they arrived, they saw Mother Mariana praying there. She rose to embrace them, greeting them with the Alleluia. Frightened, the sisters began to take flight, but Mother Mariana called out to them, "My little sisters, I am alive. Why do you fear, you who have loved me so dearly?"

But they all fled, running to the dormitory to relate this startling news to Mother Maria. Together, in Community, they returned to the upper choir. The Abbess, who found Mother Mariana still praying there, thought that it was her spirit. She addressed the figure sternly, saying, "In the name of God and holy obedience, I command you to tell me what you need."

"Mother, do not be afraid," the figure responded. "I am alive and want to be with my sisters and live among them."

After saying these words, she approached Mother Maria, who was quivering with fear.

Mother Mariana insisted, "Look at me, Mother, it is truly I, who am sound and healthy."

Still fearful of Mother Mariana, the Community began the

prayers of the Little Office. Then they all processed to the lower choir to see if the cadaver was there. They found only the empty litter, the shroud, and the candles, which convinced them that she had indeed been resurrected.

The friars who had seen her die were told the news, and they were astounded by this marvel. Mother Mariana received Communion, then gave an account to Mother Maria and her director, Father Antonio Jurado, of everything that had happened to her.

She told them that after her death, God Our Lord had placed her soul through another purification, where she saw what seemed to be her body suffering a mystical Purgatory. She remained in this state of suffering until 3 a.m. on Sunday. At that hour, the same at which Our Lord resurrected, her soul returned to her body, communicating to it all of her former vigor and health.

She rose, descended from the litter, and extinguished a candle, which, because of a tremor in the earth, had fallen and was threatening to set the Convent afire.

After extinguishing the candle and freeing herself from the burial shroud, she went to the upper choir to await her sisters in order to greet them with the *Alleluia*. Our Lord had restored her to life, she told them, because it is sweet and meritorious to endure and suffer for the love of Christ.

Hearing all this, they marveled, for they saw that Mother Mariana, who had been a pallid and weak invalid for more than a year, was now robust and restored, her cheeks as rosy as they had ever been.

They sent news of what had happened to Doctor Sancho and asked him to come immediately. At first, he was reluctant, thinking them mad from exhaustion. Instead, he went to the Franciscan monastery to ask the friars to bury the cadaver of Mother Mariana soon, for the sisters were succumbing to madness.

Finding the friars gone from their monastery, he went to the Convent. There he found Mother Mariana, alive and healthy. Startled and amazed, he marveled at the miracle, saying, "How incomprehensible are the ways of God!"

He, along with the Franciscan priests who were present and the Community of sisters, made a solemn statement under oath

of what had taken place. These testimonies are preserved in the archives of the Convent.²⁴

Mother Mariana thus resumed her penitential life in the Conceptionist Convent. Who can adequately describe what took place within the soul of this saintly creature, who returned to life in order to suffer? Nor can one express the happiness of the Community, who rejoiced to find the treasure that they had mourned as lost.

God most great, how admirable Thou art in Thy saints!

* * *

24. The solemn sworn oaths of the Priests, the doctor, and circumstantial observers testifying to the two extraordinary deaths and resurrections of Mother Mariana de Jesus are contained in the Chronicles of the Monastery of the Conception of Quito, attests the Postulator for the Cause of her Beatification (Cadena y Almeida, *Apariciones*, pp. 79-80).

CHAPTER 14

Three years passed, and the heart of Mother Maria, worn out by her sufferings, became increasingly weak. In 1592, Doctor Sancho told the Friars Minor that the Founder Mother needed tranquility and rest.

Hearing this, the Father Provincial of the Seraphic Order called an assembly of the Friars Minor to discuss the matter. They resolved to call a chapter meeting at the Conceptionist Convent to elect a new Abbess so that the life of the Founder might be prolonged. Having arrived at this decision, the friars set off for the Convent and called the Community together.

The Provincial addressed the religious, advising them of the medical prognosis of Mother Maria. He explained that it would be best for her to step down from the Abbacy and a new Abbess elected. The election would take place the next day after Holy Mass. He enjoined the sisters to pray fervently to God Our Lord to bless the outcome of this election and gave a loving sermon on the importance of the event.

Then, in the presence of her Franciscan brothers, Mother Maria asked to speak. With these words, she stepped down from the office she had held since her arrival in New Spain 15 years earlier:

“Beloved daughters and my sisters, the loving goodness of God to these lands caused me to come from Spain to found this Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy.

“How sweet are the memories of the time I spent in my Convent in Spain, where faithful monastic observance reigned. I found myself tranquil and content there in my advancing years. Nonetheless, when I least expected it, obedience commanded me to cross the oceans and come to make this foundation. Tears, pleas, attempts to avoid it – all were in vain. I surrendered myself to the heavy yoke of obedience, and, turning my face to the Holy Cross, I embraced it with a spirit prepared to endure every bitterness. From the moment that we sailed the open sea, when the infernal serpent caused that torment, until today, the heart of your Founder has been the victim of cruel martyrdoms. How many sacrifices, hardships,

and renunciations to provide you with what you have needed! ...

“Now the hour of my final farewell to this earth has arrived! I will await you in Heaven. But, before parting, I want to confide to you a secret: I am dying of sorrow because I see your rapidly growing defiance against submitting in obedience to the Franciscan Friars and the reckless deviations you are making from the path on which I have directed you.

“My daughters, if you only realized the gift of God that you now have! Tomorrow your Franciscan Friars will be shedding tears of grief that will reach the throne of the Lord. I beg you yet one more time that you consider this grave matter under the light of eternity.

“Finally, your Mother, prostrate on the ground before you, asks pardon for her bad example and lack of virtue. As a pledge of my maternal love, I leave you my niece, Mariana de Jesus, and a blessing. Finally, I ask your prayers for me.”

When she had finished speaking, the tears of the religious were flowing in torrents. All embraced the Founding Mother. So touching was this last scene between mother and daughters that it seemed to these grieving children that their hearts were being wrenched from their breasts. As each sister embraced her, she promised to submit faithfully to the Friars Minor. However, when the four discontent religious who had instigated the campaign to put the Convent under diocesan rule embraced their Mother, they remained silent, promising nothing.

Amid her tears, she told them: “My daughters, how I long to give you my heart as a pledge of my love!”

It was a moving and tender scene. Bewailing the loss of their Founder as Abbess, the sisters begged the Provincial to leave them their Mother some time longer and implored him not to call a chapter meeting. But the Father Provincial made them see that this was impossible and that a new Abbess would have to be elected the next day. The fathers then took their leave. It is not difficult to imagine how the Community passed that night, invoking their Divine Spouse to illuminate them to elect a Abbess in accordance with His Holy Will.

MOTHER MARIANA IS ELECTED ABBESS

God did indeed hear their prayers and inspired them to see who should occupy the place of the Founder.

On the next day after Holy Mass, the Friars Minor opened the chapter, and, on the first vote, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was elected Abbess by a unanimous ballot. There was general rejoicing among the religious when they learned that God had given them an Abbess so worthy and holy, the niece of their Founding Mother.

Confused and embarrassed, this humble dove did not consider herself worthy of such a high dignity and wanted to refuse the office. Weeping inconsolably, she seemed like a sad child in the arms of Mother Maria.

The Holy Founder comforted her, telling her that she herself would help her discharge this office and offering other kind words of consolation. Seeing that her niece would not accept her arguments, Mother Maria addressed her with an air of authority, "My daughter, is this how you should act as a religious?"

Then, vesting her in the large cloak of the Abbess, she obliged Mother Mariana to carry this heavy cross. But Mother Mariana continued to renounce the office before the Provincial. She insisted, amid tears, that she did not have the age requested by the Rule and that there were others who were better and more worthy religious.

Hearing this, the Provincial asked her, "Do you also renounce your religious vocation?"

"Not that, my Father," she replied. "Never will I do that."

The Provincial continued, "If you have a love of obedience, then, in the name of our Seraphic Father Saint Francis and holy obedience, accept the office of Abbess."

With this command, she submitted, weeping as she received the office. Sitting in the abbatial chair, she received the obedience of all the religious. The first to kneel before her to render her obedience was the Founder, who, embracing her, said, "My daughter, now you are my Mother, and you will close my eyes in death."

After her, each religious rendered her obedience. At the

end of this moving ceremony, the Provincial gave an eloquent sermon explaining the significance of the ceremony and how the Abbess should be revered and esteemed. At the end of the address, the sisters entered the cloisters in procession, and the Friars Minor sang the *Te Deum laudamus*.

During the procession, the face of Mother Mariana, which was always so rosy, became ashen and pale, although preserving its great beauty. The ceremony completed, the friars congratulated the sisters on the successful election in the chapter hall, then left the Convent.

At midday, at the very moment when the sisters were going to the refectory to take their meal, the bell at the door rang. It was the Franciscan friars, who had sent a meal to their sisters. For such was their love for the Community, and especially the Founding Mothers, that they had begged alms to prepare a special meal for the new Abbess and her daughters.

The Founding Mother, the new Abbess, and the other sisters received this offering from their Seraphic brothers with great joy and gratitude. They understood that their Franciscan brothers desired not only to provide spiritual sustenance on this happy day – offering themselves to help the new Abbess to serve and protect the Community howsoever God desired, but also to offer them a delicious repast for their bodies.

Great, then, was the rejoicing of the Community in celebrating their new Abbess in these blessed cloisters. In Heaven, this union and charity shone resplendently, and the Immaculate Conception was glorified to have as Abbess the select daughter of her love. She chose to manifest her content in a very special manner.

OUR LADY SENDS MOTHER MARIANA A CELESTIAL GIFT

On the evening of the same day, a stranger rang the bell at the turn-box. Mother Maria answered the call and received this message, “The Lady, knowing that Mother Mariana de Jesus was elected Abbess, sends her this meal and tells her that She has her present in her heart.”

The gift was so exquisite and plentiful that the Founding Mother had to call other sisters so that they might help her carry it

in. When she inquired to know the name of this Lady who had sent such a fine offering, she received no response.

Mother Maria joyfully presented the grand gift to Mother Mariana, saying, "My Mother, see this exquisite present that was sent to you," and she delivered the message from the Lady.

"Who was this Lady?" asked Mother Mariana.

"She did not give her name," responded Mother Maria.

"Undoubtedly it was the Marquesa," said the saint.

With a sweet smile, Mother Mariana fixed her attention on the offering. The food was distributed among the religious, and, marvelous to see, it seemed to multiply itself, with each one receiving so much that it would have sufficed to satisfy the greatest of hungers. The sisters all testified that they had never eaten food so exquisite.

Undoubtedly, the Blessed Virgin had sent this celestial food to her daughter, and Mother Mariana had smiled for this reason, for she understood that it was her Heavenly Mother who had sent her this gift.

THE MARQUESA DENIES SENDING THE GIFT

The following day, Mother Maria again went to the turn-box to receive the plentiful food sent by the Marquesa, as well as some sterling pounds she gave for the support of the Community. The Marquesa, who knew that Mother Mariana had been elected Abbess, wanted to see her personally in order to congratulate her. However, Mother Mariana, who had become ill, was unable to receive her that day.

The Marquesa replied that she would return on the following day. She asked that Mother Mariana be assured that so long as she held the office of Abbess, the pantry of the Convent would always be provided for.

Mother Maria then thanked the Marquesa for all that she had sent, especially for the exquisite food they had received the day before.

"No, Mother," said the Marquesa. "You are wrong. I sent nothing yesterday. I am embarrassed about this, but the produce from my lands had not yet arrived and I could prepare nothing yesterday."

When Mother Maria insisted, the Marquesa asked her to describe the gift. She listened carefully to the description, then responded, "This was neither prepared in my house nor served on my table."

Then Mother Maria clearly understood that the Blessed Virgin had presented this gift to her niece as her first demonstration of love and mercy for this Community.

On the first night after she was elected, Mother Mariana remained five hours as if she were dead. The other religious, frightened, wanted to call the doctor, but Mother Maria told them that this was not necessary and they should leave her be. When the new Abbess returned to consciousness, she shed a torrent of tears.

The sisters, perturbed at this behavior, met together and decided to speak with Mother Maria, their Founder Mother. They beseeched her to continue governing them since Mother Mariana's health was so precarious, and they feared she would become ill again from so much weeping.

"No, my daughters," she responded. "This will pass, for this is the will of God."

When she was alone with her niece, she addressed her on her knees, "My Mother, for you are my Mother and Abbess, but am the Founder Mother and you are my child. Therefore, I have the right to ask you to tell me what has happened to you."

MOTHER MARIANA RECEIVES NOTICE OF MOTHER MARIA'S APPROACHING DEATH

Mother Mariana took the hand of Mother Maria, and pressing it to her heart, she kissed it. Then she spoke: "Mother, I saw you dead, leaving me alone when I would have most need of you. I prostrated myself before the throne of God, offering my life in place of yours, but this offering was unworthy of acceptance, for the fruit is now mature and ready to be harvested for Heaven."

Trembling, Mother Maria asked, "When will this be, my daughter?"

"Very soon, Mother," responded her niece, "and I wish that I might accompany you!"²⁵

25. This prophecy was soon fulfilled with the death of Mother Maria Taboada on October 4, 1593.

“No, my child,” she responded. “When I reach Heaven, I will prostrate myself before God’s throne and implore Him to give you a long life so that you might maintain the holy observance of our Rule and govern my Convent.”

“Alas, my Mother,” returned Mother Mariana, “the Friars Minor will soon be separated from the Convent. You could not withstand this suffering. It remains, then, for me to bear it.”

Then she communicated to her aunt the sufferings that she would have to bear, for she had seen all this in ecstasy. “I will be persecuted, imprisoned, and tormented,” she told Mother Maria.

Mother Mariana saw the face of her aunt transformed by a profound sorrow, and she felt a secret inspiration to tell her no more of her future sufferings so as not to aggravate her already delicate state of health. Thus she said no more about what she had seen.

FOREWARNINGS ABOUT RELAXING THE COMMUNITY LIFE

Mother Maria told her niece, “My daughter, I know that the common life will be relaxed, and I beseech Our Lord that this will not take place in your lifetime.”

“No, my Mother,” said Mother Mariana. “This will not occur in my time, and even when this takes place, there will still be souls who, with their sacrifices, will hold back the divine anger.”²⁶

Mother Maria then gave her niece rules for governing the Community and confided to her various secrets regarding the great sufferings that had been endured for this foundation.

After embracing her niece, she left her and went to speak with the Father Provincial. Weeping, she told him, “My Father, I greatly fear the relaxations in holy poverty that are taking place among the Franciscans. Hold them in check and strive to eliminate all such abuses.”

“My daughter,” responded the Provincial. “What you say is true, but it is difficult to remedy this evil. I fear that some catastrophe is ahead for us.” He knew of the powerful intercession of the Founding Mother before God, and he enjoined her to implore God’s assistance in this serious matter.

26. This prophecy of Mother Mariana was fulfilled. Common life lasted 118 years after the foundation of the Convent, long after her death.

CHAPTER 15

From the moment she accepted the cross of Abbess, the government of Mother Mariana was peaceful and sweet, with strict observance to the Rule required. She imitated her Divine Spouse with supreme diligence and heroic fortitude to guard the honor of her Beloved and to foster divine worship. In a word, the Holy Virgin was governing the spirit of Mother Mariana.

In all the problems that arose, she consulted with her holy aunt, Mother Maria, her only consolation, in whom she could confide her doubts and tribulations. But since Our Lord wanted the soul of this young Abbess to climb Calvary all alone, He permitted the death of the Founding Mother in order to purify the soul of Mother Mariana.

Thus, alone and destitute, she was the victim of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

MOTHER MARIA'S CONDITION WORSENS

As the year 1593 progressed, the health of Mother Maria became noticeably worse. Such was her weakness that she had to exert great effort to assist in the routine life of the Community. Her daughters begged her to rest a little, for her infirmity would excuse her from following strict observance.

"My daughters," responded the Mother, "I am the Founder of this Convent, and I want to leave as foundation this violence I inflict upon myself so that the Rule might always be faithfully observed here. I will allow myself no rest except in Heaven, for this earthly life is the time for us to labor."

In effect, this pure victim was offering herself on the sacrificial altar of charity for her daughters – both present and future. On September 17, the feast of the Stigmata of the Seraphic Father Saint Francis, during the second Vespers, she was struck by a strong seizure of pain. Supported in her chair and sustained by Mother Mariana, she remained until the end of Vespers. At its conclusion, she found herself in the arms of her Abbess and niece, who helped her out of the choir and into the infirmary.

There Mother Mariana told her, "My Mother, this is the first order I have given you. Under obedience, I am telling you to rest in bed and not to assist at the Community activities."

Mother Maria accepted the order from her Abbess. With tears streaming from her eyes, she kissed the scapular of her niece, and remained in bed for some days.

On each of the nine days of the novena before the feast of Saint Francis, Mother Maria was dressed and carried to the choir. Her bed was always surrounded by her daughters, who wanted to be close to their Founder Mother. During one of the days of the novena, her condition became violently worse. Her very bones and nerves quivered. She closed her eyes as if in her last agony.

This agony lasted three hours and the religious cried inconsolably, thinking that she had already died. But Mother Mariana consoled them, "Do not cry. Mother Maria will still remain with us for some days."

Some days before this crisis, Mother Maria had addressed the sisters who gathered round her bedside, "My daughters, as Founder, I would like to request a favor of you. In the days preceding my death, will you permit the Mother Abbess, my niece, to remain always at my side, while the Vicar Abbess presides over the Community in her place?"

All her daughters readily acceded to this request. Therefore, in these last days, Mother Mariana never left the bedside of the dying Founder Mother, who gave her guidelines and advice for correcting those who committed faults.

"My daughter," she said on one occasion, "never let your zeal lead you to correct a sister too harshly if she is not calm and willing to admit her fault. Instead, prostrate yourself at her feet, begging her to amend herself. This is what I have done."

Mother Mariana spent these nights praying with her holy patient and offering her consolation even during the morning's light repast. When she prayed, she asked Our Lord to spare the life of her Mother and avert the bitter chalice of her death, offering herself in her stead.

However, in her interior, she felt that this was not the will of God. Then, echoing the words of her Divine Spouse, she would say, "Let Thy will, not mine, be done."

PROPHECIES OF THE FOUNDING MOTHER REGARDING THE ORDER

After her violent attack, Mother Maria was stronger for several days. On one of these days, Mother Mariana de Jesus, finding herself alone with her aunt, ordered her, "My Mother, I have confided my innermost thoughts to you, but now you will tell me what happened to you."

"My daughter," replied the Founding Mother, "soon the Friars Minor will no longer govern my Convent. Alas! Some unworthy sisters will refuse to submit to the sons of the Seraphic Francis. The Order of the Immaculate Conception is a part of the tree of our Father Saint Francis, and he himself will shake this tree to make the rotten and withered fruit fall from it. He will prune it so that the flowers will blossom, and this will occur in the 20th century. This strong and verdant tree of the Immaculate Conception will be shaken from time to time by Saint Francis so that its buds will flower and ripen into the mature fruit of virtue. There will be unworthy souls who, refusing to submit to the Friars Minor, will lose their vocations."

In this vision she recounted, the Founding Mother had seen all that would take place in her Convent in the centuries to come. She told Mother Mariana many things that are not possible to reveal here, for these two souls were deeply united by the spirit of prophecy communicated to them by God.

Again Mother Maria's condition took a turn for the worse. When they called Doctor Sancho, he only looked at her, shook his head, and said, "Mother, remember your friends when you are in Heaven." Then, leaving her cell, he told Mother Mariana, "Mother Maria is dying," and expressed his most profound sorrow.

On October 4, the feast of our Seraphic Father, the holy patient awoke quite invigorated and full of life. The sisters thought that their father Saint Francis had heard their prayers and would cure their holy Founding Mother, and a great happiness spread throughout the Community.

The Father Provincial entered Mother Maria's cell, celebrated Mass there, and gave her Communion. Afterward, he approached her bedside to feel her pulse, and told Mother Mariana, "The pulse is going, for our Mother is dying."

LAST WORDS AND BLESSING OF THE FOUNDING MOTHER

Mother Mariana approached her and asked, “My Mother, what is happening to you?”

“Farewell, my daughter, I am leaving you,” she responded.

For the last time she received Extreme Unction. Then the Provincial Father asked for a blessed candle. Placing it in her hand, he said, “Mother Maria, your Divine Spouse is awaiting you in Heaven. Now, as Founder of this Convent, bless your daughters and speak to them your last words.”

Mother Maria sat up. All trace of infirmity disappeared from her face. She appeared most beautiful, like a living rose, as if she were again 33 years of age, the age she had been when she had founded the Order in Quito. Her gaze ran over her daughters with sweetness and affection. She asked for a crucifix and lovingly took it from the hands of the Provincial Father. Then she began to make her farewell to all her daughters. She asked their pardon for all that she might have done to cause scandal or suffering. Turning to the four non-observant religious, she tried to make them see how her firmness in demanding subjection and obedience to the Franciscans was for their own good. To the others she spoke more words of unction and love. Meanwhile, the Community sobbed and lamented, and the Friars Minor surrounded her bedside, grieving with the sisters.

“My daughters,” Mother Maria told them, “remember how much this foundation has cost me.” And she strongly exhorted them to the holy observance of the Rule. “Do not forget your Mother,” she concluded. “Farewell, my daughters. I will watch over you from Heaven, and from there I will also chastise you.”

The sisters assured her that she had been blameless in her governance. Instead, they asked her to pardon them for all they had done to offend her. When Mother Mariana, as Abbess, approached to receive her blessing, the Founder blessed her with the crucifix. Afterward she blessed each religious, extending to each sister the cross she carried to kiss the Sacred Wounds. Then, she extended her own hand for each one to kiss.

After blessing all of the Community, she called for her niece, saying, “Let the Mother Abbess approach.”

For her she had these words, “My daughter, farewell. For your inheritance, I leave you my courage, my spirit, all my sufferings, and the Passion of My Divine Spouse. I entrust to you my flock for you to guard most diligently. I must make a strict account for the souls of each one of my daughters. I sustained myself with fortitude by the fulfillment of the holy Rule.”

The Founder spoke other lofty and edifying words, blessed Mother Mariana once again and entrusted her daughters to her. Then she showed her the crucifix, saying, “My daughter, kiss the Wound in the Side.” As Mother Mariana complied, it seemed as if she were entrusting her niece to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Spouse. The Founder then gave her one final embrace.

Mother Maria then raised the crucifix and said: “I bless my Community here present. I bless all my future daughters who will be faithful to their vocations in these Convent walls. I know them all, their faces, their characters, their virtues and defects, and I see all that will happen to them in the centuries to come. I bless this Convent, I bless these holy cloisters that have cost me so dearly. I bless these walls and I bless this room. These things I say now will remain written in the hearts of all my daughters present here. They will transmit them to my successors, who, knowing and reading this, will love me. From Heaven I will give them a special blessing. And this will become known when my Community will be agonizing in the 20th century, like a weak branch being tossed to and fro by furious waves, for in this time I will have daughters worthy of their vocation.

“During this difficult and anguished period, the Star of the Sea, Mary Most Holy, will save them from shipwreck, and the breath of the Holy Spirit will calm the fury, leaving them in tranquil peace, serenity, and harmony.”

With this, she gave her final blessing with the crucifix to all those who would come after her. She also gave a special blessing to the Seraphic Order, saying, “Many times blessed by God be the Seraphic Order, my mother, under whose shadow I have lived and in whose arms I die tranquil. I place all of my daughters under the blessed protection of Mary Most Holy until the end of time. My daughters should be under this same blessed shadow until the last

day at the end of time. Thus will they be safeguarded from the infernal Devil and his plots and suggestions. May those who love the Franciscan Order be blessed by God, and those who despise it or separate themselves from it be accursed. My Father Saint Francis, always guard your Conceptionist daughters and keep them in your seraphic heart!"

This, then, was her last élan of burning love for God and the Seraphic Order. Her trembling hand let the crucifix fall, and the Provincial placed the blessed candle in her hand. Her death agony began.

THE LAST AGONY OF MOTHER MARIA

Even now, her voice was sonorous. As her agony began, she gave a sigh and lovingly prayed the ejaculations that the Father Provincial or Mother Mariana would suggest. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Francis," she would sweetly repeat. When the Provincial and Mother Mariana fell silent, the dying religious would continue to repeat these words.

Her beautiful eyes had been raised toward Heaven. As the end approached, Mother Mariana slowly closed them with her own hands. When they were completely closed, she heard Mother Maria's last word, which she could barely make out: "Francis!"

HER DEATH AND BURIAL – THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

The friars prayed the prayers for the agonizing and, while they were singing the Credo, Mother Maria expired with a sweet smile, as if she were seeing some celestial vision. At that moment her precious soul separated itself from her virginal body and Mother Mariana saw it present itself before the terrible judgment seat of God. It had the aspect of a beautiful white mist, with only the slightest bit of obscurity.

At the same time Mother Mariana saw the majestic throne of glory in Heaven that would belong to Mother Maria. It was in a special choir occupied only by the Founders of religious orders. Her throne was most exalted and resplendent because she was the Founder of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito.

God Our Lord allowed Mother Mariana to see that her

aunt would spend eight days in Purgatory. There she would not suffer the pain of fire, but only that of loss. She saw all this at the very moment when the Founder died with all the Friars gathered around her bed.

When they saw that she was dead, they wanted to sing the responsorial, but the sisters were opposed to this. Undoubtedly they were hoping that she was only in a state of ecstasy, for her face was most beautiful. Her cheeks were red and her lips like roses – with her mouth outlined in a sweet smile, half-open as if she were going to speak. For this reason, they thought she might still be living.

From the beginning of the agony, the Friars also feared for the life of Mother Mariana because of her extreme suffering. But God strengthened his spouse, who was undergoing a double martyrdom: one, at seeing her Mother die; and the other, at seeing her in the prison of Purgatory. She knew that Mother Maria was already dead, but she did not say a word. She only kissed the forehead, hands, and feet of her beloved Mother. The Fathers insisted upon singing the responsorial, but again the sisters resisted. Thus they all remained gathered around the bed of their treasure.

Finally, Doctor Sancho came. They had sent messengers to find him, but he was not at his home or office. So, they had resorted to sounding the bell that the religious used to call the doctor. After examining the Founder, he informed the Franciscan Friars, “My fathers, Mother has been dead for two hours.” With this confirmation, the responsorial was finally sung. Their hearts pierced with sorrow, the friars left, leaving behind an inconsolable Community bewailing the death of their Mother.

Mother Mariana permitted no one to prepare the corpse for burial. She herself, with the love of a niece, the devotion of a daughter, and the reverence of a saint, prepared the holy body.

When it was ready to be moved, the sisters covered it with flowers and carried it to the lower choir to keep vigil over it there. Her face was beautiful, as if in ecstasy, and her cheeks like roses. The body had not decomposed even after three days nor did it give out the odor of death. Her daughters, unwilling to separate themselves from their Mother, passed day and night with the corpse, kissing it, and at times became convinced that she was still alive.

Mother Mariana, who knew that she had been judged, said nothing and permitted them to relieve their anguish at the feet of their Mother.

On the third day, they saw that a vein on her hand had swollen. Even though the body was still flexible and the face beautiful, it was necessary to bury her. They buried her in the lower choir with a nameplate stating that she was the Founder. The obsequies and funeral services were performed by the Friars Minor.

Her own heart pierced with pain as the body of her aunt was buried, Mother Mariana gave full vent to her grief. She shut herself up alone to weep at being left an orphan, and to pray to Her Divine Spouse, telling Him she could not bear to see her Mother in Purgatory.

MOTHER MARIANA FREES THE SOUL OF MOTHER MARIA FROM PURGATORY

“My Love,” she implored, “if Thou hast taken my Mother from this earth, let me see her in Heaven. Deliver the soul of my Mother, and thus will I know that Thou dost love me. Blot me out from the Book of Life so that her soul may soar to Heaven.”

To these amorous prayers, Our Lord from the Tabernacle responded, “My daughter, continue your prayers and penances, and do everything with this intention for five days, and the soul of your Mother will soar to Heaven.”

With what fervor did Mother Mariana offer all her actions of the next days to deliver the soul of her beloved aunt from Purgatory!

On the fifth day, after she had received Communion, the Abbess went into ecstasy during Mass. When the priest elevated the Sacred Host, she saw a most pure and beautiful dove rise up to Heaven. It was the soul of her aunt, Mother Maria, who said to Mother Mariana, “Thank you, my child, I am going to Heaven, where I will bless and help you.”

Then she soared to Heaven, leaving Mother Mariana below to thank her Divine Spouse for having freed the soul of her beloved aunt from Purgatory. She also saw the immense glory she was now enjoying. From this day forward, God allowed the blessed soul of the Founder to communicate with Mother Mariana, who in her dif-

ficulties would consult the Founder, the consolation of this sad orphan who helped and consoled her from Heaven.

How abundantly God Our Lord recompenses the sacrifices made for His love! Also, how strictly he judges! When the soul stands before the Divine Presence, the slightest blemish calls for purification in order for it to be united with God!

Mother Maria was an extremely pure soul but she had greatly feared death. Mother Mariana had questioned her about this fear, asking if perhaps she still had an attachment to some earthly good.

“No, my daughter,” she replied. “For having left my country and all that I had in Spain, I have neither longings for nor attachment to any earthly thing. I fear death because I know the great pain the soul feels upon leaving the body, and I fear that I lack the great strength needed at that hour.” This was the temptation and suffering of this seraphic soul, for which she was purified in Purgatory.

After the death of her aunt, Mother Mariana was alone. Her sense of loss was indescribable, but her magnanimous soul supported this burden in silence. Instead of seeking solace, she was the consolation of the other sisters, who went to her to lament the loss of their Founder. She also offered consolation to various residents of Quito who mourned the death of their saintly Mother.

For all of them, Mother Maria had been the balsam that soothed the wounds of their hearts. In her seraphic charity, Mother Mariana did all that she could for everyone; she alone suffered in silence the immense void she felt at the loss of her Mother and Founder. The virtues of Mother Maria and the immense good she did for the Convent and the city of Quito are related in the chronicle and biography of her life.²⁷ Here we note only those things that relate to the life of Mother Mariana.

27. After the death of Mother Mariana de Jesus in 1634, the Franciscan Fathers undertook the responsibility of writing the biographies of all the Founding Mothers. The biographer of the first Abbess, Mother Maria of Jesus Taboada, was written by Fr. Michael Romero, who was her confessor and spiritual director. The Father Provincial Fr. Jeronimo Tamayo, wrote about Mothers Magdalena of Saint John, Maria of the Incarnation, and Catherine of the Conception. Fr. Louis Catena, who also held the office of Provincial in 1625, wrote the lives of Mothers Lucia of the Cross and Anna of the Conception. Fr. Martin de Ochoa related the lives of Mother Francisca of the Angels, and Mariana de Jesus Torres.

After the death of this illustrious Founder, Mother Mariana continued to govern the Convent with prudence, sweetness, and discernment. At the same time, she firmly demanded strict observance of the Rule in its first rigor. She was a victim of love for her Convent, the heroine who preserved the fervor and spirit of the Founder in her Community.

Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, Founder, died on October 4 in the year 1593, 16 years after the foundation of the Convent.

* * *

These biographies were preserved in a large volume of records, entitled el *Cuadernón* [the Grand Notebook], to which Fr. Manuel Souza Pereira had access when he wrote this biography of Mother Mariana de Jesus (Cadena y Almeida, *Madera para Esculpir la Imagen de una Santa*, pp. 173-5).

At the present time, the whereabouts of the *Cuadernón* is unknown, because it was hidden in some secret closet in the Convent for safekeeping during times of political unrest at the end of the 19th century. Mother Mariana de Jesus predicted its loss and also that it, along with other items, would be found in a miraculous way during the time of restoration of the Holy Church.

CHAPTER 16

After the death of the Founding Mother, the plots of the rebellious sisters to separate the Convent from the rule of the Friars Minor started up again. During this epoch, the Monasteries and Convents, especially the Orders of the Preachers [Dominicans] and of Saint Catherine, had somewhat relaxed their rules. There were some lapses among the Franciscans who had slackened in the practice of angelic poverty and religious observance, but not to the same degree as the ones mentioned above.

The Friars Minor who governed the Convent of the Immaculate Conception were religious of great learning, virtue, and sanctity. Since they could not restrain the relaxation of the Conceptions, they prudently decided to step away from the direction of the Convent. They did not, however, renounce their complete jurisdiction in order to allow a return when the hour of God would come.

Indeed, there was a faction of sisters who were opposed to the strict observance of the Rule. They strove to put the Convent under the Bishop of Quito, and no longer the Franciscans, who led them in the right direction according to the spirit of the conventual life. This faction caused the Friars Minor to unwillingly make the decision to leave the government of the Conceptionist Convent.

Because of the opposition of this faction, the Friars Minor judged it prudent to reluctantly resign their direction of the Conceptionists. They did not, however, completely renounce their jurisdiction over the Convent so that they could maintain the holy freedom to return when the hour of God would arrive.

During this epoch, the Church was suffering greatly from excesses and irregularities in its ecclesiastical government. Discord reigned between the Bishop and the canons, and the suffering of the religious who were subjected to the Ordinary was indeed great.

The day feared by the daughters of the Immaculate Conception finally arrived. The announcement of the separation of the Franciscan friars broke the hearts of the faithful religious. On this woeful day, even Heaven seemed to commiserate with the grieving Conceptionists, for it sprinkled the whole day. Mother Mariana had

the appearance of a corpse walking on thin air. She spoke with various officials in attempts to postpone the day when the Friars Minor would separate from the Convent. We will not refer to the details of this here, for we do not want to agitate the hearts of our newest religious who will read these lines.

What a terrible suffering for the innocent doves who had made their nest in the wounds of the Seraphim of Assisi!

“THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS WILL RETURN”

On one of those bitter nights before the separation, Mother Mariana rose from her poor bed and went down to the choir where she prostrated herself on the sepulcher of her aunt, Mother Maria, as if, like another Eliseus, she would raise up the Founder. “I can no longer bear it, my Mother!” she pleaded. “Arise and support me!”

Then the Founder spoke these words to her: “My daughter, for a period of time this separation of the Franciscan Friars is necessary. Our Father Saint Francis dearly loves his Order, which is so beloved of God that He will never permit the great deviations that will be made in other Orders to occur in it. A golden era will arrive when the Friars Minor will return to govern my Convent. In those days to come, many holy religious of the Immaculate Conception will rise up. Suffer, my daughter. Through the course of the centuries, many will suffer in this Community, for the inheritance I have left my daughters is suffering and the summit of sorrow.

“The time will come when the religious will be stripped of all their temporal goods. During this epoch, the Community will receive many graces from Christ Our Lord directly through the Friars Minor and also through the Company of Jesus.²⁸

“There will be a member of my Community who will steal away the crown [of glory] of the religious. Because of her imprudence and unenlightened spirit, she will be like one who is blind,

28. On June 25, 1902 the Law of the *Manos Muertas* [Dead Hands] was passed by the liberal, anticlerical government of President Eloy Alfaro. Under one of its provisions, the property of the clergy and religious was confiscated by the government. This law left cloistered Convents like the Conceptionist in a disastrous condition of begging their daily bread to survive. The majority of the religious communities, including the Conceptionist Convent, put up a heroic and sacrificial resistance to the pretensions of this Masonic government (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 46-56).

unable to see the things of God. With feigned virtue and misdirected zeal, she will make the Community suffer much and will take her complaints to the Bishop.²⁹ She will glorify herself for this, but the hour of God will arrive. For this religious will have a heart that is not spiritual. The religious under her rule will be mystical martyrs.

“The Franciscan friars will separate themselves from this Convent at a time when you will no longer be governing it, and the Abbess under whom this takes place will remain in Purgatory until the Day of Final Judgment.

“You should share your concerns with the other Founding Mothers, for they will also receive celestial visits. Speak especially to Mother Francisca of the Angels, for she will be your successor and will help you in everything. Now, rise up and continue to fulfill your obligations as Superior.”

Mother Mariana rose and went to prostrate herself before the Most Holy Sacrament, where she prayed to be united to her Mother, asking Our Lord to take her from this earth. A refulgent light issued from the Tabernacle, and she heard these words, “My daughter, it behooves Me to not allow the Friars Minor to separate themselves from the Convent during your time as Abbess.”³⁰

Mother Mariana then asked Our Lord to not take Mother Francisca to join their Founder in Heaven. For this religious had been praying to Our Lord to permit her to die rather than live to see the Convent’s separation from the Friars Minor. Our Lord responded, “Command her under obedience not to ask me for death.”

Mother Mariana left the choir. Finding Mother Francisca, she ordered her as her Abbess, “I command you, under obedience, to no longer ask for your death from God Our Lord, for you must

29. Msgr. Cadena y Almeida proposes that this sister is the rebellious non-observant sister called “the Captain,” who caused the Community to suffer much by the division of its members, the scandal caused inside and outside the Convent, and her mendacious and calumnious complaints to the Bishop about Mother Mariana and the Spanish Founding Mothers (*Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 39-40). However, it is quite possible that this prophecy could be referring to a sister who instigated a great spiritual damage in times more recent, for it would appear that she had a position of command inside the Convent, which the captain never officially had.

30. The separation of the Friars Minor took place in 1601 at the time that Mother Magdalena of Valenzuela was exercising her first term as Abbess.

stay here and assist me in all that takes place.”

Mother Francisca bowed her head, kissed the scapular of the Abbess, and accepted this command. Mother Mariana then spoke to her of the sufferings that they, united in spirit, would endure as victims of seraphic love.

**SATANIC ONSLAUGHT
AND THE APPARITION OF SAINT GABRIEL**

One night, as was her custom, Mother Mariana was making the Way of the Cross, carrying the cross and wearing a crown of thorns and an iron chain in order to imitate her Divine Spouse. Suddenly, in the lower cloisters that leads to the choir, a sea of fire surged before her, a terrible bottomless fire with an incommensurable width that prevented her from taking another step.

Shocked at this terrible sight, the innocent virgin then heard horrible voices issuing from the ocean of fire, saying, “This is the place we want to bury this wicked Convent. But these miserable sisters hold us back, especially that one heinous sister whom we will bury here.” At that moment, two enormous black mastiffs jumped out of the flames. With one on each side of Mother Mariana, the huge creatures tried to suffocate her.

But she called out, “Star of the sea, Most Holy Mary of Good Success, help me!”

“At that very instant,” the Abbess later recounted, “I saw a star as large as the choir ceiling, refulgent and diffusing great rays of light. In the center of this star the name Mary was inscribed. From it came a golden canoe imbedded with emeralds and precious stones. An Angel guided this small vessel to my side and told me, ‘I am the Archangel Gabriel, sent by your Mother, Mary of Good Success, to help you.’ Then he set me, along with the cross I was carrying and all the symbols of the Passion, into the canoe. He added, ‘This canoe signifies your long life.’”

The Archangel steered their small vessel through the ocean of fire. As they proceeded, Mother Mariana underwent the same sufferings and combats she had experienced on the ocean coming from Spain. After crossing this ocean, the Archangel placed her on the firm ground of the cloister, where he knelt and prayed a Hail Mary.

“Mortal man can never even begin to understand all the grandeur contained in the angelic salutation,” said Saint Gabriel. Then he disappeared, and with him, the sea of fire, and all returned to normal. Mother Mariana went to the upper choir to await her sisters for the recitation of the Little Office.

How all of Hell wars against the recitation of the Little Office of Mary Most Holy! And what marvels that great Queen works so that it might continue to be said!

The holy Founding Mothers, who suffered so much to preserve that practice, guaranteed that this early morning psalmody is what preserves the Convent. When it would no longer be sung, then the religious spirit would be lost.

Woe to this Convent if, when our newest sisters read these lines, they do not preserve this holy devotion and custom! We beg all who follow us to sacrifice their sleep in order to rise and pray this Office at 4 a.m. with the devotion and the fervor of the Founding Mothers. Then, they will see how the spirit of the Community, perhaps dying, will be restored!

MOTHER MARIANA HEARS THE VOICE OF OUR LORD

On another night, the holy Abbess was praying in the upper choir when she heard a frightful roar and terrible sounds that seemed to demolish the very foundation of the chapel. Frightened, she felt herself being overtaken by a terrible despair, and she ran to prostrate herself at the foot of the Tabernacle. With her forehead on the ground, she begged mercy from her Divine Spouse. “What terrible thing is this that I am hearing?” she asked.

From the Sacrament, Our Lord replied, “My child, what you are hearing in the spirit is what your successors will suffer materially. For the time will come when the devils will try to demolish this Convent, availing themselves of both good and evil persons to achieve that end. But they will not succeed so long as the spirit of sacrifice remains. To maintain it, interior victims are needed.

“Now, my daughter, you should prepare yourself to receive a visit from my Most Holy Mother, a visit that I desire to bestow upon you.”

Mother Mariana was so filled with joy that morning at choir that Mother Francisca asked her. “What has happened to you, my

Mother, to give you such happiness?”

Then Mother Mariana related the great favor she would receive, and the two seraphic souls conversed together, assisting and supporting each other in the accomplishment of the divine will. Later, Our Lord made Mother Mariana know how holy poverty was relaxed among the Franciscans. “Speak with the friars, my daughter,” He told her, “and try to remedy these abuses by your sacrifices.”

Mother Mariana did this and increased her sacrifices for these intentions, for truly she was a victim of love for her Seraphic Order.

* * *

CHAPTER 17

At this time, the state of the poor Colony was one of sadness and affliction, primarily because the ecclesiastic and civil governments were the target of many bad rumors. The incursions of the Spanish into the South caused chaos and crimes too horrible to relate.

The Church and the Country had a great need for heroic souls who, by their practice of solid virtue, would stand between the sinful Colony and Divine Justice, thus preventing these lands from being covered by a great deluge as just punishment for their crimes. For even the religious communities, and especially the orders for men, were not as observant and holy as the religious and sacerdotal state demands.

The cause of this relaxation in the monasteries of the friars was due to the fact that Spain, like other countries, was sending their undisciplined and disruptive friars to the Colony. These insubordinate men would not subject themselves to the monastic rules of their monasteries and were sent overseas as punishment. It is easy to imagine how members of such communities might act.

Such was the state of affairs in the Colony at this time when, in silent recollection in the cloisters of the Immaculate Conception, truly holy souls lived. Without these heroic souls, Quito would have already ceased to exist. Standing out eminently among these sacrificial souls was Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who, hidden behind those four walls like a humble violet, perfumed with her sufferings the corrupt ambience of the Colony.

She suffered for the offenses made to the Divine Majesty, for the loss of so many souls, and for the internal turmoil in her own Convent, where some few members were antagonistic to the Seraphic Family. Since the death of their Founder Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, these non-observant sisters had been persistently striving to throw off the yoke of holy obedience.

This was the state of affairs in the year 1594, when Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was at the head of the Community, governing it with as much discernment, prudence, and charity as an

Abbess of much greater maturity and experience.³¹ For this young religious had received the gift to govern directly from God and from His Immaculate Mother! One could say that Jesus and Mary were presiding over this Convent so beloved by Divine Goodness, this Convent which will always be persecuted and calumniated until the end of time.

In face of these bitter sufferings that weighed like incandescent shackles on the holy Abbess, she was a strong branch of the Seraphic Tree. Even when she was whipped by terrible gales, she did not waver, firmly embedded on this trunk with its life-giving sap. During the turbulent storms, she would have recourse to Jesus, Mary, and her Father, the Seraphic Stigmatic, to find light, consolation, strength, perseverance, and relief.

Thus, on the morning of February 2, 1594, with a heart filled with bitterness and pain, Mother Mariana was praying prostrate on the ground in the upper choir of this blessed Convent.³² She was beseeching Our Lord, through the intercession of His Blessed Mother, to stop these trials through which her beloved Convent was passing and for an end to the many sins being committed in the world.

FIRST APPARITION OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS

During this long penitential act, she perceived the presence of someone before her. Her heart was perturbed, but a sweet voice called her name. She rose rapidly and saw before her a most beautiful Lady, who carried the Child Jesus in her left arm and, in her

31. By this time, the number of Convent inhabitants had risen to 300: 120 professed religious, and 180 others – *donadas* (a kind of third order sister), daughters of Quito inhabitants who were there for education and formation, and servants. Among such a large number, it is very easy for factions to form, which is what had happened. Some of the native sisters were resentful of the strict observance of the Rule that the Spanish sisters insisted upon, and wanted to introduce relaxations into the monastic life in the Convent. Knowing this was impossible so long as the Convent was under Franciscan rule, they sought to change its jurisdiction and put the Convent under the Bishop Ordinary (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico de la Sierva de Dios Sor Mariana Francisca de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa*, Quito, 1989, p. 34).

32. The place chosen for the apparition was the upper choir, where the whole community of professed sisters congregate to fulfill their primary obligation of praying the Divine Office.

right, a polished gold crosier adorned with precious stones of un-earthly beauty.

Her heart was filled with an indescribable and holy happiness and such an immense love of God that it seemed insupportable and she thought she would die of joy, she later told her spiritual director. In this holy transport of joy and happiness, she asked the Lady, "Beautiful Lady, who art thou and what dost thou want? Dost thou not know that I am but a poor sister, filled with love of God, most surely, but also overflowing with pain and sorrow?"

To this the Lady responded: "I am Mary of Good Success, the Queen of Heaven and Earth. It is because you are a religious soul filled with love of God and His Mother that I am speaking to you now. I have come from Heaven to console your afflicted heart. Your prayers, tears, and penances are most pleasing to our celestial Father. The Holy Ghost Who consoles your spirit and sustains you in your just tribulations formed from three drops of the Blood of my Heart the most beautiful Child of mankind. For nine months, I, Virgin and Mother, carried Him in my most pure womb. In the stable in Bethlehem, I gave birth to Him and lay Him to rest on the cold straw.

"As His Mother, I carry Him here, in my left arm, so that together we might restrain the hand of Divine Justice, which is always so ready to chastise this unfortunate and criminal world.

"In my right hand, I carry the crosier that you see, for I desire to govern this Convent as Abbess and Mother. Soon the Franciscan friars will no longer govern this Convent, which is why my patronage and protection are more necessary than ever, for this difficult trial will last for centuries. With this separation, Satan will begin to try to destroy this work of God, making use of my ungrateful daughters. But he will not succeed, because I am the Queen of Victories and the Mother of Good Success, and it is under this invocation I desire to be known throughout time for the preservation of my Convent and of its inhabitants.³³

33. Thirty years later, on February 2, 1634, the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success was christened with holy oils and placed on the Abbess chair in the upper choir. She will remain Abbess and Mother of the Conceptionist Convent in Quito, offering consolation and assistance to her daughters there until the end of time. She foretold that she would become known under this invocation in the 20th century, and would offer her assistance to those who invoked her under

“In all times until the end of the world, I will have holy daughters, heroic souls in this Convent who will suffer persecutions and calumnies within the very bosom of their Community. They will be the object of the complaisance and love of God and His Mother. We shall personally console them, for they are destined to be familiar with us by means of their external manifestations.

“Like strong, stout columns, they will sustain the Community in troubled times. Their lives of prayer, self-denial, and penance will be most needed during each period. After having lived on this earth unknown, they will rise to Heaven to occupy high thrones of glory and receive the palms and crowns of virgins and martyrs of penance and love of God.³⁴

“Now I desire to give you strength and encouragement. Do not allow suffering to discourage you. For you will live a long time on this earth for the glory of God and His Mother, who speaks to you now.³⁵ My Most Holy Son desires to give you every type of suffering. And to infuse you with the valor that you will need, I take Him from my arms. Receive Him in your own. Hold Him to your weak and imperfect heart.”

The Most Holy Virgin placed the Divine Child in the arms of the happy religious, who embraced Him next to her heart and caressed him fondly. As she did so, she felt within herself a strong desire to suffer.

this title. For more on the prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success concerning the crisis in the Church in the 20th century, see Marian T. Horvat, *Our Lady of Good Success: Prophecies for Our Times*, (Los Angeles; TIA, 2000).

34. Our Lady promised Mother Mariana that there would be at least one faithful sister in this Convent throughout time. These faithful sisters, she foretold, who would suffer greatly – even by the hands of their own sisters, would sustain the Community in the bitter times ahead. The life of Mother Mariana and the Founding Mothers are examples of this. For this reason, the Community recorded the names of favored sisters and extraordinary incidents in the Convent chronicles. To the disgrace of History, large lacunas appear in these records due to the lack of care of Abbesses and religious responsible for the execution of this order. (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 61-65).

35. Mother Mariana de Jesus died at age 72 on January 16, 1635. As Our Lady foretold, she suffered much during her long exile on earth as an expiatory victim for her own sisters and Convent, and also as a victim soul for the 20th century, a time when heresies, blasphemies, and impurity would abound in the spiritual and temporal spheres.

This visit from the Queen of Heaven lasted until three o'clock in the morning.³⁶ Throughout the apparition, lights emanated from Mary Most Holy, the true Dawn, and from the Sun of Justice, her Son, resplendent with an unearthly brightness. When this Dawn and Sun had gone, everything around her was again darkness and night.

Mother Mariana rose from the place where she had been praying, walked through the grille gates of the upper choir, entered to the right, and took her seat as Abbess to watch over her daughters who were coming to pray the Little Office, so pleasing to Mary Most Holy.

The sisters arrived and began their morning prayers, but they noticed the transformation of their Abbess. Without understanding why, they felt their hearts inflamed with love of God and Mary Most Holy, and they prayed with greater than usual fervor.

As she prayed, Mother Francisca of the Angels was given to understand that her Mother had just received some important grace, and she gave thanks to the Divine Goodness. Later that day, she asked the Abbess if she could know this great privilege. Mother Mariana de Jesus told her briefly what had occurred. Then these two seraphic souls conversed together, thanking Our Lord for this manifestation of His great love for their Convent.

From that happy day of February 2, 1594, when this apparition of the Mother of Good Success to her chosen daughter took place, Mother Mariana de Jesus felt herself reinvigorated and inflamed with the love of God. She enjoyed an imperturbable interior peace, with both her soul and body reflecting the grandeur of the grace she had received.

The time was arriving when her three-year term as Abbess would end, an office she had exercised without ever having committed the least fault. For she had meticulously observed and enforced strict monastic silence, exact observance of the Rule and

36. After this apparition in 1594, Our Lady of Good Success often favored Mother Mariana de Jesus with visits on February 2 until the end of her life. The Postulator for the Cause of her Beatification, Msgr. Cadena y Almeida, counts the number of visits as 40, for in some years she would receive more than one (*La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria*, p. 40). Many of these visits and the prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success will be related in Volume II of this work by Fr. Sousa Pereira. See also Horvat, *Our Lady of Good Success: Prophecies for Our Times*, *passim*.

vows, and especially the rule of perfect enclosure.

MOTHER MARIANA HEARS THE VOICE OF THE HOLY GHOST

Nine days before the election of the new Abbess, Mother Mariana began a novena to the Holy Ghost, begging Him to enlighten souls to make the right choice. On the seventh day, during her fervent prayer, she felt a strong wind, like the one on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles. She saw refulgent rays illuminating the whole room.

A voice emanating from this shining light said: "I am He Who gives My seven gifts and twelve fruits. I take my repose in pure souls as on a bed of roses and lilies. Now, I come with the gift of fortitude to give new strength to your soul, for the time of your great sufferings is at hand, when, step by step, you will imitate the life of your Crucified Spouse. The sufferings awaiting you are so great that without the gift of fortitude to support you, your life would end. For soon the Franciscan friars will surrender their government over the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, and you will be persecuted, slandered, and imprisoned."

Saying this, the refulgent light dissolved, and Mother Mariana fell to the ground in a faint.

When the religious saw that their Abbess did not appear, they looked for her everywhere. Not finding her, they became quite anxious until Mother Francisca of the Angels found her lying on the floor of the balcony as if she were dead. The vision had taken place in the lower choir where the Abbess customarily made her penances and prayers. After her first swoon, she had managed to rise and had reached the balcony before she again fell to the ground senseless. It was there that the religious found her.

The sisters asked Mother Francisca, the nurse, to administer to their Abbess. Mother Francisca applied some aromatic oils to try to bring her back to consciousness. But she sensed that this mysterious illness was not of a physical nature. To herself, she was thinking, "I do these things to no avail. For Mother is suffering from something supernatural."

When Mother Mariana did not regain consciousness, the sisters became increasingly upset. Concerned about the growing disturbance, Mother Francisca beseeched God Our Lord to bring

the Abbess to herself. Immediately, Mother Mariana opened her beautiful eyes and fixed them on the four non-observant religious who were there in the room. But these sisters could not bear her gaze, and they slowly eased themselves out of the room. The sisters who shared their spirit of non-observance followed them.

When Mother Mariana was finally alone with Mother Francisca, she reprimanded the nurse sweetly, "Why did you try to cure me with these things, my daughter? You may offend against the spirit of poverty so beloved by our Father, Saint Francis!"

Mother Francisca responded, "I was compelled to do so by the other sisters. For how can they know what happens to you? I beg you now to tell me what has taken place, for your countenance was as pale as death."

"My child," replied Mother Mariana. "our Father Saint Francis is indignant and has a complaint with the Convent, for some ungrateful daughters will soon throw off the yoke of obedience to the Seraphic Family, laid out by Our Holy Father Julian II in the Rule for the Religious of the Immaculate Conception."

Hearing this, Mother Francisca, in union with Mother Mariana, began to weep. These two seraphic souls went to unburden their hearts before the Blessed Sacrament, Mother Francisca supporting Mother Mariana, who was still too weak to walk alone. At the hour of choir, Mother Mariana took her place to preside over it.

* * *

CHAPTER 18

The day to choose a new Abbess arrived. While the religious were well aware of the outstanding merits of Mother Mariana – who should have been re-elected in order to maintain the splendor of observance to the Rule – some of the sisters allowed themselves to be deceived by the Devil, who wanted to extinguish this shining light.

Under the influence of the non-observant sisters, who wanted a greater relaxation in conventual life and to enjoy the favors of the family of Mother Magdalena de Valenzuela, who held high positions in the ecclesiastical government of Quito, the vote took place with only two candidates: Mother Mariana de Jesus and Mother Valenzuela. With great grief, the Franciscan friars received word that Mother Valenzuela had been chosen Abbess, for they highly esteemed Mother Mariana and the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

With profound humility, Mother Mariana rendered obedience and handed over the office to Mother Valenzuela.³⁷ Thenceforth, she became the object of scorn, mockery, persecution, and calumny in the Convent that she had founded. She was falsely accused of serious neglects during her Abbacy, but this prudent virgin sealed her lips and did not defend herself.

THE FRIARS MINOR ARE DISMISSED FROM THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Like a flash of lightning, Mother Valenzuela set to work to free the Convent from its obedience to the Franciscan friars and subject it to the Ordinary. In a short time, she managed to succeed in this. The dire day finally arrived when the Friars Minor were sent away. Before they took their leave, the Father Provincial and other friars met together with the sisters. They gave a moving talk to the Community in the lower choir, showing how holy observance had progressed under their direction since the first day of the foun-

37. She exercised the office of Abbess for the first time from 1601 to 1603.

ation. They explained that they were leaving now not by order of the ecclesiastic authority, but of their own will in order to avoid greater spiritual damage to the non-observant sisters.

The Provincial then knelt down and, with his arms in a cross, thanked Mother Mariana and all the observant sisters. He gave them a special blessing and told them, "Our separation will not last forever. We will not see the days of our return, but our successors will again come to govern our beloved Convent of the Immaculate Conception in better days than these. The Rule from our Holy Father Pope Julian II will be observed and there will be many holy religious."

Mother Mariana and the observant sisters, especially the Spanish Founding Mothers, were engulfed in tears. The Provincial told them, "We will record and preserve for posterity these tears, this date, and this event in the archives of our Seraphic Order."

After tenderly blessing the religious faithful to the Rule, especially Mother Mariana, he turned to the non-observant sisters, directing to them words of malediction that would be fulfilled for some even in life, and for others at the hour of death.

The non-observant sisters asked to speak alone with the Father Provincial, but he refused, turning his back to them and leaving them with these last words, "No one is a prophet in his own country." With this, he took his leave, leaving Mother Mariana and the rest of the Founding Mothers in cruel agony. Even the elements of nature joined in the lamentations of the innocent doves who cried at being set adrift from the Franciscan Order. The weather was dreary and the sun refused to illuminate that ill-fated day.

After the separation from the Friars Minor, the direction of the Convent was handed over to the Bishop,³⁸ and Mother Mariana and her companions submitted docilely to this hard trial. The non-observant sisters now saw themselves free from the yoke of the Friars Minor, who had watched over them with charity. The observance of the Rule began to decay, strict silence disappeared, and lapses occurred in the matter of enclosure. In short, the relaxation of monastic perfection had begun.

38. He is referring to His Excellency Bishop Luis López de Solís, who governed the Diocese of Quito from 1594 to 1606.

THE IMPRISONMENT OF MOTHER MARIANA

Seeing this, Mother Mariana's heart was torn. Feeling obliged to address this situation as a Founder and ex-Abbess, she went to Mother Valenzuela, her Abbess. With profound humility she made her see how the non-observant sisters should be curbed. The result of her efforts was more humiliation.³⁹ When the Prelate heard this, he ordered that Mother Mariana should be imprisoned for three days: Her veil was to be taken from her, and she should receive the public discipline and eat on the floor in the refectory on each of these days.

The innocent dove was locked in the lower floor prison, near the lower choir. Each day Mother Mariana was taken to the refectory without her veil and the discipline was applied to her before the eyes of the Community. Then she was made to take her meal on the floor, as the non-observant sisters mocked and derided her. The innocent virgin did not raise her eyes. Fixing them on the ground, she humbled herself in order to imitate her Divine Spouse. For these three days, she was also deprived of attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion.

At the end of the three days, they took her from the prison, assigned her a despicable cell, and forbade her to speak with her sisters, watching to see that no one spoke to her. But the Spanish Founding Mothers could not endure this suffering and gave vent to their grief with Mother Mariana. A new order soon came from the Prelate commanding that they should all be imprisoned together for one month.

Thus the innocent doves were imprisoned in that dark, basement prison, deprived of the Sacraments, Holy Mass, and the Di-

39. The leader of the non-observant faction, whom the Convent charitably records as simple "the captain," sent a message to the Bishop saying that Mother Mariana was interfering with the government of the Convent and making other false accusations. The chief accusation that led the ecclesiastical authority to order the incarceration of Mother Mariana was that she was stirring up resistance to the new spiritual government that had passed to the hands of the Bishop. The letter containing this calumny and others was delivered to the office of the Bishop, who was making an apostolic visit to his Diocese at that time. The reply and order came from the hand of his representative, Don Cristóbal Loarte, the Vicar General of the Diocese, who was related to the sister called the captain. (*Cadena y Almeida, Mensaje Profético*, pp. 32-4).

vine Office. The non-observant sisters had also wanted to deprive them of their habits and veils, but the Prelate would not permit this, saying that their habits could not be taken since they were the Founding Mothers. Therefore, only their veils were confiscated.

The captive heroines passed their time in prayer and recollection, making the prison an antechamber of Heaven. The victims could leave only to go to the refectory. They were allowed to wear only the novice veils and made to eat what little was given to them on the floor amid derision and disdain. They would then return to the prison to continue their way of the cross.

Although Mother Mariana was the consolation of her daughters, she could not bear to see them deprived of Holy Mass and the praying of the Divine Office. She wrote a note to the Bishop asking him to allow them to assist at Holy Mass and to pray the Divine Office.

“If it were only I alone,” she wrote, “I would endure this silently, as I did before. But I cannot see my daughters and sisters suffer this injustice being dealt to the Spanish Founding Mothers in this Colony.” Mother Mariana also asked for the passports for her and all the Founding Mothers to return to Spain, taking with them the remains of Mother Maria Taboada, her aunt.

The non-observant sisters did not want to deliver this note to the Bishop. Mother Mariana left the prison and humbly presented herself before the Abbess, telling her that she could not be prevented from directing herself to the Superior and that she, as Founder, could close down the Convent. Hearing this, the non-observant faction became fearful and granted her request, that is, that she might go personally to the turn-box to send her note to the Bishop and receive his response in her own hands.

This was done, and in his reply the Prelate told her that the complaints against the Spanish Mothers had been so many and were so serious that they must remain imprisoned for the prescribed month, but that he would permit them to assist at Mass and pray the Divine Office. The innocent captives rejoiced to hear this. Their number was fifteen, seven Spanish Founding Mothers and another eight sisters formed by Mother Mariana.

The other observant sisters in the Convent suffered immensely at seeing the injustices and torments inflicted on Mother

Mariana and her companions. When they walked through the lower choir, they would make sounds as they neared the prison so that those inside could hear them. Distressed, they went to the Abbess and asked her to be less severe on their imprisoned sisters. Seeing such humility, modesty, and holiness in these religious who had been accused of serious crimes, even the sisters who were opposed to the prisoners felt inclined to support their position, but they did not do so out of human respect.

In fact, the sisters who supported the holy virgins were themselves taken to prison, so that the number of religious imprisoned for love of the holy observance of the Rule rose to 25.

These imprisoned sisters participated in the Community prayers and assisted at Holy Mass in the lower choir. In the refectory they received penances as if they were novices and were made to eat on the floor, receiving offenses and scorn. In response to such bad treatment, they kissed the feet of the sisters of the Community with such humility and fraternal love that the persecutors themselves were impressed to see their serene and peaceful faces, joyfully suffering persecution, scorn, and calumny from their own sisters.

After the hour of refectory, they would return to the prison and be consoled by their holy Mother Mariana, who would address celestial words to them. Within the blessed walls of that prison, they followed the community life prescribed by the Rule. They requested the Abbess to give them work that they might do for the Convent so that they could work during the hours prescribed for labor. This she did, and these abnegated spouses of Christ sewed and mended the clothing of their persecutors.

They prayed the Divine Office together and sang the divine praises, giving joy to the Heart of their Beloved Spouse. Deprived of Holy Communion, they suffered this indescribable loss without making the least complaint. Their consolation lay in prayer and sacrifice. Nourished by the sweet liqueur of seraphic love, they displayed a disarming serenity and kindness of spirit amid these terrible sufferings. By their resignation and practice of all the virtues, they converted the prison into a Heaven, inhabited by angels.

The Abbess, Mother Magdalena de Jesus Valenzuela, by nature had a tender heart, and she should have taken pity on the

sufferings of her daughters. But she lacked strength of character and was quite soft. Thus, she did nothing to stop the non-observant sisters from tormenting these innocent victims.

At times, however, she would go to visit them in the prison and console them. She was always received with great love. The prisoners would prostrate themselves at her feet and bathe them in tears. With compassion, the Abbess would also weep, but she did not have the courage to face the non-observant faction and alleviate their torments. For God so desired to sanctify His spouses with this most difficult trial.

When the day finally arrived for them to leave the prison, the Abbess presented them with fruit as a kind of amends for the suffering of these victims of observance and seraphic love.

When a certain Canon heard about the persecution of the Conceptionist virgins, he went to the Convent to remove them from prison and take them to the northern part of the Colony where he lived. He was quite wealthy and wanted to build a magnificent convent on his best lands and provide it with all that was necessary, on the condition that Mother Mariana and her 25 companions would go there to found a Convent of the Immaculate Conception, for such was the fame of the great holiness of Mother Mariana and her daughters. He told the sisters that he would write to the King of Spain to receive permission to carry out this plan.

“I know that Mother Mariana de Jesus is imprisoned here with her companions,” he told the sisters. “How could you do this?”

But the sisters denied it, saying that this was a false rumor.

He replied, “Then let Mother Mariana come to speak with me.”

But the sisters made an excuse, saying that Mother Mariana could not come at that moment because of some work that she was doing...

The Canon left, but he returned again and insisted on speaking with Mother Mariana. The sisters, however, told him that he had to have permission from the ecclesiastic authority.

CHAPTER 19

While these unworthy sisters conspired to torment the daughters of the Immaculate Conception with scorn, calumnies, and others sufferings, the imprisoned spouses of the Lamb imitated their Divine Model with sacrifices, penances, prayers, and a life of continual immolation. Thus they placated Divine Justice angered by so many crimes committed in the Colony and by the relaxations being allowed in the Convent. The victims pleaded for pardon and mercy for their sisters. By their prayers and sacrifices, these sacred cloisters of the Immaculate Conception were preserved.

During this difficult trial, the dark prison was visited and sanctified by the presence of God Himself, His Blessed Mother, our Seraphic Father Saint Francis, the apostle of love Saint John the Evangelist, and the Angels, as we shall see below.

THE MIRACULOUS CROSS OF HEAVENLY BRILLIANCE

One night while Mother Mariana was praying in her prison bed, the cross painted in the cavity of the wall above her bed became illuminated with heavenly brilliance, making the prison more luminous than the sun.⁴⁰

It wakened all the captive sisters, who asked Mother Mariana, "My Mother, what is happening?"

"My daughters," she responded, "we must thank God Our Lord for consoling those who suffer persecution for justice's sake."

As she spoke, the cross began to grow until it had reached the actual size of the one upon which the God-Man was crucified. At that moment all the Spanish Founding Mothers went into ecstasy, each one being favored with a different vision.

WORDS OF OUR LORD TO MOTHER MARIANA

Mother Mariana saw Our Lord Crucified as He was on Golgotha, agonizing and with blood pouring from His wounds. She

40. This vision took place one night in early May of the year 1601.

heard the insults and blasphemies of the Jews.

Seeing the immense pain His tears caused Mother Mariana, Our Lord told her: "These wounds were opened in Me by the non-observant religious who revolted against obedience to the Franciscan friars, and I will feel this pain in all the future centuries so long as the Convent remains separated from the jurisdiction of the Friars Minor. For throughout time, there will be unworthy daughters who will revolt against the Seraphic Order. But there will also be souls intensely devoted to the Seraphic family who will take great care to carry out the holy Rule."

SAINT FRANCIS PUNISHES THE NON-OBSERVANT NUNS

Mother Francisca of the Angels saw our Seraphic Father Saint Francis angry with the Convent. Carrying a bow in his hand, he was walking through the cloisters, shooting arrows left and right. One of the arrows pierced the heart of a sister, who died instantly, without anyone knowing the cause.

Then Saint Francis told Mother Francisca, "This sister was the primary cause for the separation of the Friars Minor and the relaxation in the Convent. Upon her weighs all the sufferings and lack of observance of future centuries until that time when the Convent returns to the jurisdiction of the Seraphic family with the exact observance of the Rule given by Pope Julian II. Nonetheless, I will watch that, throughout time, there will always be souls here devoted to the Seraphic Order. By their penitent and abnegated lives, these souls will sustain the regular observance of the Convent."

That morning when the happy prisoners went to Holy Mass, they heard a great commotion in the Community and saw doctors entering to examine a sister who had died during the night. She was believed to have suffered an apoplexy attack, for her face was black and purple of hue.

After the doctors declared that she was dead, the innocent prisoners were released to carry out the body and prepare it for burial. How great was the sorrow of Mother Francisca to bear on her shoulders the body of her persecutor, whom she loved with an angelic love and whose fate she had foreseen in the vision she had been given on that blessed night in prison.

**OUR LADY EXTINGUISHES THE LIGHT
OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT**

Mother Anna of the Conception saw our Immaculate Mother extinguish the sanctuary light of the Blessed Sacrament. As she did so, she told Mother Anna: “My daughter, thus will the spirit of my daughters be extinguished until the Friars Minor return to govern this Convent. For I will always have ungrateful daughters who will violate the spirit of the Seraphic Family – some, through ignorance; others, through weakness; and yet others, through malice.

“But I will also have holy daughters who, loving my Immaculate Conception and my servant Francis, will be firm columns that will preserve the Convent here in the heart of the city where it was founded in order to appease Divine Justice for the crimes committed in it. The infernal serpent will try to destroy this Convent, making use of persons distinguished in learning and virtue, but I will not permit this. For, throughout time, I will have innocent, penitent, abnegated, and faithful daughters who will attract the gaze of God and of His Immaculate Mother and who will be known only by God.”

That morning, at Holy Mass, the lamp of the Blessed Sacrament was found extinguished. Despite the efforts of many persons both inside and outside the Convent to light it, for one day and one night it remained dark, even when the non-observant sisters changed the container, wick, and oil.

On the second day, the lamp lighted by itself, undoubtedly because of the early morning sacrifices of the captive victims who had attracted the mercy of Our Lord for this Convent.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO MOTHER LUCIA OF THE CROSS

Mother Lucia of the Cross saw the Most Holy Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In her vision of the God-Man, she saw His Divine Heart surrounded by thorns and beating violently with love for mankind. His Blood ran in torrents until it flooded the courtyards and cloisters of the Convent, converting it into an ocean of blood.

Our Lord told her, “In this ocean of Blood, My Heart wants to wash the guilty sisters who will return to Me with contrite hearts.”

The servant of God then saw all the religious, both faithful and unfaithful, who would ever inhabit these cloisters until the end of time. She saw that through the course of the centuries, some of the guilty sisters would be washed in the Blood of the Divine Heart of Jesus.

APPARITION OF SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE

Mother Magdalena of Saint John saw the Apostle of Love, Saint John the Evangelist, who smiled lovingly at her. He revealed to her that on the night of the Last Supper, when he was reclining on the breast of his Master, one of the secrets he was given to know was that of the foundation of this Convent so beloved by Christ, and that in it there would be Eucharistic souls who would make expiation for the sacrileges committed against the Divine Victim.

Mother Magdalena then saw a terrible sacrilege that would be committed in the city of Riobamba. The country, which would then be called the Republic of Ecuador, appeared as a Calvary, and the city of Riobamba, a Golgotha. In this city, she saw a Eucharistic victim making expiation through the violence of his sorrowful love. The Sacred Hosts were being trampled upon by the filthy feet of criminal sons, who would cause the cruel and ignominious death of a Jesuit priest, whose just soul would ascend immediately to Heaven without passing through Purgatory even before the Eucharistic profanations that caused his martyrdom would end on earth.

She then saw a person going up and down the streets of the city of Riobamba. When his friends inquired how he was, he replied merrily, "Very well, for I have spent the most enjoyable evening of my life catching friars!" And he continued his jaunt through the outskirts of the city until a beam from a construction site fell on his head, killing him instantly, and his miserable soul descended to Hell.

Mother Magdalena then saw the reparations that the simple people of the country would make. She also saw their Convent of Conceptionists in Riobamba with all the persons who would inhabit it during that time. She saw the tears, prayers, and expiations that the unblemished spouses of the Lamb would make inside the cloister's silent walls rising like the smoke of incense in the solitude

of a temple, placating God Our Lord. The day was bleak and rainy, for the elements of nature manifested the sadness of the day, weeping for this nameless sacrilege made against their Creator.

Saint John then told her that atonement would be made for this public sacrilege and for the many hidden profanations to which the Sacred Eucharist was victim. And she understood that a Convent of the Immaculate Conception had been chosen by God to make amends for that crime of May 4.⁴¹

She also saw all the penances and public acts of humility of the religious who would make reparation for this and many sins of the times. She saw a penitential procession taking place with the sisters carrying the insignias of the Passion. In a transport of joy, Mother Magdalena exclaimed, "How I would like to live in those happy times in order to join my sisters and be with them in this act of reparation!" She further saw that unless such amends had been made, the guilty Republic of Ecuador would have suffered a great chastisement of a total deluge. But she also saw that the sacrifices of the Conceptionist virgins of this Convent would appease the divine anger and that God Our Lord would be pleased with these annual acts of reparation.

She moreover understood that, with the passage of time, a religious soul would become bad. With steadfast cunning, she would try to end the reparation and public penances in the refectory, as well as the penitential procession, the practices that sustained the Convent. I pray that she return to her senses and beg mercy from God!

The Holy Apostle told her that God would be pleased with this procession and pledged to never deny anything so long as it was made with the true and proper spirit, and that the names of

41. The horrendous crime that Saint John foretold took place 300 years later in Riobamba on May 4, 1897. A soldier broke into the Chapel of the College of Saint Philip, and attacked and wounded Fr. Emilio Moscoso, S.J., who died trying to defend the Most Holy Sacrament. The wretched criminal entered the Sacristy, emptied the chalices, stamped on the Sacred Hosts, and then drank spirits from the chalices. In 1900, Sister Francisca of the Wounds founded the Congregation of Franciscan Mothers of the Immaculata as national reparation for this unpardonable sacrilege (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 87-8).

Mother Mariana and the Founding Mothers grieved to realize this horrendous crime, and also the countless sacrileges that would be committed against Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in the 20th century.

those who took part in it carrying the cross and insignia of the Passion would be recorded for all eternity. With the symbols of the Passion, those souls would be presented before God at the hour of their deaths in order to receive great rewards. Their recompense on earth, however, would be suffering and pain.

Finally, the Holy Apostle told her that the world would not end until the friars of the Seraphic Family returned to govern the Convent of the Immaculate Conception. Then, the religious spirit would shine resplendently, and there would be many very holy religious. With this, the vision came to an end.

APPARITION OF THE ANGELS AND THE TORTURE WHEELS

Mother Catherine of the Conception saw that the Angels of Heaven had placed torture wheels in diverse parts of the cloisters and patios of the Convent. As religious approached these wheels, the Angels themselves turned them, torturing the sisters until their bodies were lacerated. The Angels then presented these souls with palms and crowns, and with these symbols their souls soared to Heaven.

Then other Angels placed new wheels in the Convent and, as she saw religious approaching them, she heard a voice saying, "These are the heroic penitential souls who, by their voluntary martyrdoms, will make reparation for their sins and those of their brothers, poor sinners. Thus will they hasten the hour of good fortune for this Community."

MYSTIC VISION AND MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

Mother Maria of the Incarnation contemplated the council of the Holy Trinity in its deliberations on how to ransom fallen mankind. The Person of the Divine Word offered Himself to redeem it, making at that moment an act of humiliation so profound that it could never be repeated by any creature. This act alone would have sufficed to redeem a thousand worlds. Notwithstanding, God desired to become Man.

At that very instant, the Blessed Trinity sent from Heaven the Archangel Saint Gabriel to announce the Mystery of the Incarnation to the humble Virgin Mary who was praying in the retirement of her home in Nazareth. The Most Holy Trinity quietly awaited

the *fiat* of the humble Virgin. After She pronounced it, the Eternal Father and the Holy Ghost worked that ineffable Mystery. The Holy Ghost compressed the Heart of the Blessed Virgin so tightly with divine love that, from the impulse of this love, three drops of blood fell from it. From them, the Holy Ghost formed a most perfect Body the size of a bean pod, and this Body united itself with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Thus did the Mystery of the Incarnation take place.

In this tiny Body, Mother Maria of the Incarnation saw the Heart of the Child God pulsating with love for men and the Divine Word united to Humanity growing in the womb of Mary Most Holy, where He prostrated Himself in the form of the cross. The religious gazed at the tiny hands of the Divine Infant and perceived that they would be pierced with hard nails.

This was followed by the vision of His birth and of how He miraculously lay in the crib. The humble religious later saw his hidden life in Nazareth, and was given to know that throughout the centuries there would be daughters of the Immaculate Conception who, imitating the retired and hidden life of Christ at Nazareth, would sustain the Convent. It was also revealed to her that the common life would reach a greater perfection when the sons of the Seraphim of Assisi will return to govern the Convent. Seeing these marvelous things, the holy religious would have died from the violence of her love if God had not sustained her life.

All the Founding Mothers communicated to Mother Mariana the visions, each one different from the other, that they had simultaneously received on that blessed night. They also attested under oath to the truth of these things in written accounts that are conserved in the archives of the Convent.

OTHER LESSER VISIONS:

PUNISHMENT OF THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

Even the non-observant sisters were given to know that something extraordinary had happened that night. For in the early morning when they were praying the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary (for, despite everything, they had not ceased this practice), they heard celestial music coming from the prison, and saw a refulgent light issuing from it.

Further, at the same time that the Founding Mothers were being favored with the above-mentioned visions, Mother Mariana and the other imprisoned sisters saw the chastisement of their persecutors. It was revealed to Mother Mariana that the present Abbess, Mother Magdalena de Jesus Valenzuela, would die in a few years from a weakened heart and that she would remain in Purgatory until the Final Judgment Day.

All the other sisters saw that the most guilty non-observant sisters, those who had caused the relaxations that would last for centuries, would be lost. Others would suffer their purgatory in that very Convent. In the gardens of the choir courtyard, they would be covered with filthy things. This would be their chastisement. The less guilty religious would leave Purgatory when the Friars Minor will return to govern the Convent of the Immaculate Conception and with the reestablishment of the full observance of the Rule of Pope Saint Julian II.

One can only imagine the suffering that this vision caused to those heroines of seraphic love in their prison, and how they strove to placate Divine Justice in order to save the souls of their beloved sisters. How many humiliations, penances, and sacrifice were made by these innocent virgins! With fear and trembling, they labored for the sanctification of their sisters, begging God Our Lord to hasten the day when the Franciscan Friars would return to govern their Community!

Alas! Since that day, the lack of observance, the relaxations, and so many other evils have increased, being the motive for the tears and sufferings of all the religious victims of angelic love. But it was the evils of these days that caused those future relaxations. For, as the Blessed Virgin told Sister Anna of the Conception, the relaxations of the future centuries would result from sisters entering the Convent who would have never been accepted into the Community of the Immaculate Conception had the Friars Minor been governing the Convent.

Oh! How our holy Religion suffers to see these daughters who stray from the Heart of their God, causing such sufferings to His faithful spouses!

CHAPTER 20

The sufferings of the Conceptionist victims continued. Deprived of their veils and mantles, they suffered the humiliation and despal of the Community.

During the whole time of their unjust imprisonment, however, the non-observant sisters also suffered, for there was so much sickness that the Convent took on the atmosphere of a hospital. And while many of the non-observant sisters became ill, the fortunate captives enjoyed good health, their cheeks like roses. One could say that God Our Lord had given the health of the persecutors to his innocent and beloved spouses.

MOTHER VALENZUELA TAKES STEPS TO FREE THE PRISONERS

Finally, the Mother Abbess could no longer bear to see the sufferings of the saintly prisoners. During a chapter, she spoke to the Community, "My sisters, it is impossible to continue to imprison our innocent sisters. We must ask the Bishop to free them. They are needed in the choir for the recitation of the Divine Office, and I miss their presence."

She could not finish, for she broke into tears, joined by some of the religious. Others, however, remained hard as rocks.

After the meeting, the Abbess went to visit the prisoners, who, falling to their knees, received her with filial love. She told them, "My daughters, your trial will soon come to an end. They will set you all at liberty."

Mother Mariana sealed her lips and the others, with their gazes fixed on the ground, followed her example and said nothing.

The Abbess sent a note to the office of the Bishop, asking, among other things, "that liberty be given to the holy prisoners, for they innocently suffer many injustices. No one except Mother Mariana de Jesus should govern the Convent, for she has been the model of sanctity and observance. I, because of lack of character and softness, allowed myself to be led by the other sisters in this wicked treatment of Mother Mariana. For that, I beg a thousand pardons. I know that I do not have the aptitude to govern, and I

present my resignation as Abbess. My health also no longer permits me to govern, for it has weakened considerably in this period.”

She received the following reply: “Mother, the words you have written me in your letter have pierced my heart. You should have realized your incapacity to govern sooner than this and should never have tormented those who are innocent. This could have caused the closure of your Convent, for the Spanish Mothers are much loved for their sanctity and nobility. You should have realized that they are the ones who should hold the highest posts of importance in the Community. You should know that among the ladies-in-waiting of the Queen of Spain, there is a close relative of Mother Mariana. Some of these ladies have already inquired about her and the other Spaniards.

“Henceforth, you will not permit any of the *criollas*⁴² to hold any position of power or office, for the preeminent posts belong to the Spaniards. Free them immediately and restore to them all their privileges. As for your resignation, complete your three years and your time will end.”

It would be difficult to imagine the suffering of Mother Valenzuela upon receiving this note from the Prelate. She called the Community together and read it publicly, saying, “Sisters, we deserve no more than this. Let us now go in community to release our sisters from prison.”

Seeing that some of the sisters resisted, she cried out, “Under the command of holy obedience, I order that we all go in community to free our saintly sisters.”

They entered into formation and moved toward the prison, with those who had resisted following the procession from afar.

When the group reached the prison, they knocked, opened the door, and entered. The prisoners, seeing the Abbess with the whole Community, began to tremble in fear, dreading yet greater sufferings and fearful that they had come to take Mother Mariana. They surrounded their treasure, fixing their eyes on her.

The Abbess then told them that the Bishop had already restored them to freedom, and, in a short speech, she asked pardon for all that they had suffered.

42. *Criollas* was the name given to the children of Spaniards who had married the natives of Ecuador.

THE HOLY PRISONERS LEAVE THE PRISON

The innocent victims humbled themselves, kissing the ground and the feet of the Abbess. They also kissed the feet of all the religious present and embraced them. When the Abbess gave the command for them to leave, they went in procession to the lower choir where the innocent victims prostrated themselves on the ground in the form of a cross without saying a word. When they rose, the floor was wet with the tears that they had shed at the feet of their Sacramental Spouse.

This was a day of rejoicing for the Community. The freed sisters were given a time to rest, and then the Confessor was called. He heard their confessions and the next morning, they received Communion with great fervor and took up their duties, reassuming their lives of fervor and observance. Still, there was no shortage of sufferings that their persecutors continued to cause them.

These heroines were the first fruits of the Order, and the glory and honor of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy. The Prelate was right to have ordered their liberation.

If the Spanish Founding Mothers had not suffered this trial, there would not have been saints in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception. For this dark, underground prison was the wine press where the precious wine of divine love was made! Mixing it with the myrrh of sorrow, it was then offered to the Divine Spouse and refreshed His mysterious thirst through the course of the centuries. Added to it is the suffering of many religious souls who will imitate the heroic suffering of their Founding Mothers and will also be victims of angelic love.

* * *

CHAPTER 21

During the year 1598, Mother Mariana de Jesus continued to suffer terrible torments, persecutions, and calumnies from the hands of the non-observant sisters. She bore their affronts without making the least complaint, thus imitating her Divine Spouse Who, on the Cross, pardoned and prayed for His enemies.

THE RE-ELECTION OF MOTHER MARIANA AND A REPROACH FROM OUR LORD

Finally Mother Valenzuela's Abbacy reached its end, a most ominous time for the Founding Mothers, and a new election took place. The non-observant sisters did all that they could to have their companion elected, who would permit them even greater freedom in the relaxation of the monastic life. They worked so hard for this that they felt assured of achieving their goal.

For this reason, they were stunned to find that the vote had fallen in favor of Mother Mariana de Jesus, who lacked only the votes of the non-observant sisters In face of the victory of their adversary, some of their number became so fearful they suffered attacks; others could not speak in their anger and confusion.

Immediately following the election of Mother Mariana de Jesus and before the ceremonies could begin, Mother Valenzuela rushed forward and rendered her obedience. She could not wait another minute to deliver the office into the hands of the one whom she now desired to be her Superior. As she rendered her obedience, she said, "Reverend Mother, now you will be my mother."

Bewildered and disoriented, Mother Mariana wanted to ask to resign the office. But as she started to speak, God Our Lord took away her voice and she was unable to speak or even move. At that moment, she saw a light that left the Tabernacle, inundating and illuminating the whole altar and lower choir. She was then given to understand all the sufferings, calumnies, and imprisonments that awaited her in her Abbacy. Notwithstanding her desire to suffer, she still interiorly continued to renounce this burden.

Thinking these things, she saw Our Lord leave the Sacramentary carrying an enormous Cross and wearing a crown of thorns.

His eyes filled with tears, Our Lord approached her and said: "I did not falter on the road to Calvary with this large and heavy Cross, which I carried for love of you and all sinners. And yet you would leave Me alone? Woe to you should this Convent close and you return to Spain!"

Our Lord was also bound with cords and carrying the Cross. He seated Himself next to her with a rope around His neck. This gave strength to Mother Mariana. Meanwhile, the religious were rendering her their obedience, kissing her scapular. But, in fact, without realizing it, they were kissing the rope of Our Lord.

"It is My cord that they kiss," Our Lord told her.

How, indeed, could her heart not be moved upon seeing the tears of her Divine Spouse Who begged her to accept the cross of the Abbacy!

After being invested with the insignias of the Abbess, Mother Mariana felt in her soul such a profound humility that she believed herself to be the most abject creature on the face of the world. "It is just that I suffered," she told herself, "and my sisters were right to treat me as they did."

OUR LORD PUNISHES AN ATTEMPT OF SCHISM BY THE NON-OBSERVANT RELIGIOUS

The procession with the new Abbess took place immediately, followed by the commemorations. Everyone was joyful with the exception of the non-observant sisters, and especially that one who had conspired to be elected Abbess. This unhappy sister, who had been waiting eagerly to assume this office, manifested a death-like sadness.

Mother Mariana, who knew what was taking place in the heart of this sister, approached her persecutor amid the rejoicing of her daughters. With a maternal expression and kindly tone, she said to her, "My dear sister, why are you looking like this? What interior suffering or sadness do you bear?"

The sister, however, responded with arrogance and insolence, "Nothing is wrong. Go and enjoy what you have coveted so greatly."

Mother Mariana left her without saying a word. But Mother Valenzuela reprimanded her impertinence, saying, "What is this,

sister? Why are you behaving like this during our festivities? If you would feel better apart from us, then retire to your cell.”

“Yes, Mother,” replied the sister bitterly. “Many thanks for that.”

And she left, taking with her all the non-observant sisters, who gathered together to intone sad songs expressing their grief.

Distraught by such a display of insolence, Mother Valenzuela fell into a faint. Mother Mariana went to her, and, supporting her in her arms, she commanded Mother Francisca to bring water. The latter flew to comply with this order, returning with this and other remedies. Together, they worked to bring Mother Valenzuela back to consciousness. Her first words upon coming to herself were, “Oh, my poor sisters!”

The religious continued the festivities celebrating the election of their new Abbess. But, as night approached, the insolent sister who had wanted to be Abbess died suddenly from no apparent cause. For this rebellious sister had been the ringleader of a small group that was conspiring to split the Convent and form another community. But God Our Lord did not permit this split, for “the kingdom divided will be destroyed,” and He took the life of the unfaithful instigator.

When her companions saw that their leader had died, they blamed Mother Mariana, saying that she had done something to kill her. The innocent Abbess was silent, saying nothing in her defense. How terrible, indeed, are the unbridled passions in religious persons! And how cruelly they can persecute and torment the innocent victims of their jealousy!

The Divine Spouse, however, had clearly shown the hand of His justice. For since the non-observant sisters had separated themselves to sing canticles of grief, God gave them a true cause for such mourning by taking the life of their leader who had wanted to be Abbess.

But even this did not open their eyes, which were blinded by the infernal serpent. At their iniquitous meetings, they continued to calumniate and persecute their holy Abbess, Mother Mariana, who suffered a double agony, first, to see the scheming of the non-observant sisters; and second, from the continuous sufferings they caused her, as we shall see.

With the death of this poor revolted sister, the Community festivities ended, and funeral preparations began.

THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS SCHEME AGAINST MOTHER MARIANA

Mother Mariana realized all that was taking place in the hearts of the non-observant sisters. To placate their ire, she tried to satisfy their desires even before they expressed them. She personally attended to their needs with a celestial sweetness and humility. In their arrogance and pride, these rebellious sisters would at times disdainfully accept what she brought them; at other times they would haughtily respond, "Put it down there."

Mother Mariana continued, then, to be the object of their anger and contempt. At the end of the first month of her Abbacy, the non-observant sisters went to Mother Valenzuela with their complaints and asked her to write the Bishop so that he might give an order to imprison her. They wanted her to accuse Mother Mariana of causing unrest in the Convent and to say that they could no longer tolerate her stern treatment. She should tell him that after only a month under her government, life had become intolerable, and beg him to put an end to such a harsh government.

Mother Valenzuela replied that she would indeed write the Bishop a letter, and told them to come back later so that they could sign it. She then composed a letter that exposed the non-observant sisters as the source of agitation inside the Convent. She asked that they be imprisoned, listing all of their names.

When the non-observant sisters read what Mother Valenzuela had written, they became furious. They resolved to write the letter to the Prelate themselves, without her assistance.

In fact, Mother Mariana would not tolerate inobservance of the Rule, but she employed the most gentle and tactful means she could to correct the sisters in their transgressions against it. She would sweetly admonish her, "My dear sister, let us not forget that in this house we are obliged to keep silence. Let us, then, be more careful." But her attempts were futile, and for her efforts, she suffered unspeakable torments.

The situation was further confused by certain orders of the Bishop who had jurisdiction over the Convent, for they were of a

tenor that to obey them would compromise the conscience. Thus observance to the Rule diminished, and the life of the Convent wavered precariously and threatened to die from the loss of the government of the Friars Minor, who had sweetly instructed their daughters in strict observance of the Rule. The secular Prelate, on the contrary, neither understood the Rule nor could he hold in check the non-observant faction of sisters.

Mother Valenzuela was a good religious, but she did not have the gift for governing. Lacking character and firm resolution, she had allowed herself to be swayed by the non-observant sisters. Now she was suffering profoundly for having been the one to request that the Franciscan friars leave in order to please the rebellious sisters. Upon her conscience fell all the weight of non-observance of the Rule.

Seeing that the humility and sweetness of Mother Mariana could not subdue these rebellious sisters, Mother Valenzuela fell ill in her grief. During the sickness, her only consolation was Mother Mariana.

MOTHER MARIANA IS IMPRISONED

Meanwhile, the conclave of non-observant sisters wrote the Bishop a note along these lines: "Mother Mariana de Jesus breaks the silence whenever she desires. She does not assist at Community prayers. She privately indulges herself and her friends with extra food. The Convent is conspiring with the Franciscan friars, with whom she converses into the late hours of the night. Furthermore, Mother Mariana is striving to overthrow the jurisdiction of Your Illustrious Lordship. We beg you to imprison her."

They also included other such accusations. The note was sealed and sent, although God Our Lord revealed to Mother Mariana what it contained.

Two notes from the Prelate were not long in returning: a private one to the non-observant sisters, whose contents God Our Lord revealed to Mother Mariana. The other was addressed to her.

It said the following: "Mother, for having so gravely transgressed your Rule and for communicating with the Friars Minor until late into the night. I order your temporary dismissal from the

office of Abbess, this seat remaining vacant until further notice, and your immediate imprisonment.”

Reading this note, Mother Mariana wept. Mother Francisca, seeing her grief, inquired, “What has happened, my Mother?”

But Mother Mariana did not reply. Instead, she went to the lower choir to pray.

Meanwhile her persecutors were looking for her. Finding her in the choir, they triumphantly commanded, “Leave the choir, Mother, and go to the prison in obedience to the Bishop’s order commanding us to put you there.”

The innocent victim complied, telling them, “I would like to get the Breviary from my cell.”

“No,” her persecutors responded, “the Divine Office is for the observant sisters, not for you.” And they took her to the Convent prison.

The other religious, who knew nothing of the Bishop’s letter and command, were searching for their Abbess but could not find her anywhere. One of the persecutors finally told them, “We no longer have an Abbess. We will have a new election, for Mother Mariana is in prison.”

How this sword of sorrow pierced the hearts of the Spanish sisters! They immediately went to her. “Our Mother,” they said to her from outside its walls, “what shall we do?”

“My daughters,” she replied, “leave me here, and pray for me.”

* * *

CHAPTER 22

While the Community of faithful sisters mourned the imprisonment of their Abbess, the persecutors put on triumphant airs and tried to restore the health of Mother Valenzuela so that they could make her Abbess. They had an interest in seeing her well because in the note that they had written to the Prelate requesting the imprisonment of Mother Mariana, one of the calumnies was that Mother Valenzuela had fallen ill because of the rigorous treatment she had received from the Abbess.

The non-observant sisters, therefore, were constantly at her bedside, which caused Mother Valenzuela great disgust. For Mother Valenzuela, who had recognized her error and no longer supported the non-observant sisters, was now firmly united to Mother Mariana and the other Founding Mothers.

Sick in bed, Mother Valenzuela remained ignorant of the imprisonment of Mother Mariana. All her consolation had been in her Abbess, who had tried to help her regain her health by every means possible, treating her with sweetness, charity, and a maternal love.

Now, seeing that Mother Mariana was no longer there to assist her, she called out for her, requesting her presence. The persecutors responded that she was busy, but the ill woman continued to call out for her. When Mother Mariana did not come, she began to weep, saying that Mother Mariana had died.

A non-observant sister then told her, "No, she is not dead, but imprisoned."

Hearing this, Mother Valenzuela fainted. Two days passed with her lying in a deathlike state from the terrible heart attack she had suffered. The religious were worried that she had, in fact, really died.

When, deathly pale, she returned to consciousness, the doctors said that it was a miracle, for the attack had touched not only her brain, but also her heart, and they had warned that if this would happen often, she would die from it.

The Community became greatly alarmed when Mother Valenzuela, weeping, begged them to dress her and carry her to the

prison. "I want to be in prison with my Abbess," she said. "I should be there with her." The non-observant sisters did not know what to do. However, after conversing among themselves, they decided they could not do what she requested.

THE OTHER SPANISH FOUNDING MOTHERS ARE ALSO IMPRISONED

Under the solicitous care of Mother Francisca, Mother Valenzuela's health improved as the days passed. Noting her improvement, the rebellious sisters pretended that this had happened by a miracle of Mother Mariana and the nurse, whom they also subjected to insults. Finally, they put her in the prison with Mother Mariana.

Mother Valenzuela then asked for Mother Maria of the Incarnation, the Convent secretary. In response, the non-observant sisters arrested her as well. As they led her to the prison, this holy religious questioned them, "Upon whose orders do you take me to the prison?"

They replied, "On orders from our superiors."

The religious tried to resist, for she realized that no order from the Bishop existed. However, to avoid causing greater scandal, she entered the prison. And with each day that passed, they continued to imprison another of the Founding Mothers.

When Mother Valenzuela learned that Mother Maria of the Incarnation and all the other Founding Mothers had been imprisoned, she became furious. Exerting great effort, she rose from her bed and strongly reprimanded them, crying out: "How can you commit such injustices against our holy Founding Mothers? Because of you, the Convent will be destroyed, and your names will be written for posterity in ignominy!"

She directed yet more serious words to them, but the non-observant sisters would not relent. This was the first time that Mother Valenzuela broke the silence.

"Mother," they told her, "do not defend the Spanish sisters, for they are guilty." As proof, they presented outrageous falsehoods about the innocent victims. When she vehemently protested and accused them of lying, they would smile, shake their heads, and say, "Poor Mother Valenzuela is delirious."

When, trembling and weak, Mother Valenzuela could finally walk a bit, the first place she went was the prison. Knocking on the door, which she wished she had the strength to break, she said, "Who has the key to this door so that I might enter this Heaven?" She then called out for the Mother Abbess.

Mother Mariana respectfully went to the door, and Mother Valenzuela asked her: "What is going on here, my Mother?"

Mother Mariana told her about the note that the non-observant sisters had written to the Bishop, as well as his reply with the order to imprison her. Hearing this, Mother Valenzuela became profoundly distressed and agitated. When the non-observant sisters found her there outside the prison door, they thought that she truly was in a state of delirium.

Right there in the prison cloister, the non-observant sisters began to argue among themselves.

"It is your fault this is happening because you wrote the note," accused one.

"But it was you who told me what to write," answered the other.

"But it was you who added this point," added another.

And so they bickered among themselves, and became divided. Since Mother Valenzuela was well enough to write, she immediately directed another message to the Prelate, professing the innocence of the Abbess and the other Spanish Mothers, and asking him to free them.

But since the government of the Convent was in the hands of the non-observant faction, the note was not sent. Instead, the sisters tore it up and lied to Mother Valenzuela, telling her they had sent it.

When she would ask if a response had arrived, they would reply, "It will come soon, Mother."

Confused at the delay, she called for her confessor to inform him of the injustices being committed against the innocent prisoners. Since the non-observant sisters had spoken to him first and insisted on the guilt of the Spanish Mothers, the confessor pretended the matter was out of his hands.

He told her, "I can do nothing, for the Bishop is angry with the Spanish sisters."

**THE EDIFYING BEHAVIOR OF MOTHER MARIANA
AND THE FOUNDING MOTHERS IN PRISON**

This situation caused Mother Valenzuela indescribable torment for she realized that she was the cause of these injustices committed against the innocent Mothers. Her only consolation was to go to the prison of the innocent victims, finding refuge in the prison cloisters. There she would sit on the stone benches outside the prison and the good observant sisters would join her there, disputing for the honor to keep company with the holy prisoners.

“This evening you are going to go to prison,” they would say. Or, “Mother, tomorrow you and the other observant sisters will join your friends.”

Even facing this group and Mother Valenzuela, who was frustrated beyond words because she could stop neither this torrent of fury, envy, and lies, nor the growing relaxation of the Rule inside the Convent, the non-observant sisters continued to torment the captives. These revolted sisters did whatever they wanted, and during this ill-fated month, life in the holy cloisters was very bitter indeed, for the infernal serpent was in power.

It is worth noting that these poor non-observant sisters, who met often with their confessors, nonetheless did not receive Communion even once during this month, most probably because their consciences tormented them about the terrible way they were treating the saintly and illustrious Abbess, Mother Mariana de Jesus, and the rest of the Founding Mothers and other observant religious.

What a sad and lamentable epoch in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception when the infernal serpent had seized control of the native sisters in order to destroy, by means of division and non-observance of the Rule, the motherhouse of the Order of the Immaculate Conception in Ecuador. These chronicles should be blotted with tears of blood. Let it be known that these shameful times are recorded here only so that they might resplendently reflect the mercy of God and the Blessed Virgin in preserving this Convent, which was not destroyed during this ill-fated epoch undoubtedly in part because of the penances, prayers, and continual immolation of the saintly Abbess and the Spanish Mothers, who placated the divine ire.

During this time, strict observance of the Rule shone resplendently only in the prison. When Mother Francisca was imprisoned, she brought with her the Breviary of Mother Mariana. With the rest of the imprisoned sisters, they prayed and sang the divine psalmody, these melodious verses consoling the Heart of their Divine Spouse, so sorely wounded by the non-observant sisters.

This prison, then, deflected the hand of Divine Justice and become an altar that exhaled the sweetly scented incense of its sacrificial victims. Happy the Convent that housed those sweet doves, whose tender cooing consoled the Divine Lover. Blessed are the Spanish Mothers who founded this nest of the Immaculate Conception and who, sighing plaintively like mourning doves, placated the Divine Spouse, preserving the Convent by the violence of their sacrifices and their love.

LIGHTS AND SWEET VOICES FROM HEAVEN INUNDATE THE PRISON

But the Queen of Heaven and Earth did not forget her faithful daughters. With unmatched fervor, they paid homage to her each day with the recitation of the early morning Little Office. Worthy Spouses of their Crucified Lord, they bore the cross with dignity and valor.

One night at midnight, the holy Abbess, as was her custom, prepared to pray while her sisters slept the tranquil sleep of the just. Prostrate with her forehead on the ground, she humbled herself in the presence of her Lord and God. Believing that her many faults were the cause for divine anger against her beloved Convent and judging herself to be the most culpable creature on earth, she begged His mercy and pardon.

At the height of her prayer at 1 a.m. on January 16, she heard the strains of a melodious voice, accompanied by a zither of heavenly tone. As she listened in marvel, the prison became illuminated with a celestial light. Quickly she rose to her knees, calling out several times to her sleeping sisters so that they might also be consoled by the celestial music. They did not awaken, however.

Mother Mariana remained kneeling before the cross that had been painted on the prison wall. Suddenly she saw before her

the Seraphic Saint Francis, playing the zither, and Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, her Mother and Founder, who was intoning couplets of mournful love.

Inebriated with joy, Mother Mariana could not say a word. Her heart longed to partake of the celestial happiness of her Mother and Founder.

Then Mother Maria spoke to her, "My daughter and niece, you have never been so pleasing to Our Lord as during this present time, when sorrow engulfs you. Ah! If you only knew the value of suffering unjustly for love of conventual observance! To recompense your constancy and your humble suffering, my Seraphic Father and I have come to delight your ears and fill your heart with celestial consolation."

Saint Francis spoke: "My daughter and beloved bride of the Spouse of virgins, your sufferings and those of your daughters and mine, as well as the tears and prayers that rise to Heaven from this prison, have touched the magnanimous Heart of God and his Blessed Mother. In His infinite love for you, He sent us to comfort your downcast spirit.

"Hear this zither: it is the same one that a winged spirit played for me during an ecstasy of love and joy I experienced in times long past when I lived on earth. Now, in Heaven, I play it for my sons and daughters on earth to console them during the unjust persecutions they suffer. Some hear this celestial music with their bodily senses, as you do. Others can hear it only in the depths of their souls.

"Take courage and remain steadfast in your suffering for conventual observance, for the rewards in Heaven that await the observant religious are great. Whoever loves me will be loved and blessed by God, but whoever swerves from my spirit, I will neither recognize nor defend before the Supreme Tribunal. This Convent, so beloved by me, will always be privileged. I will unceasingly watch over it until the end of time, for in all centuries it will have faithful and loving daughters.

"Now expand your heart and prepare yourself, for Our Sovereign and Queen is coming to visit your prison. We are only her messengers."

Saying this, Saint Francis and Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada disappeared.

**THIRD APPARITION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
ON JANUARY 16, 1599**

In a light more brilliant than the one that was fading away, a most beautiful Lady appeared. She carried her most precious Son in her left arm and a crosier in her right. On the crosier was a cross of diamonds, each one shining like the sun. In the middle of the cross was a ruby star engraved with the name Mary, which radiated lights, one more brilliant than the next.

The humble Mother Mariana did not believe herself worthy of such a favor. She feared that this might be some imaginary illusion brought on by her great sufferings.

Summoning all her strength, she raised her arms and said: "Beautiful Lady, Who art thou and what dost thou desire of me in this obscure place where thou dost find me with my suffering daughters? Perhaps some sin, hidden from my sight, has roused divine ire against this amenable garden? If such be the case, let me, the guilty one, die, but save the innocent ones and this beloved Convent.

"If I stand before a figure of my imagination, then I beg thee, by the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and the Divine Maternity, to depart from me, leaving me in the obscurity of the Faith, so sweet and enchanting for me!

"I do not refuse suffering, nor have I ever refused it, because I love Jesus, and this love makes me want to make myself like unto Him. I only implore strength and valor, for, distanced from the Seraphic Family, religious life is difficult and obscure."

**OUR LADY REVEALS WHO SHE IS
AND THE DESIGNS OF GOD FOR THIS CONVENT**

Then the divine apparition spoke these words: "My most beloved daughter, why are you so slow and heavy of heart? This is no figure of your imagination who stands before your eyes. I am Mary of Good Success, your Mother from Heaven, an invocation

well known in Spain,⁴³ and one to whom you have often resorted. There is no hidden sin in you nor any of the observant sisters who love my servant Francis and his Seraphicfamily. The tribulation that my Most Holy Son has given you is a celestial gift to embellish your own souls and to hold back the divine ire, so ready to unleash a terrible chastisement upon this ungrateful Colony. How many hidden crimes are committed in it and the surrounding area! For precisely this reason, this Convent was founded here so that the God of Heaven and Earth would receive reparation in the very place where He is offended and unrecognized. For this reason also, the Devil, enemy of God and of the just, both now and in future centuries will use all his malicious cunning to try to destroy this Convent, my foundation and legacy. Toward this end, he will avail himself of persons of authority and dignity, often under the pretext of improving the situation and bringing greater peace!

“Oh! The ignorance of the learned and the folly of mortals who do not recognize the secret designs of God in His works! Remember the words of the Royal Prophet: ‘How marvelous are the works of the Lord!’ Be convinced of this truth; teach and impress upon your daughters – both those who live now and those to come – that they should love their divine vocation. Let them also love the glorious place that God and I chose for our property and inheritance. God, absolute Master of all that exists, chooses where He will accomplish His secret designs, and no creature can thwart Him without incurring divine malediction.

“Throughout the centuries, I will live here in the person of some of my daughters. For here, amid the tumult of the ungrateful world, God will have some contemplative spouses worthy of His Majesty. Those souls, who will suffer obscurity, silence, humiliation, and scorn even from within the bosom of their Community, will placate Divine Justice and gain great benefits for the Church, their country, and their fellow man. Without them, Quito would not continue to exist.”

43. The devotion to Our Lady of Good Success was approved by Pope Saint Pius V in 1571 to honor a statue found miraculously in a cave in Catalonia by the founder of the Order of Saint Francis of Paola. See *Our Lady of Good Success Novena and Prayer Booklet*, (Oconomowoc, WI: The Apostolate of Our Lady of Good Success, 2003).

PROPHECIES REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE COLONY AND THE CONVENT

“In a short time, the country in which you live will cease to be a Colony and will become a free Republic. Then, known by the name of Ecuador, it will need heroic souls to sustain it in face of so many public and private calamities.⁴⁴

“Here [in this Convent] God will always find these souls, like hidden violets. Accursed would be Quito without this Convent. The most powerful king on earth with all his riches could not erect new buildings on this site, for this place belongs to God. Just as Julian the Apostate with all his mendacious powers could not rebuild the Temple of Solomon, the power of men against the Lamb of God is futile!

“With maternal solicitude, I will watch over this Convent and its properties. If it is necessary to uphold these walls that guard the cloisters with miracles, I will make them. All those who strive to sustain and preserve this beloved place will be blessed by God and His Mother, to whom you speak. Their names will be written on the shining star of rubies that you see in the middle of this crosier, the symbol of my power and authority in this house. As for those who work to destroy this Convent, I will take the lives of some when they least expect it; to others will befall great difficulties, and all will receive in eternity what they deserve in justice.

“In the 19th century a truly Christian president will come, a man of character whom God Our Lord will give the palm of martyrdom on the square adjoining this Convent of mine. He will consecrate the Republic to the Sacred Heart of my Most Holy Son,

44. It is interesting to see that Our Lady specified that the new country would take the name of the Republic of Ecuador. This apparition took place on January 16, 1599. In an autobiography of Mother Mariana written in 1735 by Fr. Bartolomé Ochoa de Alácano y Gamboa, O.F.M., he records these prophetic words precisely (Cadena y Almeida, *Apariciones*, pp. 120-1).

In fact, the Republic of Ecuador was declared on August 19, 1809. The following year witnessed a terrible massacre of the nobility, even women and children being put to the sword. Independence was definitively secured on May 22, 1820 after the Battle of Pinchincha. Since that time, Ecuador has been torn by internal dissensions. Backed by the powers of Freemasonry, the Liberals took power in the 19th century. In the early 20th century the government instituted a policy of strident anticlericalism and introduced laws to deprive the Church of her power and possessions.

and this consecration will sustain the Catholic Religion in the years that will follow, which will be ill-fated ones for the Church.⁴⁵ These years, during which the accursed sect of Masonry will take control of the civil government, will see a cruel persecution of all religious communities, and it will also strike out violently against this one of mine. These unfortunate men will think the Convent destroyed, but God lives and I live, and we will raise up powerful defenders and set before these enemies difficulties impossible to conquer, and the triumph will be ours.⁴⁶

“During this time there will be beautiful souls in this Convent, who, like solitary doves cooing plaintive notes of mournful love, will attract the mercy of God upon His Convent, His unworthy country and the attacked Church, souls so obscure and unknown to all that they themselves will not know how their Lord and God is forming them.”

**OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS COMMANDS
A STATUE OF HERSELF TO BE MADE**

“Thus it is the wish of my Most Holy Son that you command a statue of me to be made, just as you see me now, and that you place it upon the Abbess’ chair so that I may govern my Con-

45. A century and a half later, in 1873, the truly Catholic president Gabriel Garcia Moreno made a public consecration of the Republic of Ecuador to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This act infuriated the Freemasons, and the German Grand Lodge gave an order for his death. On August 6, 1874, on his way out of the Cathedral in the square of Quito adjoining the Convent, as Our Lady had forewarned, he was struck down and killed by assassins. Under his presidency (1861-1865 and 1869-1875) civil and religious affairs were reorganized favoring the Catholic Church. The Jesuits were recalled and charged with the education of youth, a concordat with Rome established, and new Dioceses erected. After his death, persecution of the Church recommenced under the influence of Freemasonry.

46. The year saw the installation of a secular liberal government that effectively established the laicism of the State, with laws of civil matrimony, divorce, and equal rights for all religions. The Law of *Manos Muertas* of 1902, which despoiled the goods of religious communities and deprived the religious of their monthly stipends, led to the gradual disappearance of many religious institutions. In 1909, to complete the attack, Miguel Valverde introduced a decree in Congress that would abolish all monastic establishments of contemplative women and sell their properties. There was a vicious fight, and in the end, the decree was not approved. During this turbulent period, the sisters of the Immaculate Conception Convent suffered greatly and had recourse to “*la Mamita Virgen del Buen Suceso*,” as the sisters affectionately called her, asking her assistance in this great trial (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profetico*, pp. 46-61).

vent. In my right hand, place the crosier and the keys to the cloister as a sign of my proprietorship and authority.

“In my left arm, place my Divine Child: first, so that men understand how powerful I am in placating the Divine Justice and obtaining mercy and pardon for every sinner who comes to me with a contrite heart, for I am the Mother of Mercy and in me there is only goodness and love; and second, so that throughout time my daughters will understand that I am showing and giving them my most Holy Son and their God as a model of religious perfection. They should come to me, for I will lead them to Him.

“When tribulations of spirit and sufferings of body oppress them and they seem to be drowning in a bottomless sea, let them gaze at my holy Image, which will be for them a star for the shipwrecked. I will always be there, ready to listen to their lamentations and calm their weeping. Tell them that they should always have recourse to their Mother with faith and love, for it is my desire to live with them and in them. The sufferings of your daughters will conserve their Convent for all times. Tell them that they should imitate my humility, my obedience, my spirit of sacrifice, and my absolute dependence on the divine will. These are the wings on which my daughters through the ages who venerate the mystery of my Immaculate Conception will soar with mysterious agility to the highest summits of sanctity in the quiet retirement of their cloisters under the pure gaze of God.”

THE PRELATE WHO WILL COME TO RESTORE THE AGONIZING COMMUNITY

“The separation of the Friars Minor has taken place by divine permission. Woe to those who openly worked to obscure the light of my Convent! But after some centuries, they will return to govern this beloved flock, which will always lament their absence and feel their loss.⁴⁷ Then, this beloved garden of mine will be a fecund garden where the Celestial Spouse will find His rest amid its sweet fragrances, rare flowers, and exquisite fruits.

47. When will the Franciscan friars return to the spiritual direction of the Convent? This will depend on the will of God and the intervention of Our Lady. It will be during a time – we hope not too distant – of great fervor and holiness in the Convent, when the Rule is faithfully observed in all its details, a “golden era,” as Our Lady called it.

“Neither you nor your present-day daughters and sisters will see the happiness that will dawn for this blessed Convent. However, you and your faithful and obedient daughters should make sacrifices and implore God to hasten that time to come on this earth, for today marks the beginning of a dark night. But a golden era will come for this my Convent. Then a *Prelado* [prelate], my most beloved son, blessed and prized before God, will understand by divine light the necessity for the daughters of my Immaculate Conception to subject themselves in exact obedience to the Friars Minor for their sanctification and perfection. This Prelate will ask the Vicar of my most Holy Son here on Earth to restore the jurisdiction over this Convent to the Friars Minor.

“The day will come when the corruption of customs in the world will have seemed to have reached its apogee, and when my agonizing Community will find itself deprived of earthly goods and overflowing in bitterness and sorrow. The Friars Minor will raise up their downcast spirits, attract true and saintly vocations, and form religious worthy of the name.

“During this time, the Community of Franciscans, dearly beloved sons of My Immaculate Heart, will be observant in every detail. None among them will be unfaithful to their Seraphic Father, whose virtue will be recognized and loved by all. They will attract the hearts of the good and the evil, and all will respect them. For God Three Times Holy and the Seraphic Stigmatic [Saint Francis] will have separated the wheat from the chaff, leaving only the pure wheat and the most perfect grapes in order to nourish, with the health-giving bread of practical teaching, the delicate souls of their sisters, the observant religious, so needed in that time. Founded on on solid virtue and from the heights of their seraphic and humble contemplation, the observant sisters will be inebriated with the plentiful wine of Divine Love and close union with God.

“Happy, blessed, and beloved by God will be my daughters of this time who, with humility and simplicity, will manifest their desire to subject themselves to my Franciscan friars, following the Rule and obeying that Prelate, my much beloved son. Their names will be written in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, their Divine Spouse, and in my own. They will merit special honor among the daughters of my seraphic servant Francis. Those who will oppose them will

be counted as worthless straw, worthy only of the punishing fire.”

HOW THE HEIGHT OF THE MOTHER OF GOD WAS MEASURED

The humble religious opened her spirit to the Blessed Virgin Mary, her Celestial Mother and Abbess. Then she timidly addressed her about the statue she wanted her to have made: “Most beautiful Lady, Thy beauty enchants me. Oh! If thou would only allow me to leave this ungrateful earth and take me with thee to Heaven! But permit me to say, that no human person, even the greatest expert in the art of sculpture, could make a wood statue in thy enchanting likeness and details as you ask. For this mission, I request my Seraphic Father to carve thy holy statue in the finest wood, aided by the Angels of Heaven, for I could never explain, nor much less give the measurement of your height.”

To this, the vision responded, “Remain undaunted, my daughter, I will agree to what you ask of me. My servant Francis with his own wounded hands will carve my statue and the angelic spirits will assist him. He himself will place on me his cord, the symbol of all his sons and daughters who belong so closely to me. As for the height of my form, you yourself will measure me with the seraphic cord that you wear around your waist.”

The religious replied, “Beautiful Lady, my dearest Mother, how can I, still a wayfarer on this earth, dare to touch thy divine forehead, which even the angelic spirits dare not do? Thou art the living Ark of the Covenant between poor mortals and God. And if Oza fell dead only for his fault in touching the Holy Ark to keep it from falling to the ground, how much more do I, a poor and weak woman, have to fear?”⁴⁸

The Blessed Virgin responded: “Your humble restraint pleases me, and I see your ardent love for the Mother of God to

48. The Israelites had a great reverential fear of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. Only the priests were allowed to touch it. The Lord struck down Oza for touching the Ark to steady it when the Israelites were moving it to Jerusalem (2 Kings 6:6-7). In the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), Pope Pius XII explained how the new Ark of the Covenant is Our Lady and superior to the old, since the most pure body of the Virgin Mary is an Ark “built of incorruptible wood ... preserved and exempt from all the corruption of the tomb and raised up to such glory in Heaven” (n. 26).

whom you speak. Bring your cord to me and place one end of it in my hand. Then you should touch the other end of it to my foot.”

The exultant religious did what Mary Most Holy ordered, trembling with joy, love, and reverence.⁴⁹

The Holy Virgin continued: “Here, my daughter, you have the measurement of the height of your Heavenly Mother. Tell this to my servant, Francisco del Castillo,⁵⁰ and describe to him my features and bearing. He will do the exterior work on my statue, for he has a delicate conscience and scrupulously observes the Commandments of God and the Church. He is the only one worthy of this grace. You, on your part, must aid him with your prayers and with your humble suffering.”

LAST WORDS AND BLESSING OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS

“Soon you will leave this prison, which will remain a privileged place in this Convent of yours and mine, because the innocent have suffered here. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice’s sake, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. I say this to you, your daughters and companions in prison, and also to all my daughters who will suffer through the centuries for the Seraphic Family to preserve regular observance of the Rule.

“With my own hands, I receive your tears and secret sufferings and convert them into beautiful pearls to present to my Most Holy Son, so that He might hasten the day of your seraphic freedom. For since today, their captivity begins. Encourage your suffering daughters. Now, I give my maternal blessing to you and all of my daughters.

“Awaken your sisters from their sleep so that, with you, they might raise their voices in reciting the Matins of the Little Office, which gives me such great pleasure, for it is the mainstay of this, my Community. Without it, its members would lack the true

49. The majestic statue of Our Lady of Good Success, made according to these specifications, stands 5 feet 9 inches tall.

50. For more on the role of the artist Francisco del Castillo in the making of the miraculous statue, see Marian T. Horvat, *Stories and Miracles of Our Lady of Good Success*, pp. 42-4.

religious spirit, and they would see themselves wither like plants exposed to the harsh winter air.”

After saying these words imbued with divine mystery, the divine apparition disappeared, and the happy Abbess lit her lamp to awaken her daughters, who were peacefully sleeping.

The voice of their Abbess awakened the imprisoned sisters at 4 a.m. Kneeling, they said the first prayers of the day and each one received the blessing of their Abbess. In it, she included the blessing of their Heavenly Mother. Then, with extraordinary fervor, they began to pray the Little Office. The Angels took new delight in carrying these ardent prayers to the heavenly kingdom, prayers that emanated from hearts purified by suffering, making them powerful in placating the divine ire and obtaining pardon and mercy for the culpable Spanish Colony.

VISION OF THE INFERNAL DRAGON

After the praying of the Matins and Lauds, Mother Mariana remained in prayer. As she prayed, she saw in the Convent an immense and monstrous dragon, whose large, round eyes spit fire in every direction. This fire consumed the unfaithful sisters who had plotted so unceasingly how to banish the Franciscan friars for ever and oppress the holy and innocent Founding Mothers. The dragon prowled throughout the Convent and its courtyards, but it could not enter either the choir or the prison. When it approached these places, the monster trembled in confusion and fled in terror.

Having finished the hour of Tierce and before beginning the recitation of the Sext, she told her sisters: “My daughters, let us offer the remaining hours of the Office for our poor sisters who walk in darkness and persecute us unjustly. I see how the infernal dragon is instigating them. It saddens me that these sisters, spouses of my Lord and God, are losing their souls. The tears, sorrows, and loss of the spirit of the Order that our sisters in the coming centuries will suffer weighs heavily upon these guilty sisters. Oh! If they could only realize this now, as we do!”

When they recommenced the praying of the Little Office, all the Founders, along with Mother Mariana, saw the terrible dragon prowling through the Convent. At the end of the morning prayer,

the religious and their holy Abbess all took the discipline. After this, they began the mental prayer prescribed by the Rule.

During it, they all saw their seraphic Father Saint Francis with a bow in his hand, shooting flaming arrows at the dragon, who tried to flee but did not know where to go. Badly wounded and covered with arrows, it gave a horrible cry. Exerting all its strength, it caused the earth to open and withdrew into this abyss. At that very moment, 5:15 a.m., a long, strong tremor of the earth took place. This tremor caused fear and commotion among the inhabitants of the city, and the sisters could hear the cries and shouts of persons begging to God for mercy.

Inside the Convent, Mother Valenzuela attributed the earthquake to Divine Justice meting out a chastisement for the injustices being done against the holy Founding Mothers. The non-observant sisters awoke sick with strong pains in their bodies. They cried out, saying that the walls were falling down on them, but they were unable to move. Only one sister, the worst tormenter of the innocent Founders, managed to rise with great effort to try to prevent Mother Valenzuela from going to help her innocent sisters in the prison.

Be it understood that during this ill-fated time in the Convent, Mother Valenzuela did not command. Rather, a resentful non-observant sister had unjustly assumed the direction of the Convent, and neither the insinuations nor reproofs of Mother Valenzuela could do anything to bring her to her senses.

Sorely afflicted and suffering enormously, Mother Valenzuela, along with the rest of the observant sisters in the Convent, fled to the door of the prison. There they were consoled by their holy Abbess, for, in her, they found all the virtues that the non-observant sisters lacked.

LIFE IN PRISON

Mother Valenzuela had employed every means in her power to free the innocent sisters from prison. She could neither eat nor sleep in peace. As for the captives, they had converted the prison into a true Heaven, so much so that the Queen of Heaven visited them there. In union with their Abbess, the innocent victims implored light and mercy for their poor sisters, whom they loved with

all their hearts.

As generous and faithful daughters of their Crucified Lord, Mary Immaculate, and the Seraphim of Assisi, they bore no resentment in their hearts. Deprived of every human good, for even their food was frugal and sparse, they suffered a thousand hardships. Less virtuous souls, wearied by such suffering, would have given in and ceded to the demands of their negligent sisters, who wanted to abandon observance of the Rule. But they maintained their happiness, peace, confidence, and holy tranquility in prison.

Their holy Abbess, with her generous and magnanimous heart, or better said, her truly virile heart, tried to divert and cheer her sisters, fostering their love for Mary Most Holy and animating them with the hope of Heaven. Would that we could hear the words that this blessed soul spoke about the beauties of Heaven to her sisters and daughters!

As the Author of every perfect gift had endowed Mother Mariana with beauty of both soul and body, her very presence attracted all to her. Further, she was gifted with a beautiful voice, sweet and melodious in song, and she had learned to play several instruments.

The Marquesa, a lady of Quito who knew and admired Mother Mariana greatly, had ordered a beautiful harp made in Valladolid and presented it to her at the time of the foundation of the Convent.⁵¹ In the prison, Mother Mariana would play on this harp with the greatest of unction, heartening herself and her daughters.

Curiously enough, when the non-observant sisters would imprison Mother Mariana, they themselves would bring her the harp. Then, when she played and sang, they would go to listen to her beautiful voice whose sweetness they could not resist.

And just as in times past the bad temper of Saul would lift when he heard the harp of the young David, they found comfort in hearing her singing and playing. The observant sisters who were not imprisoned would also go to hear her play and were consoled to

51. More stories of the holy widow, the Marquesa Maria de Yolanda, and her role in the making of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success are told in Volume II of this biography by Fr. Manuel Pereira. See also, M. T. Horvat, *Stories and Miracles of Our Lady of Good Success*, pp. 45-50.

hear the melodious voice of their Mother. As they listened, they would shed tears of compassion and yearn for the hour when they would again be united with their holy Mother and Abbess.

During this imprisonment, Mother Mariana de Jesus composed the moving verses filled with divine unction transcribed below. Accompanied by her harp, she sang and taught her daughters these verses dedicated to her Heavenly Mother.

They accompanied her in song, each voice harmonizing with the other, making a lovely concert of angelic voices. For Mothers Francisca of the Angels, Lucia of the Cross, and Maria of the Incarnation were also gifted with beautiful voices, inferior only to that of Mother Mariana. The sad melody that raises heart and soul to Heaven was composed by Mother Mariana while she was in prison.

**VERSES THAT MOTHER MARIANA COMPOSED IN PRISON
IN THE YEAR 1599**

Beautiful Maiden,
Delight of God,
Come visit my soul,
Quickly I implore.

I implore thee, my Mother,
Sustain me in my strife.
Console me in my sorrow
And relieve me in my pain.

In cruel bitterness
Amidst pain and grief.
Thou art my consolation,
And thou givest me strength.

Save, then, thy house,
Which was founded by thee.
Where peace and love
Reside hidden in it.

Like a withered leaf
That falls from the tree of God,
I feel far removed from the tree
of the Franciscan Order

Oh! Stigmatic Father,
Francis of Assisi!
Be thou my advocate
In this fateful battle.

Oh! most blessed tree!
Beloved of God.
Lacking your shade,
I lack love.

Watch over your children,
Who amid their sad tears,
Implore thee lovingly
For strength and fervor.

Such a small weak vessel
On the tempestuous sea,
My soul drifts aimlessly
Without oars and light.

A thousand times cursed
Be those who love not Francis,
Soldier of Christ,
My Father and my beloved.⁵²

When Mother Valenzuela heard these sad strains, she was moved to extraordinary action. She went to the non-observant nuns

and, with unusual vigor, told them that she, more than they, had the right to govern the Convent since she had been the Abbess. Almost violently, she snatched the keys from the impudent one who had assumed for herself the government of the Convent. Forthwith she wrote a very formal note to the Bishop vindicating her innocent Abbess and all the Founding Mothers.

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| 52. | <p>Hermosa doncella,
Delicia de Dios,
Camina hacia mi alma
Con paso veloz.</p> <p>En mi cruel amargura,
En pena y dolor,
Sois Vos mi consuelo,
Y dadme valor.</p> <p>Cual hoja marchita,
Del árbol de Dios,
Me arrastro muy lejos
Del árbol Menor;</p> <p>Oh! árbol bendito!
Querido de Dios,
Faltando tu sombra,
Me falta el amor;</p> <p>Cual débil barquilla,
En mar tempestuoso,
Fluctúa mi alma,
Sin remo y sin luz.</p> | <p>Pidiéndote Madre,
Sostén en mi lucha,
Consuelo en mi pena,
Alivio en mi mal.</p> <p>Que salves tu Casa,
Fundada for Tí,
Do ocultos residen,
La paz y el amor.</p> <p>Oh Padre Llagado!
Francisco de Asís,
Sed Vos mi abogado,
En lance fatal.</p> <p>Cuidad de tus hijas,
Que tristes, llorosas,
Te piden, ansiosas,
Valor y fervor.</p> <p>Maldito mil veces,
Quien no ame a Francisco,
Alférez de Cristo,
Mi Padre y mi amor!</p> |
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CHAPTER 23

In her note to the Bishop, Mother Valenzuela told him that God was angry that such a great injustice was being committed in the Convent, and that she feared the city would be destroyed by an earthquake coming from Pichincha Mountain, whose fierce volcano at that time was threatening the countryside.⁵³ She explained that she had wanted to tell him before now what was happening, but the non-observant religious had not allowed her to do so. Finally, she explained, she had overcome her weakness, made herself heard, and taken the keys by force from them so that she could recount the true state of affairs inside the Convent to him.

She asked that he respond immediately to her note, and that he give a signed written order for the release for the holy and innocent prisoners. He should also command that Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, so worthy because of her virtue, strength of will, and strong guidance, should continue governing the Convent until the conclusion of her term.

THE ORDER TO RELEASE THE PRISONERS ARRIVES

The petition of Mother Valenzuela, to whose name posterity will be grateful – for she sinned because of a lack of character rather than from malice – was heard, and everything she asked was done. Under holy obedience, the Bishop ordered that she and the whole community – with no exceptions, not even the sick – should go immediately in triumph and joy to release their innocent sisters from prison. Then all should acknowledge Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres as their legitimate Abbess, rendering her obedience and restoring her to the Abbess' chair in the upper choir of the Convent. All the keys to the cloisters and other buildings should be handed over to her. The Bishop also directed that only the Founding Mothers should occupy the higher posts of command in the Convent, because they were the ones suited for this.

53. Pichincha is an active volcano two miles outside the city of Quito. The area surrounding Quito had recorded large eruptions in 1566, 1575, and 1582; therefore, its rumblings set fear in the hearts of the inhabitants of the city. After a 300 year period of dormancy, Pinchincha came alive again in 1981 and covered the city with ash in late summer of 1999.

Further, he ordered that the rebellious *criollas* be given the lowest places, and that the leader be locked in a secluded room with a crucifix and a skull so that she could reflect upon her actions. She should not be placed in the prison, he added, since she was unworthy to stay in the same place where the innocent religious had been unjustly imprisoned.

After she read the note, Mother Valenzuela, quite well satisfied with its contents, rang the community bell. Hearing it, the religious were alarmed. When all were gathered together, including the sick sisters, Mother Valenzuela read the stern note. The observant sisters wept from happiness, and the non-observant sisters, from anger and disgust. The sick sisters, and their number included the leader, wanted to return to their beds, pleading that their illness prevented them from accompanying the group to the prison. Mother Valenzuela, however, vigorously asserted herself and told them that either they would obey the Bishop or they would suffer the consequences. With the sick sisters at the head of the procession, they all prepared to file down to the prison to free the innocent captives.

ROSES FROM HEAVEN

As the procession was about to begin, the outside bell rang. Mother Valenzuela went to the turn-box [the opening in the wall where the city residents left packages and messages for the sisters] and found a bouquet of roses and lilies there. She understood that these flowers had come from Heaven, for they were out of season and there was no one outside to say who had sent them, so that they might crown the heads of the innocent Founding Mothers with wreaths. Everyone helped to carry these garlands except for the non-observant nuns, who were not obliged to do this.

Hearing the happy uproar in the Convent, the prisoners became frightened. But their Abbess told them: "My daughters, the hour to leave this holy place has arrived. Let us prepare to rejoin our guilty sisters, whom we will warmly embrace to our hearts. Let us pray a Hail Mary and kiss this blessed floor that has allowed us to acquire so much merit for our souls. From this, let us learn that everything in life passes. The day and hour of deliverance from our prison has arrived for us. But let us not forget to entreat

God in His goodness to hasten the day of liberty for our future sisters with the return of obedience to the Franciscan friars.”

By the time the Abbess finished speaking these words, Mother Valenzuela had arrived at the doors of the prison. Throwing them open, she and the rest of the religious entered that blessed place. They all vied to be first to embrace their Abbess. But Mother Valenzuela pushed herself forward, and, in an flood of tears, grasped her tightly in her arms. She then embraced each of the Founding Mothers. Mother Mariana, however, extended her arms first to the most guilty sister and then to other non-observant sisters. They would condescend to make only a civil response.

IMPRISONMENT OF THE NON-OBSERVANT LEADER

One by one, the observant sisters lovingly embraced their Abbess and the other Founding Mothers. Showering them with the flowers they carried, they began to process to the choir in accordance with the orders of the Bishop's letter, which Mother Valenzuela read aloud to the whole Community.

When she reached the part that ordered the most guilty sister into solitary confinement in a secluded room, Mother Mariana could not contain her tears. She wanted to prevent this indignity and suffering for her guilty sister. But Mother Valenzuela emphatically insisted that she had to carry out the orders of the Bishop to the letter. So she locked the guilty sister in the room, and handed the key to her Superior.

She then proceeded to assign all the higher posts in the Convent to the Founding Mothers. The atmosphere of joy was similar to that of the first day of the election. The non-observant sisters, unable to conceal their unhappiness, alleged illness in order to separate themselves from the Community.

HOW MOTHER MARIANA TREATED THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

The saintly Mother Mariana visited the non-observant sisters often, speaking to them of God and the Blessed Virgin and doing all that she could for them. She never mentioned her own recent sufferings or her month in prison.

When they finally left their sickbeds, these sisters rejoined

the community life. Mother Valenzuela was careful to see that they occupied the lowest places, in conformance with the Bishop's orders. Anguished and humiliated, they were forced to comply.

The holy Abbess also constantly visited the guilty leader, who had been locked up in a room apart from the others. She ordered that a table, chair, and good bed be placed in the room. She carefully saw to her needs and meals, she herself performing all the humble acts required for a person in prison or seclusion. She brought her fruits, bread, and a sweet milk to try and make her life less miserable. In short, she did everything that a loving mother can do for a cherished daughter.

However, this guilty sister received Mother Mariana with scowls and coldness. At times, she would accuse the Abbess of making intrigues with the Bishop to unjustly procure her seclusion. Therefore, she said, it was only right that Mother Mariana should at least try to afford her some relief for this wrongdoing, but that the day would come when she would see justice done and the Abbess once again imprisoned.

The Abbess would not respond a word to these things. Instead, she would help the sister to pray the Divine Office, speaking to her often of God, the Most Holy Virgin, and the wondrous joys that God Our Lord has reserved in Heaven for His faithful servants.

MOTHER MARIANA OBTAINS FREEDOM FOR THE CAPTIVE SISTER

After eight days had passed, Mother Mariana wrote to the Bishop, begging liberty for this suffering sister, for she did not have the heart to see her suffer any longer in this seclusion. She reminded him that human weakness is great and capable of many errors. The Prelate responded that this nun should remain in seclusion for one complete month. How long this seemed to the kindly Abbess, whose heart, a volcano of charity, burned with a divine fire that communicated itself to all who came near her or even spoke to her!

At the end of the month, she again sent a note to the Bishop asking authorization to release the non-observant sister from seclusion. The Prelate replied that he would give no order, but leave the

matter in her hands. She could release the sister, or she could keep her locked up for as long as she deemed necessary.

After reading his reply, she went to Mother Valenzuela to inform her of what the Bishop had said. Mother Valenzuela argued that the revolted sister should remain imprisoned to prevent her from disturbing the spirit of other non-observant sisters.

"No, Mother," replied the Abbess. "My heart cannot allow this poor sister to be locked up any longer. She suffers without consolation, and I must do everything possible to alleviate her cross so that she does not fall into despair. For I fear that with her little virute, the least weight could make her succumb."

Mother Valenzuela replied, "Your Reverence is very charitable, but you are going beyond the limits of charity. Release her, then, but I would not do so."

Without losing another minute, Mother Mariana went to the room of the recluse. Entering it, she found the defiant sister lying on the bed, moaning in pain from a colic. The holy Superior approached and embraced her, saying, "My dear sister, you need no longer stay here. Today I have obtained permission from the Bishop to release you from this seclusion. Since you are ill, I am going to prepare a bed for you immediately in the infirmary so that you can be better attended."

"Then I allow you to do so," replied the religious coldly.

Leaving the key with the sick sister, Mother Mariana went quickly to the infirmary and called for Mother Francisca of the Angels. She told her, "My daughter, our poor sister in seclusion is sick with colic. Let us prepare a bed and all that is necessary to restore her to health. I have just received permission from the Bishop to release her from seclusion. Let us remember that since it is she who is forming our souls for Heaven, we should love her dearly. For if the beautiful statues had the use of reason, they would cherish the instruments that carved and polished them. We, then, who have the use of reason, should do what the statues cannot do."

THE INGRATITUDE OF THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTER

Together, they quickly prepared a bed and the other necessary things to cure their sick sister. Then they both went to the room of the sick sister to transfer her to the infirmary.

The holy Abbess told the recluse: "My dear sister, everything is ready in the infirmary. Here is the nurse herself to carry you there, for she loves you like a dear sister."

Approaching the sick sister, Mother Francisca of the Angels embraced her, saying, "Poor little sister, you are sweating and cold. I am going to help to make you well."

But the sick sister coldly retorted, "It was you who made me like this."

The two religious placed a cover on the ground and lifted the sick sister onto it since she was too ill to take a step. On their way to the infirmary, they met Mother Anna of the Conception and Mother Magdalena of Saint John. After they heard what was happening, the two approached the sick sister, and, with comforting words, helped to carry her to the infirmary, where they lay her on the bed prepared for her. Immediately they began to attend to her.

Mother Francisca of the Angels prepared an ointment of animal fat, chamomile, and anise, and the charitable Abbess massaged this on the poor sister's stomach, assisted by Mother Anna of the Conception and Mother Magdalena of Saint John. Meanwhile, Mother Francisca of the Angels and Mother Lucia of the Cross prepared an enema. After these remedies had been applied, the sick sister was finally able to move. Relieved from the terrible pain she had been suffering, she thanked them. The Mothers embraced her lovingly. But she returned their solicitude and caresses with coldness.

Thus is the example of Saints. The holy Founders of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy bequeathed a great practical lesson to their future daughters so that they might follow their example when, through the course of time, they would have bad sisters who formed their crowns of thorns. Nor will this Convent ever lack such bad sisters, who will make the others exercise the virtues of patience, charity, humility, and tolerance, so necessary for the daughters of the humble Seraphim of Assisi.

After recovering from this sickness, the guilty sister did not amend her life. Restless and agitated, she constantly perturbed the spirit of her sisters and would not leave them in peace. During this term as Abbess, Mother Mariana suffered much and earned great

merit, as did the good and observant religious and all the Founders. Thanks be to God, the greater part of the sisters were observant religious, formed by Mother Mariana. This model Abbess suffered everything in silence and with most exemplary humility so that, throughout the centuries, she might be imitated by all the fortunate religious in this Convent, the Abbesses as well as their subjects.

* * *

CHAPTER 24

Amid these many interior sorrows, the holy Abbess governed with humility, prudence, and mildness. Yet she never permitted the least deviation from the Holy Rule. Humble of heart, she believed herself to be the one most lacking in virtue and intelligence. Shedding tears over her inadequacies in the presence of the Sacramental Jesus, she would attribute the faults of the non-observant sisters to her own flaws. To atone for these, every evening she would make the Way of the Cross, which she ended in the lower choir.

On Mondays and Fridays, she would kiss the feet of the religious of her Community, thinking herself fortunate to be able to touch with her lips the feet of her holy sisters, as she used to call them. On Wednesdays and Saturdays she would eat on the floor without her veil and with a cord around her neck, considering herself unworthy to eat in the company of her sisters in the refectory. On Thursdays she would lay on the floor so that her growing Community would step over her, judging herself fortunate to be able to live in this holy house where God and her heavenly Mother had dispensed so many favors despite her lowliness and absolute worthlessness. On Tuesdays, she always placed something bitter in her food. Thus did she habitually divide the days of the week.

At times Mother Valenzuela would remark with great concern that she was overexerting herself and that if she did not take care, Mother Mariana would soon leave her alone in the world.

She would exclaim with embarrassment and affection, "Oh no, dear Mother! It is Your Reverence who will leave me alone, and not I, you. It is only that this poor dust of the earth desires to be, at least for some moments, where it belongs. For if the saints considered themselves as nothing, how much more so should I think this of myself, who, in reality, am nothing?"

HOW MOTHER MARIANA CORRECTED THOSE WHO COMMITTED FAULTS

Her prudence was admirable and worthy of being imitated not only by her present and future sisters, but also even by Bishops.

On the various occasions when, as Abbess, she had to correct abuses, curb the non-observant sisters, make an admonishment, or dispose some matter, she would first consult with Our Lord in the Eucharist. Weeping like a child and applying the discipline to herself, she would implore His counsel. Then, she would do what she should, her heart expanded by her love. With her blushed cheeks making her more beautiful, her very appearance would attract the hearts of her daughters, who loved her so intensely, except for those few imprudent ones.

She never brought up past wrongdoings or received her daughters with a severe or forbidding countenance. Neither would she speak imperiously to them. Instead, she corrected them with winning charm. Going to the cell of some sister who had committed a fault, she would first embrace her and then speak to her of the sublimity of being a religious and of the glory that awaited the observant and mortified religious in Heaven.

After this, she would tell her: "My dear sister, it seems that you did not remember such and such a thing, for these faults have been repeated many times. We have memories so weak that some things escape us. Thus I will give you a small reminder so that you take the highest care to avoid these things, for, living in community, it is most critical that in all things we give each other good example. When we reach Heaven, we will be happy for the good example that we gave to our beloved sisters.

"Let us remember the life of the Child Jesus in the humble little house of Nazareth. How we should imitate Him here in our cloister! The Gospel tells us only a few words about Jesus in Nazareth, '*Et erat subditus illis*' ['And he was submissive to them']. But these few words tell us much.

"How many volumes of books could be written about the daily life of Jesus in Nazareth. However, He did not want anything to be written about this period of His life, because this is the part that should be lived in all the convents of His beloved spouses. Anyone who wants to know how Jesus acted in Nazareth need only look to the cloistered religious, and, therein, he would find his answer. Because of this, I, your poor Mother and sister, beseech you and rightly oblige you to take care that Christ is always living in us. I will help you with my poor prayers and small sacrifices. If

something is lacking to you or causing you doubts, do not be afraid to come to me. Perhaps I can help you to resolve your concerns, for, although your Abbess is the least and most ignorant of creatures, the Holy Spirit assists her and lovingly directs the souls of the virgin spouses of the Eucharistic Christ.”

The sweetness yet admirable firmness of these admonitions and reprisals were such that not even the non-observant sisters could resist her at these moments. All their wrongdoings were committed out of her presence.

With each day that passed, Mother Valenzuela’s admiration for the humble Mother Mariana increased. For, at times, she could reprimand without a word, but only a look – a kind and winning look for the observant religious, but a terrible one for the non-observant sisters.

A NEW ORDER FOR THE IMPRISONMENT OF MOTHER MARIANA

The life of Mother Mariana was one of suffering and contradictions, a distinctive mark of the servants of God. For she, so humble, sacrificial, and obedient, was accused and reprimanded repeatedly by the Bishop Ordinary.

This Prelate, who did not understand the internal affairs of the life in the Convent, again allowed himself to be swayed by the lies of the non-observant nuns. Before believing their accusations, he should have first gone to the Convent and carefully examined the situation to arrive at an understanding of the truth. But God, in His secret designs, disposed things otherwise so that the Seraphic family would have a heroine of suffering and humility in this Conceptionist daughter.

At the anxious request of the rebellious religious, the Bishop made a pastoral visit. Once again, the non-observant sisters made so many accusations against the Abbess that we might say the few triumphed over the many. Vacillating, the Bishop was unsure of what to do.

Finally, his secretary said, “Your Excellency should exercise care in deciding this matter because there are many accusations against Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres!”

The designs of God are mysterious indeed! The Prelate

ordered that her title should be taken away and she should be placed in seclusion in her cell, giving the government during this interim to the Vicar Abbess of the Convent.

When she received this order, the humble Abbess said: "My dear sisters, I go to my cell in seclusion. For some time God has been calling my heart to yearn for solitude. My position among my sisters is cumbersome to me, for I was born to obey and not to command. I know my insufficiency for the latter. Pray for me that I love you all without exception as the beloved and chosen spouses of Our Lord. Pardon me for all the bad example I have given you. I, on my part, will never forget you in the presence of my Lord.

"However, I must tell you that my conscience does not accuse me of any of the charges raised against me. For these things, I do not deserve punishment. I do not regret my diligence in observing the Rule and the solicitous care I took in rebuking individuals privately and in community. On the contrary, my conscience is at peace that I have carried out my duty. If this has angered one among you, then I mind not, for I would that the whole world were angered rather than my Lord and God.

"The office of Abbess is very critical and most serious. Exercising it, many great souls are lost. And mine, so small, does not want to further endanger itself because of other guilty souls."

When Mother Mariana had finished speaking, Mother Valenzuela cried out in a broken voice, "Your Reverence will not go alone. I will accompany you. Why is innocence persecuted, calumniated, and punished?"

Then, to the Vicar General, she said, "Who are the unwise sisters who act like this?"

The other observant sisters were weeping. But the captain and her followers showed no remorse. They approached Mother Mariana and told her, "Let us go, then, to the prison, as the Bishop ordered. For in reality he ordered you to be placed there, and not in your cell in seclusion."

Mother Valenzuela, who heard some of these words, became indignant. "What are you brazen souls saying now?" she asked angrily.

Then, stepping between them and Mother Mariana, she said, "Isn't her seclusion in the cell sufficient for you? You want

even worse for her, the prison! The prison should be for you!"

Joined by the Vicar Abbess and some of the other observant sisters, she was prepared to stop these impudent sisters. But the discerning Abbess said: "Let them be, my Mothers and sisters. They are only instruments of the Divine Will. Nonetheless, read aloud the order of the Bishop."

Mother Valenzuela then made one of the non-observant sisters read it aloud, which caused a great altercation in the Community. Thanks be to God, the majority of the sisters were observant. However, that small faction of non-observant sisters had upturned the Convent.

AMID THIS ORDEAL, OUR LORD APPEARS

Clearly this innocent lamb would have been freed if she had chosen to defend herself and allowed Mother Valenzuela, the Vicar Abbess, and the others to support her cause. At that very moment, however, God had manifested to her that, if violence was used, the souls of all those non-observant sisters would be lost. She was also given to understand that this humiliation was necessary in order to save the Convent founded by her holy aunt, the other Founding Mothers, and herself, as well as to save the souls of the non-observant sisters.

At this moment, she saw Our Lord Jesus Christ, tied and handcuffed by the barbarous Jews after the betrayal of Judas. She saw Him unjustly accused and calumniated in the tribunals of the iniquitous pontiffs, treated with great cruelty and ignominy. At the same time, she saw what was passing within His Divine Heart: His sentiments of loving magnanimity toward His very persecutors, His heroism in offering His sorrowful Passion for so many ungrateful souls, and His profound sorrow over the perdition of such souls and ingratitude of His ministers and spouses throughout the course of the centuries until the end of the world. She saw how the Divine Master suffered His interior and exterior Passion.

Turning toward her, He said with loving tenderness, "My spouse, do not leave Me alone in such great bitterness and sorrow. If you truly love Me, I ask that you do not leave Me, but accompany Me during your days on earth. Know that this generous sacrifice will germinate the seed of this Convent so beloved of My Heart, so

that it will have victim souls of suffering and sorrow throughout time. These souls, under My gaze, will live in the practice of the most sublime perfection, being the columns of your Community and deflectors to deter My divine anger in the ill-fated times that the Church will see on this soil. Let us go, then, to your seclusion, for there I desire to speak alone with you and make you a participant of My sorrows.”

MOTHER MARIANA IS UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED FOR THE FOURTH TIME

Filled with the love of God, the Abbess rose from her seat. Kneeling, she handed the keys to the Vicar Abbess, kissing her feet and hands. She covered her beautiful face with her veil, and, with grave steps, she walked to her cell, whose window opened to the Church. There she had all her precious jewelry, which were her instruments of penance and the enormous cross upon which she would often lay outstretched in the form of a cross.

She left the key in the lock so that they could lock her in if they so desired. However, Mother Valenzuela and the Vicar Abbess, fearing that the non-observant sisters might do this, left the door unlocked and took the key. Mother Mariana then barred the door from within and began her time of seclusion.

VERSES THAT MOTHER MARIANA SANG IN SECLUSION IN HER CELL

During this time, Mother Mariana composed these expressive, sorrowful verses. In addition to her keen intelligence and extraordinary unction, she was gifted with a profound ascetic and mystical understanding. The Seraphic family could well claim that Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, Spanish by birth, Abbess and Founder of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, could vie with the Spanish Founder of Carmel [Saint Teresa of Avila], with Mother Mariana being a hidden violet in the verdant garden of Mary, Our Immaculate Mother, and the great Saint Teresa a vibrant bugle of Jesus Christ.

By way of note, the confessors and directors of this great soul are certain that Mother Mariana received the gift of infused

wisdom, as demonstrated by her celebrated writings on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, and even on Papal Infallibility. The Seraphic family sent these writings of Mother Mariana to Rome for review and approval. However, a disastrous shipwreck submerged these marvels, as well as other important papers of the Franciscan Order, in the depths of the sea.

According to information from trustworthy sources, Mother Mariana preserved the drafts of these works, which still exist today in the Convent closets, along with the *Cuadernon* [the grand Notebook] recording the events and miracles of her life and the biographies of the rest of the Founding Mothers.

These were the verses Mother Mariana composed in the seclusion of her cell:

In a faraway willow
My lyre in hand,
I see myself captive
And begin to weep.

Far off in the distance
Of the centuries gone by,
I see Francis and his children
Coming to me.

They bring their great happiness,
Their peace and joy,
To soothe so many sorrows
That have become my home.

Oh! fortunate day
Of blessed joy!
Come quickly, come quickly!
I am eagerly waiting!

But here on this soil
Of so much grief,
Where I taste my tears
Without hope of joy.

When an end will come
To my days here on earth,
My sorrows will end
And I will enjoy happiness.

Then I from Heaven
With holy dedication,
I will guard from here
Holy observance of the Rule.

Throughout the centuries,
Good daughters will I find,
Lovingly and exhaustively,
They will serve God.⁵⁴

It is a great privilege to be in this Convent, for there great marvels took place, and in it saintly religious have lived, who will be followed by other hidden souls, forgotten and despised by their own and the outside world in their quiet retirement. They are souls, nonetheless, who, by their austere and secret penances, deflect the ire of Divine Justice.

Thou art good, my God, that in Thy merciful wisdom. Thou didst create convents with such souls in them! Weak women who

become Thy spouses do thus attract and stimulate the admiration of wise and strong men! I confess that my sisters of the Immaculate Conception are walls of fortitude and, for their brothers, the Franciscan friars, a stimulus to progress in religious perfection.

THE LAVA OF CALUMNIES

While she remained secluded in her cell by order of the Bishop, this holy Abbess practiced all the virtues to a heroic degree. Her life was that of a cloistered hermit. How rigid were her penances, according to her spiritual director, and how solid her humility, how magnanimous her generosity, how childlike her simplicity, and how ardent her love for Jesus and Mary!

During the next pastoral visit, the Abbess remained in seclusion. They took the seal from her and deposed her ignominiously of her office of Abbess. She was despised by her own daughters and by the Bishop. For, during this time, by divine permission, the infernal demon spewed forth scurrilous calumnies like lava from a burning volcano. He used as his instruments the non-observant sisters, who were instigated by the rebellious captain, for whom regular obedience and the practice of virtue were disagreeable.

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|---|---|
| 54. En sauce extranjero,
Colgando mi lira,
Me miro cautiva,
Y empiezo a llorar. | Mas yo, en este suelo,
De tanto quebranto,
Do bebo el llanto,
No espero gozar. |
| Más allá, en lontananza,
Pasados los siglos,
A Francisco y sus hijos,
Los veo venir. | Cuando haya acabado,
Mis días mortales,
Terminan mis males,
Empiezo a gozar. |
| Trayendo la dicha,
La paz, la ventura,
Que en tanta tristura,
Se encuentra mi hogar. | Y ya desde el Cielo,
Con santo desvelo,
La santa observancia,
De aquí celaré. |
| Mi día dichoso,
De santa alegría,
Venid presuroso,
Que ansío por tí! | Y en todos los siglos,
Tendré buenas hijas,
Que, amantes, prolijas,
A Dios servirán. |

This long, painful trial, suffered in silence and with humble resignation, sanctified the soul of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, one of the Spanish Founding Mothers of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito. It prepared her to receive an abundance of special graces in her intimate communication and contact with God and His Blessed Mother. For it was these sufferings that earned her the high throne of glory that today she occupies in the Celestial Jerusalem!

PRAYER

Oh! unconquerable heroine and my dear sister! From Heaven which you enjoy with Christ, the Pure Spouse of chaste souls, deign to turn toward us your beautiful blue eyes, which symbolize profundity of the love of God. Look down on us and dry the tears of your brothers, the Friars Minor, and of your Conceptionist sisters, who still mourn and weep in this earthly valley of exile. Obtain for us daily fervor in the fulfillment of our holy Rules; animate in us the spirit that our Stigmatic Father, the Seraphim of Assisi, left us for our inheritance.

And for this brother of yours, who, in longhand and with this rustic feather pen writes your life, bless him from Heaven and obtain for him humility, strength to sustain the daily trials of spirit, and, in the end, a tranquil and holy death so that from his poor deathbed, he may go to keep you company in Heaven, where, with the Seraphic Father, you reign glorious with Christ and Mary for all eternity. Amen.

* * *

CHAPTER 25

During this sad period, another person representing the Bishop made a secret visit to the Convent. Mother Valenzuela, the Vicar Abbess, and the observant sisters spoke to him about their worthy Abbess and showed him the falseness of the innumerable calumnies that had been spread about her, calumnies all the more surprising because they were made by religious sisters. They made him understand that only jealousy and bad will could induce anyone to obscure the shining light of sanctity of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who, as a simple sister as well as Abbess, was an almost inimitable model of religious perfection. "Who among us," the sisters would often ask, "could have suffered so much and with such sweetness, silence, patience, resignation, and prudence?"

THE BISHOP'S REPRESENTATIVE WANTS TO FREE MOTHER MARIANA

Hearing this, the Bishop's representative felt a great admiration for Mother Mariana and promised to do all in his power to free the holy and virtuous Abbess who suffered so unjustly. In fact, he exposed the whole situation to the Bishop, who sent a formal note to the Vicar Abbess, ordering her to free Mother Mariana and restore her as Abbess and Mother of the Community. The command was carried out immediately amid the general recognition and rejoicing of the religious.

The next morning, the same representative of the Bishop came to the Convent to speak in the confessional with Mother Mariana. This soul, so simple and so holy and, at the same time, so intelligent and dignified, presented herself to the Confessor. With the integrity of an innocent soul, she responded to all that he asked with moderate words, neither loquacious nor condemnatory of any person. She pardoned everyone, attributed what had occurred to divine permission, and affirmed that it would be futile to hope to attain Heaven without suffering during this mortal life.

The Bishop's representative marveled to see the virtue of this religious. Above all, he was impressed by her admirable tranquility and integrity of spirit after the terrible sufferings through

which she had passed. He later assured the Bishop that she seemed to him like one of those heroic martyrs from the early days of the Church, and that the Prelate had a duty of conscience to make amends to her for all the unjust punishments that had been inflicted upon her.

NOTE FROM THE BISHOP TO MOTHER MARIANA

The Bishop, who had a tender heart, for he was not by nature an unjust man, suffered keenly when he realized that he had oppressed a just soul with unjust slanders.

Taking pen in hand, he wrote the following note: “Reverend Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, most worthy Abbess of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of this city of Saint Francis of Quito:

“Having been badly informed about Your Reverence by the scurrilous calumnies from the mouths of those poor women who do not deserve the name of religious, I committed an act of great imprudence by ordering your seclusion without prior investigation. Today, the truth having been brought to full light, I order Your Reverence to be now and forever the one who governs and rules this Convent, above even the governing Abbess, who should consult you in everything and seek your counsel in all she does, obeying you as Mother and Founder. All, without exception, should respect and obey you, and Your Reverence will have the authority and right, for all times, to reprimand and chastise the guilty.

“For all that Your Reverence has done in the Convent, I thank you in the name of God, for you have acted well in everything, imitating your Divine Spouse, Who passed His life on this earth doing good, even to those who were His persecutors. A similar thing happened to Your Reverence, and for this reason you should saintly rejoice in Our Lord, Who sends His cross to those whom He most loves because He deems them worthy of such a supreme gift.

“Henceforth, anyone who shall denounce Your Reverence to me will be imprisoned and immediately will receive the greater penances, and these badly intentioned daughters will be obliged to ask your forgiveness. Since your Abbacy is ending soon, continue

until the time of the canonical election to rule your Community with your special gift for governing and the keen discernment that God, prodigious in His graces, has bestowed on you.

“Blessing your Reverence in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, I sign myself as your father and Prelate.” It finished with the signature of the Bishop

Her liberty once again restored, the holy Abbess continued to govern the Community with that humility characteristic of her great soul. Never referring to her prior sufferings, she treated her enemies with an affability and sweetness that made her the mistress of the hearts of all her daughters.

These poor non-observant sisters, however, were contradictory. Always agitated, perturbed, irritable with each other, they were continually making complaints against Mother Mariana. As their loving Mother, she would calm, console, and counsel them; nonetheless, as their Abbess, she would demand obedience and give orders without distinction or preference. In this way, she made herself not only loved, but also respected.

DIFFICULTIES IN ELECTING A NEW ABBESS

When the term of Mother Mariana’s Abbacy ended, a new canonical election was held, and a representative of the Bishop came to the Convent to preside over the proceedings. The sisters were so divided, however, that after two days they still had not succeeded in electing an Abbess. A most distressing confusion reigned.

Mother Valenzuela went to Mother Mariana and told her, “Reverend Mother, as Founder, you should continue to be Abbess.”

Mother Mariana replied, “No, Mother, according to the Rule, an Abbess should govern for no more than three years for the good of herself as well as those governed. Instead, it might be necessary for Your Reverence to take up the office of Abbess in order to put an end to so much dissatisfaction. Under the present circumstances, a person is needed who is worthy and experienced in conventual government, and this person is Your Reverence.”

Mother Valenzuela responded, “I have neither the character nor strength for this, my Mother. It would be much wiser to elect one of the other Spanish Founding Mothers. All are capable

and virtuous ladies. It seems to me that Mother Francisca of the Angels would have the capacity to govern well. I will give my support to her.”

To this, the Abbess responded: “If you want one of the Founding Mothers, choose Mother Lucia of the Cross or Mother Catherine of the Conception or Mother Magdalena of Saint John, but not Mother Francisca of the Angels, for this office would not be right for her at this time. She, along with others, sustains our burgeoning divine worship, and we must do all that we can to preserve this, for upon this our happiness depends.

“The office of Abbess requires great vigilance over the whole Convent, both the buildings and the persons within. Burdened with two enormous weights, Mother Francisca of the Angels could not carry them out properly without saddling her soul with the serious neglect of both. In electing an Abbess, we should always act with great charity toward others. Mother Francisca will be Abbess when others, who have been properly trained, can exercise with perfection the duties of the Divine Office. But now would not be the proper time for her to become Abbess.”

“Who, then, does Your Reverence choose,” asked Mother Valenzuela, “so that I might choose the same?”

But Mother Mariana replied, “Your Reverence knows better than I that we should not reveal our personal preferences, but that we should let our consciences be led by God so that the election cannot be declared null. All that I can tell Your Reverence is that we should pray much in order to forestall scandal in our Community.”

PROCESSION OF THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

On the third day, the Bishop returned for another vote. He first delivered a short and very serious talk, but to no avail. The non-observant sisters did everything they could to try to elect their captain as Abbess. Some of them even managed to vote more than one time. Confusion and agitation raged rampant. Again no result was reached, and the Bishop retired to return on another day.

The non-observant sisters used the time to stir up more agitation in their efforts to win over more sisters to their cause.

Taking into their party the lay sisters and the devotees,⁵⁵ they resolved to present themselves in a procession before the Bishop and ask him to confirm the election of the captain as Abbess. For, they said, "Mother X would be a person very capable for this office, far surpassing Mother Mariana in her intelligence and virtue. Since your Excellence neither knows her nor has dealt with her, you do not know her. And while Mother Mariana has a very strong character, she is not intelligent."

This, then, was the plan of these poor shepherd-less sheep who had gone astray because they wanted to be their own shepherd. The non-observant sisters considered themselves strong enough to reach their goal because they had won to their side the lay sisters, who, lacking humility, had become insubordinate and filled with demonic envy. Proud and filled with themselves, they were told that they could change their humble positions of serving the sisters.

The members of this rebellious faction took up the great processional cross, and, each one carrying a candle, formed lines to process out of the Convent through the lower choir and into the presence of the Bishop. One of them assured the others that she had the keys to open the doors.

"When the others see us in such formal procession," they said, "they will become fearful and will not dare to stop us. Thus we will be able to carry out our plan. We must make this attempt now, or we will have to continue on as we are. Even Mother Valenzuela is no longer with us. So let us go ahead."

They formed the procession in two rows and began to pray the Rosary, since the lay sisters did not know any other prayer. Hearing their voices, Mother Valenzuela left her cell to see what was happening. Astonished, she asked the meaning of the procession.

But no one responded. All the religious were wearing veils, including the lay sisters, so she could not see their faces. But one of the devotees, who had been brought into the Convent by Mother

55. The lay sisters are religious occupied solely with manual labor and the secular affairs of a convent. As a rule, the lay sisters, who can have provisory vows, wear a habit different from that of the contemplative sisters. Usually their prayers consisted of the Rosary or a certain number of *Paters*, *Aves*, and *Glorias*.

Valenzuela, replied that they were going to see the Bishop.

Overcome by holy indignation, Mother Valenzuela grabbed this devotee by the arm and pulled her into her cell. There she asked her what they were doing. The poor girl, having already received one blow and trembling with fear to see Mother Valenzuela raising her hand again with the discipline, told her everything.

Mother Valenzuela took away her veil, headdress, and scapular. Giving vent to her anger, she told the frightened sister, "I am locking you in here for now until I return. Tonight I will give you what you deserve, and then put you out of the Convent." Locking her in the cell, she went to look for her Abbess, whom she could not find anywhere. Tired and distressed, her face deathly pale, she continued her search.

THE "LITTLE PATRONESS"

When the Founding Mothers and observant sisters heard a group of voices praying aloud, they also came to ask what was happening. But no one in the procession would respond with even one word. The praying figures all appeared so pious that nothing could perturb them.

Finally, they found Mother Valenzuela, who told them, "Mothers and sisters, help me find the Mother Abbess, for these mad women say that they have the key and are going to process through the lower choir, leave the Convent, and go to speak with the Bishop. The outcome of the meeting does not worry me, but what causes me great concern is the consequence for the souls of these imprudent women."

They all began to anxiously search for the Abbess, but she could not be found. Mother Valenzuela then called the Founding Mothers and observant sisters to the lower choir, where they would wait for the non-observant sisters in order to stop them from leaving, by force if necessary. They gathered together there, weeping and imploring assistance from the Statue of Our Lady of Peace:⁵⁶

56. The Statue of the Virgin of Peace, called the "Little Patroness" by the Conceptionist Sisters, was brought from Spain in 1576 by Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, Founder and first Abbess. This wood statue, 31 inches tall, was highly prized among the sisters, and "the Little Patroness" worked many miracles in the Convent's first days, when it was displayed for public veneration in the Church. During these times of internal turmoil and division, Our Lady of Peace was brought

“Oh! Mother of Peace, who was brought from Spain by Our Founding Mother, save us in this crisis. Oh! Founding Mother, rise up from this sepulcher and subjugate these imprudent women.”

As they prayed, they saw close to the grille their Mother and Abbess, who was there praying in silent contemplation. No one dared to interrupt her until Mother Valenzuela, hearing the sound of the approaching procession, nervously approached and said, “What is this, Mother? Rise up and see these imprudent sisters who are leaving the Convent. We must take quick and forceful action to stop them. Your Reverence, as Abbess, knows what must be done. Here is a discipline.” And she handed her Abbess a thick, strong discipline.

MOTHER MARIANA CONFRONTS THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

The Holy Abbess gave a sigh that penetrated the very depths of all their hearts. After kissing the ground, she stood up, and the sisters gathered around her. Looking at them with affection, she said, “Why do you fear? Do you not know that God lives in Heaven and in the Most Holy Sacrament?”

Taking the hand of Mother Valenzuela, which trembled with fear, she pressed it to her heart, kissed it, and said, “Mother, the situation would have been much worse but for the merciful intervention of God. Your Reverence knows that there are two keys to the grille doors. I have one, and the non-observant sisters have tried to obtain the other through cunning and guile. However, our good God permitted them only to procure a false copy. Now you will see what will happen.”

Hearing this, Mother Valenzuela became a bit calmer. In another moment, the procession of those poor blind souls came into sight. Reverently they processed in, walking steadily toward the iron gates.

Stepping in front of the first grille door, Mother Mariana

inside the cloisters at the special request of the Founding Mothers. The small statue was set in a finely carved niche in the lower choir near the locked gate separating the Convent cloisters from the Church Sanctuary. The Spanish Founding Mothers would often go there to pray before her and lament the loss of the Franciscan Friars, who no longer had jurisdiction over them.

gravely addressed them: "Where are you going, my sisters? Whose cadaver do you carry and to where? [referring to the processional cross that bore the crucified Christ]. Better said, you are the cadavers."

The non-observant sisters and their captain trembled with terror to hear these gravely spoken words. Rallying strength, they curtly replied, "Your Reverence, do not impede our procession. We are going to the Bishop so that justice might be done."

"You will not go," the Abbess said in a severe tone. Violently pushing her aside, some of the non-observant sisters reached the iron grating of the first door. Finding they could not open the lock with the key, they broke it.

THE MIRACLE OF THE "LITTLE PATRONESS"

Without saying a word, Mother Mariana raised her eyes to the Virgin of Peace while Mother Valenzuela, with incredible strength, physically restrained the non-observant sisters. She tore the candles from their hands and threw them away from them. The Abbess quietly gave a command for the observant sisters to gather up these burning candles, extinguish them, and put them in a pile.

Realizing they could not break the lock [of the second door] to the Church, and feeling themselves cornered by Mother Valenzuela, the non-observant sisters heard a sound that left them terrified. They turned around and saw the Little Patroness, who was turning her back to them.

The holy statue then spoke these words: "Unfortunate women, what are you doing? Go, then, if you so desire, but you will have no place to which you may return, for I will return to Spain with the Founding Mothers and the observant sisters. Too late will you weep for your follies. And so that this house might forever remember this day, I will always remain like this, with my back turned toward you, as a warning and lesson to those who will follow you."

Raising their eyes in the direction of the holy statue, they saw the Little Patroness illuminated by light, her face pale, her countenance severe. They tried to speak, not knowing what to say. Instead they all fell to the ground unconscious, like cadavers.

Mother Mariana, Mother Valenzuela, and the rest of the

observant sisters, terror-stricken, knelt directly before the holy Image, contemplating her face. This blessed and miraculous statue fixed upon them a sweet gaze, full of affection and warmth. With a loving smile, she raised their timid spirits and restored calm to their hearts. They rose up without further delay to try to make the guilty sisters, the lay sisters, and the devotees return to consciousness. The ensemble was a considerable number.

This scene seems to re-enact the arrest of Christ Our Lord in the Garden of Olives when the guilty soldiers fell to the ground, while the Apostles remained standing. The soldiers represent all the rebellious sisters, and the Apostles represent Mother Mariana and all her faithful observant sisters.

THE TEARS OF THE VIRGIN OF PEACE

Mother Francisca of the Angels hurried back and forth with remedies to bring the stricken sisters to consciousness. They had begun to moan and emit a foam from their mouths and noses; their bodies remained cold like cadavers. Mother Valenzuela and the observant sisters were weeping in their distress and fear. Only Mother Mariana and the Founding Mothers remained serene and calm, applying the remedies to their poor guilty sisters who had been struck down by the Hand of God.

The holy Abbess then commanded the sisters to pray three Hail Mary's to the Holy Virgin of Peace with their arms in a cross. When they finished, she approached the non-observant sisters, raised them to a sitting position, and blew on them. With this, their bodies returned to life. When all were restored enough to stand, they turned their eyes with dread toward the Little Patroness and saw that she had turned her back to them. Filled with fear and confusion, they did not know what to do or say.

Mother Mariana then ordered them to leave. They walked with great difficulty and, as the group passed before the holy statue, they saw her face become pale and her expression severe. This was also noticed by the observant sisters. Then, from her eyes fell three large tears that slowly rolled down her cheeks.

THE LAY SISTERS ARE FORGIVEN

The whole group of weakened, guilty sisters left the lower choir like a defeated army. The lay sisters did not know how to make reparation for their fault, for they were there to serve the nuns and not to insolently rise up against them. They believed, and with good reason, that their holy Abbess would rightfully chastise them for their rebellion against their humble position.

Sick as they were, some of them said, "After committing such a fault, how can we go to bed to be assisted by Mother Francisca? Let us continue to serve and do our work, for this is the purpose for which we entered this Convent." And, shamefacedly, they tried to return to their daily work, but were too weak to carry it out.

Mother Mariana, who was observing the scene unnoticed, unexpectedly presented herself before them. The poor lay sisters began to tremble, for they had a great respect and love for her. They knelt before her, awaiting their punishment.

But the holy Abbess, with that amiability proper to her grand soul, raised them up, saying, "My sisters, you need to recover your strength. I order each of you to go to your bed. I will find Mother Francisca of the Angels so that she can attend to you. Go, then, and tranquilly restore your physical strength. At the same time, repair your souls. Enter into yourselves and beg God mercy and pardon for your sins with contrite hearts. He will receive you with open arms just as the prodigal son was received by his good father. For, in truth, you are prodigal daughters. Now, rise up and return to your paternal home."

These poor lay sisters, prostrate at the feet of their Mother Abbess, were weeping and trembling in fear. In voices broken by sobs, they begged her pardon. The holy Abbess comforted them, assuring them that they were pardoned and that she would forget that grave fault. She ordered them, however, not to speak to anyone until the excommunication they had incurred would be lifted by the Bishop.

She added, "Some of you should prepare yourselves to die, for your hour is arriving. And to assure you of the truth of my words, you will see with your own eyes that the candles you car-

ried in that foolish and blameworthy procession have changed into bones with your names imprinted on them.”

Obeying the order of their Abbess, these non-observants set out at once for their cells after receiving her blessing and kissing her hands, feet, and scapular.

The charitable Abbess went in search of Mother Francisca of the Angels, whom she found in the lower choir praying before the Virgin of Peace. She told her, “My daughter, the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are active volcanoes of divine love, and they will not turn away even our guilty sisters. Go now to assist our poor lay sisters whom I have commanded to rest in their beds because of their extreme weakness. First, make a good quantity of anise water and give them this to drink. Then you can decide what is better for them. You already know that you should not speak to them except for what is absolutely necessary until the Bishop lifts their excommunications. Afterwards, you should comfort their fearful and timid spirits, since this is your vocation.”

Kissing the ground in obedience, Mother Francisca rose to carry out her obligation of charity toward her poor sick sisters with the grace, goodness, and winning sweetness that characterized this angelic soul.

THE PLOT OF THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

Early the next morning, the Abbess visited each of the poor lay sisters, giving them all her blessing and ordering them to rise at dawn. They assured her that they were much better after taking the anise water and remedies administered with such charity by Mother Francisca.

The non-observant sisters and their leader, however, continued to stir up trouble over the election, which would take place on the following day. The whole day, these malcontent sisters strove to provoke arguments and disputes. They approached the lay sisters again to induce them to be their spies. These lay sisters, however, turned them away. They told the non-observant sisters that they deplored their former rebellion and would never take part in anything like that again, for now they realized the great injustice of the non-observant sisters, especially on the serious matter of disavowing the merits of their Abbess, whose behavior was a mute

voice proclaiming her sanctity. They also reminded these non-observant sisters that because they had listened to them before, they were now excommunicated, although they hoped to be absolved in order to carry out their humble duties.

“Let me remind you, sisters,” added one of the lay sisters, “that you, like us, are also excommunicated and that you should correct your behavior so that God does not punish you here and in eternity.”

The non-observant sisters blushed to hear the firm resolution of the lay sisters. Addressing them with a few disparaging words, they withdrew.

The holy Abbess and the rest of the Community occupied the day begging God and the Blessed Virgin Mother for a remedy to cure the difficult situation and to send a ray of divine light to enlighten those poor sisters who walked in such complete spiritual blindness. For these intentions, they increased their customary penances. In the refectory, some kissed the feet of the other sisters; others ate on the ground with cords around their necks and without their veils; still others remained prostrate on the ground while the others ate.

They performed these and other edifying penances that are customary in the Seraphic family, which, by the grace of God, is characterized by penitence, humility of heart and of understanding, following the example of our Father, the Seraphic Francis.

YET ANOTHER ELECTION

The next day the Bishop came to preside over the election. Again the votes were divided. The non-observant sisters all wanted the captain as Abbess. The observant sisters divided their votes among the various Mothers, all good, admittedly, but this in itself made a decisive election difficult. Since the election was secret and there was no opportunity to make them understand this problem, the situation steadily worsened.

The non-observant sisters, who were not that numerous, strove to influence the observant sisters, who could not reach a consensus. The latter ignored them in silence. What was certain was that the spirit of division was reigning.

At midday the Bishop sorrowfully retired to his house to take his repast, saying that he would return three hours later and if they would not elect an Abbess then, he himself would name the religious whom he judged more capable of governing. He would choose one who would govern with a demonstrated wisdom, sanctity, prudence, and extreme tolerance.

The Community went to the refectory. The holy Abbess, without her veil and with a cord around her neck, kissed the feet of the religious and ate on the ground. How edifying it was to see this beautiful creature, self-effacing, making these acts of humility. Her cheeks rosy red, she blossomed in the simplicity of her love of God, Whom she begged for a solution to this crisis in her beloved Community.

Mother Valenzuela and the rest of the Founding Mothers, following her example, also ate on the floor. But the non-observant sisters only mocked and laughed at them, providing these good creatures with the opportunity to practice patience. Mother Valenzuela charitably rebuked them, telling them to be silent and cease their insolent behavior.

STILL NO DECISION

At mid-afternoon, the Prelate returned. Before the votes were cast, he addressed the sisters shortly and severely, making them see the bitter times through which their recently founded Convent was passing. He ordered that the election should take place and said that he would not intervene unless he judged it convenient. Should no decision be reached, he himself would name the religious who would govern for three consecutive years. He would not allow any complaints or arguments over his choice.

The voting began, and again there was no decisive result. Weary, the Bishop again warned, "If you persist in this, I will make my own choice, which will be the right one." And he opened proceedings for another election. In this one, only a few votes were lacking to re-elect Mother Mariana. The Prelate said he would take a short break before the next vote.

The holy Abbess asked Mother Valenzuela to help her prepare something to drink for the Bishop. In the meantime, one by one, the religious approached their Abbess to make sure that she

was not angry with them. This saintly creature received them all with the same goodness and imperturbable spirit that she displayed in every situation.

Mother Valenzuela, however, took the opportunity to address them with seriousness and authority, "My sisters, why do you want to destroy this Convent? See where your caprice has led us? Use good sense and unite your spirits. Another Abbess like the one we now have cannot be found."

"Mother," the humble Abbess replied in kind, "Your Reverence can govern this Community much better than I. Remember, my sisters, that the holy Rule says that a Superior can only govern for three years. Here, instead, you have Mother Valenzuela, a person most fit to govern."

THE BISHOP'S SOLUTION

After drinking his cordial, the Prelate returned and reassembled the group to begin the voting. This time, only two votes were lacking for Mother Mariana to be elected.

At this point, one of the non-observant sisters spoke out, saying, "We do not want Mother Mariana to govern another term. She is unacceptable to us all and has many defects. Narrow-minded as she is, she wants us all to conform to her impossible standards. We would like a little more liberty, and, for this reason, we choose Mother X," naming the leader of the non-observant sisters.

The captain then spoke, "Your Excellency the Bishop, to stop the tears of these sisters, I will accept the Abbacy, for it is true that life is unbearable under these Spaniards who require an iron fist while the rest of us need kid gloves.

"Your Lordship well knows that the letter of the law kills, and it is only its spirit that gives life. With the Rule in their hands, these Spaniards want to fulfill it to the very letter, thinking that we can do all that they can. Thus, we take advantage of this opportunity and we all beseech you that the Spaniards either return to their own land or else be permanently imprisoned. Only in this way can we be left free and at peace."

As soon as this impertinent sister finished speaking these words that manifested her limited understanding and complete lack of virtue, the Bishop indignantly replied: "These *criollas* are a mis-

erable people, ignorant, vicious, and lacking all discernment. I order in the name of holy obedience that this sister should be immediately imprisoned so her ungoverned tongue might be restrained. As for her companions, I annul their votes for this election, which will now depend on the nobility of heart of the remainder of the Community. Only in this way will the election proceed in peace and according to the desire of God.

“Moreover, the Abbess who is elected must keep this mad, pretentious woman in prison and rule the rest with a firm hand, giving them the lowest and most humble offices and imprisoning whoever resists her orders. Now, take this sister to the prison, for the voting will not proceed until this order is carried out.”

The captain was struck speechless by this strong public rebuke. She wanted to respond, but could say nothing. Nor could her imprudent companions, who were also struck mute, just as Aman was stuck dumb when King Ahasuerus rebuked him before his enemy, the Jew Mardechai (cf. Esther, 6, 1-12).

Mother Valenzuela took it upon herself to carry out this order. Rising from her seat, she bowed her head to the Prelate. Then, taking the arm of the captain, she said, “Walk quickly to prison, and leave us in peace. Obey the order of the Bishop, since you always boast of knowing what to do.”

As she started to lead her away, the Bishop said, “Mother, your behavior pleases me, and I will begin the new vote as soon as you have returned and given me the prison key.” Saying this, he pounded the table.

A VISION SHOWING THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS

The unhappy captain trembled in anger and shame because, for a proud soul like this, humiliation deals a mortal blow and inconceivable suffering.

In fact, unknown to the Bishop and other sisters, something extraordinary was taking place while this poor sister was speaking to the Prelate. For as she rose to propose herself as Abbess, Mother Mariana saw that she was surrounded by monkeys emitting fire from their mouths, eyes, and noses. These flames passed to the leader’s heart and the hearts of her non-observant compan-

ions. To the measure that this fire overpowered their hearts, the passions of anger and envy seethed in them against the Abbess and the Spanish Mothers, extinguishing the fire of the love of God. Further, she saw that these souls, empty of good works, were weighted down by many sins, bearing grave consequences for eternity.

Mother Mariana saw that this poor captain would not be saved, nor would many of her followers who had been led astray by her bad example. It would have been better for these souls to have remained in the world than to have entered into religion to lead such lax and dissipated lives. For they had introduced agitation where there should have been silence, peace, fraternal unity, charity, detachment, mortification, and humility, with the exact observance of the Rule, whose daily practice is easy for a good religious.

What this sister said about the letter of the law killing and the spirit giving life is not in conformance with any of the Rules of monastic institutions, because the eternal life of a religious person depends upon the literal observance of the Rule. We have a practical example of this from our Father Saint Francis, to whom God Himself directed these words concerning the practice of the Rule "To the letter, to the letter, to the letter; without comment, without comment, without comment."

The sophistic reasoning of this poor sister revealed her bad spirit and total lack of virtue.

Let us continue, however, with the vision of Mother Mariana. She saw that the captain, along with various of her followers, would not be saved because of the blatantly relaxed life they were leading. The divine graces that pour torrentially on good religious in their cloisters were transformed into venom for these deplorable creatures, blinding their souls despite the vibrant light around them and making them die of thirst despite the fountain of living water in their midst.

She saw how they would fall from one abyss to another the rest of their lives, at times placing the Convent at risk and leading yet other religious sisters astray by their bad example. For the infernal serpent was using them as subtle instruments to carry out his plan to destroy the work of God and of Mary Immaculate in the foundation and preservation of this Convent.

THE HOLOCAUST REQUESTED BY OUR LORD

The soul of this charitable spouse of Jesus grieved to see this series of disasters for her beloved Convent, for which she was disposed to give her life should it be necessary. She was also willing to offer her life to prevent the loss of the souls of the religious, her sisters, who had cost the Divine Redeemer so dearly. Tears ran down her cheeks, and her fervent and silent prayer rose up to Heaven like the smoke of an exquisite incense burning in the temple of her pure heart and in the thurible of her profound humility.

Then, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Mother Mariana as He was in the Garden of Olives, kneeling in mournful, ardent prayer. She was given to understand the most bitter sorrow that overpowered His Sacred Heart in those moments when, feeling the tedium of life, He said, "My Father, if it be possible to take from Me this bitter chalice, do so ... but not My will, but Thine be done." She saw that the greatest interior torments of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were the ingratitude and indifference of those souls who, chosen among millions to be His spouses and ministers, abandoned Him in the most absolute solitude. This, despite the fact that He would live under the same roof with His spouses and descend into the hands of His priests at the simple call of their voices at the most solemn moment of the Consecration of the Holy Host and Chalice.

Mother Mariana then heard the Beloved of her soul exclaim in His sorrowful agony, "Alas, I look for those who might console Me, and I find none. I created sons, and they ignore and despise Me! And you, my spouse, what will you do for Me, since I have done so much for you? Oh! how much these religious souls have cost Me! Snatch them from the throat of the infernal wolf! How it pains me to lose them!"

Immediately, the heroic Conceptionist responded: "My Beloved, what dost Thou desire? What dost Thou request of me? Until now Thou hast denied me nothing, and I am resolved to never deny Thee anything – even to my last breath. Tell me, my goodness: Dost Thou desire that I live and die in prison, in absolute isolation from creatures, abandoned by all, suffering double what I have endured until now in those times when I have been Thy faithful companion? I willingly accept. I do so not in an impulse of momentary fervor, but with mature reflection upon what is being

asked of me. Here I am before Thee. I will release my guilty sister and remain to suffer for her... My nature withdraws in horror, but my spirit is ready for the sacrifice, relying as it does on the fire of Thy ardent love, which inflames my weak heart."

Our Lord responded: "It is not your life, nor your health, nor imprisonment that I desire of you, My beloved Mariana. Rather, I ask that you suffer for the period of five consecutive years the punishments of Hell that the soul of this poor sister would have suffered for all eternity. I have chosen five years in memory of the five Wounds impressed on My body during My sorrowful Passion. Understand, My daughter, that during those five years, I will absent Myself from your earthly eyes and deprive your spirit of every consolation and relief amid your suffering, for it will be similar to what the soul of your poor sister would have endured in the obscure prison of Hell. Be certain that interiorly I will be with you, fortifying you, for otherwise neither you nor the holiest of mortals could tolerate such suffering for even a minute. I ask you, do you agree to My request?"

Then the Divine Master showed her those five years, which seemed not a handful of years to Mother Mariana, but an eternity. Her body quivered even to the bones, and she felt her heart compress so tightly that she would have died from the violence of her pain if God, prodigious in His grace and mercy, had not miraculously preserved her life.

MOTHER VALENZUELA IS ELECTED ABBESS

Undetected by anyone in the room, she fell into a swoon. Her sisters, as well as the Bishop, only perceived that she was trembling fiercely. Attributing this reaction to shock over the rigorous punishment that he had imposed upon the captain of the non-observant sisters, he gently admonished her: "*Valor*, Mother, *valor*! It is necessary to punish the guilty to give an example to the others. I am absolutely inflexible in this matter." And he ordered her to temper her sorrow. Immediately, her trembling ceased, and she awakened as from a dream.

Mother Valenzuela roughly led the guilty sister to the prison. The other non-observant sisters remained in their places, mute with fear. Several of the sisters told them that they should leave, but

they took no heed of their words. Mother Valenzuela went to the Bishop, placed the prison key on the table, and said, "Now we can vote in peace. If things had remained as they were, God would not be with us." Then she raised the non-observant sisters by their arms and expelled them, one by one, from the room. Sprinkling them with holy water, she told them, "Go in peace, rebellious sisters, and weep for your sins." After the last one had filed out, she firmly closed the doors.

The Bishop thanked her and praised her energy. They then invoked the Holy Ghost, Our Lady of Wisdom, and the Seraphic Francis and made up a new voting sheet. The ballots were cast and counted, and Mother Magdalena of Jesus Valenzuela was elected with five votes more than Mother Mariana, which was the necessary majority.

The Bishop and those present were quite satisfied and content with the results, remarking among themselves, "If only we had eliminated the guilty sisters earlier from the vote, we would not have lost so much time. But all is well now, and those difficult moments were worthwhile, for the majority of the sisters are observant and united. Let the troublemakers remain where they are, and, above all, their captain, who is so lacking in good sense!"

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

This place, so necessary and so sacred to all religious communities, was never lacking in those that were truly observant. The prison in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito is located in the lower cloisters and adjoins the lower choir. From the outside, the prison has a strong, double door. On the outside of it are two large bars. After the bars are set in place, the door has a bolt that is locked with a key. This makes the door virtually impossible to open – even with great violence.

Above the door is a small window with crossed iron bars covered with a wire screen, which permits light to enter the prison, not profusely, but enough for some manual work to be done, as well as for reading and praying the Breviary. However, it is impossible to pass any paper, however small it might be, through the tight screen. Across from the door, about 15 feet away, is a small 1 x 1-1/2 ft. window with bars that also provides light for the prison.

THE INTERIOR OF THE PRISON

To the left of the entrance is a small niche on the wall where a crucifix hangs to remind the guilty sister that the Holy Cross is the wood of salvation and the life-giving bed where the Spouse of just souls rested, inviting her to do the same. It also provides a reminder that under the cross, one reposes in complete security.

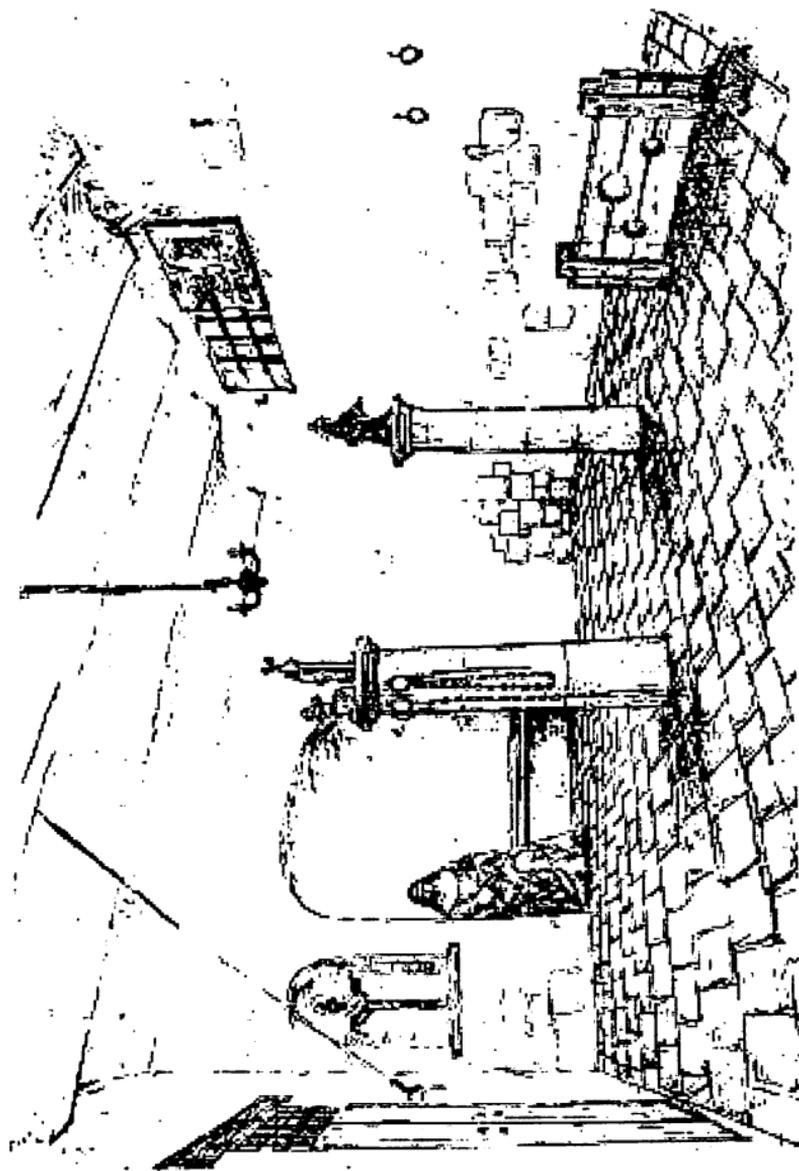
To the side of the cross and a little behind it, there is a large cavity imbedded in the wall with a stone bench inside it, which serves as a bed for the repose of the imprisoned religious. The whole prison measures about 30 x 15 feet. Along the wall across from the door and bed, running from one wall to another, are stone benches about five feet long.

The small window above the door that opens to the cloisters has thick bars of iron, and can be closed from inside the prison by a small wooden door to keep out the damp night air. This small door is painted on one side with a picture of the Archangel Gabriel announcing the sublime mystery of the Incarnation of the Word to the Holy Virgin. Below this picture these words are inscribed in large, clear letters: "Remember the four last things and you will never sin." This small door always remains open during the day.

On the other side of this small door, which can be seen at night when the window is closed, is a beautiful picture of Our Lord Jesus Christ imprisoned and wearing heavy iron chains. Two weeping angels watch Him tenderly and under His divine feet are roses and lilies. This picture is very moving; in it Christ inspires tenderness, love, and repentance for all the sins one has committed. Under this picture are large letters reading, "One dies as one lives," followed by this stanza:

Remember that God watches you.
 Remember that He is watching you now.
 Remember that you must die.
 Remember that you know not when.⁵⁷

57. Mira que te mira Dios.
 Mira que te está mirando.
 Mira que debes morir!
 Mira que no sabes cuando.



Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room is a simple, heavy curved candelabra that holds three candles to provide light at night.

THE TWO COLUMNS

Four feet in front of the bench is a thick column of stone in the form of a circular pillar, 5-1/2 feet high, and topped by a round wooden platform 2-1/2 feet in diameter. Like a small altar, it holds a precious statue of Christ Our Lord imprisoned and bound to a column upon which a rooster perches. At the feet of Our Lord is a moving figure of Saint Peter the Apostle repenting after Christ fixed him with His gaze. Weeping over his sin of denying his Master, he inspires guilty souls to contrition as well as love and confidence in the goodness of Christ Our Lord.

The statue of Christ is touching. Looking at it, one's heart fills with tenderness and love. To the innocent and the just, it seems to say, "Look what I suffered to give you an example and to give you strength." To the guilty, it says, "Beloved soul, I keep you company in this place where you justly atone for your faults. Turn to Me and, with unlimited confidence throw yourself at My feet like My penitent Apostle and weep for your faults. Study Me well: I have allowed My hands to be bound to this column to pay the punishment due for your sins. Give Me your love and tears so that they might intermingle with Mine and be presented before My Celestial Father, Who will grant you full pardon."

On one side of this stone pillar there are three metal rings or irons from which hang three long iron chains. At the end of each chain is a kind of handcuff that can be locked on the feet, hands, or waist of the prisoner. These handcuffs are of various sizes, so that they can be applied to the guilty sister according to the need or nature of the faults committed.

The other side of this column is smooth. The prisoner can bind herself to it voluntarily, if she so desires, to make penance and pray with the sorrowful and suffering Christ. The floor around this column was often found stained with blood from the penances that Mother Mariana and the Spanish Mothers made there on the various times they were imprisoned.

Eight feet away from this column is another one, also of

stone and similar to the first. On top of it is a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. The image is very moving and captivating. It inspires love, tenderness, compassion, and sorrow for one's sins. Her eyes, turned on high as if she were gazing up at the Child of her love and sorrow, are filled with compassionate tears. Like the other, this column has the same shackles and chains on one side, while the other side is smooth.

The prison also has a stock, fetters, and chains. It lacks nothing, and is a most respected place. One who enters it is filled with a holy fear and dread of occupying it. However, in it the innocent have suffered, as we see in the story of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres.

To the right of the entrance, there are more of the same limestone tile benches. In the middle of them is a long closet that holds the food provisions, sewing supplies, books, and instruments of penance. The stone bench then continues, extending from the end of the closet to the next wall, which has the small barred window that has already been described. The floor is of tiles, and the room is dry.

Fathers Isquierdo and Jurado, both Friars Minor, zealously designed this venerable place. Father Isquierdo personally directed the making of the statues of Our Lord and the Virgin. He provided exact instructions for the sculptor, Francisco de la Cruz de Castillo, about how to make them so that they would be appropriate for such a place, communicating that mystical unction which Our Lord imparts to attract souls to Himself – the guilty souls, by means of repentance, and the just souls, by means of love and gratitude.

This, then, is the prison in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito. It is a necessary place, as we have said, given the weakness of human nature. Yet it has been sanctified by the fact that more of the innocent rather than the guilty have suffered there.

CONSIDERATIONS

Oh! If it were possible for me to be in this very place occupied by Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, the place where, through the benevolence of the Queen of Heaven, she received such extraordinary graces that this place of suffering was transformed into

a Heaven rather than a place of penance! Our sisters, the religious of the Immaculate Conception, should consider themselves most fortunate in possessing such a sacred place in their Convent and should love and respect it, as well as preserve it with veneration. When, through the course of time, it should happen that someone should occupy it, that person should consider herself fortunate, for it is a holy place. If she is guilty, she should mourn her faults, convert, and change her life. If she is innocent, she should remember Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres and the Founding Mothers and how they transformed this prison into a Heaven, and then imitate their conduct. Thus will she perfect her soul and draw to it, to her Convent, and to this city so laden with sins, the mercy and grace of God that only holy and humble souls can attract. That God resists the mighty, and converses and unites Himself with the humble of heart is a truth that will remain throughout the centuries until the end of time.

I have the certainty that even if all mankind, however good they might be, should try to close the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, prevailing on every viable means, they would not be able to do so. For this blessed place is consecrated with the most exquisite incense of elevated prayer and with the oil of the blood of innocent virgins, who, lacerating their blameless bodies with blows from severe disciplines, thus consecrated the walls of this beloved place.

For this Convent is built upon the profound foundation of admirable humility and is constructed with the stones of solid virtue – from the virtue of its saintly Founding Mothers up to that of the final holy sister who will live here. For I am certain that these great and hidden souls will not be lacking throughout time. They will be sculpted from within the very bosom of their Community by the sufferings imposed by the hands of their sisters, all the more painful and sorrowful than if made by the hands of strangers.

A thousand times blessed art Thou, my God, Who hast made the Seraphic family a mother fecund with holy sons and daughters.

Immaculate Daughter, hidden in the womb of your mother Saint Anne, thou wert the delight of God and the terror of demons. Blessed art thou for making the daughters of the Immaculate Con-

ception an integral and fruitful branch of the Seraphic family.

And you, angelic creature, Saint Francis of Assisi, my Father, blessed art you for corresponding with perfection to the divine call, founding a mendicant Order that spread throughout the entire world and attracted many souls to God by means of humility, meekness, and poverty. To this Order I belong, the least of your sons, yet I desire to exceed all of my brothers in loving you and imitating you, fulfilling to perfection the holy Rule that you gave us.

But since my virtue is small and my strength only that of a weak child, I pray that you yourself, my holy Father, ignite in my heart the ardent fire of the love of God. For your heart was the blazing volcano that inflamed your sons and daughters throughout time. Bless your sons, the Friars Minor, and your true daughters, the religious of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy, so that one day all your sons and daughters, united with you in Heaven, might sing in praise the goodness and perfection of our God: "*Ecce quam bonum et jucundum fratres habitare in unum.*" [Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity]. Amen.

* * *

CHAPTER 26

The Bishop confirmed the election of Mother Valenzuela with great satisfaction. Immediately the solemn act of the Community rendering obedience to the new Abbess took place. Mother Valenzuela told the Prelate that to proceed with peace and harmony, the imprisoned captain and the other guilty sisters should also render her obedience and the excommunication should be lifted from them.

The Bishop readily acceded to this request, ordering Mothers Mariana de Jesus, Francisca of the Angels, and Lucia of the Cross to go and release the guilty leader from prison and bring her and all the others into his presence.

With that docility characteristic of grand souls, Mother Mariana went with her companions in search of the guilty sisters to tell them that the Bishop had requested their presence to free them.

Seeing them, the captain arrogantly asked, "What do you want? If you have come to take my place, then you are doing the right thing. For the real saints chose to take the place of those who were imprisoned."

The Mothers replied serenely, "Sister, the Bishop is calling for you to lift the excommunication. Then you can also render obedience to the new Abbess who was elected, Mother Magdalena de Jesus Valenzuela."

Finding a ray of hope in this news, the captain was encouraged. "Let us go then," she said.

Standing before the Bishop, the non-observant sisters felt somewhat fearful. He addressed a brief sermon to them to make them realize their bad behavior and terrible consequences it would have for eternity. He lifted their excommunication, but then ordered that the captain should return to the prison, which was done after she kissed the scapular of the new Abbess.

HAPPINESS RETURNS TO THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

After the Mothers had accompanied the captain to prison, the ceremony of rendering obedience began. One by one, following the order of precedence, each sister pledged her obedience to the

new Abbess. At the end of this solemn act, the Bishop made a magnificent speech, exhorting them all to the love of God and the practice of mutual charity. Then he publicly manifested his will that Mother Mariana should retain all the privileges of Abbess and Founder, and that the present Abbess should not resolve any matter, however small it might be, without first consulting with her and receiving her approval. She would also retain full rights to punish and imprison the insubordinate non-observant sisters. Then, blessing them, he left.

A great happiness fell over the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito as the sisters celebrated the election of their new Abbess. The only one not rejoicing was Mother Valenzuela. Weeping and disconsolate, she kept Mother Mariana constantly at her side, for she looked upon her as the guardian angel of her Abbacy. With profound humility and charming sweetness, Mother Mariana attempted to console the Abbess. The very soul of the happiness of her sisters, this angel of innocence began to play her harp, singing divine canticles that inspired her sisters with new fervor. Only the non-observant sisters were somewhat downcast and withdrawn.

When Mother Mariana stopped singing, the sisters began to converse about the beauty of Heaven and the happiness of the blessed, who enjoy eternal and holy harmony in their possession of the heavenly Fatherland. Other sisters left to help the lay sisters who were preparing the meal. Every time that the bell of the call box rang, Mother Mariana would answer it. She always returned with more food and gifts, for she was greatly loved inside and outside the Convent.

When the meal was ready, Mother Mariana herself went to the refectory to serve it. Taking the portion reserved for the prisoner, she asked the Mother Abbess for the key so that she could bring her the meal.

When this miserable sister saw Mother Mariana, she spared no words of abuse, telling her that she had fooled the Bishop with her hypocrisy and tricks so that she could continue to tyrannize the sisters. But the day would come, she threatened, when she would have the consolation of seeing Mother Mariana imprisoned again. Then she would be happy.

Mother Mariana said nothing to all his. After embracing the embittered captain, she left to rejoin her sisters.

During the three days of festivity, Mother Mariana glowed. It seemed as if God Our Lord had further enhanced her normal beauty. Her cheeks were full and rosy, her blue eyes shone with greater brilliance and charm.

When the festivities ended, Mother Valenzuela - from now on we will refer to her simply as the Abbess - communicated to Mother Mariana her decision to call together the sisters to assign them their various offices. She told her that she desired that Mother Mariana be Vicar Abbess, or Novice Mistress. But this humble sister, shying away from every office of dignity, protested that since she had just been Abbess, she needed time to recollect herself after so many hours of distraction that were necessarily a part of that office. The two of them discretely distributed the various offices in charity, peace, and unity, which is no cause for surprise since one of the members of that fortunate council was a saint.

THE MYSTERIOUS CONTENTS OF A BOX

The offices were distributed, and each one who was chosen took possession of her function. The non-observant sisters, however, were given no positions. They went to visit the new Abbess and tried to win her to their side with sweet words, as is the habit of shameless persons lacking character.

They would also speak highly of their imprisoned captain, insisting that this sister was suffering now only because she had been so good. If she spoke as she did in the chapter, they explained, it was not from pride, but from holy zeal. Since Mother Valenzuela had always acted as their mother, they pleaded, now she should free the captain and put in her place the insupportable Spanish Mother who had abused her Abbacy and whose behavior demanded chastisement.

“One day, Mother, she carefully hid for herself a three-square-foot iron chest that she ordered specially made not long ago. It is filled with precious jewels given to her by the donors who admire her. She sends the jewelry to Spain, and eats the sweets and drinks the liqueurs, while she pretends to be mortified in front of the Community.

“What is worse, Mother, is that she hides this box in the lower choir, daring to eat and become drunk there at will without being noticed, before His Majesty in the Sacramental Species. This is why she emerges from the lower choir so rosy-cheeked and inebriated, pretending sanctity with such hypocrisy. It seems that it is time to expose this Spaniard and make her fall.”

Hearing this, the Abbess was interiorly distressed, fearful that this might be true and dreading to discover it to be so. She replied, however, by stating that she could not believe that such evil could exist in one so obviously humble, mortified, and patient, but that she would investigate the matter.

The non-observant sisters retorted, “Yes, Mother, but do so very cautiously and quietly so that she will not perceive you are watching her. Then we can catch her by surprise and she will have no way out!”

CANDLES CHANGE TO BONES

With this suspicion in the back of her mind, the Abbess tried to follow Mother Mariana everywhere she went, especially to the lower choir. As her office of Abbess did not permit her to remain there as long as Mother Mariana did, it never happened that they would both leave at the same time. The Abbess noticed, however, that Mother Mariana always sprinkled the iron chest with holy water.

Her distress increasing, the Abbess finally told herself one morning when Mother Mariana was praying in the lower choir, “Today I will order her to reveal to me the contents of this box that has made the other sisters so suspicious. If, by some chance, what they have said is true, I will tell no one, but will guard the secret in my heart. For I love her so much. She is still young, and her nature might crave sweets, poor sister. And even if it is true, she is still an angel.”

Entering the lower choir and finding herself alone with Mother Mariana, the Abbess called to her and said, “Mother, what does Your Reverence have in this box? Perhaps some instruments of penance or some other such private thing? I would like to see what it contains. Perhaps Your Reverence has forgotten to tell me about it. Now, while we are alone in the presence of the Blessed

Sacrament, I want to see what it is.”

“It is neither an oversight nor a secret, Mother,” the creature gravely and humbly responded, “for it is not fitting that a subject should have secrets from her Abbess. I had a great desire to show you its contents on the very day you were chosen by God to govern this Community. I did not, however, want to embitter the days of celebration. Day after day, I have deliberated on whether to reveal to Your Reverence the contents of this box, but seeing you suffering so much and your health so precarious, I have not done so. Even today I do not feel it would be prudent for you to see it.”

This explanation roused the concern and curiosity of the Abbess, who told her, “It does not matter, Mother, that I am suffering. I have decided to see it.”

“Very well, Mother,” responded the obedient religious. “But first, ask the Lord for fortitude and strength.”

Approaching the box, Mother Mariana said, “Mother, do you remember the shameful procession that our poor sisters made with lighted candles as they tried to cross through this blessed door?”

“I remember it well,” the Abbess replied. “And I became so indignant that I seized them violently, took the candles from their hands, and threw them far from them. But what does this have to do with the contents of the box?”

“Mother, all those candles were transformed into the shin bones of the dead,” said Mother Mariana, “and here they are, each one with the respective name of the religious who carried it marked on it. For this reason, I, Mother Francisca of the Angels, and Mother Lucia of the Cross carefully picked them up and secretly guarded them. A short time afterward, I ordered the box to be made so that this event would be preserved and passed on as a lesson for those who follow us. For in every age, Satan will wage a fierce war to demolish our beloved Convent, and this grave event will serve to check our younger sisters.”

“We will see, Mother,” said the Abbess with a trembling voice. Opening the lid of the box, she looked in, tried to cry out but could not speak, and fainted.

Catching the body of her Abbess, Mother Mariana gently eased her to the ground near the box, carefully supporting her head all the while. As she did so, she prayed to the Sacramental Jesus to

send one of her sisters to help her revive the Abbess.

THE ABBESS CALLS TOGETHER THE COMMUNITY

While this scene was taking place, Mother Francisca of the Angels and Mother Anna of the Conception were heading to the lower choir to visit the Prisoner of Love. Hearing the cry of their Abbess, they hurried their pace. Entering, they saw the Abbess stretched out on the floor with her head supported by Mother Mariana, who said to them, "Come quickly!"

"What has happened?" they asked.

"You know that the candles from the procession changed into bones and that we kept them here so that they would be preserved for all times," explained Mother Mariana. "The Abbess insisted upon seeing the contents of this box. Unable to withstand the shock, she fainted. Now, Mother Francisca, go quickly and bring wool to burn so that she can smell it and return to her senses, and also a cup of anise water for her to drink. Mother Anna of the Conception and I will massage her. Also, tell the others that we are here."

Mother Francisca of the Angels hurried away. Seeing her haste and concerned expression, the other religious, one after another entered the lower choir and found their Abbess on the floor in a swoon next to the box.

With smiles on their lips, the non-observant sisters said, "Poor Mother! She had an attack when she saw with her own eyes such great hypocrisy."

The rest of the sisters did not understand the meaning of these words, but God Our Lord revealed the secret of their malicious hearts to His gentle spouse Mother Mariana, who saw how they had calumniated her to the Abbess. She pardoned these poor, blind sisters and prayed for them, begging that they receive light, mercy, and forgiveness.

Mother Francisca of the Angels returned with the remedies and applied them. Returning to consciousness, the Abbess took a deep breath and, squeezing the hand of Mother Mariana, kissed it with tenderness and love. The latter, meanwhile, pressed her to drink the anise water.

The non-observant sisters quickly approached the Abbess.

Addressing her in tones of honey, they said, "See, Mother, what we have told you is true. Mother Mariana has caused this illness, for you had this attack because of the shock of what you have seen. Now you know the terrible hypocrisy that has been going on for such a long time. We implore you, then, that Mother Mariana be justly chastised and imprisoned, and that you release the captain, who has been unjustly imprisoned."

Hearing these words, the Abbess was taken by a holy impatience and cried out, "Get out of this holy place, you liars and slanderers. Soon you will receive your punishment."

Meanwhile, Mother Mariana fixed her eyes on the ground and, without the least change in expression, continued to administer to her Abbess to restore her completely.

The fury of the Abbess increased as the non-observant sisters drew yet nearer and insisted that she show everyone the contents of the box. Her countenance severe, she replied, "Yes, you will see with your own eyes the fruit of your sins. Examine your consciences and ask God for pardon."

Hearing these words, the non-observant sisters drew back, somewhat concerned and no longer certain of what they were going to see.

THE COMMUNITY GATHERS TOGETHER AGAIN

Fully restored, the Abbess gave an order to her secretary to ring the bell, calling the whole Community together in the lower choir. In the meantime, she consulted with Mother Mariana, saying it was her opinion that the hour had arrived to reveal to the whole Community the transformation of the processional candles into bones inscribed with the names of the guilty sisters. The humble religious responded that God so desired it, and that it was also His divine will that a detailed account of this terrible and extraordinary event be written and preserved for posterity in the same box that guarded the bones. She had known that this was the will of God when she ordered the box to be made.

Presided over by the Abbess and her worthy counselor, the Community gathered together. The Abbess gave an order to Mother Lucia of the Cross to accompany her to the prison and bring out the prisoner so that she might also be present. The two left together

and entered the prison, which was located next to the lower choir.

Seeing them, the prisoner rushed forward to greet the Abbess, speaking with sweet cunning, "Welcome, my Mother. I hope in your charity you will release me from this place where I suffer innocently, and that Your Reverence will place here instead the guilty one, Mother Mariana, the sole cause of all the disturbances in the Community."

The Abbess told her: "You, sister, are the sole cause of all these things. Make a true conversion if you want to save yourself. Agitated, rebellious, disobedient, ambitious – your example leads many imprudent sisters astray, just like Lucifer who swayed to his side one-third of the Angels. As for me, I would like to have you imprisoned permanently or put out of this Convent so we might be left in peace. Putrid member that you are, you need to be separated so that you do not infect the others.

"Now I will conduct you to the lower choir where the whole Community is gathered. There you will see with your own eyes what God has done on behalf of the innocent and holy Mother Mariana, and to reprove your rebellion and pretentiousness. Let us go."

MOTHER MARIANA'S INNOCENCE IS AVENGED

With the captain walking ahead of them, they returned to the lower choir and took their respective places. The Abbess assigned the prisoner the last place behind the lay sisters and on the floor.

Closing the door, the Abbess then spoke: "Mothers and sisters, God Our Lord gathers us together to avenge the innocent Mother Mariana, so calumniated for a long time and always so unjustly persecuted and punished. The rebellious sisters told me that here, in the lower choir, in this iron-plated box that you see, she was keeping various jewels to send secretly to her family, along with sweets and cordials that she took to become drunk and please her senses, all the while pretending to virtue with great hypocrisy. I refused to believe this. Nonetheless, a cruel doubt crept into my heart, and I suffered unspeakably until, surprising her unawares, I found her here and demanded to see the contents of the box. Unable to bear the shock of what I saw, I fainted.

“As soon as I recovered, my first desire was for the whole Community to see its contents and tremble to realize what has taken place among you. Let the guilty ones implore God for mercy and atone for the many sufferings they have caused Mother Mariana, who was an innocent victim during her Abbacy. Nonetheless, she always pardoned and loved her guilty sisters. The worthy daughter of our unforgettable saintly Founder Mother Maria, Mother Mariana valiantly carries out what her aunt, upon leaving this earth, entrusted to her and to all her daughters so that we might be happy in this life and eternity.

“Now, Mother Francisca, Mother Lucia, and Mother Anna of the Conception, accompany the prisoner and the non-observant sisters and bring this box to the center of the choir.”

Discontent, the non-observant sisters helped to carry the box to the place designated by the Abbess. The three Spanish sisters, however, were in peace.

Mother Valenzuela descended from her place, telling the prisoner and the non-observant sisters that she would open its lid for them to see the contents. They approached quickly, thinking that their slanders might be proved true.

The Abbess raised the lid, saying, “See, sisters, the candles that you carried in your hands during the procession you made only some days ago. They have changed into your bones inscribed with your names. Read each one. You had the presumption to calumniate your innocent Mother and sister. Now take the jewels, cordials, and sweets that you said were concealed here. Enjoy them yourselves if you so desire.”

When they saw the contents of the box, the screams of the sisters filled the whole Church. The Abbess ordered the three Mothers to empty the contents of the box on the ground. The guilty religious, trembling and stupefied, wept in fear.

The ones who had taken part in the procession from coercion or lack of character wept and cried out: “Most Holy Mother of Peace, have mercy on us! Beloved Little Patroness, mercy! We have sinned! Mother Mariana of Jesus, pardon! A thousand times, pardon! Our intentions were not bad. We were dragged along out of human respect. Beg mercy from God for us that we might never again take part in such mutinies! Sister X [the captain] is respon-

sible for all this. She won us over with threats and promises. Mercy! Mercy!”

Weeping, each one publicly confessed her misdeeds.

The lay sisters said, “Have mercy on us, Lord! For we are only poor lay sisters who, according to the holy Rule, should serve our mothers with humility. Yet we, won over by Sister X, went against our innocent Mother and Founder, Mother Mariana de Jesus, causing her to suffer. Pardon, Lord, pardon! Our dear Little Patroness, forgive us and erase our names from these bones, for it was an unfortunate hour when we took those candles into our hands. Have mercy on us!”

Amid these cries of confusion and fear, the prisoner and the calumniators said nothing. They were very upset and even had they wanted to hide their fear, God would not permit it, for their faces were livid and they trembled uncontrollably.

HOW THE NON-OBSERVANT SISTERS REACTED TO THIS CHASTISEMENT

The Abbess ordered Mother Mariana to come down from her place and indicate to whom each bone corresponded according to the name written on it. Then, after the name was read out, the Abbess placed the bone in the hands of the guilty sister to whom it belonged. The captain and the calumniators wanted to protest, but when they tried to speak, they were unable to make a sound. They fell unconscious over the bones upon which their names were written.

Mother Mariana, whose compassionate heart could not bear to see her sisters suffer, re-collected the bones and put them back on the floor in the center of the choir. Then she hurried to help the fallen sisters, who had become like corpses, unwillingly clutching the bones in their hands. Perhaps it was the finger of God acting.

She took the stiff bodies of these sisters into her arms and vigorously rubbed their faces and arms, while Mothers Francisca of the Angels, Anna of the Conception, and Lucia of the Cross hurried to get anise water and wool to help bring them back to consciousness. With this assistance, one by one, they gradually came to themselves.

The first person they saw upon opening their eyes was

their benefactress who was assisting them. They were shamefaced and large tears rolled down their cheeks. Fearfully, they cast away the bones, which were picked up by one of the Mothers and placed on the floor in the center of the choir.

The last to return to consciousness, and this only with great difficulty, was the captain, who was thought to be dead. The Abbess regarded her with severity. When she revived, she saw herself in the arms of the humble Mother Mariana. Still holding the bone, she fearfully threw it aside and disdainfully gestured away the holy sister who was helping her, saying, "Imposter!"

All were scandalized at such ingratitude. The Abbess, whose temper was fierce, approached and threatened to give her a blow, exclaiming, "Insolent women!" But Mother Marian intervened and forestalled the blow that the captain would have otherwise received.

A WRITTEN ACCOUNT IS MADE OF THE INCIDENT

Fear, confusion, and shame filled the room, as some of the sisters cried out loudly and unceasingly for mercy from God, the Little Patroness, and Mother Mariana. The Abbess ordered silence, and all became calm.

She then spoke to them, exhorting them to union, peace and charity, and advising the guilty ones to convert so that their souls might be saved. Some of the non-observant sisters rushed to embrace Mother Mariana, who received them most amiably, extending her arms to them. They apologized profusely for their misdeeds and kissed her feet in their penitence. Others, however, including the captain, said nothing, although they remained quite perturbed.

Accompanied by Mother Lucia of the Cross, the Abbess returned the captain to the prison, locking her in and leaving her without saying a word.

Then, returning to the lower choir with parchment and ink, the Abbess instructed the secretary to write down all that had taken place. She told her to add to the account that the box with all its contents should remain forever in the lower choir as a lesson for posterity.

After the Abbess, her council, the secretary, and the whole Community had signed the document, she placed the parchment,

along with a small metal crucifix, in the box and ordered it locked. This box, like the prison, is a precious treasure that belongs to our sisters, the religious of the Immaculate Conception of Quito.

APPARITION OF THE VIRGIN OF PEACE TO MOTHER MARIANA

The next day, Mother Mariana was in the lower choir making her customary meditation when her heart stirred and her sensibilities became alert. She heard a soft murmur that came from the niche where the Virgin of Peace stood, and then the melodious voice of her Most Holy Mother, who told her, “Child of my Heart, I am the Queen of Peace and the Mother of Fair Love. Prepare your heart and expand your spirit so that your heroism might save the soul of your imprisoned sister. For you must either sacrifice yourself for her, or her soul will be lost. How I suffer from the loss of a religious soul!”

And large tears rolled down the beautiful cheeks of the Queen of Peace, whose precious image had come alive to speak to her beloved daughter.

Mother Mariana became inflamed with the love of God and Mary Most Holy, and a strong desire to save souls consumed her being. She offered herself for all that God desired of her, without recalling what Our Lord had already asked of her and what she had accepted – five years of Hell to save the soul of her sister.

FIVE YEARS OF HELL FOR THE SOUL OF THE CAPTAIN

Continuing her prayer, she then saw Jesus Christ anguishing and crowned with thorns. Large drops of blood flowed from His forehead and fell onto His face. Our Lord gave a touching sigh, and said, “My spouse, the time has arrived for you to fulfill the offering that you made to Me to save the soul of your sister – suffering five years of Hell so that she will not suffer it for eternity. You must now fulfill your word, or Divine Justice will fall upon this guilty soul. See her even at this moment...”

Mother Mariana then saw that the captain was out of herself in a state of despair. Dissatisfied with life because of the terrible remorse of her guilty conscience, she was trying to find something with which she could kill herself. At her side were two

huge black creatures who were taunting her to greater despair. They were whispering in her ear that there was no other way out for her, and that either she should kill herself and finish with such a sad life, or else leave and go into the world where she could enjoy herself and find some pleasure in life.

In the world, they told her, she could live more freely and without such oppression, for it would be intolerable to live her whole life imprisoned, all the more so because the Spaniards were all her enemies who, with their lies, had turned the spirit of the whole Community against her. In the Convent, she would henceforth be regarded with hatred and horror, like a diseased member. With these words, the black creatures strove to make her lose her soul.

Accosted by these ideas, which all seemed to be true to this poor sister, she began to run back and forth in the prison like a madwoman, wishing herself dead. She fell to the ground, foaming at the mouth and shrieking. Then she ran to the door of the prison and tried to tear it down.

Seeing this, Mother Mariana suffered indescribably and prayed with great fervor for her poor sister. She then recalled the vision that she had experienced during the election in the chapter hall, and the formal promise she had made to Our Lord to suffer Hell for five years to save this soul.

Our Lord showed her again what these five years – which seemed more like centuries – would entail, letting her see the full intensity of the painful suffering she would take on in a state where she would be without relief or divine consolation, much less human consolation, which is futile in this type of suffering. Again, Our Lord allowed her to freely accept or refuse such torments, and to choose whether she would sacrifice herself for the salvation of this soul.

For the captain, who was spiritually dead, needed a human victim who, united to the Divine Victim, would do violence to Heaven to snatch her from the claws of the Devil, who already considered her in his possession because of the many sins she had committed for so many years in the religious life.

The religious life is most charming in its essence: sweet, consoling, filled with indescribable peace and divine pleasures. The faithful soul feels the grace of her divine vocation like a torrential

rain falling on the pleasant garden of the cloisters. However, for the dispersive, unfaithful soul, this same downpouring of graces become poison, leaving her increasingly languid, dry, and remarkably indifferent. Such souls are not attracted by the moving mysteries of Calvary, the Holy Eucharist, and Bethlehem, nor do they feel the tenderness that faithful souls enjoy in these mysteries. Poor souls! May God forbid that this type of soul ever again occupy the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of my beloved sisters!

THE HEROIC SACRIFICE

The heart of Mother Mariana shuddered and vacillated upon seeing the intense agony she would have to endure. Then she recalled the unspeakable sufferings of Jesus Christ in the Garden and on the Cross when He saw that a great number of souls would be lost, making no use of the copious graces of the Redemption. She also saw the ingratitude and perfidy of those who called themselves His friends and of those souls chosen by His love to be called His beloved spouses. Then, such a great love for her Divine Spouse took possession of her heart that she considered herself fortunate to be able to suffer and unite herself to Jesus and save souls – especially the soul of her poor sister separated from Christ who had not combatted the pride in her heart in its first manifestations.

In her amorous fervor, she said: “My Divine Redeemer and Beloved of my soul, I, the favored daughter of Thy love, had forgotten the generous resolution and offering I made to Thee in order to save this sister’s souls. But today, gazing again at Thy Divine Heart, I ask Thee to allow me to save souls, especially this one. I offer myself to suffer this five years of Hell so that she might attain eternal happiness.

“Well do I understand the bitter and terrible suffering this resolution encompasses. I fear and shudder when I consider my weakness and little virtue. But confiding in Thy divine strength and in the love that Thou hast for me, I not only accept, but, humbling myself in Thy presence with my forehead on the ground, I implore Thee in Thy charity to allow me to suffer these five years of Hell so that my poor unfortunate sister can be saved. For she, like a sheep gone astray, has separated herself from the flock of the Di-

vine Shepherd.

“Uniting myself to Thy internal and external sufferings, making Thy merits mine, and relying on the favor of my Immaculate Mother and my Seraphic Father Saint Francis, I do not fear.

“How difficult it is to think of myself deprived of Thy presence and suffering such a grievous separation! Since Thou didst also suffer that loss of the condemned souls during those three hours of Thy Agony on the Cross, Thou knowest from Thine own experience what this sorrow is. I hope and pray, therefore, that Thou wilt sustain me.”

Our Lord accepted this generous offering of love and said to her, “I desire hearts like yours, My beloved spouse, for the salvation of souls. And such hearts I will always find in this, My beloved Convent.

“Have no fear. I will be your secret strength. You will suffer the five years of Hell, and in exchange, the soul of your sister is already saved. She will first suffer a severe illness, during which time you will take care of her in order to win and convert her. You will have much to suffer in bearing the severity of her abusive treatment. Then she will be cured. After she stands before the Judgment Seat and realizes her bad life, then your Hell will begin.”

Mother Mariana understood, then, all that she would suffer during this sickness of her sister. She saw how her abnegated and loving service would be received with ingratitude and roughness. She also saw the Judgment through which this religious would pass, and how she would be condemned to remain in Purgatory until the day of Final Judgment. However, by virtue of her heroic sacrifice, the soul of this guilty sister would be saved.

STRANGE VOICES COMING FROM THE PRISON

The Abbess, who vigilantly watched over the whole house and habitually passed by the prison, would hear strange noises and screams coming from it that frightened her very much. She was by nature fearful, and for this reason, never entered the prison alone. The Mothers and sisters who frequented the lower choir to visit the Blessed Sacrament and pray – for at that time the fervor of the religious was very great – told the Abbess that they had also heard these noises.

One day, the Abbess and Mother Mariana were walking together to the lower choir when they heard the raucous shouts and ugly voices of persons inside the prison.

The Abbess became exceedingly frightened and asked, "Mother, do you hear that? My Lord and my God! What is happening in there?"

Mother Mariana sighed, saying, "Mother, this poor sister is a victim of the Devil. We should have zeal for her soul and go to visit her and remove her for a short time to the lower cloister so that she will not despair."

The Abbess replied, "Mother, it would be better if she were to leave the Convent so that we were completely rid of her, for I believe that she has gone mad."

"No, Mother," replied Mother Mariana. "If she leaves the Convent, this poor sister will lose her soul. We must instead win her for God."

"If Your Reverence is strong enough to accompany me," returned the Abbess, "then I will do as you say. Otherwise, no."

"Yes, Mother, I will take care of everything."

"And if you are attacked?"

"I will embrace her and hold her to my heart. Fortunately, she is a very small person," Mother Mariana concluded.

Crossing themselves, the two religious opened the door to the prison and entered.

Seeing them, the prisoner ran to them, shouting, "I am dying! Dying! And the Devil is carrying me away!" She ran to and fro in the prison, beating her head against the walls.

The Abbess looked at Mother Mariana, who was quietly praying for her poor sister, renewing her offer to suffer Hell so that she might be saved. Her prayer was heard, and the prisoner suddenly fell unconscious in front of the column with the statue of the scourged Christ atop it.

"Let us go to help her, Mother," exclaimed Mother Mariana, directing herself to her superior, who was trembling.

The Abbess replied, "Let Your Reverence go by yourself."

Mother Mariana went to her poor sister and raised her up. The captain was lying face down, spewing foam from her mouth and blood from her nose, her face fixed with a fearful expression.

She charitably cleaned and rubbed the captain, trying to make her regain consciousness.

The Abbess, who remained standing in the prison doorway trembling with fear, said, "Mother, if she returns to herself, I am going to rush out of here."

Mother Mariana wept, and her tears fell on the forehead and face of the poor captive. From time to time she was shaken by strong convulsions, after which she would cry out and her body would start. Meanwhile, Mother Mariana continued to hold her head and torso in her lap.

Turning to the Abbess, she said, "Mother, it would be good to ask Mother Francisca for anise water and wool to burn. Tell her that there is a seriously ill person here so that she can come with others to assist our poor sister."

"I will go tell Mother Francisca this. But what will you do here by yourself if she regains consciousness while I am gone?"

"Do not worry, Mother. Jesus and Mary are here with me."

THE EXORCISM

The Abbess quickly took her leave. While she awaited assistance from Mother Francisca, Mother Mariana continued to do all she could to revive her poor sister. As she attended her, she saw the two black creatures, who were timidly pressing themselves against the wall as if to hide themselves.

Seeing them, Mother Mariana cried out: "Vile and abominable beasts, what are you doing here? Return to your own wicked abode, for this is a holy place, a house of prayer and penance. All your efforts to take the soul of my sister will be in vain! Jesus Christ died for her and, in spite of you, she will be saved!

"I order you now, in the name of the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Divine Eucharist, and the Divine Maternity of Mary Most Holy and her glorious Passage and Assumption body and soul into Heaven, that you immediately leave this holy place, never again to return to torment with your abominable presence any of my sisters, be they justly or unjustly confined here!"

Before the humble religious had finished pronouncing her last word, a dreadful roar was heard. The earth trembled and horrible howling sounds could be heard. The Abbess was returning at

that very moment with Mothers Francisca of the Angels, Anna of the Conception, Lucia of the Cross, Magdalena of St John, and Catherine of the Conception, who were bringing the remedies. All were quite frightened, especially the Abbess.

The religious recovered their courage and said to the Abbess, "Mother, have no fear. Something diabolical must be taking place in the prison. But Mother Mariana is very good, and the devils have no power over her. Let us enter without fear and with haste. We will see what will happen. Besides, Sister X is small and thin, and she would not be able to attack Mother Mariana, who is tall and strong."

The Mothers pressed forward to learn the cause of the dreadful commotion, but the Abbess, terrified, followed at a distance. Mother Francisca entered the prison with the other religious and saw that the room was darkened with a thick smoke.

They called out to Mother Mariana, who replied, "Come quickly. One of you go tell the Abbess to bring holy water and the incenser."

Mother Lucia of the Cross found the Abbess in the cloister hallway and told her Mother Mariana's request, which they both hastened to carry out.

When they returned, they saw that the prison was still obscure with smoke. On Mother Mariana's orders, Mother Lucia burned the incense while Mother Magdalena of Saint John sprinkled holy water around the prison, including on its walls. With this, the smoke dispersed and all could approach the poor sick sister, whom Mother Mariana was holding, half-dead, in her lap. They rubbed her, shook her, and fanned her. Finally, she opened her eyes and suddenly sat up.

THE INGRATITUDE OF THE PRISONER

Finding herself among the good Spanish Mothers whom she despised, the captain seemed somewhat ashamed, and said, "I do not feel well."

Mother Mariana brought to her lips the cup of anise water and made her drink it, making the Sign of the Cross over her.

The Abbess approached and said, "Let us take her outside for a while to take some sun."

“Thank you, Mother,” the prisoner responded. They raised her up, but she lacked the strength to walk, even with the support of the religious.

Consoling her like true Mothers and sisters, the religious visited her and provided her companionship throughout the day. The next day, the Abbess entered the prison with Mother Mariana and Mother Francisca. The prisoner, glowering at the Mothers, directed her attention only to the Abbess. Gravely, the Abbess addressed her, “Sister, you should be grateful to these two good and charitable Mothers who have come to take you outside for awhile so that you might get some fresh air.”

“I will go, Mother,” responded the prisoner. Supported by the two Mothers, she left the prison for the cloisters, where they helped her to stroll for a good length of time.

When an hour was up, the Abbess said, “Return, daughter, to prison, where you will remain until, contrite of heart, you amend your life and ask a public pardon of the Community for your bad example, and especially of Mother Mariana de Jesus, who loves you and has only compassion and tenderness for you.”

The poor sister, weeping, returned to the prison. That night she suffered much, battling with her guilty conscience. But the envy in her heart was so deep-rooted that she could not bring herself to ask pardon and love the humble Mother Mariana.

THE REVELATIONS OF OUR LORD BEGIN TO BE FULFILLED

The next morning, the prisoner woke with great pain, a high fever, and symptoms of pneumonia. Seeing her in this state, the Abbess sought the counsel of Mother Mariana. Hearing the news, Mother Mariana sighed and large tears ran down her rosy cheeks.

She responded without hesitation, “Mother, I am going to the infirmary to advise Mother Francisca to prepare a comfortable bed for her, for she can be cured with care. Poor little thing, she is our sister and a soul redeemed by the Precious Blood of Our Divine Redeemer.”

“If you deem it convenient, then do so. As for me, I would prefer she be nursed in the prison itself,” responded the Abbess, who drew near the captive.

that very moment with Mothers Francisca of the Angels, Anna of the Conception, Lucia of the Cross, Magdalena of St John, and Catherine of the Conception, who were bringing the remedies. All were quite frightened, especially the Abbess.

The religious recovered their courage and said to the Abbess, "Mother, have no fear. Something diabolical must be taking place in the prison. But Mother Mariana is very good, and the devils have no power over her. Let us enter without fear and with haste. We will see what will happen. Besides, Sister X is small and thin, and she would not be able to attack Mother Mariana, who is tall and strong."

The Mothers pressed forward to learn the cause of the dreadful commotion, but the Abbess, terrified, followed at a distance. Mother Francisca entered the prison with the other religious and saw that the room was darkened with a thick smoke.

They called out to Mother Mariana, who replied, "Come quickly. One of you go tell the Abbess to bring holy water and the incenser."

Mother Lucia of the Cross found the Abbess in the cloister hallway and told her Mother Mariana's request, which they both hastened to carry out.

When they returned, they saw that the prison was still obscure with smoke. On Mother Mariana's orders, Mother Lucia burned the incense while Mother Magdalena of Saint John sprinkled holy water around the prison, including on its walls. With this, the smoke dispersed and all could approach the poor sick sister, whom Mother Mariana was holding, half-dead, in her lap. They rubbed her, shook her, and fanned her. Finally, she opened her eyes and suddenly sat up.

THE INGRATITUDE OF THE PRISONER

Finding herself among the good Spanish Mothers whom she despised, the captain seemed somewhat ashamed, and said, "I do not feel well."

Mother Mariana brought to her lips the cup of anise water and made her drink it, making the Sign of the Cross over her.

The Abbess approached and said, "Let us take her outside for a while to take some sun."

“Thank you, Mother,” the prisoner responded. They raised her up, but she lacked the strength to walk, even with the support of the religious.

Consoling her like true Mothers and sisters, the religious visited her and provided her companionship throughout the day. The next day, the Abbess entered the prison with Mother Mariana and Mother Francisca. The prisoner, glowering at the Mothers, directed her attention only to the Abbess. Gravely, the Abbess addressed her, “Sister, you should be grateful to these two good and charitable Mothers who have come to take you outside for awhile so that you might get some fresh air.”

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Mother Mariana took her leave so she might forewarn Mother Francisca about their sick sister and the need to bring her to the infirmary and nurse her with diligent care.

“Blessed be God, Who, by this, allows us an opportunity to practice charity with our adversary,” said Mother Francisca. Together, they prepared the bed and everything necessary for transporting the sick sister. As they spoke of the prisoner, large tears rose in the eyes of Mother Mariana.

Taking note of them, Mother Francisca exclaimed to her, “Courage, my Mother and sister! The hour of your heroic sacrifice has arrived, for by your unspeakable suffering, this poor soul will be saved.”

She continued, “Your Reverence should know that today, while I had Our Lord in my heart during Communion, He communicated to me the sacrifice that He had asked of you for this soul and the heroism with which Your Reverence accepted. Further, He told me that you were a most precious jewel which He possessed in the arid desert of this Spanish Colony, placed here in order to save souls and to placate Divine Justice, angered by the many crimes of its inhabitants.

“He asked that I encourage and console you in your arduous suffering. He revealed to me that this agony would not begin while the poor prisoner is ill. When she recovers, you will suffer the pains of the Hell that she would have suffered eternally. The duration of your suffering was not revealed to me. I hope that you do not turn away your sister who wants to share your sufferings and alleviate your pains.”

“Ah, my sister!” exclaimed Mother Mariana with tears in her eyes. “No mortal can alleviate my five years of suffering in Hell. Five years where, for me, each day will be centuries. Have pity on me! Ask Our Lord to give me strength, valor, and humility so that I do not weaken, for I am a weak and miserable creature in a human body. I ask only that you do not tell this to anyone, not even to the Confessor.”

“The Confessor and the Community do not know,” replied Mother Francisca. “However, Mothers Maria of the Incarnation, Anna of the Conception, Lucia of the Cross, Magdalena of Saint John, and Catherine of the Conception already know, for Our Lord

spoke to them also during Communion. They said nothing, for each thought it to be only an illusion. Even should it be true, each one is thinking to herself, they could not bear to see such an innocent and blameless creature suffer like that. Each one is waiting for the other to mention the matter, but none have done so since they are all uncertain of the truth of this distressing fact. I never doubted it for a minute, and, because I believed it, I suffer and tell you all this."

The two embraced and, weeping together before a crucifix, Mother Mariana offered herself again as the expiatory victim to save the soul of the poor sister.

WHO WILL NURSE THE SICK SISTER?

After preparing the infirmary room, Mother Mariana told Mother Francisca, "Call the Founding Mothers so that we can go down to the prison and transfer our beloved sister here. I will go ahead, for the Abbess, who is fearful by nature, is there alone with her. We cannot allow her to suffer alone."

When the Abbess saw Mother Mariana, she exclaimed with relief, "Mother, enter immediately! You were so long in coming!"

"What is it, Mother?" Mother Mariana asked. "I was delayed because I went to prepare the bed in the infirmary where our sick sister will be cured." And she told her all that she had done.

The Prioress embraced Mother Mariana, saying, "Mother, your humility enchants me, but I fear that you debase yourself too much!"

To this, she responded, "Jesus Christ, our Master and Model, humbled Himself more than we do. Since we are His spouses, we should imitate Him closely. After having done all that our strength permits, we should still say, 'We are useless servants, because we do not do what we should, but only what we can.'"

At that moment, Mother Francisca and the other Founding Mothers entered the prison, greeted the Abbess, and asked her blessing. They approached the prisoner, addressed her fondly, and expressed their sympathy for the violent sickness that assailed her. Trying to encourage her, they told her that she would soon be better. To hasten that day, they said, they had come to carry her to the

infirmary, where everything was prepared for her. They wrapped her in a warm covering, placed her on the litter, and transported her to the infirmary.

During the transit, the eyes of the Founding Mothers were fixed on Mother Mariana, who manifested profound sorrow, yet, at the same time, remained unperturbed, so characteristic of that great soul, whose physical beauty was just a weak reflection of the beauty of her soul.

Arriving at the infirmary, they called the doctor, who diagnosed her sickness as pneumonia complicated by another infectious virus that had caused the fever. He gave a prescription for medicines and warned that the sickness was very serious and contagious. He recommended that none of the sisters, and especially the younger ones whose health was more vulnerable, should enter the sick room, and that those who attended her should number no more than three. These sisters should nurse her in rotating shifts and take the greatest precautions, since anyone who was contaminated - young or old - could lose her life.

Because it was most grave, he recommended that, as a prudent precaution, it would be better for a woman from outside the Convent - middle-aged, better thin than fat - be engaged to come into the Convent and care for her. Otherwise, they could run the serious risk of one sister passing the virus to another, transforming the Convent into a hospital, which would be a most lamentable situation.

“It is nothing,” said the doctor, “if only one sister dies. But it is quite another matter should all of the sisters in this Royal Convent be taken.”

The doctor also advised that the sick sister not be kept in the infirmary, which was near the service room. He asked permission to look through the Convent to find a better place. The Abbess and Spanish Mothers walked with him through the Convent until he found a room of regular size, isolated and well-ventilated.

“The sick sister should be brought here,” he decided, “although it will be most troublesome to nurse her because of the distance from the rest of the Convent. She should be assisted by two women, as I already indicated. One is needed to attend her quite closely. The other, without entering the room, should bring the

first all that is necessary for the patient's cure. But this must be done immediately, for it is an urgent matter." And he took his leave.

CONSULTATION WITH JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The Abbess called Mother Mariana aside and said, "Mother, I pity this sister, but I am very worried that she might contaminate me. I know that as Abbess, I should be the one to attend her at close quarters. Yet despite the violence I make against myself, I cannot conquer my fear. My nature will not permit me to do this. Therefore, I have decided I will renounce the office of Abbess.

"Then it will be the duty of the new Abbess to find the two women whom the doctor advised should nurse this sick sister, for I cannot do this. For to introduce complete strangers into the Convent does not seem fitting to me.

"In face of all this, let this sister die. We will not miss her. On the contrary, without this revolted person, we would enjoy peace. Since God Himself wants to free us of this burden, why should we try to cure her with such zeal?

"What does Your Reverence think about this? What should we do? I ask your advice, Mother, first, because I know your virtue, judgment, and prudence, and second, because you are the Founder, and the Prelate directed you to give me counsel and to command in the Convent."

Mother Mariana prudently replied, "Mother, this matter is most delicate. Your Reverence is right in part about this. But, along with abnegation and humility, charity is a fundamental virtue of religious life. So that we do not err in this matter, let us go together to the lower choir for a half hour, and there, in silent prayer, we will speak intimately with the Eucharistic Jesus at the foot of the Sacrament. Let us ask Him with filial confidence His divine counsel, and we will do what He tells us. Our Lord is very good and will not be deaf to the humble supplications of hearts that love Him."

"Very well, Mother," responded the Mother Abbess. "Let us go, but I ask that you beg Him most emphatically to manifest His will to us. For I have a great fear of introducing strangers into the Convent."

Together they went down to the lower choir and prostrated themselves at the feet of the Divine Prisoner of souls, Who, day

and night, remains with His beloved ones, watching over them with a truly paternal solicitude. During the half hour of prayer, the Abbess glanced from time to time at Mother Mariana, who seemed absorbed in sweet, heavenly contemplation, far removed from this miserable earth of sorrow and tears.

Seeing her so beautiful and holy, she said to herself, "Ah! How happy are the truly good souls! Surely she is a saint! How many sufferings this beautiful soul has borne! I would not be capable of suffering so much and with such serenity! My God, I beg Thee to consider her merits and enlighten me and give me discernment in this matter!"

At the end of the half hour, the Abbess touched the arm of Mother Mariana, saying, "Let us go, Mother. The half hour has passed." Upon hearing the voice of her Superior, the obedient religious tranquilly left her sweet prayer and, kissing the ground, accompanied her outside.

The Abbess asked her, "Mother, what was the response of the Sacramental Jesus? Do not conceal it from me."

"And to Your Reverence, what did He say? As Abbess, it is your right to speak first."

"Mother, Our Lord did not inspire me with any definite resolution," responded the Abbess. "I float on the waters of tribulation. To refuse any treatment for this sister would be a blatant lack of charity that would displease God. To introduce strangers from outside does not seem fitting to me. I do not have the courage to sacrifice some religious, ordering them to take care of the sick sister. Thus I resolved that, after consulting with you, I would present my resignation to the Bishop, for my health is certainly quite broken. My heart causes me great pain and needs to be calm. This is impossible for a poor Abbess. Does it not seem, Mother, that this would be a sensible and godly thing to do? Answer me, Mother, I beseech you."

MOTHER MARIANA PROPOSES HER SOLUTION

Mother Mariana gave a deep sigh and large tears ran down her rosy cheeks. Drying them, she responded, "Mother, the Sacred Heart of our Divine Redeemer is a furnace of ardent charity, and these conquering flames cannot remain in the divine sphere, but

want to transmit their fire to creatures so that this charity might live in them and for them, as Our Lord did in His mortal life. It is not, therefore, the divine will that you should renounce the Abbacy, for this would show that you do not want to carry the cross with Christ, our Divine Spouse. Much less is it the will of God that outsiders should be introduced into the closed garden of the cloisters, for the spirit of secular women in domestic service would be injurious to the delicate spouses of the Lord. Nor does His divine will want us to abandon this poor sick sister.

“The will of our Divine Spouse is that I assume the duty of closely nursing this sister, who is sick in soul and body. I will be assisted by Mother Francisca and the Founding Mothers, but by none of the other religious. Be assured, Mother, that none of us will catch this sickness from the patient, for this is the will of God. Moreover, in this way, we will save the soul of the poor sister.”

She had not finished speaking when the Abbess exclaimed in surprise, “How can Your Reverence accept such conditions from Our Lord? Such heroism is beyond my understanding. Reflect well, Mother, on what you will have to do and what you will suffer from the rudeness of such a creature.”

“I see everything, Mother, but I also see that my self-love is different from that of my Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed for His very persecutors, executioners, and calumniators. He died for them, offering His precious life. Moreover, He would still be disposed to die again, if it were possible, so that all His souls might be saved. And I, who am completely insignificant in this world, a nun unknown to all, how can I bargain with my God over small sacrifices? Heaven is costly, my Mother! Why should we not labor arduously while we still see the light of day, before the night of death arrives when the time for all labor will be ended?”

“The Founding Mothers and I need nothing more but the blessing of Your Reverence and your formal command to proceed so that all might be done meritoriously. Do not be fearful that one of us will catch this sickness. As for the personal apprehensions of Your Reverence, do not worry, for they result from your own sickness. Keep yourself calm and do not go near the sick patient. I, or one of the Founding Mothers, will inform you minutely of all that takes place with her. Mother Francisca, a religious of great virtue

and soul, will tell you the things needed for the cure of this sick sister so that nothing will be lacking to her.”

The Abbess responded, “Mother, how can I impose such a harsh order upon the Founding Mothers? They do not know that this is the will of God and, with reason, they will resent me for ordering this of them.”

“Mother, the Founding Mothers already received a fore-warning that this is the will of God and are only awaiting the order from Your Reverence to convince them entirely of its truth. They will then go joyfully to serve their poor sister. For they are magnanimous souls and live only to sacrifice themselves. To obey this command will be sweet for them since they will see it as a formal mandate from God Himself. Indeed, they do not know resentment, for they live a life of the spirit on this earth.”

Mother Valenzuela was simultaneously admiring, confused, and edified to see this degree of heroism in the Founding Mothers, who, by right of their position, should be excused from such humble offices. This is the way the proud world thinks because, in its crass ignorance, it lacks the higher light of the spirit. Only souls that live in the refulgent light of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ can see, clear and unveiled, the valor of humility. They know that the higher the place a creature occupies in the House of the Lord, the greater should she humiliate herself in order to strengthen the foundation of her perfection. For those in religious life should aspire to greatness in Heaven by solidifying their virtue while on earth.

What great edification and love of virtue are inspired when one sees how those who occupy offices of authority and dignity behave with humility and suavity with their subjects. By reprimanding them in private, they achieve a swifter correction of sinners, and they infuse in them a healthy shame for their bad behavior. On the contrary, daily experience shows that the abuse of authority damages many subjects and vocations.

“Mother,” continued the Abbess, “Will Your Reverence herself arrange for the Founding Mothers to come to me so that I can impose this command upon them under the law of obedience? I will do this with timidity and sorrow. Seeing such humility greatly edifies me, even while I lament my own lack of virtue in governing the Community, where I should be the example. Pray for me to

God Our Lord.”

“I will ask them to come to Your Reverence immediately,” Mother Mariana replied, “so that as soon as possible we can begin to cure our sister, for it is a most urgent matter.”

She quickly rose and left the presence of the Abbess, who never tired of admiring such great virtue in a person so young and beautiful. For God Our Lord, Who was so munificent in conceding to her the gifts of nature, was still more generous in communicating to her the gifts of grace.

THE JOY OF THE FOUNDING MOTHERS

Mother Mariana did not delay in finding her sisters in religion and virtue. Calling the Founding Mothers together, she revealed what Our Lord had manifested to her: that He desired they should all take upon themselves the task of curing their poor sister. She told them that she knew that Our Lord had made this known to each of them during the morning Communion and that they were only awaiting the formal order from the Abbess to confirm the truth of this and render their immediate services to the poor, sick patient. She invited them to appear before the Abbess to inquire about their sick sister and offer themselves to do whatever their Abbess might deem necessary to help this sick member of the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Founding Mothers replied, “What you have said is correct, dear Mother and sister. Our Lord also communicated to us how much you will suffer at the hands of this poor sister and the Hell that you have accepted in order to save her soul. We are deeply moved and offer ourselves to share in your suffering to alleviate it in any way that we can.

“How admirable is the goodness of God! He gives us pleasure, allowing us the opportunity to help cure this poor sister. You can count on our good will and the fraternal affection that unites us, since we are all daughters of the same mother. In effect, if our unforgettable Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, our Founder and your aunt, were still living, how she would suffer from seeing you suffer. But since she is now in Heaven resting from all her earthly labors and enjoying the reward of her virtue, we who remain here, loving each other and desiring our mutual sanctification, will keep

you company, and participate in your joys and sorrows.

“Now, accept our warm embraces, and then we will go before our Abbess to joyfully receive this much-desired command.” After each one embraced Mother Mariana, these human angels directed themselves to make their heroic sacrifice. The angels in Heaven, undoubtedly astounded, contemplated this cortege of virgin spouses of the Immaculate Lamb who on earth rivaled the angelic inhabitants of the celestial Jerusalem!

THE SPANISH FOUNDING MOTHERS ACCEPT THE COMMAND OF THE ABBESS

Filled with that holy joy proper to just souls, the Founding Mothers greeted the Abbess and inquired about their sick sister, saying, “Mother, it is our duty, as Founding Mothers, to attend and serve this sick patient, who is our sister. What can we do to help our poor sister who is so gravely ill? Let Your Reverence command whatever she deems convenient, and we will be quick to obey, convinced that from the lips of the Abbess, God Himself speaks to us. We ask you, then, to command us with full liberty.” All of them, together with Mother Mariana, knelt to receive her order.

How edifying a sight were these young religious whom God Our Lord had favored with every gift of nature and grace, who knelt to receive from their Abbess the command to begin their sacrifice, as if they were receiving the order to do some agreeable thing.

The Abbess wanted to kneel also, but they said, “Mother, we will not allow this! It is for us, the subjects, to be on the ground, and not Your Reverence. Do us the favor of either standing or sitting as you impose this command.”

Blushing, the Abbess stood up and said: “Beloved Mothers and sisters, the holy will of God asks of you a sacrifice, and your Abbess asks of you a favor. By the power of holy obedience, I command that all of you, together with Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, take care of our poor sick sister and nurse her, diligently accepting the bad with the good, thus imitating your Divine Spouse. Be certain that He will protect and guard you. And I, with tears in my eyes and a heart filled with tenderness, I bless you and ask that you pray for me to the Lord Our God.”

The sisters bowed their heads and kissed the ground, and then the feet and scapular of their Abbess, saying, "Thank you, Mother, for having considered us worthy to render our services to this poor sister. We owe her much, for she provides us with an efficacious means to acquire great merit for Heaven. We joyfully accept your order, and now we leave to serve and nurse our sick sister with dedication."

The Abbess embraced each one of the Mothers, who, tranquil and happy, headed to the room of the sick sister.

Arriving there, they prayed a Hail Mary and approached the patient, who rudely upbraided them and asked why they had left her without the care the doctor had prescribed. She told them they had an obligation to cure her as soon as possible since it was because of their insidious schemes that she had been imprisoned and suffered so much. Moreover, she added, it was her desire to get well so that she could again obtain their imprisonment, for only this would make her happy.

The humble Founding Mothers, with unchanging expressions of edifying serenity, only replied, "Be patient, dear sister. We will now apply all the remedies. God Our Lord and the Most Holy Virgin, Who are goodness itself, will make you better, healing not only your body, but also your soul."

THE MARQUESA'S DREAM

After arranging the bed, which had been disheveled by the agitated movements of the impatient sick sister, the Founding Mothers prepared what the doctor had ordered for her cure. While the others were doing this, Mother Mariana and Mother Francisca arranged to administer the prescribed treatments, one of which was to take a bath in a tub of very hot water. The Convent, however, had no tub, so Mother Francisca went to explain the problem to the Abbess, who was also at a loss as to what to do.

At that moment, the sister-porter came in to tell the Abbess that the Marquesa wanted to greet and speak to Mother Mariana. The Abbess called for her, and they both went to speak to the Marquesa.

This lady, in great agitation of spirit, recounted to the Mothers a disturbing dream that she had experienced the night before.

In it, she saw and recognized Mother Mariana, so beautiful, smiling, and gracious, laboring untiringly for a sick woman whom the Marquesa did not recognize. The patient, miserable and under the power of two huge black creatures with eyes of fire, abused Mother Mariana in both word and deed, even to the point of physically attacking her several times.

On one of these occasions, Mother Mariana fell dead, her soul leaving her body in the form of a beautiful white dove carrying a rich bunch of grapes toward Heaven. The holy Mother said to the Marquesa, "Thank you, thank you, good lady, for the favors that you have done for me. Now I entrust to you my Convent and ask that you bestow your alms on it. From Heaven I will watch over you and reciprocate your kindnesses." Hearing these words, the Marquesa screamed and awoke.

Her maids quickly called for her nurse, for the Marquesa, in her perturbation over this dream, could not speak. They called the doctor, who came quickly and applied various remedies. Regaining her senses, she nonetheless remained most grieved and anxiously awaited the morning so that she might speak with Mother Mariana and assure herself that she were still alive. For the Marquesa could not resign herself to the death of her holy friend, who, by her counsels and prayers, had done her many spiritual favors and sustained her in many battles of the spirit. Describing the dream, the Marquesa sobbed inconsolably.

"Do not cry, my good lady," Mother Mariana comforted her. "One should not believe in dreams. You can see that I am still living in order to give you whatever happiness I can. I still have many long years of life on this earth. Alas, my exile will last for many years yet to come. On another day, we can converse more; now I have to go for I have an urgent occupation. I assure you of my affection and gratitude, and, since you are so kind, I will ask of you a favor."

"Mother, what do you want? My greatest joy and happiness is to be able to please you. What do you need?"

"I will tell you, gracious lady, that one of our sisters is gravely ill. The doctor prescribed a warm bath in a tub, but we have no tub in the Convent. Perhaps Your Grace could provide one for us?"

“Considering myself most fortunate in being able to serve you, I will most happily and without delay send you a tub. I also give you 30 sterling pounds for the cure of the sick sister. I only ask one thing, that you come to me first to ask for anything else that is needed for this holy patient.”

The Marquesa asked the blessing of the Mothers, then took her leave. Since this good lady knew nothing about the guilty sick sister, she had called her holy, for she was convinced that all the sisters were like the saintly Mother Mariana.

THE ENORMOUS PATIENCE OF THE SPANISH MOTHERS

After this providential conference, Mother Mariana hurried back to her place of sacrifice. She found Mother Francisca before a fire heating the water.

The latter asked, “Mother, what shall we do about the tub? As you can see, the water is almost hot enough.”

“My beloved sister! God is so good! Even while I received the call to speak with the Marquesa, He had already prepared the gift of a tub. For that good lady will provide this for our poor sick sister and is sending it immediately.”

Soon, she received a message saying that the tub had arrived. Mother Mariana and Mother Magdalena of Saint John went to get the tub. After everything was prepared, Mother Francisca said, “The water is ready now. Let us bathe our sick sister.”

Entering the sick room, they said, “Dear sister, the water and everything necessary for your bath are ready. Prepare yourself.”

To this, she responded, “I am ready. Do you think I am as stupid or retarded as you are? All you have to do is pick me up and let me down into the tub, since I am not strong enough to do this myself. Besides, this is a job most fitting for you Spaniards.”

Mother Mariana and Mother Francisca approached her bed, took her in their arms, carried her to the tub, and let her down into it with great charity and kindness. Meanwhile, the other Mothers made her bed, prepared towels for after her bath, and helped her to wash herself.

“This water is boiling!” the sick sister exclaimed. “The doctor did not order it to be like this. These Spaniards are trying to kill

me!" And she threw water into the face of Mother Mariana.

This water entered her eyes and brought forth an abundant stream of tears. Seeing this, the impatient sick sister said, "The water is ice cold. It feels as if it had never been heated. And Mother Mariana is proof of this, for she is crying because her guilty conscience is accusing her of her negligence. She is so proud and self-indulgent that she does not know what suffering is." Again, she threw water in her face.

Mother Francisca told her, "Sister, be quiet. You should act as a religious at least once. This way, you will not get well. Time is short."

"You are lazy," retorted the patient. "You are the ones who should do something at least once." And she twisted and turned in the tub, making as much work as she could for the Mothers, who suffered all this with an edifying patience and charity.

After she had finished her bath, they removed her from the tub with great difficulty, for she acted like a stubborn child. They placed her in her bed and began a hot massage over her whole body. As Mother Mariana rubbed her, the captain threw out blows and harsh words at her. This miserable creature, undeserving of the name of sister, screamed and cried in rage, saying that she was being treated with unspeakable harshness. The good and charitable Mothers passed the whole night without sleep taking care of her.

THIRTY DAYS

The fever and pneumonia rapidly became worse. In her delirium, the sick patient would address the Bishop accusing Mother Mariana and demanding her imprisonment.

"Only then," she said, "will I be at peace. For she is repugnant!"

When the doctor came to visit, she complained that nothing he had ordered had been carried out. On the contrary, she said, the sisters did whatever they thought best, and, because of this, she was worse. Because of the hatefulness and stupidity of the Mothers, she was being left to die. She asked that he arrange with the Abbess to have them replaced by someone who could cure her.

"While I was suffering from thirst and pain," she continued, "the Spaniards were sleeping soundly."

The doctor, who knew the Mothers well and, above all, Mother Mariana, whom he venerated, reprimanded the patient severely for her words, but the Mothers excused their patient, attributing everything to the delirium of fever. The doctor gave new orders and left, quite shocked by the ingratitude of the sick sister, and most edified at seeing such virtue, charity, and abnegation.

The Spanish Mothers prepared the medicines. When Mother Mariana administered them, she received them back in her own face, spit there by the rebellious sister. With holy patience and a sweet smile, she would dry herself off and embrace the patient, making her take a new dose. Often the sick sister would spit the final mouthful out at her. At other times, the captain would call Mother Mariana to attend to her bodily necessities, which were more frequent because of the medicine. When she raised herself, she would fling her filth upon Mother Mariana, soiling her.

Without altering her expression or uttering the least word of complaint, this holy religious would change her own clothing and then continue attending to the patient for the love of God. It is impossible to describe how much this unconquerable and blameless creature suffered from this sick sister, whose illness lasted thirty days and nights.

DEATH, JUDGMENT, AND ... THE CONVERSION OF THE GUILTY SISTER

On the thirtieth day of her illness, the captain became much worse and appeared to be dying. Her face was pale, distorted in terror and agonizing despair. Her short hair stood on end and her eyes seemed to jump out of their sockets.

She screamed and writhed, calling out, "It is too late for me now. I cannot love or pardon her. I want to save myself, but, in my present state, I cannot. If those black creatures would only go away! Help me, Spaniards, since they are carrying me away with them!"

She threw her arms around Mother Mariana, who silently shed a torrent of tears over the head and face of her sick sister. With this healing bath, her panic subsided somewhat, and she said, "Keep applying this fresh liquid that is giving me relief. This is what the doctor has been ordering. These Spaniards have finally been moved to compassion and are providing me with some relief."

They called the confessor, who, frightened, did not want to remain long in the room. He told the Mothers, "This poor sister is dying impenitent. I will not return to see her. Do not call me again. She should confess and repent for the sins she has committed in this life. But she is impenitent. How much have I labored in vain for her! You must forgive her and pray, for she is entering her last agony."

Mother Mariana held her in her arms, praying to the Divine Majesty that He would not permit this soul to be seized from her arms and carried into Hell. Reminding Him of her offer, she again renewed it. As she prayed, the sick sister began to have strong convulsions, her body shaking violently. Her death agony began, which lasted for two painful days. Finally, she gave a cry, opened her eyes and mouth, which was expelling foam, and her body fell limp.

Since Mother Mariana was holding her in her arms, the Founding Mothers told her, "Mother, she had already died. Do not continue to hold her corpse. We have exhausted every means possible to cure her, soul and body. How often did we counsel her! But it has been to no avail."

Mother Mariana replied, "My sisters and Mothers, do not forget so quickly the offer that was accepted to save this soul. Pray to God for her. Now she is standing before the judgment seat of God and realizing all the evil for which she was responsible. She will return to life and amend her life. Do not be frightened and remain calm.

"Later, she will die, but she will save her soul, even though her Purgatory will last until the Final Judgment Day. Our Lord has revealed this to me even now."

As she finished speaking, the sick sister quivered and returned to consciousness. Her eyes moved around the room, as if she were looking for one in particular. Her gaze came to rest upon Mother Mariana, who was holding her in her arms. She pressed her hand and tried to speak, but her voice would not respond. Her eyes were streaming with tears. The charitable Mother Mariana dried them with the love of a mother and spoke tender words to her, infusing a great confidence in the goodness of God and making her feel how much He loved her.

The saintly religious asked Mother Francisca for a little anise water and, with her fingers, she moistened the dry lips of the captain. Finally, she made her drink. Regaining her strength, the recovered sister reported that she was returning from eternity, that she had become a better person, and that she understood who Mother Mariana was.

She seemed to be ashamed, but the charitable Mother Mariana told her, "Do not become disturbed, my little sister. You need to remain quiet and calm so that you can make your general confession with a Franciscan Friar. For this, we must first cure you and rebuild your strength. You must love and have much confidence in the good God. Courage, for all your sisters love you and wish you both physical and spiritual health."

REPARATION AND PENITENCE

From that moment on, the captain became a model patient. Her docility was like that of a child. She received everything prescribed with appreciation and holy shame, manifesting her profound gratitude to Mother Mariana, whom she always wanted near her, as well as to the other Mothers who attended her. She continued to improve and, in one month she had completely recovered.

She then asked that they call the Abbess, who came, fearful of catching the sickness.

"What do you want of me, sister?" the Abbess gravely asked her, "Are you the same as before – or worse?"

The poor religious flung herself at her feet, saying, "Pardon me, Mother, for my bad behavior. And may the Founding Mothers and the whole Community pardon me for the scandalous life that I have led until now. Above all, may my dear Mother Mariana pardon me and have compassion on me."

"It is not enough that you humble yourself and ask pardon here. You must do this before the Community and then return to the prison where you will stay until you die," replied the Abbess.

"Yes, Mother," responded the poor sister. "Your Reverence is right to command this. Well do I deserve to remain in prison forever, for now, through the mercy of God and the prayers of dear Mother Mariana, I am free from the eternal prison of Hell. I will return to prison today if Your Reverence so orders it, and there I

will do penance for my sins. When I left this mortal life, I received a severe but just reprimand from our Founding Mother, but she did not turn me away from her feet. I am truly the prodigal son.”

And the poor sister began to cry inconsolably. Here it is fitting to describe her features. Small of body, her color was neither brown nor white. Her eyes, nose, and mouth were large. She had black hair, and was more thin than fat. Her illness had weakened her considerably so that she appeared quite pale and feeble.

Seeing her so confused and contrite, Mother Mariana and the Founding Mothers spoke on her behalf to the Abbess. Because her state of soul was so improved, they argued, it was no longer necessary to imprison her. Further, because of her weakness and broken health, she needed to remain free. They promised that they themselves would answer for her conduct.

Mother Valenzuela conceded, although somewhat reluctantly, to ask the Bishop to release the captain from prison. However, she would do this only to please the Founding Mothers. If this sister committed the slightest fault, she would imprison her forever and allow no intercession on her behalf, for justice and reason would demand this.

From that day forward, this sister enjoyed freedom. The first thing she did to atone for her past was to accuse herself of her faults in the refectory with a cord around her neck. She also asked for a penance for her past scandalous deeds.

The Abbess reprimanded her severely. She applied the discipline to her before the full Community, and ordered her to kiss the feet of the religious and eat on the floor of the refectory for nine days. The contrite sister carried out all of this with humility, and often, Mother Mariana would accompany her.

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE ABBACY OF MOTHER VALENZUELA ENDS

All this took place during the first year of the Abbacy of Mother Valenzuela. At the end of the year, the captain was completely recovered, saved because of the heroic sacrifice of Mother Mariana. Working together with the Abbess, Mother Mariana then began the process of obtaining permission from the Bishop for this sister to make a general confession to a Franciscan friar, the very

one whom Mother Mariana consulted.

After this permission was granted, the sister made her general confession. The friar heard her calmly and charitably. He took pity on the many sufferings of this poor lamb who had strayed from the flock of her Divine Shepherd. He absolved her and gave her pardon for her sins, thus freeing her from this enormous weight and leaving her reconciled with God, Who, with the Angels of Heaven and the just on earth, rejoiced at the return of the prodigal son who had so imprudently abandoned the paternal home to fritter away his inheritance. Having squandered everything and being reduced to entire misery, his hunger drove him to eat the remains of the acorns left by the pigs...

How valuable it is to overcome the passions that assail us in life at their very inception and while there is still time. For when we accede to them, virtue and religious perfection fade. Farewell, then, to our vocations and to Heaven. Religious persons in particular should fear letting themselves be carried away by their passions, for they should be as Angels on earth. By their virtue and hidden lives of sacrifice, such holy men and women in religious communities hold back the hand of Divine Justice and avert the punishments merited by the traitors and guilty persons.

* * *

CHAPTER 27

One day at the end of the first year of the Mother Valenzuela's Abbacy, Mother Mariana and the happy converted sister were praying in the lower choir, when the holy Mother fell into ecstasy and saw Jesus Christ.

Sorrowful and loving, He gazed at her, saying: "My beloved spouse, the time has arrived for you to suffer the five years of Hell that you accepted with heroic charity to save the soul of your poor sister. Pray insistently to the Holy Ghost to prepare your soul for this and fortify your spirit with the gift of fortitude. Confidently embrace My loving goodness and enclose yourself in the Wound in My side that was opened to shelter My chosen souls, and place yourself under the maternal care of My Virgin Mother.

"Further purify your soul with the grace of absolution, which you should receive tomorrow with great faith and humility. I will remain with you in Communion until the Sacramental Species has been consumed, and then your Hell will begin."

Blessing her, Our Lord, the Prisoner of Love, again concealed Himself in the Sacrament. Returning from her ecstasy, Mother Mariana pondered with the keen intellect given her by God these future sufferings. She trembled at the sight of them, but was happy to offer this suffering to save one religious soul from the eternal fires of Hell.

The next morning she spoke with the Franciscan friar who directed her and told him all that had passed. He heard her confession, as Our Lord had instructed, and gave her absolution. Throughout her life, this saintly soul committed no sin save the slight imperfections that are bound to occur in this mortal life. The whole day she prepared herself to receive her God in the Eucharist, as if it were to be her last Communion. She experienced most ardent sentiments of love, gratitude, and faith and was filled with a deep and pervading joy the whole day.

AFTER COMMUNION, HELL...

The next morning as she approached the Table of the Angels to say farewell for the long period of five years to the intimate union she enjoyed with her God, she felt as if her heart were being

ripped asunder. She tried to conserve Him in her heart as long as possible, but the hour for her sacrifice had struck.

After the Sacramental Species had been consumed, Mother Mariana felt a sorrow so intense that it seemed to wrench her heart violently from her breast. At that moment, she became completely insensible to her God. She felt a tedium toward Him, and even more, she experienced a type of hatred and despair that did not permit the least ray of hope.

She tried to reflect upon the heroic sacrifice that she had made to save the soul of her sister. However, instead of receiving relief, she felt fury, despair, and a total suspicion with regard to God. She wanted to remind herself that the Divine Heart loved her to the point of delivering Himself for her sake to cruel torments and infinite humiliations, but she only felt the weight of the Blood of Christ, shed in vain for a condemned soul! She reminded herself of all the sublime mysteries of Christ on earth and of His Virgin Mother, pure and immaculate from her conception, but these thoughts were only a perpetual source of unending rage and despair. She still felt herself to be a daughter of the Immaculate Conception – but not a condemned one.

The notion of the five years vanished from her mind, and she could only foresee from then on an eternity of affliction.⁵⁸ She wanted to encourage herself by thinking that some day this Hell would end, but she heard rough, terrible voices taunting her without any order, saying: “Eternity! Eternity! Forever! Forever! In Hell, the Redemption has no meaning. Oh! religious who squandered the time given to you on earth, who wasted countless graces, you deserve the unspeakable torments and horrible sufferings of the punishment of perdition.”

THE TORMENTS OF THE FIVE SENSES

The terrible chastisements of the senses fell upon Mother Mariana. Her body would feel a fiery heat, as if it were a living coal that burned without being consumed. Then, following this ex-

58. In the years 1760-1770, Fr. Bartolomé Ochoa de Alácana y Gambo, O.F.M., published *The Vida Admirable of Mother Mariana de Jesús Torres*, providing dates and copious documentation. This venerable Franciscan, who served various terms as Provincial of Saint Paul Monastery in Quito, attested to this heroic act of charity carried out by Mother Mariana in favor of the revolted sister (Cadena y Almeida, *Apariciones*, pp. 154-6).

treme heat, she would experience a coldness impossible to express or describe, more intense than if she were buried under a mound of snow. Her breathing was constricted by the immense pain caused at times by fire, and at times by the frigid cold.

Before her eyes appeared horrible infernal visions. Her ears were tormented by the appalling blasphemies made by the condemned souls and devils. Repugnant odors permeated her sense of smell, worse and more intense than if she were surrounded by the filth of all mankind. Her sense of touch was tormented, and she felt as if she were lying on a hard bed, hard with the hardness of Hell, a bed lined with sharp nails that penetrated to her very depths. Her palate was tortured by a horrible taste, worse than anything she had ever experienced. In addition, the devils forced her to swallow molten hot sulfur and dealt her strong, harsh blows that drove her mad and incited her to fury, despair, and blasphemy.

In face of these unspeakable trials, she never opened her lips to say the least word whatsoever to her Community about the sufferings transpiring in her soul. Only the Franciscan friar who directed her knew of them.

THE REJECTION OF GOD

During these long years of her trial, her memory was afflicted by the remembrance of graces received from the loving goodness of God and Mary Most Holy, Whom she seemed to have lost forever. It was especially painful for her to think of the grace of the religious vocation and the joys of conventual life. For while she had suffered many hardships in her religious life, these now seemed like veritable pleasures to her, for then at least she could love her God, and this was denied to her in her present condition.

Her mind understood perfectly and with the greatest clarity who God and Mary Most Holy were, and she recognized the existence of Heaven and the eternal delight of the blessed who inhabited it. But hopeless, she felt that it was absolutely unattainable for her. Her will was no longer free to do either evil or good, as it was in her mortal life, for she was a prisoner suffering the rigor of Divine Justice. She wanted to have recourse to mercy, but from the depths of her tormented soul, she heard voices that echoed through her being, "It is too late for you. Everything is over.

Now the only thing that remains for you is eternal punishment. The avenging justice weighs over you. Hell ... for all Eternity!”

“Oh! unfortunate time given to me,” she would say to herself. “Now I see how I strayed from the pathway of truth.”

Mother Mariana took upon herself the guilt of all the sins of her sister, suffering as if they were her own sins. These sins tormented her with their weight and their memory. She entertained not the least hope of relief and even less of pardon, for she saw God unhappy and irritated with her. Mary Most Holy, as well as her Founder Mother and all her celestial friends, showed themselves completely indifferent to her cries.

She was convinced that this punishment was just, for the sins of the sister for whom she was expiating were numerous. She no longer had any memory of how she was a favored soul beloved by God, or that she was suffering for a span of five years in an heroic sacrifice to save a sister’s soul. All this was lost to her memory, and only the conviction that she was condemned forever lived in her. These dark, dismal shadows that were in her spirit constituted the worst part of her Hell.

She wanted to love God and raise her spirit to Him, but she felt repelled by Him. When she thought of God and His infinite beauty that had been lost to her forever, she fell into an anguished despair so great that she wanted to end her very existence. The thought that the soul is immortal filled her with fury and despair, for such a suffering is incomprehensible and inexplicable. In short, for this suffering creature, there was not the least consolation, the least respite to her sorrow, or the least type of physical or moral relief.

All creatures without exception became for her sources of great torment. The attentions and kindnesses of her Abbess and the Community only augmented her suffering. She considered herself interiorly abandoned and irremediably lost, living and breathing in an atmosphere of hatred.

OUR LORD ENLIGHTENS THE FOUNDING MOTHERS ABOUT HER SUFFERINGS

This holy creature suffered all these torments – and unspeakable others – every minute of the day and night, in all times and places. At the same time, throughout these years of harsh ex-

piation, she appeared to all around her as a model of sweetness, humility, and meekness in her exact observance of the Rule. She was for her fellow religious a mirror: Looking at her, they could see a faithful and exemplary model to imitate.

Although her expression remained serious, dignified, and sweetly amiable, there was, nonetheless, something in it that manifested a profound sadness that caught the hearts, affection, and attention of her Community. Yet no one dared to question her as to the source of her sorrow.

On one of the first days of her Hell, the Founding Mothers, surprised to see her great affliction, asked themselves, "What could it be? Has her time in Hell begun?" And they prayed to the Lord that He would enlighten them.

Our Lord did not delay in responding to this question of His faithful spouses. One day, after they had all received Communion, he manifested to them that Mother Mariana, His beloved and faithful spouse, was already suffering the Hell that she had accepted for five years to save the soul of her guilty sister. He made them understand that she suffered without the least relief, and that no one could help alleviate her pains. He showed them the heart of Mother Mariana, which He was protecting, hidden in His own Sacred Heart and safeguarded by His Immaculate Mother. During her time of Hell, she would remain without a heart, thus being deprived of the power to love Him and enjoy intimate communion with Him. On the other hand, the keenness of her senses were sharpened and quickened, so that she would suffer both physically and morally the pains of this loss, and experience the feeling of being a condemned soul.

Thus, in face of the many great sins committed during this epoch in the Colony, this heroine held back the hand of Divine Justice from burying this Spanish possession under the ashes of the Pichincha Volcano, whose strong tremors periodically shook that guilty country.

THE SUFFERING LEAVES ITS MARK

Enduring this great suffering and pain of loss, Mother Mariana's health rapidly declined. She lost the beautiful rosy color of her face, which was now sallow; her eyes became hollow and

sad. Her whole physiognomy expressed a private, profound suffering.

Noting this, Mother Valenzuela, who loved Mother Mariana dearly, said: "Mother, what is wrong with Your Reverence? Why have you declined so rapidly and lost your natural color? If you are sick, it is best that you see the doctor so that he might cure you as soon as possible. I cannot bear to think that you might die and leave me alone on this earth. Nor can I help but suspect that the sickness of our sister has passed to you, for you nursed her closely and breathed all that foul air. I had wished for her to die, but now it will be you who will perish. You will die, and she will live. The hope of the Convent will die, and the obstacle will remain. This thought is with me day and night and prevents me from sleeping.

"For the love of God, my Mother, take care of your health. You must have a complete rest in order to recover. The cool dawn and damp night air are damaging your health. Arise later and go to bed earlier. Do not fast or do any penances, for already you are a living corpse!" And, weeping, Mother Valenzuela embraced her.

"Besides, you had assured me," continued the Abbess, "that no one would catch this sickness. It seems to me that Your Reverence took the illness upon yourself to prevent it from spreading to the others. If I had foreseen this, I would not have permitted you to assist the sick sister. I would have forbidden you to go near her to even ask how she was."

Mother Mariana responded with her customary calm and sweetness, "My Mother, how I appreciate your care and concern. But be assured that I most absolutely did not catch the virus of my poor sister, but that it is God Our Lord Who is punishing me for my ingratitude. It is His most holy Will that I suffer the rigor of Divine Justice – and I will do so.

"From you, my Abbess and Mother, I pray and beg for myself what I most need. There is no sufficient reason to exempt me even in part from the observance of the Rule since I am not suffering from any physical illness. Remain tranquil concerning me and freely dispose of me for whatever Your Reverence desires."

This response quieted Mother Valenzuela's fear that Mother Mariana had caught the contagious sickness. But she continued to suffer intensely as she watched Mother Mariana wasting away

day after day. She would send her more nourishing food, and this humble and obedient religious would eat and drink everything that her Abbess ordered given her. The Abbess's admiration increased to see this prompt acquiescence to her orders and her irreprehensible behavior, as well as Mother Mariana's regular and exact obedience to the smallest details of community life.

According to her reports to her spiritual director, it is known that her daily meditations, instead of being a consolation, relief, and support, as they used to be, constituted a cruel Hell.

Those who study mystical theology understand the step Our Lord takes to purify and refine the souls He wants to raise to high degrees of perfection. We, however, know it only from study, and not from our own experience. We cannot describe, therefore, the kinds of interior sufferings endured by this Conceptionist sister, a martyr of fraternal charity. Either she herself would have to return to earth to give us an account of it, or we ourselves would have to suffer something similar for us to have an idea of the profound, intense sorrow she suffered. There is no other way.

THE CONVENT'S CONFESSOR AUGMENTS HER INTERNAL TRIALS

During this time, she continued to receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Her director testifies that despite her interior state, which only he knew, the purity of her beautiful soul shone admirably and that she committed no sin that required absolution. She, however, was convinced that she was the worst of sinners for having abused such singular graces that Divine Goodness had conceded to her.

The confessor of the Community, who was not a Franciscan, remained ignorant of the state of purification of this heroic soul. Augmenting her sufferings, he reprimanded her severely: "How you have changed, Mother! Why is this? Before you were a simple soul without any dissimulation, and now it is difficult to understand you. I do not know what you are saying. I fear that some hidden sin is the cause of this transformation. Examine your conscience well and place yourself in the presence of God. If we lose our innocence, we can still save ourselves through the Sacrament of Penance. I do not understand the present state of your soul. I cannot

enjoin you to receive Communion, for I am afraid to stand responsible for your soul. Examine yourself to see if you can or cannot approach the Holy Table to receive the God before Whom the Heavens and the Earth tremble.”

The Confessor never ordered her to receive Communion. However, her spiritual director, a Franciscan friar, obliged her under holy obedience to receive the Communions prescribed by the Rule, an order that this docile and abnegated creature obeyed without a word.

She would prepare herself for Communion with the most profound humility. But when she received Communion, she felt neither the love nor the sweetness she had formerly experienced. Also, she did not sense the presence of her beloved Creator. During these moments, however, the fury and despair would abate, although she continued to feel an indescribable darkness and desolation of spirit that caused immense interior suffering to this seraphic soul. In the ardent depths of this victim soul, the fire of divine love burned strongly, her outward spiritual state being only a thick layer of ashes that kept it hidden from sight.

THE CONVERTED SISTER

Meanwhile, the captain mended her ways, although the Mother Abbess still treated her with severity and even harshness. At times, the non-observant sisters, who were reduced in number, sought out their old leader in hopes of plotting new revolts. When Mother Mariana died – for her health was rapidly deteriorating, the Convent would finally be free of her influence, they told her. Now, they insisted, was the time to set in motion a plan to elect the captain as Abbess and finish with the Spaniards.

Sometimes this religious would simply turn a deaf ear to the seducing voices of these revolted sisters who wanted to shipwreck her again in the dangerous sea of her former laxity. On other occasions, she treated them with scorn and contempt. There were also moments, however, when she would weaken and feel inclined to accede to their demands. When this happened, she would run to Mother Mariana, her refuge and support. Confessing everything to her, she would ask for her counsel, prayers, and courage.

With admirable calm and sweetness, as if nothing unpleasant

were passing in her soul, Mother Mariana would listen to her charitably and give her sound practical advice. After receiving this counsel, the captain's fears would dissipate, her spirit would be strengthened, and her will to persevere in her conversion would be sustained.

**AMID THE SUFFERING,
THE FESTIVITIES FOR THE NEW ABBESS**

So the years of the Abbacy of Mother Valenzuela passed. She suffered so much that her heart became worse, and she experienced frequent painful attacks. When they would occur, she did not want Mother Mariana to leave her side, because only she could give her consolation. On the other hand, her sorrow increased to see Mother Mariana's worsening state of health. The latter, always humble, sweet, and discerning, would try to distract the Abbess who loved her so greatly.

The time for a new election arrived. The non-observant sisters voted for their old leader, the captain, who was far from accepting any change. Along with Mother Valenzuela and some of the others, she voted for Mother Mariana. But her state of debility and almost complete collapse was causing fear within the Community, and the majority of the votes fell in favor of Mother Inez Zorrilla, who was confirmed as Abbess. The others rendered her their obedience and celebrated her election with joy and elation.

In these Community celebrations, Mother Mariana took an active part, even while she suffered such indescribable and profound torments! Weakened and desolate as she was, she entertained the Community at this celebration with her harp and melodious voice, which seemed to have taken on celestial timbres in her profound sorrow.

Even as she diffused this happiness in her beloved Community, her soul felt not the least personal consolation. Alone in her interior desert, she suffered her cruel Hell, feeling hatred and despair as well. What is most admirable and incomprehensible is that she showed no sign of these feelings that overwhelmed her soul, but rather displayed toward her sisters only sweetness, amiability, and endless goodness.

Mother Inez Zorrilla loved her greatly, but Mother Mag-

dalena de Jesus Valenzuela surpassed all the others in her affection for this holy creature. When her attacks would come on, she would beg insistently to have Mother Mariana with her. The Abbess would ask Mother Mariana if she would be willing to stay with the former Abbess. This docile creature, as if she were a newly professed sister, would obey immediately whatever she was asked. Even more, she would try to foresee the desires of her Abbess and carry them out promptly. Mother Valenzuela's love and profound gratitude continued to grow, and Mother Mariana would render her every possible service, as if she were a maidservant.

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What an inimitable example! If we were suffering such interior trials, we would have found ourselves unable to render such delicate services to our fellow brothers. Even if we possessed great virtue, we would at least occasionally have manifested our impatience and anger, conceding to forces outside our power to contain.

This young Conceptionist heroine surpassed the greatest masters of the mystical science. As for her virtue, the way she conducted herself during this cruel suffering should have sufficed for the Holy Church to raise her to the honor of the altars even in her own time. She was, indeed, a matchless religious following an extraordinary pathway, which no one, without being called by God, should imprudently venture to travel lest she go astray. But we can all imitate her in her humility, obedience, sweetness, silence, prudence, and charity, virtues that attract others and move them to draw nearer to God. They either convert from their bad path and relaxation or they become more perfect, more faithful to the grace.

Happy the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the city of Quito, which sheltered within its walls such a creature!

Happy the religious of all times, who, called by God, will reside in this blessed place, sanctified by such a creature!

Happy the Seraphic family who counts this heroine among its ranks, and a thousand times happy am I, who, being a Friar Minor, have such a sister!

THREE MORE YEARS PASS

The three years of the Abbacy of Mother Zorrilla passed. These years saw some laxness in fidelity to the Rule due to lack of prudence on the part of the Abbess rather than bad will. This, however, is not the place to discuss these matters, since this is the story of the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, which we thus continue.

By the end of Mother Inez Zorrilla's term, the health of Mother Valenzuela had improved since she had been relieved of the heavy duties of the office of Abbess and the worries that accompany it. The state of Mother Mariana, on the other hand, had worsened considerably. Without exaggeration, she was nothing more than a living corpse.

When the day arrived to elect a new Abbess, Mother Valenzuela again found herself with a majority of votes and was confirmed in the office by the Bishop. She was very reluctant to accept such a responsibility, which, for her, was an enormous burden.

But Mother Mariana spoke these few words to her, "Mother, accept it, for it is the will of God. Soon, all your earthly concerns will be over."

These were prophetic words, for after only three months of her term of office, Mother Valenzuela left this earth for eternity.

MOTHER MARIANA LEAVES HELL

After the sisters officially rendered obedience to the new Abbess, the festivities began. Mother Mariana, as always, took upon herself the task of offering entertainment to her Community; all the while her Hell continued.

On the fifteenth day after the election, she was making her early morning meditation along with the Community when she suddenly cried out and fell unconscious to the ground. Mother Valenzuela ran to her, took her in her arms, and rubbed her face and hands, trying frantically to bring her to her senses. The face of Mother Mariana expressed a distress that touched her to the quick of the soul.

"She is dying!" cried the Abbess, sobbing like a child. "My

God! Do not take away my consolation! Let her remain here so I can die peacefully, having her close to me!"

Mother Zorrilla, along with the Spanish Founding Mothers, hurried to bring remedies. They returned a short time later and told the Abbess that prudence demanded that they take Mother Mariana to the dormitory so that she might receive attention there. She gave the order for this to be done, and the Mothers promptly transported her there and began administering to her. The Abbess sat next to Mother Mariana, who was inert, as if dead, and would not permit anyone except the Spanish Mothers to touch her.

They bathed her in warm water and applied poultices. After four hours had passed, her condition still had not changed, and the doctor was called. After examining her, he shook his head, saying, "What a pity! I will do my best, but if she has not returned to consciousness in an hour, then it is certain that she is no longer with us."

Mother Valenzuela took this much harder than the others. Weeping inconsolably, she embraced Mother Mariana, who was already nothing but skin and bones. Forty-five minutes later, Mother Mariana slowly opened her eyes, finding herself in the arms of the Abbess.

She lifted her head slightly and, seeing her Superior so distressed, said to her, "I am sorry to have caused you such grief, Mother." Claspng the hand of the Abbess to her breast, she exclaimed, "Enough tears! No more! How good and worthy of love is our good God!"

Turning to Mother Francisca of the Angels, she said, "Mother, I ask that you would have the charity to bring me a little anise water, for you know that this is an excellent remedy for all ailments."

THE SURPRISE OF THE PHYSICIAN

The humble religious asked the blessing of her Abbess and permission to drink the water, which she drank with unusual pleasure. This, however, worried and distressed the Mother Abbess, who feared she was drinking too much after such a severe attack.

Noting this, Mother Mariana told her, "Mother, do not worry. I feel such thirst because I am now well - for the greater glory of

God and the consolation of Your Reverence, whom I will serve with filial love.”

Taking the hand of her Abbess, she brought it to her lips and kissed it, bathing it with her tears.

When the hour had passed, the doctor returned to find Mother Mariana not only alive, but recovered and well with a strong pulse. In admiration, he said, “Human science cannot begin to understand the divine will. There is nothing for me to do or prescribe. I am very happy that this holy creature has not been taken from us. I rejoice for you, and also for me. I remain always at your disposal.” And he took his leave.

After drinking the anise water, Mother Mariana turned to her Superior, “Mother, the hour for choir to praise the good God is drawing near. In the refectory, God, our good and loving Father, has already set the table and today He will serve us a most excellent bread.”

No sooner had she spoken these words than a knock sounded on the door and a sister arrived carrying in some large, very fine bread sent by the Marquesa, who had ordered it made that day specially for her beloved Community of Conceptionist sisters.

Mother Valenzuela sat in a kind of dazed state. The unexpected recovery of her beloved Mother Mariana seemed like a dream to her. She would repeatedly ask how she was feeling.

“Well, Mother,” was the invariable response.

THE SPANISH MOTHERS EXCHANGE CONFIDENCES

The hour for choir arrived, but the Abbess feared that her recently recovered daughter would not have the strength to go to prayer after all that had occurred.

She told her, “Mother, I do not want you to go to choir today. When we have finished, I will return to you and we will go to the refectory together.”

This humble religious responded, “Mother, I feel well enough to join my sisters at choir, but if it pleases Your Reverence that I remain here with Mothers Francisca and Magdalena, who will also be unable to participate, I will remain, for it is my pleasure to obey you.”

The Abbess confirmed her command, "Yes, Mother, today you will not go. We will see each other in the afternoon. We have the whole day before us."

With the tranquility of the obedient soul, Mother Mariana remained, praying with the two religious.

The two Mothers, who realized that her time in Hell had come to an end, addressed her, "Mother and our dear sister, how joyful we are that the time of your agony has ended! Your soul is marked with the indelible seal of divine charity. During Communion today, our good Jesus manifested this to all the Spanish Mothers, in the same way that five years ago He revealed to us the sufferings you would undergo. How much we suffered before Communion in the fear that you had left us alone and orphans, but when it was given to us to see your glory, our sorrow gave way to rejoicing.

"During these five long years, we have accompanied you in your sufferings. United in spirit, we never ceased to assist you with our prayers, sacrifices, and penances, begging strength and valor for your tormented soul."

Then they embraced her.

**PROPHECIES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CONVENT,
THE SISTERS IN PURGATORY, AND
THE RETURN OF THE FRIARS MINOR**

Mother Mariana returned their embraces, saying: "Alas, my sisters! How terrible Hell is! No words can describe it! Only by seeing it can one know what it is! But, also, how ineffable are the delights of the glories of Heaven, where I was taken by the hands of our Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary. As you know, I have spent the past morning there!

"I will tell you a secret that you should keep from everyone, for I know I cannot hide it from you. Our sister, for whom I atoned, will die in one month, and our good Mother Abbess after two months and 15 days. Our Abbess will have to pass a century in Purgatory, and we will be unable to alleviate her sufferings. Our sister will remain in Purgatory until the Day of Judgment. However, we and our successors can mitigate her sufferings to a certain point. She will also receive some relief when, after a long time, the Franciscan friars return to administer to our Convent. From

Heaven, I will give assistance to the Convent.

“I will live yet many more years and will bury all of you. Know also that many of our sisters will remain in Purgatory so long as our Convent is subject to the Ordinary. They will rise to Heaven only when jurisdiction has returned to the Franciscan Friars. A long time will pass before this takes place. We will see it happen from Heaven, and we will help our daughters to attain this grace, after they have been tested by great tribulations, which will come from hands inside this Convent as well as from outside.

“And do you know why our sisters will remain in Purgatory until the return of the Friars Minor? Because upon them will weigh the guilt for the relaxation of the Rule that will be introduced and will last for a long time in our beloved Convent. Upon them will weigh this laxity, and also the trials and tears of those, who, with upright hearts, will strive to carry out the Rule to its very letter and who, for this reason, will suffer humiliations, scorn, and calumnies.

“However, these souls will be blessed by Our Lord, Who will flood their souls with torrents of divine grace, engendering a great and hidden sanctity. I recognize these sisters and they give me much consolation, for they will sustain our beloved Community through certain times of agony.

“Woe to those hypocrites and lax sisters who are stubborn in their infidelities! Their number will not be great, but they will always exist, just as there will also always be saints. The unfaithful ones will carve the crowns for the latter, just as some non-observant sisters did for us. Our sufferings were well spent to build and sustain our Convent. Blessed are the efforts of our Founding Mother, who from Heaven blesses all her faithful daughters, our daughters also, and our sisters for eternity.”

The Community prayer had ended and the Abbess hurried back to Mother Mariana, whom she found quite well and cheerful, already having lost that deathlike pallor. Together they went to the refectory where they took some nourishment. The poor captain outdid herself in showing every kindness to Mother Mariana, who treated her with the sweetness and love of a mother, for she had cost her soul much suffering. She was truly the daughter of her interior sorrows, and, for this reason, she loved her most tenderly.

OUR LORD RETURNS THE HEART OF MOTHER MARIANA

The next morning, Mother Mariana approached the Holy Table radiant with happiness, her countenance manifesting the glory of her soul. The evening before, she had spoken with her Franciscan director and told him all that had passed during her long swoon.

During that Communion of her first day of glory, she saw Our Lord Jesus Christ take from His Sacred Heart her own purified heart, which, during those five years of trial, He had safeguarded under the maternal care of Mary Most Holy. Our Lord and His Blessed Mother then returned Mother Mariana's heart to her bosom and again took possession of it. With her heart, all her tender and loving affection returned, further augmented.

The holy religious also noted that the devils and all Hell trembled at seeing her escape their clutches. They wanted to newly assail her but were unable to do so, for her simple presence sufficed to shame and scatter them. Thus would they be impeded from doing any more great harm in the Convent where she lived and died, and where her remains, although still hidden, are preserved to this day. For, upon her humble request, God permitted that she be buried under one of the arches of the Convent for which she had sacrificed herself.⁵⁹

This Convent will be persecuted throughout time by the good and the evil, who will ignore the advantage of having this blessed cloister in the heart of the city to act as a deflector for the many private and public crimes committed by persons of both sexes and in every condition of life in this sinful city.

Woe to Quito should this Convent be lost! Rightly should its inhabitants shudder!

59. The body of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was exhumed in 1885, 271 years after her death. Her body was found whole and incorrupt. She was wearing a white habit with a black veil. Her face retained its natural color with a rosy hue in the cheeks and lips. Through her slightly parted lips, the tongue could be seen. The eyes were closed, but preserved, as well as the eye lashes. The ears were flexible. The hair was red. The whole body exhaled a perfume of lilies. Some tools of penance were found in her pockets, as well as some personal objects. These objects were placed there by the Friars Minor with the permission of the Abbess Mariana de San Domingos and the Convent Council. They were removed and are conserved in the archives of the Convent. The bodies of the other Founding Mothers were also discovered incorrupt, and are preserved today in the Convent.

THE CONVERTED SISTER DIES

From this day on, Mother Mariana began to regain her health as if by magic. Her countenance recovered its joy, the rosy color returned to her cheeks, and life and vigor returned to her whole being. The Abbess, on the other hand, was steadily weakening, and the captain went to bed with a very high fever. In her delirium she called for Mother Mariana.

The Abbess forbid her to attend this sick sister. But Mother Mariana told her that it was the will of God, and that this poor sister would never rise again from her bed.

The Abbess, who watched over Mother Mariana with solicitous care, acceded to this request only with great reluctance. Constantly she checked on the sickroom to be sure that the captain was treating Mother Mariana well. When she saw that Mother Mariana continued her recuperation and that the sick sister was treating her with love and respect, she was more at ease. But she did not let up in her vigilance.

Finally, the last hour of the captain arrived. She made a very good confession, devoutly received the Last Sacraments, and asked pardon for her faults and bad example. Then, with Mother Mariana at her side, she died on a Thursday at 3 p.m.

Mother Mariana saw the judgment of this sister, who, standing before the throne of God, finally realized that five years of Hell suffered by an innocent soul had been the price for her salvation. For this, throughout eternity, she would be profoundly grateful. Frequently in Purgatory she would recall the heroic sacrifice made for her, and she would continue to rely on her benefactress to alleviate her sufferings through prayers, Communions, and penances.

Mother Mariana always showed the greatest charity for the soul of this converted sister, and, until the end of her life, she sought to alleviate her pains and console her. Then, as time passed, this unknown soul was forgotten. She will remain forgotten until the day when a kindred soul who will be very close to God will assist her again. This soul, who will know various secrets and communicate with those in Purgatory, will obtain great relief for this soul and for many others. And this, according to the words of Mother Mariana, will take place in the 20th century.

DEATH OF MOTHER VALENZUELA

As the days and weeks passed swiftly by, the fragile heart of Mother Valenzuela weakened more and more. She had turned the government of the Convent over to Mother Mariana, who cared for her Abbess day and night without leaving her. Finally, after just three short months of her Abbacy, she received the Sacraments in her last agony and closed her eyes to this earthly light, opening them again only to the light of eternity.

Mother Mariana wept copiously. She herself prepared the body of the Abbess, arranging flowers around it on the stretcher, which the Convent kept for this purpose and which Mother Mariana had ordered made when she was first elected Abbess. This stretcher was used for the first time to carry the venerable body of Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada. It was used throughout time to carry the bodies of all the Founding Mothers and other religious, including the body of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres herself. With filial affection, this religious mourned the death of Mother Valenzuela, for they had loved one another dearly.

* * *

CHAPTER 28

After the death of Mother Magdalena de Jesus Valenzuela, who had governed for only three short months of her Abbacy, Mother Mariana notified the Bishop so that he could specify what should be done.

The Prelate sent a private note to Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, making her the presiding Abbess for three years. When the humble religious read these lines, she immediately sent back a reply, pointing out to the Bishop the advantages of allowing the Convent to choose a new Abbess. The spouses of Christ, she argued, should be able to elect freely the one whom they would lovingly obey. For this practice prevents resentments and fears, which can cause so much turmoil in communities, she noted.

MOTHER MARIANA IS AGAIN ELECTED ABBESS

The Prelate accepted the reasoning of the humble and selfless religious, whose great virtue he once again recognized. He arranged to come to the Convent to preside over the election.

The first vote was split between Mother Mariana de Jesus, Mother Magdalena of Saint John, Mother Anna of the Conception, and Mother Inez Zorrilla. The second vote was divided between Mother Mariana de Jesus and Mother Magdalena of Saint John. In the third ballot, Mother Mariana received the majority. The Prelate joyfully confirmed the election, exhorting the sisters to love and obey her as the mother and head of the Community. In his presence, the religious rendered their obedience to Mother Mariana. After the Bishop left, the community celebrated the election.

The non-observant sisters, as usual, were not pleased, but since they lacked a leader, they could do nothing. On the contrary, they made an earnest attempt to appear happy, but in fact, it was the depths of their hearts that appeared on their exteriors. Despite the false front they presented, what was passing in their hearts was seen by the humble Mother Abbess, who loved them dearly. She would even think that their bad behavior was caused by her poor dedication to the service of God. For this reason, these daughters were the favored souls of her maternal love. In her effort to win

them to the service of God, she would assist them and relieve their every need even before they could make it known, for she knew better than they themselves what they wanted and needed.

THE INTRANSIGENCE OF MOTHER MARIANA

When, however, it was a matter of some relaxation or fault against the Rule, she would immediately call the offenders to her cell or she would go to theirs. With disarming sweetness, she would make them see the temporal and earthly happiness of the observant religious who followed the Rule even in its most minute details. She would then tell each one the fault she had committed, embrace her tenderly, and humbly demand that she not repeat the offense. After praying a Hail Mary with the guilty sister, she would kiss her feet.

Thus she provided the example of true humility and attracted the souls of her daughters by the sweetness characteristic of the spouses of the meek and humble Jesus, with Whom they live united by the strong and indissoluble bonds of divine and heroic charity.

THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN COMES TO COMPLAIN TO MOTHER MARIANA

It was the beginning of the year 1610. Each day of this happy year was one of an uninterrupted sequence of supernatural communication of God and Mary Most Holy with Mother Mariana.

During this period, Our Lady often admonished her favored daughter about the delay in ordering her statue to be made. She told her that she wanted her statue of Our Lady of Good Success to be placed above the abbatial chair, where, as absolute Mistress, Mother, and Abbess of the Convent, she would govern her beloved Community until the end of time. She threatened Mother Mariana that if this were not done, she would withdraw her graces and favors from her and give them to another more worthy soul, who would correspond and carry out the request that she had made some years ago.⁶⁰

60. In the second vision of Our Lady of Good Success to Mother Mariana on January 16, 1599, she had commanded that her statue be made and had given her the measurement for her height.

The heart of this humble religious was inflamed anew with divine fire and, like a penitent child, she begged pardon of her Most Holy Mother. She told her that she did not think it was possible to describe the dazzling beauty of her queenly features to the sculptor, who, regardless of his skill, could never do them justice.

In addition to this, she feared that she would not be believed by the Bishops and priests, and that this revelation might destroy her beloved Convent, which had been founded upon and conserved by the suffering of her aunt, the Founding Mother, who now enjoyed eternal happiness in Heaven, as well as by her suffering and that of the other Founding Mothers.

However, she begged the Queen of Heaven and Earth, who knows all the events of the future, to show her the way to obey and please her, for this was her only ambition on this earth.

END OF VOLUME I

In Volume II, Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira tells how the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success was made by an artist and miraculously completed by Saint Francis of Assisi and the Archangels. It was solemnly consecrated and installed in the Convent in the Abbess' chair on the Feast of the Purification, February 2, 1610.

Our Lady of Good Success appeared again to Mother Mariana on February 2, 1634 and described the great crisis in the Church and society in the 20th century. In the last apparition of December 8, 1634, Our Lady warns about the corruption of customs and loss of purity in priests and religious.

In Volume II, the author also recounts many miracles inside and outside the Convent worked through the intercession of the saintly Abbess, Mother Mariana. It includes her last words to her sisters on her deathbed, and her Last Testament, a moving document that transmits the spirit and virtue of religious life.

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THE ADMIRABLE LIFE OF
MADRE MARIANA DE JESUS TORRES'

Volume II

Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira

- 1790 -

Translation and Footnotes by
Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

The devotion to Our Lady of Good Success has been approved by the Bishops of Quito since February 2, 1611, when the 8th Bishop of Quito, Salvador de Ribera (1607-1612) blessed the miraculous statue and formally installed her in the Abbess' chair of the Convent.

The process for beatification of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres y Berriocha was initiated by the Archbishop of Quito, Antonio J. Gonzalez, in April 1986.

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for this English translation

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The front cover shows the statue of Our Lady of Good Success. The back cover includes a close-up of a portrait of Mother Mariana de Jesus painted by Don Carlos Salas in May 1922.



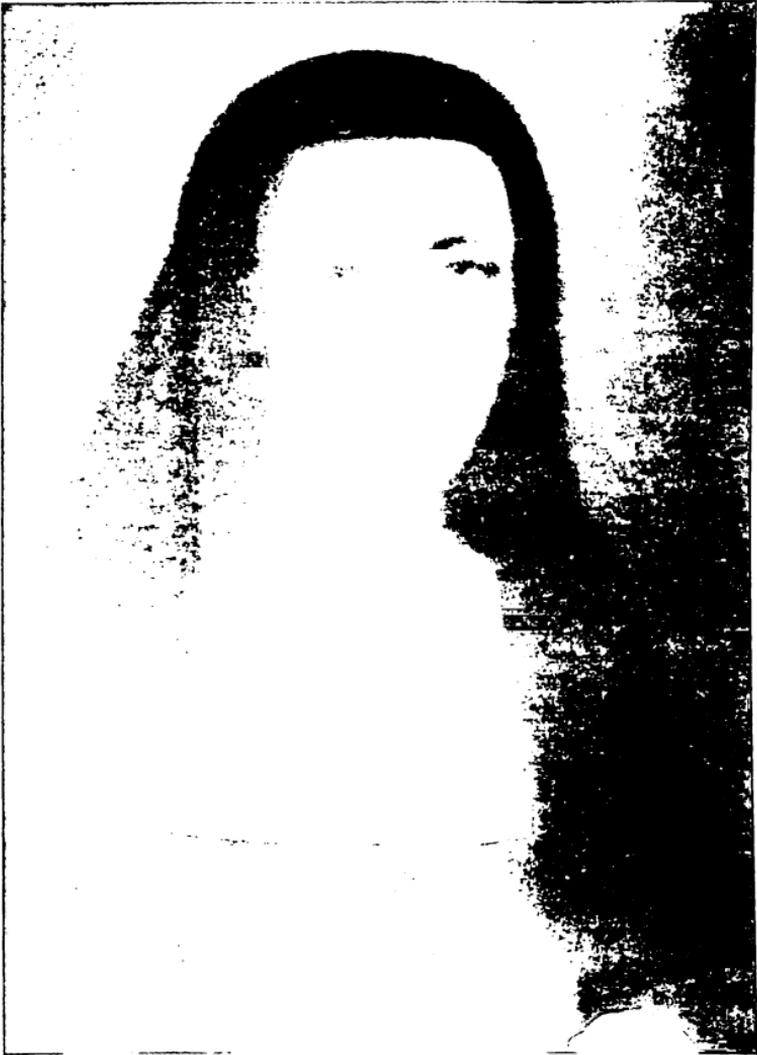
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Mother Mariana Francisca de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa (1563-1635), one of the Founding Mothers of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, Ecuador. This Spanish religious received many prophecies about the future, and especially about the 20th century.



Our Lady of Good Success told Mother Mariana that she would start to be known in the 20th century. She promised her special attention to those who invoke her under this title - Our Lady of Good Success - during the great crisis the Church would be suffering in our times.

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* * *

Vida Admirable
de la Rda. Madre
Mariana de Jesús Co-
rras, española y una de las
fundadoras del Monasterio
real de la Limpia Concepción
en la Ciudad de Quito

Escrita por el Rdo. Padre
Manuel Sousa Pereira de
la Orden Seráfica de los Me-
nores del Convento Máximo de
S. Francisco de Quito en el Ecuador.

Como Segundo.

FOREWORD TO VOLUME II

This is Part II of the biography of Venerable Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres (1563-1635) written by Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira in 1790. Part I was transcribed in Volume I.

Part I recounted the special favors she received from God in her early years in the province of Biscay, Spain. At age 13, she left her homeland and family to travel with six other valourous religious women to the New World to found the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, Ecuador. On the difficult sea voyage of 1576, the Devil tried to destroy the ship and stop this foundation that was destined to do so much good.

The virtue and extraordinary gifts of Mariana were described in the account of Fr. Pereira of her novitiate and early years of profession. In 1582, she was given to know how Our Lord in His Agony suffered for the sins of heresy, blasphemy and impurity in a great crisis that would come over the Catholic Church and the world in the 20th century. Brought before the Divine Tribunal, Mariana was given the choice to remain in eternal glory or to return to earth to suffer as an expiatory victim for the 20th century. She was asked to become an expiatory victim for this time, a mission she accepted.

A period of great trial inside the Convent began for her, during which she experienced sufferings of both body and spirit. At the same time, she and the other Spanish Mothers had to endure a cruel persecution from a group of native nuns who wanted to introduce relaxations in the Rule and remove the Convent from the jurisdiction of the Franciscans.

In the first vision of Our Lady of Good Success to Mother Mariana in 1594 as well as in the second one on January 16, 1599, Our Lady commanded her to have her statue made, just as she appeared to her, with the Divine Infant in her left hand and the crosier and keys of the Convent in her right. From 1599 to 1610, however, the Convent was experiencing the worst period of the internal revolt instigated by those rebellious nuns. During these years, Mother Mariana was unjustly imprisoned four times inside the Convent and mystically suffered five years of Hell to save the soul of the leader of the rebellion. Therefore, there were not conditions for her to have the statue made.

Volume I ended with an account of the third apparition at the beginning of January 1610. The Convent was at peace and Mother Mariana had been restored to her position as Abbess. In this apparition, Our Lady admonished her for the delay in having her statue made. She commanded her to go immediately to the Bishop and tell him to order the work to begin on this statue, which was destined not only to be an invaluable aid for the Convent and Country in those days, but also the remedy for the crisis in the Church that would begin in the middle of the 20th century.

* * *

INTRODUCTION¹

During this period of history, the Colony was guilty of many crimes before the Lord. The ecclesiastic government itself left much to be desired because of the indiscretion of the governing Bishop.² Neither the Clergy nor the people loved him as a father, and he was the target of much criticism.

Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres and the rest of the Founding Mothers³ of the first Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of the city of St. Francis of Quito were the shield to prevent the lightning arrows of Divine Justice from striking this guilty Colony.

If only this Colony would have recognized those who sustained it! How true it is that the decision of those nuns to remain cloistered gave precious and exquisite fruits of virtue and sanctity. The world does not know them and, for this reason, does not love them; nor would it even be worthy to know them, since its values and twisted ideas are contrary to theirs.

It was the year 1610, and Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, Abbess of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, had reached heights of sanctity and heroism in her spiritual life here on earth. Her prayer was continuous, her practice of humility incessant. In this way she moved the Heart of God, who bestowed upon her ineffable gifts either directly or through the mediation of His Holy Mother, as we will see in the fourth apparition of the Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of Good Success.

1. The Introduction, the narration of the fourth apparition of Our Lady, is followed by Chapter 1, which describes the fifth apparition. This is the original order of chapters set out in Part II by Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira in 1790.

2. His Excellency Salvador de Ribera was Bishop of Quito for five years from 1607 to 1612. He was known for his harshness in government and many imprudent actions favoring his family and the powerful.

3. The names of the other Spanish Founding Mothers who had been present when the Convent was formally installed in Quito on January 13, 1577 were Mother Catherine of the Conception, Mother Francisca of the Angels, Mother Maria of Saint John, Mother Anna of the Cross and Mother Lucia of the Cross. The first Abbess of the Convent and aunt of Mother Mariana was Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, who had died on October 4, 1593, 16 years after the foundation of the Convent (see vol. 1, chap. 15). The seventh Founding Mother was Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who came to the colony with her aunt and other Founding Mothers at the age of 13 (see vol. 1, chaps. 3-4).

THE APPARITION OF JANUARY 21, 1610

After confiding her unworthiness and fears with filial trust to the Mother of Heaven, she was praying at midnight, as was her custom, on January 20, 1610. Concluding her penitential exercise, she ended her prayer at 1 a.m. on the 21st. She gave thanks for the favors received and was preparing to retire for a short rest only to return again, as she always did, at 3 a.m. for another hour of prayer.

Suddenly, she felt her heart palpitate with holy joy. She was on fire with transports of love and ardent desires for Heaven and to suffer even more than she had already suffered in order to imitate her Divine Spouse and Model, Jesus Christ.

At the same time, she wished to offer Him sensible proof of her intense love, which rivaled that of the angelic spirits themselves, who, dumbfounded, contemplated the abyss of sanctity in this weak woman. Then, by the will of God and Mary Most Holy, angelic hosts appeared before her as messengers of their Queen.

THE THREE CELESTIAL AMBASSADORS

As Mother Mariana de Jesus prayed, the choir was suddenly inundated with celestial splendor, a favor not uncommon for this humble, saintly religious whom God granted so many privileges.

Amid this refulgent brilliance, she saw the arrival of the three Archangels, St. Gabriel, St. Michael, and St. Raphael, accompanied by innumerable hosts of Angels.

The celestial ambassador of the Incarnation of the Divine Word approached her and said:

“Privileged spouse of the Divine Word, chosen daughter of the tender heart of my Queen, Mary Most Holy, and my beloved sister: I come bearing a message from Heaven to tell you that in a short while, you will speak with your Holy Mother and our Sovereign Queen. To prepare you for this, I have come to illuminate your intelligence so that you might know the truth of this and the other apparitions to come. Do not ever have any doubt about them, for such would constitute an enormous ingratitude to God.”

The Archangel sent forth a luminous ray that penetrated the mind of this fortunate religious and dissipated her fears and doubts, just as the sun bursts forth on a dark morning and its bright rays introduce a new day.

Then the Archangel St. Michael spoke: "Creature most fortunate and beloved by the Holy Trinity, may God be with you!

"I am sent from on High to strengthen your weak heart and, at the same time, to expand it so that it can receive the abundance of divine graces you will be given when you speak with your Blessed Mother and my Sovereign Queen. Your solid humility will confuse the proud spirits, who, disobedient, hurled themselves from Heaven into the deep abyss, and they will be unable to cause you any harm.

He thrust a luminous ray into the heart of Mother Mariana de Jesus, which penetrated her heart to its deepest fibers, inflaming it with a supernatural fire. She felt herself capable of undertaking the greatest deeds for the love of God and her Heavenly Mother. At the same time, she realized the nothingness of her own being, as well as the infinite love of her God, Who had chosen her for the singular favor of familiar conversation with the Divine Majesty and Mary Most Holy.

For Our Lady would confide to her secrets and other facts for the propagation of a new and efficacious Marian devotion under the sweet and consoling invocation of Our Lady of Good Success. She wanted this devotion to be spread throughout the Colony that would later become Ecuador and a free Republic.

By means of this devotion, Our Lord would work great miracles, spiritual as well as material, *first* for her Convent, so that in it He would always find a home, and *second*, for the devout faithful, above all those at the end of the 18th century and the 20th century, who would be the favored of His Heart, for in that period Hell would be unleashed and many souls would be lost.

Finally, the Archangel St. Raphael approached and said:

"Fortunate creature, whom Divine Munificence has permitted to live like the blessed while still in mortal flesh, for the Divine Redeemer took you as His favored spouse from your tender years and sent you crosses and sufferings so that you might be purified, preparing you in this way to converse intimately with His Divine Majesty and with my Sovereign Queen, the Immaculate Virgin of Virgins.

"Our Lord has charged you to order that a statue of His Blessed Mother – which will be venerated above all in future centuries – be sculpted in accordance with her directives.

"I was sent to cure your blindness of mind so that you will believe the truth of these apparitions that you have imprudently doubted

until now. From this day forward you will see their veracity most clearly, for these doubts, so repugnant to God, will be dissipated.”

The Archangel sent a translucent ray into her mind and heart that illuminated her whole being. She saw with great clarity her entire life and all the graces and favors throughout its course that she would receive from the goodness of God and His Blessed Mother.

She also understood the veracity of all the apparitions and how her soul had needed all the sufferings through which she had passed, for such sufferings are necessary for every soul that Our Lord calls to walk on an extraordinary pathway.

HER RESPONSE TO THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNS

Filled with gratitude to God and His Blessed Mother, she responded to the three Archangels, the messengers of God, in the presence of the angelic spirits who accompanied them:

“Holy princes and faithful messengers of the Sovereigns of Heaven, I thank you for the lights that have illuminated my understanding and strengthened my heart, dissipating the blindness of one who is the least of all creatures that exist upon earth. I praise the Lord for the marvelous things He has done in me, who am deserving of nothing.

“Return, then, to Heaven and tell our Divine Sovereigns that the poor slave of their Majesties, prostrate on the ground, awaits them to do whatever they desire, for my heart and entire being belong to them; like a small drop of dew, I have lost myself in the immensity of the Divine Being.”

The celestial messengers departed, hastening into the presence of God upon whose bequest they had come. Presenting the humble prayer and oblation made by that blessed soul in her cloisters, they rejoiced to have been chosen for such a mission.

Meanwhile, Mother Mariana de Jesus, prostrate on the ground, her arms stretched out in the form of a cross and her face on the ground, meditated upon her insignificance and contemplated the grandeur of God and the truth of the divine favors she had received.

Giving thanks to God for having bestowed such great benefits on her, she offered herself to Him for all that He might desire. Her heart was so inflamed with amorous fire that if she had not been miraculously sustained by God, her life would have been consumed by its divine ardor, liberating her soul from its bondage

to the body, to which this blessed creature paid not the least account.

**VISION OF OUR LADY, THE DIVINE DAWN,
AND HER SECRETS**

She remained in this position in complete annihilation until 2 o'clock in the morning. Then the Heavenly Dawn appeared to her, carrying in her arms the Divine Sun of Justice. The celestial Queen addressed her with these words:

“Arise from the ground upon which you lay, favored daughter of my maternal Heart and beloved spouse of my Divine Child. Your humility has attracted my heart, just as the pride that reigns in this poor Colony separates it from me. But because I have faithful and loving daughters in this Convent, and among them, you, my chosen one, I come as always to confide to you my secrets.”

Mother Mariana de Jesus arose and there before her, inside the choir sanctuary at a distance of about five feet, was a most beautiful Lady emanating a heavenly charm and grace, surrounded by a light as resplendent as if she stood amidst the sun itself. In her left arm she carried her most precious Child, and in her right, a beautiful crosier, just as was described in the previous apparitions.⁴

On the arm that carried the crosier some sickly doves perched. They were trying to leave the arm of their Mother, but the Divine Child tried to detain and divert them, caressing them and offering them the Eucharistic Bread. They would turn their heads aside, however, in order not to take this Bread. Their good Mother, Mary Most Holy, spoke to them with maternal sweetness, but they paid no attention to her words. Against their will, they remained with the beautiful Lady and became increasingly weak.

In face of such disdain and after exhausting every means of winning them with charity and love, the Divine Child took them and threw them down into the tempestuous sea of the world, where, lacking the strength they needed to survive on the surface, they were immersed in the deep abyss. All that remained was the echo of the despairing cries of those who, for lack of vigilance, realized too late that they had lost a good that could have been fully theirs in exchange for just a little effort, suffering, and sacrifice.

Mother Mariana was absorbed by all that she saw but, above all, by the singular beauty of her Mother of Good Success, whom she recognized from other occasions.

4. See vol. 1, chaps. 17, 22.

Upon seeing Our Lady again before her, she was reminded of the great suffering she bore in her own heart to see God offended in this ungrateful Colony and also of the needs of her beloved Convent. She thought of manifesting these things to her powerful Mother and Queen.

Even though she was convinced that this was really Our Lady who appeared to her, the humble Mariana de Jesus addressed her in this way, "Beautiful Lady, who attracts my heart and raises it to God, tell me: Who are you and what do you desire? Do you not see the great abyss that exists between you and this most vile creature?"

Opening her lips, the Queen of Heaven responded: "It is true, my beloved daughter, that a great abyss exists between creatures and the Creator, but so that they might approach Him without fear, He became flesh in my most pure womb, subjecting Himself to suffering and death. And, without ceasing to be virgin, I became the Mother of God; I am also the Mother of all mortals, the just as well as sinners."

Our Lady continued: "I manifest myself and communicate to just souls. And I attract sinners to God and myself – at times by secret inspirations and at others, by great tribulations. You cannot comprehend how much we love souls, God and I! They were created for Heaven, but a great multitude is nonetheless lost because they refuse to suffer and do a little violence to themselves.

"You saw those sickly doves? You will understand, my daughter, that they are the religious unfaithful to their vocation who will live here in my beloved Convent throughout the course of the centuries.

"Did you see how lovingly and tenderly my Most Holy Son and I treated them? We will always assist them like this, drawing them to us and nourishing them with the Eucharistic Bread. But, alas, how ungrateful they were! They turned their backs to us. Exhausting the mercy and patience of my Most Holy Son, they abandoned themselves to the turbulent ocean of the world, where they were oppressed by sufferings and sorrows and tormented by their uneasy consciences. Who knows how many of them will end their lives miserably and be lost?

"Observe them well, so that you might know them all."

Then Mother Mariana de Jesus looked and clearly recognized each and every one of the unfaithful religious who would live in her beloved Convent, from the first to the last until the end of time.

In her charity, Mother Mariana wanted to intervene before Divine Justice and plead their causes, but the Queen of Heaven continued to speak in this way:

“Daughter, neither I nor you can avert such a misfortune, since God respects the free will of His creatures. They do not lack lights, graces, inspirations, and the charitable counsel and warnings of their superiors, as well as the example of many good sisters who will pray for them and sweetly admonish them. They, however, remain deaf and blind to everything.

“Because of their inveterate lukewarmness, God justly abandons such souls, who of their own volition make themselves unworthy of the sublime grace of the religious vocation and receive, as you see, their just chastisement.

“But moderate your sorrow, beloved daughter, by considering this enormous number of faithful souls who here in my beloved convent will live and die in self-abnegation and isolation, practicing solid virtue in heroism and hidden sanctity. Through them in the centuries to come, as well as through you in these times, divine justice will be stayed.”

A GREAT CRISIS WILL LAST THROUGH MORE THAN HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

“Thus I make it known to you that from the end of the 19th century and from shortly after the middle of the 20th century, in what is today the Colony and will then be the Republic of Ecuador, the passions will erupt and there will be a total corruption of customs, for Satan will reign almost completely by means of the Masonic sects.

“They will focus principally on the children in order to sustain this general corruption. Woe to the children of these times! It will be difficult to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, and also that of Confirmation. They will receive the Sacrament of Confession only if they remain in Catholic schools, for the Devil will make a great effort to destroy it through persons in positions of authority.

“The same thing will happen with Holy Communion. Alas! How deeply I grieve to manifest to you the many enormous sacrileges – both public as well as secret – that will occur from profanations of the Holy Eucharist. Often during this epoch the enemies of Jesus Christ, instigated by the Devil, will steal consecrated hosts from the churches so that they might profane the Eucharistic Spe-

cies. My Most Holy Son will see Himself cast upon the ground and trampled upon by filthy feet.

“But this Convent will conserve faithful souls, devoted and fervent spouses who will make amends to Him with loving tenderness, suffering to seeing Him thus hated by their ungrateful brethren, sinners whose hearts will hardly seem to be human. They will pray for these sinners and make great penances of every type; some will also carry the heavy cross of infirmity by which God purifies His chosen souls, and with it they will make amends for so many crimes and sacrileges committed in the world. The wily demon will try to impede this, placing in the imaginations of my suffering daughters ideas of despair with the intent of making them lose the merit they have gained.

“But in those times you will already be known, as well as the favors that I am bestowing on you. How I love the fortunate inhabitants of this sacred place! And that knowledge will stimulate love and devotion to my Sacred Statue. For this reason, today I authoritatively order you to have this statue made: Let it be sculpted just as you see me and placed upon the Abbess’ chair, so that from there I may govern and direct my daughters and defend my Convent; for Satan, making use of both the good and the evil, will engage in a fierce battle to destroy it.

“This battle will reach its most acute stage because some irresponsible religious, under the appearance of virtue and with bad-intentioned zeal, will undermine the existence of their mother, the Religious Life, who nourished them at her breast. These souls will assume massive responsibility for their actions. Only by Divine Mercy will they arrive at Purgatory to be purified by its fires.

“All these souls should tremble upon learning of this future destiny! Falling into themselves, they must struggle to reform their Convent, reforming themselves first. Above all, they must have a heroic charity, carefully and lovingly guarding in their hearts the weaknesses they discover in their sisters. Without this divine charity not a single virtue can exist, for charity and profound humility are the only solid foundation of religious perfection. Without them, there can only be a simulation of virtue that barely covers the putrefaction of the soul.

“Since this poor Country will lack the Catholic spirit, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction will be little valued. Many people will die without receiving it – either because of the negligence of their families or a misconceived affection for their sick ones. Others, incited by the cursed Devil, will rebel against the spirit of the

Catholic Church and will deprive countless souls of innumerable graces, consolations, and the strength they need to make that great leap from time to eternity. But some persons will die without receiving it due to just and secret chastisements of God.

“As for the Sacrament of Matrimony, which symbolizes the union of Christ with His Church, it will be attacked and deeply profaned. Freemasonry, which will then be in power, will enact iniquitous laws with the aim of doing away with this Sacrament, making it easy for everyone to live in sin and encouraging the procreation of illegitimate children born without the blessing of the Church. The Catholic spirit will rapidly decay; the precious light of Faith will gradually be extinguished until there will be an almost total and general corruption of customs. Added to this will be the effects of secular education, which will be one reason for the dearth of priestly and religious vocations.

“The Sacrament of Holy Orders will be ridiculed, oppressed, and despised, for in this Sacrament, the Church of God and even God Himself is scorned and despised since He is represented in His priests. The Devil will try to persecute the ministers of the Lord in every possible way; he will labor with cruel and subtle astuteness to deviate them from the spirit of their vocation and will corrupt many of them. These depraved priests, who will scandalize the Christian people, will make the hatred of bad Catholics and the enemies of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church fall upon all priests.

“This apparent triumph of Satan will bring enormous sufferings to the good Pastors of the Church, the many good priests, and the Supreme Pastor and Vicar of Christ on earth, who, a prisoner in the Vatican, will shed secret and bitter tears in the presence of his God and Lord, beseeching light, sanctity, and perfection for all the clergy of the world, of whom he is King and Father.

“Further, in these unhappy times, there will be unbridled luxury which will ensnare the rest into sin and conquer innumerable frivolous souls who will be lost. Innocence will almost no longer be found in children, nor modesty in women. In this supreme moment of need of the Church, the one who should speak will fall silent.⁵

5. The hard facts showing the situation of the Church in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century confirm the great crisis the Church has experienced since Vatican Council II.

The number of priests has fallen from 58,000 in 1960 to 45,000 in 2002, and the

OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS ORDERS HER STATUE BE MADE AND THE WAY IT SHOULD BE DONE

“You will see this from Heaven, my beloved daughter, where you can no longer suffer, but your daughters and successors will suffer, those beloved souls already known to you who will placate Divine Ire. They will have recourse to me under the invocation of Our Lady of Good Success, whose statue I ask and command that you have made for the consolation and preservation of my Convent and for the faithful souls of that time, an epoch when

number of seminarians has dropped from 49,000 to 4,700, a 90 percent decline. In the same time period, the number of Catholic nuns fell from 180,000 to 75,000, and the average age of the remaining sisters is 68. The picture is more bleak for religious orders; for example, the number of men studying to become Franciscan and Redemptorist priests fell from 3,379 in 1965 to 84 in 2000.

Regarding Catholic education, almost half of the Catholic high schools in the United States have closed since 1965, and parochial schools suffered an even greater decline.

Further, the students in these schools are often ignorant of basic Catholic teaching; instead they are indoctrinated with progressivist religious and social doctrine. Polls shows that three-fourths of young Catholics believe that the Holy Eucharist is merely a “symbolic reminder” of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Only 10 percent of lay religious teachers now accept Church teaching on contraception and 53 percent believe that Catholics may divorce and remarry.

A 1958 Gallup Poll reported that three in four Catholics attended Mass on Sundays. A recent study by the University of Notre Dame found that only one in four now attend.

Catholic marriages have fallen in number by one-third since 1965, while the annual number of annulments has soared from 338 in 1968 to 50,000 in 2002. In addition, Matrimony is increasingly contracted with the sole object of taking advantage of the pleasures of the body, without consideration of its indissolubility, the consequent rights and obligations, and the sanctity and fidelity that this state imposes on both parties. Instead it is viewed and accepted lightly and subject to the most aberrant profanations of every type.

The number of Catholic families who appreciate the urgency of infants receiving Baptism is declining. More and more are waiting until their children are seven or eight years old, or until their children ask for the Sacrament, which often does not happen. The practice of individual private Confession is increasingly rare.

Also, who is concerned that sick members prepare themselves for their meeting with eternity by means of the pious reception of the Last Sacraments? Who calls the priest to absolve the dying, when it suffices to call the doctor?

How the prophecy has been accomplished to its very letter! (Statistics from Kenneth C. Jones, *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II*, St. Louis, MO: Oriens Publishing, 2003).

there will be a great devotion to me, for I am Queen of Heaven under many invocations.

“This devotion will be the shield between Divine Justice and the prevaricating world to prevent the release of God’s formidable punishment that this guilty earth deserves.

“This very day, when morning breaks, you should go to the Bishop and tell him that I have asked and commanded you to have my image sculpted and be placed at the head of my Convent so that under this title, I might take possession of that which belongs to me. As proof that what you say is true, tell him that he will die within two years and two months and that he should begin to prepare himself for the day of eternity, for his death will be violent.

“He should consecrate my Statue with holy oil and give it the name of Mary of Good Success of the Purification, or Candlemas. On this solemn occasion, he himself should place the keys of the cloister, together with the crosier, in the right hand of my Statue, as proof that the government of the spouses of my Most Holy Son has been entrusted to me and that they should surrender all their concerns to my maternal and loving protection.

“Then, at that moment, I will take complete possession of this, my house, and I will be obliged to keep it safe and free from all turmoil until the end of time, demanding from my daughters a continuous spirit of charity and sacrifice.

“With this, along with humility, obedience, patience, silent recollection, and continual prayer, this house and community will be sustained. Just as material elements are used by proprietors to build their houses and palaces, these are the spiritual recourses that will uphold and sustain the grand edifice of religious observance. The daily exercise of such recourses will thus support these beloved walls.

“So long as my daughters diligently strive to sanctify themselves and edify each other with good example and mutual charity, bearing the crosses proper to religious life and practicing the virtues that I have indicated to you – for these are the virtues most preferred by my Heart and the Sacred Heart of my Divine Son – I promise that we will love them greatly. All their needs and requests will be heeded with the daily practice of these virtues. This applies to each one of my daughters who will live in these blessed cloisters until the end of time.

“Those who are more humble, docile, meek, and willing to suffer will be the preferred and most favored of God and their Mother, who speaks to you today.

“Further, tell the governing Bishop – a man of indiscrete zeal who sows dissension and rancor among the clergy and the people – that every Prelate should be the father of all classes of people, taking the party of none, in imitation of the Divine Pastor Jesus Christ Who said, ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of Heart.’ All creatures are equal in their souls, and Heaven was created for all those who desire to go there, for my Most Holy Son died on a shameful Cross as Redeemer of all, with the exception of none. Souls condemn themselves of their own will.”

ABOUT THE SEPARATION OF THE FRIARS MINOR AND THE EXAMPLE OF A FAITHFUL FRANCISCAN

“With respect to the difficulties through which your Convent presently passes, I tell you, beloved daughter, that suffering and sorrow are most necessary to form religious souls, just as the blows of the hammer and other instruments are needed to form great works of art on earth. The absence of the government of the Friars Minor, so indispensable, is the cause for many sufferings, and so it will be until the 20th century, after which they will again have jurisdiction over my Convent, in order to raise many souls to great perfection and sanctity. The separation of the Franciscans took place not by divine will, but only by divine permission.⁶

“You should realize that mortal life is the time given to creatures. But the hour of God will come, and then He will take the actions and their consequences of each of His creatures into strict and severe account. He will judge and sentence each one with perfect equity. You yourself saw what happened to your sisters who worked for the separation of the Franciscan Friars after they had passed to eternity. How many of these sisters will suffer until the Friars Minor return, and others until the final judgment day.

“In all times the religious souls who violate the perfect observance of their rules should tremble!

“During this time when the religious spirit is absent from the [Franciscan] monasteries, you still have in your Convent [the mystical presence of] my servant Francis of Assisi, your Father

6. The Conceptionist Convent in Quito left the jurisdiction of the Franciscan Order in 1601, when Mother Magdalena de Valenzuela was Abbess (see vol. 1, chap 18). The Convent still has not returned to their governance.

who loves you as well as his worthy sons who serve God with an upright heart. To convince you of this, I will show you your lay brother, Friar Pedro of the Conception, my privileged son, who, because of his love for my Immaculate Conception, has taken this name.

“See, my daughter, the beauty of his soul, his profound humility, the fire of his seraphic love! For this reason, even while I speak to you, I also favor him with seeing what now takes place here between you and me, manifesting to him the privileges and favors that you are receiving so that he can give thanks to the Most High for the gifts that He dispenses to His beloved souls.

“This dear son of mine will leave the earth in fourteen and a half years, and you will be with him at this hour so that you might know how God rewards His good and faithful servants, who untiringly labor in the acquisition and practice of solid virtue”

Then Mother Mariana de Jesus saw the lay brother Friar Pedro of the Conception, who, oblivious to everything around him, was contemplating all that was taking place between herself and the Queen of Heaven. For he had fallen into ecstasy while he was humbly praying at the foot of the Tabernacle in his monastery during those early hours of the morning after having concluded his penitential exercises, for he was a man much given to the practice of penance.

Mother Mariana de Jesus realized that this friar saw her and that he rejoiced at the favors which the Holy Queen had conceded to her chosen daughter.

She, in turn, admired the beauty of his soul and the sublime degree of solid virtue he had acquired. She gave thanks to God and to her Most Holy Mother, who sustain just souls upon this earth while so many crimes are committed.

MOTHER MARIANA TAKES THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Queen of Heaven continued: “Thus you see, my beloved daughter, how many favors and graces God grants you through my mediation. Now, be docile to my exhortations, and command without delay that my holy Statue be sculpted, just as you see me, and hasten to set it in the place I indicated to you.”

The humble religious responded:

“Beautiful Lady and beloved Mother of my soul, this insignificant ant who enjoys your presence cannot describe to any artist your magnificent features, your incomparable beauty, and

your stature. It would be necessary for one of the three Archangels, who wait upon you as nobles of your Court, to come and sculpt the holy Statue for the work to bear your resemblance. I do not have words to describe it, nor has any earthly artist – however great his talent – the capacity to make the divine work that you request of me.”

The Queen of Heaven replied: “Do not let this worry you, beloved daughter. I will see to the perfection of this work. The Archangels Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael will take charge secretly of making my Statue. You should call Francisco del Castillo, who knows this art well, and give him a succinct description of my features, exactly as you see me, today and always, because it was for this end that I have appeared so many times to you.

“As for my height, take the cord from around your waist and measure me without fear. For the respectful and humble confidence of her children is pleasing to a Mother, who I am.”

In an instant Mother Mariana de Jesus took off her cord and, with humble respect, replied:

“Queen of Heaven and beloved Mother, here is the cord to measure you. But who will hold it to your beautiful forehead, adorned with this magnificent and glowing diadem with which the Holy Trinity crowned you as Daughter, Mother, and Spouse, making you Queen of Heaven, Earth, and Hell? I dare not, nor would my small stature permit me to reach high enough to measure you.”

The Blessed Virgin responded with the goodness proper to a mother:

“Beloved daughter, place one of the ends of your cord in my hand and I will hold it to my forehead, while you hold the other to my right foot.”

The celestial Queen took one of the ends from the hands of her favored daughter and raised it to her beautiful forehead, while Mother Mariana de Jesus placed the other at the tip of her right foot. In this way the measurements were taken.⁷

Then the Blessed Virgin raised her right hand and, with tenderness and love, gave her blessing to the child of her Heart, who, returning to herself, or, rather, to the use of her senses, saw that it was 3:30 in the morning.

7. This is the second time Our Lady of Good Success gave this measurement to Mother Mariana. During the third apparition of January 16, 1599, she also miraculously extended the cord from Mother Mariana's habit to reach her exact height (See vol. 1, chap. 22). The statue, which stands 5'9", was made according to this specification.

TWO SIGNIFICANT DETAILS

There are two details of this marvelous event that should be explained here:

First, in order for the Blessed Virgin to be able to hold the end of the cord offered by Mother Mariana de Jesus to her forehead, the three Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, raised the royal crown over the head of their Queen, replacing it reverently after the measurement was taken.

Second, since the cord of Mother Mariana de Jesus was a little short, it stretched miraculously, as if it were elastic, until it reached Mary Most Holy's exact height, at which point the cord remained permanently fixed.

Mother Mariana de Jesus guarded this cord thenceforth with great reverence, always carrying it with her in one of her pockets as a precious relic, and it is preserved today in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

At the end of this apparition, so filled with graces and favors not only for herself but also for the poor Colony and the Church, Mother Mariana de Jesus remained in prayer. Her heart brimming over with love of God and her Blessed Mother, she stayed there awaiting the religious community to come to the choir, for the hour was approaching for the recitation of the early morning Little Office, which she prayed that morning with increased devotion and love.

THE VISIT OF FRIAR PEDRO TO MOTHER MARIANA AND THE ECSTASY THEY BOTH EXPERIENCE

At 9 o'clock that morning, one of the sisters came to tell the Mother Abbess that Friar Pedro of the Conception wanted to speak to her. Mother Mariana directed the sister to take him to the parlor⁸ and hastened to meet him.

Upon seeing her enter, the lay brother saluted her in this way, "*Ave Maria Purissima!* [Hail to Mary Most Pure!] Good day to you, Reverend Mother Abbess! How is the Convent?"

8. The cloistered mothers and sisters could receive visitors in the convent reception room, or parlor, provided that they remain behind the grille erected there. The parlor was at the entrance to the convent, and the religious did not have free access to it. For such visits a reasonable cause and permission from the Bishop was usually needed. The permission, however, was not required in case of those who, by virtue of their office, were obliged to have relations with a convent, e.g. the ecclesiastical superior, the confessor, the canonical visitor, etc. Except in Advent and Lent, relatives were also permitted.

She responded, "*Sin pecado concebida!* [Conceived without sin!]⁹ Good day, dear brother. My Convent is well, and yours?"

"There is nothing new, Mother," replied the brother. He added: "Mother, how beautiful was the Queen our Mother, Mary Most Holy, with whose presence we were favored this morning before the rise of dawn! I saw the many favors bestowed on Your Reverence, including how you measured the height of the Queen of Heavens with your cord."

"It is true, brother," responded Mother Mariana de Jesus, "that this most vile creature was the recipient of many undeserved gifts. Help me, therefore, to give thanks to God Our Lord, rich and liberal in His gifts."

As they spoke, their words were intermixed with tears. They spoke only of the grandeur of God and His divine attributes, and of the beauty and the maternal goodness of Mary Most Holy. During this colloquy both fell into ecstasy, with Mother Mariana de Jesus on one side of the grille that separated them and Brother Pedro on the other. Like weightless feathers, they both elevated into the air...

Then before their eyes the vision of that early morning was again revealed to them.

Upon realizing that their Superior did not appear, the sisters became extremely worried. They searched for her throughout the whole house, in both of the choirs and the balconies. Finding her nowhere, they sought out the Founding Mothers in the fear that they had perhaps all returned to Spain. But they found them, to their relief.

They explained to the Founding Mothers that the Abbess, her features beautiful and her heart overflowing with an extraordinary joy, had vanished from their sight that morning. When they had asked her what had happened to her, she had responded, "My daughters, how good God is! Love God! Love Mary Most Holy! Be faithful daughters!"

The Founding Mothers, who understood how privileged by God this soul was, surmised that she had received some new vision. They calmed the sisters, telling them, "Do not become upset, little sisters. We shall look for her until we find her. Certainly she is 'sleeping' in some corner, suffering from some mystical slumber."

9. It was a common custom at that time for a Spaniard to salute his neighbor with the angelic "*Ave Maria Purissima*," and for the other to respond, "*Sin pecado concebida*." This pious practice still continues in many Catholic countries.

They set out to search the building for the Abbess. The Vicar Abbess Mother Lucia of the Cross, accompanied by Mother Francisca of the Angels and Mother Anna of the Conception, directed their steps to the parlor. The others went to look for her in other parts of the Convent.

Upon entering the parlor, the three religious sensed something unusual. Opening the door, they saw Mother Mariana de Jesus suspended in the air about midway up to the high ceiling, her eyes raised to Heaven, her hands together in prayer. They also saw Brother Pedro weeping with tears running down his cheeks. Their hearts inflamed with divine love, the Mothers stopped to contemplate this moving scene for a few moments, and then called out loudly to their Superior, but she did not return to the ground.

They left and returned shortly carrying a ladder. Finding Mother Mariana in the same state, they climbed the ladder up to her. They shook her strongly and called to her, but seeing that she remained immobile, they desisted. Climbing down the ladder, they left the room, leaving the door closed and reprimanding themselves for their imprudence.

They met the other Founding Mothers and the rest of the sisters, who again reported that they had not been able to find the Mother Abbess anywhere in the house. The three responded, "Calm yourselves and do not worry. Mother Mariana is presently occupied; you need search no longer for her. She will soon be free and will rejoin you."

The fears of the sisters abated, and they went their various ways. The Founding Mothers, however, remained. Mother Lucia of the Cross and the other two religious told them, "Let us go to the parlor so that you might see the marvels of God in His servants. We did not say anything in the presence of the others, for we should exercise great prudence in matters such as these."

Directing their steps to the parlor, they all entered and saw Mother Mariana de Jesus and Friar Pedro still in ecstasy. After contemplating this marvel for some moments, they went to the choir to express their gratitude to the Author of all good. They closed the door of the visiting room, leaving only Mother Francisca there to watch and see what would happen.

**MOTHER MARIANA AND FRIAR PEDRO SPEAK
TO EACH OTHER ABOUT THE REVELATIONS OF OUR LADY**

The hour of choir was already approaching when the two souls returned from ecstasy. The first words of both, pronounced simultaneously, were, "How good God is! How will we correspond to His kindnesses?"

Then, Friar Pedro, directing himself to Mother Mariana responded:

"Mother who loves Him with all your heart, strength, and senses, and suffers much for Him, how good and sweet it is to suffer for God!"

Mother Mariana responded, "How true, my brother, how true! Would that God would always give us His cross!"

"Mother," said the lay brother, "what is it that Your Reverence has to tell me? For the beautiful Queen of Heaven and Earth, upon disappearing from our sight, told me that she had entrusted Your Reverence with a message for me."

"My brother," returned Mother Mariana de Jesus, "is it not also true that our tender Mother, Mary Most Holy, has also commanded you to transmit something to me?"

The brother replied, "But, Mother, I rightfully claim that Your Reverence should speak first."

"Very well, brother," said Mother Mariana. "I was given to know that after 14 years and seven months, a little past the middle of August, you will leave this miserable earth of sorrow and tears and will arrive securely in Heaven. During this year, I will be bearing the heavy cross of Superior, and our Blessed Mother will grant me the favor of assisting at your death. You will see me, but no one else in your monastery will be able to do so.

"When you enter into the Fortress of Glory, remember me and beseech God that I also might soon leave this sad, miserable earth so that we might together praise the Lord our God and delight in our tranquil possession of Him without fear or possibility of ever losing Him!"

Filled with joy, the friar responded: "O, Mother, what happy news, a source of great satisfaction to me! But alas for me! Still 14 more long years and some months of this cruel exile! The fire of divine love consumes me! How I would like to make the time accelerate and tear as under the bonds that imprison my soul and prevent me from soaring to the celestial region, to remain there forever!"

Mother Mariana said: "My brother, let us make the sacrifice of living so that we might offer God proof of our love by our suffering. Let us live as pilgrims, strangers on this earth, practicing the solid virtues and making reparation to God, Who is so greatly offended by this criminal world. In the meantime, let us commend ourselves and each other to God, begging Him to sustain us with His grace so that we might not cause Him the least displeasure.

"Now, I ask that you communicate the message that you have for me. Perchance my petition has been heard and I will leave this earth before you, and I will assist you at your death from Heaven?"

"No, Mother. Your Reverence will remain on earth, and will only soar to Heaven to sing the new canticle in the year 1635 in the middle of the month of January, after receiving many graces and favors from God and Mary Most Holy, our Mother. This is the happy news that I communicate to Your Reverence on the part of Mary Most Holy, Our Lady.

"Keep your lamp always lit and ready, then, like a prudent virgin.¹⁰ Heaven is won at the cost of great sacrifices and of keeping ourselves lowly in our own sight.

"The Queen of Heaven told me that, after my death, Your Reverence will have an advocate and protector in me and that I will be present at the hour of your death to accompany you at your entrance into Heaven, where you will receive the just reward and

10. This is a reference to the parable of the ten wise virgins in the Gospel of Matthew (25:1-13): "Jesus said: Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

glory for all that you have done and suffered for God throughout your long life.

“And even though our Blessed Mother has already commanded Your Reverence to speak to the Bishop and have her holy Statue sculpted, I also, on my part, urge you to do so without delay, for this regards the glory of God, devotion to and love of Our Lady, and the salvation of many souls. Moreover, it also involves the security and stability of this blessed Convent which God and the Blessed Virgin love so dearly.”

Having said these words, those two blessed souls took their leave of each other, remaining united in spirit.

MOTHER MARIANA REJOINS HER SISTERS

Leaving the parlor, Mother Mariana de Jesus encountered Mother Francisca of the Angels, who had seen and heard everything. With a sweet smile, the Abbess asked her, “How curious you are, my sister. Tell me who ordered you to come here?”

“The will of God, Mother,” responded Mother Francisca. “I will tell you what we did. The Vicar Abbess, Mother Anna of the Conception, and I brought a ladder and climbed up to where Your Reverence had risen. We called to you and pulled on your habit, but our efforts were in vain. So, we climbed down the ladder, and I remained here to see what would happen, for I know very well that Your Reverence places much trust in us, and we took great care to conceal what we had seen from the rest of the community.

“Some of the sisters were looking for you all through the house, but the Vicar Abbess told them to cease their search because the Mother Abbess was ‘asleep’ and would soon appear. Now, Mother, tell me what you saw.”

Mother Mariana responded: “How curious my sisters are! What great efforts you made to bring a ladder here! I will tell you, however, that the Queen of Angels has again visited me, but not only me at this time but also Brother Pedro of the Conception, a humble and penitent man – what a beautiful soul he has!

“This afternoon I will call together all the Founding Mothers to tell them what happened and to ask their assistance and counsel concerning a work that has been entrusted to me. Until then, say nothing, and let us go to choir.” They then directed their steps to the choir.

Seeing her, the sisters exclaimed, “Mother, where did Your Reverence hide herself? We searched for you the whole morning in anguish. A thousand sad thoughts crossed our minds, but the Mothers consoled us, assuring us that Your Reverence, suffering a mystical slumber, was ‘asleep’ and would soon appear.

“But, Mother, where was Your Reverence sleeping? We want to know so that if this happens again we might go there directly to awaken you should we need you. For, since you are a good mother, we know that you will not become annoyed if your afflicted daughters disturb your sleep.”

With the sweetness of a soul that imitates Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mariana de Jesus responded with an angelic smile: “It is not possible that you could disturb me with anything in this life, my daughters. You have a right to my affection and attention. Only when someone offends the Holy Rule does she cause me displeasure. As for the rest, I am yours. I desire to serve you and make you happy.”

ADVICE OF THE FOUNDING MOTHERS AND THE HESITATION OF MOTHER MARIANA

On the afternoon of that day, January 21, 1610, the Abbess called together the Founding Mothers to speak with them and ask their advice.

When all were present, she addressed them:

“Beloved Mothers and sisters, you know that I – the least of your sisters – have never hidden my sufferings from you. I have also shared with you the gifts bestowed on me by God. Therefore, you should know that before the rise of dawn on this very day in the choir of our cloister, the Heavenly Dawn, the celestial Mary, Our Mother and Lady, appeared to me ...” And she narrated to them the whole vision.

At its conclusion, she told them that the vision had been repeated in the parlor, but this time before her and Brother Pedro of the Conception together. Upon taking leave of her, he had beseeched her to direct herself to the Bishop as soon as possible so that the Statue that Our Lady had requested might be ordered to be made. This was what Mother Francisca of the Angels had heard.

Mother Mariana, however, felt a great fear to do this. On one hand, she imagined that the Bishop would not believe her; on the other hand, it would be impossible to describe the features of the celestial visitor. Because of this, her soul was weighed down

with the bitter suffering of not carrying out the order given to her by Mary Most Holy. As she considered herself to be an ignorant creature, she was asking the Founding Mothers for enlightenment on this delicate matter so that she might not err.

The Mothers listened attentively to her account of the celestial vision with tears of joy running down their cheeks.

When Mother Mariana de Jesus finished speaking, they all said: "Mother, we are of the opinion that Your Reverence should call the Bishop and tell him everything, just as you have done with us. Tell him to order immediately whatever he deems fit. Indeed, if it were up to us, this very day we would call this fortunate man, chosen by Mary Most Holy for such a work.

"We will pray that all goes ahead quickly so that we might soon possess the treasure of this Sacred Statue, which we will bequeath to our successors. With this, we will die tranquil, thus assured of the stability of our Convent, which has cost us so many sacrifices, tears, persecutions, and imprisonments. Further, we have the consolation of knowing that some day the Friars Minor will return to direct and govern our Convent, thus enkindling anew the seraphic spirit that should animate every religious of the Immaculate Conception."

Mother Mariana felt satisfied and at peace after hearing the resolution of the Founding Mothers in this matter of such great importance.

As the days went by, however, her fears increased that the Bishop would not believe her and that she would put the Convent at risk. Moreover, she understood well how the inhabitants of the Colony – not only the lowly-born but also persons of distinction – had a strong propensity to idolatry. This was the other fear that prevented her from carrying out the order of Mary Most Holy and following the counsel of the Founding Mothers.

Praying and weeping, she presented her concerns to God and her Heavenly Mother. When the Founding Mothers insistently asked her if she had addressed the Bishop, she would repeat her apprehensions to them.

"Do not fear, Mother," they would respond. "The things of God should be carried out. God Himself will illuminate the Prelate in accordance with His will. Rather, you should have great fear, Your Reverence, to disobey the Mother of God."

Amid these struggles and misgivings, Mother Mariana de Jesus passed the time that transpired from January 21 until the dawn of February 2, 1610.

CHAPTER 1

On the first day of February in the year 1610, Mother Mariana de Jesus and the other Founding Mothers were preparing themselves through a more perfect purification of their souls and penitential exercises to worthily celebrate the Feast of the Purification, the name with which the holy Statue would be consecrated. But Mother Mariana still had not made the decision to speak with the Bishop, despite the insistence of the Founding Mothers, who never allowed a day to pass without reminding her of her obligation.

As was her custom, Mother Mariana was praying at one o'clock in the morning on February 2 near the grille in the upper choir. She later revealed to her confessor that her meditation was on the humility of Mary Most Holy in the sublime mystery of the Purification. Her thread of thought, however, often turned, by no will of her own, to the consideration of how the obedience of Our Lady was a virtue inseparable from her humility. She continued this meditation until 1:30 a.m., when she resolved to conclude her prayer and retire to take a short rest to restore her strength.

Suddenly she felt herself overcome by a joy intermixed with fear, and immediately saw herself in the presence of her Mother, Mary Most Holy of Good Success.

She experienced a momentary impulse to leave the choir, but her ardent love for the Blessed Virgin held her fast. Our Lady was surrounded by a light coming from many precious stars that formed a brilliant arch framing the Heavenly Queen. Mother Mariana fixed her gaze on the face of her Mother, who was looking at her with amiable severity without saying a single word.

Unable to endure this grave demeanor of her Mother for another moment, Mother Mariana de Jesus spoke: "Beautiful Lady, my Queen and Mother, your poor daughter cannot bear to see you like this any longer. Accustomed to your maternal caresses, my heart feels an emptiness that nothing or no one can fill. Let your just anger cease, and I will immediately obey your order, should it cost my life or even that of my Convent."

**“PERCHANCE YOU DO NOT REALIZE
THAT I AM AN ALL-POWERFUL QUEEN?”**

Addressing her, the Queen of Heaven spoke: “Hard-hearted and long-delaying creature, perchance you do not know that I am an all-powerful Queen, and that I impose orders having full knowledge of all things? Why are you afraid when there is nothing to fear? This Convent is my foundation, and I love it more than you do. Even if all the earthly powers were united against it, they would be unable to destroy it for in face of divine power, all the earthly powers are insignificant worms that can do nothing.

“With the making of my Statue, I will favor not only you and my Convent, but also the people – and the general public – through the centuries. Since this Convent is a fortress, it will bring salvation for many souls, drawing them from the abyss of sin in which they find themselves. God will be glorified in those souls. How many conversions it will bring about!

“Do you want to be responsible for the loss of so many souls by remaining deaf to my voice and command? For if you do not carry out this order immediately, I will withdraw from you the treasures of graces that I have bestowed upon you so abundantly and I will give them to another soul better than you.”

“Beautiful Lady,” responded Mother Mariana de Jesus, “your reprimand is most just and I receive it humbly before God. Inestimable and incommensurate are the treasures of graces that you have gratuitously given me, and these you can also withdraw at will. But I implore your pardon and mercy, promising amendment.

“This very day I will seek out the Bishop to initiate the work of sculpting your holy Statue.

“But, because my filial love and confidence are great, permit me – if it will not displease you – to tell you my fears and request a grace, which, as a Mother, you will not be able to deny me.

“The fear that I present is this: since the people of this land are so inclined to idolatry, this might prove an occasion for them to deliver themselves to this practice. The grace that I ask is that you will hide my name so that only you, as the Sovereign and Queen that you are, might be glorified and I always hidden. Also, I ask that you give me your measurement once again, so that I can be certain at least of your height, since it would be impossible to repre-

sent your features, even if your holy statue were carved by the angelic spirits.”

The Queen of Heaven responded: “Beloved daughter of my heart, your humility pleases me. Already you are pardoned for your fault against obedience. Go as soon as possible to speak with the Bishop and tell him, on my part, what I ordered and told you at our last meeting. Make haste in commanding my Statue to be sculpted, for time is flying and only two years of life remain for the presently governing Bishop, who has been chosen to consecrate my Statue with holy oil and place it in the spot I have designated.

“Tell him, moreover, that in his final agony, we – I and you – will be there at his side to assist him in that final transit. If he asks how you will come to find yourself there, tell him that nothing is impossible with God and His Most Holy Mother, for they are the absolute masters of all creatures.”

**THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS
AND THE LIFE OF MOTHER MARIANA WILL BECOME
KNOWN IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

“As for your request that your name be hidden, this pleases me, and I will do as you have asked. Tell the Bishop that it is my will and the will of my Most Holy Son that your name be hidden at all costs, both within as well as outside the cloister, for it is not fitting for anyone at the present time to know the details or origin of how this Statue came to be made. For this knowledge will only become known to the general public in the 20th century.

“During that epoch the Church will find herself attacked by terrible hordes of the Masonic sect, and this poor Ecuadorian land will be agonizing because of the corruption of customs, unbridled luxury, the impious press, and secular education. The vices of impurity, blasphemy, and sacrilege will dominate in this time of depraved desolation, and that one who should speak out will be silent.

“Know, beloved daughter, that when your name will become known in the 20th century, there will be many who will not believe, claiming that this devotion is not pleasing to God. But the great sufferings of my daughters – and yours – of this time will make a melodious concert of humility and hidden penance for my Most Holy Son and myself. The Divine Spouse and I, His loving Mother, and you also will watch over our daughters from Heaven and guide them on the correct path that leads to Paradise. What

will cause these favored daughters the greatest pain will be the doubt of their own sisters, who will increase their sufferings, but also their merit.

“A simple, humble faith in the truth of my apparitions to you, my favored child, will be reserved for humble and fervent souls who are docile to the inspirations of grace, for our Heavenly Father communicates His secrets to the simple of heart, and not to those whose hearts are inflated with pride, pretending to know what they do not or infatuated with empty science.”

OUR LADY GIVES HER MEASUREMENTS AGAIN

“Do not worry about the features of my Statue, for it will be completed as I desire for the elevated ends for which this statue is destined.

“Now, hand me the end of the cord that you wear around your waist, the symbol of the purity of the spouse of the Divine Jesus,¹¹ so that I might hold it to my forehead. Touch the other end to my right foot, and you will have the measurement of my height marked by the length of this cord. Then make no further demands of proof from your Heavenly Mother who speaks to you now and command that this statue be made.”

Instantly, the humble religious, filled with confidence in and loving gratitude to the Blessed Virgin, took the cord that she wore around her waist and offered one of its ends to her Blessed Mother, while she touched the other end to the foot of Our Lady. The cord stretched as if it were elastic until it reached the height of the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

When she raised her eyes to contemplate the forehead of Her Mother, she saw the Divine Child was standing and holding the end of the cord that touched the forehead of His Blessed Mother. He was gazing at His Mother as a loving Son, pleased with the beauty of this creature whom He had adorned with every grace, gift, and virtue in order to make her His elect Mother.

Then, extending His small, gracious hand, He handed the cord to Mother Mariana, saying: “My beloved spouse, here you have the measurement of the height of My Most Holy Mother that you desired.¹² Conserve it reverently, for I desire that the many

11. The white Franciscan cord with three knots in it symbolizes the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience made by the novice at her first profession.

12. This is the third time Our Lady gave Mother Mariana the measurement for the statue.

spouses I will have here throughout the centuries should measure themselves by it. The measurement has already been given.

“And do you know how I desire that they be measured? I shall measure their humility, their silence, their charity, their patience, and their love for Me and My Blessed Mother, in Whom all should see themselves mirrored. And as Christians and, even more, as religious, I desire that they have My spirit in every act of their lives. My spirit is one of patience, meekness, abnegation, and total abandonment to the divine will. Let them serve Me with diligence and disinterest, abandoning even their eternal happiness to the loving will of My Divine Heart.

“So that I might take My delight among religious souls, My dearly beloved spouses, I remain hidden under the appearance of bread in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, exposing Myself to the irreverence and profanations of My enemies. If they often torment Me, I find My satisfaction in the loving redress of those favored souls who live with Me under the same roof, where I receive their caresses and live in them through sufferings of every kind.

“What does it matter to them to live here on earth in obscure oblivion and abjection when their names will resound in Heaven among those of the immense number of daughters of My Immaculate Mother? In these first centuries, I desire that your name remain hidden, like the names of the heroic souls of My spouses who will live in this Convent in all centuries to comfort Me and hold back the arm of Divine Justice, ready to release itself upon this ungrateful land.”

THE CHILD JESUS PLACES A GOLD CROSS IN THE HEART OF MOTHER MARIANA DE JESUS

“I want to give to you – and, through you, to all the faithful religious who will live in this Convent until the end of time – this small gold cross as a symbol of interior and exterior sufferings, an insignia that they will present at the judgment on the final day of their lives. Then I will recognize them as My property and will introduce them into Heaven, their Fatherland and place of eternal happiness.”

Saying this, the Divine Infant descended from the arms of His Blessed Mother into those of His spouse, Mother Mariana. Opening her heart, He placed in it a small gold cross, embellished with pearls and precious stones, each one resplendent like the sun.

Then, well-satisfied, He returned to the arm of His Most Holy Mother, who, after blessing Mother Mariana de Jesus, disappeared.

The heart of this humble religious remained inundated with love of God and joy. Returning to herself, she found herself with her cord in her hands and the Founding Mothers before her, asking her to begin the Little Office. She hurried to her place and began the early morning praise to her Queen and Lady who, from the heavenly straits, was listening with pleasure to the prayers that her daughters of the Immaculate Conception directed to her with pure and upright hearts.

THE FOUNDING MOTHERS URGENTLY ENTREAT MOTHER MARIANA TO FULFILL OUR LADY'S REQUEST

Sensing that something new had taken place, the Founding Mothers asked God and their Blessed Mother that they might be worthy to know and assist in the fulfillment of the divine will. With these petitions, they made their habitual meditation and received Holy Communion that day.

They saw Mother Mariana de Jesus transformed, as if she were another creature, totally spiritual in nature, and they loved her even more. While their Eucharistic God rested in their hearts, they were given to understand that their Superior had been favored that morning with a visit from their Blessed Mother and Christ Himself, who had given her the measurement of the height of their Heavenly Mother with her cord so that she could command the Statue to be sculpted.

They realized that they should animate and stimulate her to act immediately, for the Devil wanted to impede the making of this holy Statue that would so benefit the times in which they were living, as well as those that would follow in the centuries to come. For the Spirit of Darkness perceived that this Statue would act as a serious obstacle for the realization of his evil plans regarding this Convent as well as a multitude of souls who, through this devotion, would be turned toward God.

When the occasion arose to speak with their Superior, they asked her what Our Lord had revealed to her that morning, beseeching her not to hide from them any of the favors she had received from God and Our Lady. With humble simplicity and confidence, Mother Mariana told them all that had passed and showed them the cord, which the Mothers venerated with augmented love. They held to their hearts this jewel, which, for them was worth more than all the treasures of earth, and they entreated their Abess to speak to the Bishop and reveal to him all the apparitions, from the first to the last of that very morning.

FRIAR JUAN OF THE MOTHER OF GOD MENDOZA

Mother Mariana de Jesus spoke first with her spiritual director, a Franciscan priest, Friar Juan of the Mother of God Mendoza, of noble Spanish descent from the house of Santiago de Galicia.

He was a religious of outstanding virtue distinguished for his love of Our Lady. He always invoked her by the name "my Most Holy Mother," and spoke of her with fervor. He loved the religious sisters of the Immaculate Conception as favored daughters of Our Lady and as his own dear *hermanitas* [little sisters]. When he referred to them in public, he would call them "my dear little sisters, the daughters of the Immaculate Conception."

This virtuous man was the assistant Provincial of the Franciscan Monastery of St. Paul of Quito in the Colony. He possessed the gift of discernment of spirit, and there was no sinner who could resist conversion before his sweet and gentle admonitions.

This friar, as well as the venerable Fr. Jeronimo Tamayo, had assisted Mother Mariana de Jesus during that period she spent in Hell.¹³ The guilty sister called the *Captain* had made her confession to Friar Juan of the Mother of God when she converted. United in spirit, these two priests had prayed and suffered with Mother Mariana to save the soul of this poor sister, who had, in fact, been snatched from the claws of the infernal wolf.

Fr. Juan died in the odor of sanctity in the year of Our Lord 1636.

He, together with Fr. Francisco Anguita, assisted the humble Mother Mariana at her death [in 1635]. This priest was destined to be at that poor bedside which bore such a rich jewel. His physiognomy expressed joy and at the moment that she expired, he returned to his senses, saying with a contented smile, "My little sister has already entered Heaven, telling me that I will follow her there next year on the day of the Purification. Alleluia, alleluia!"

Fr. Jeronimo Tomayo was a learned and virtuous religious. Often he was so absorbed in God that when he encountered his superiors, he would not greet them because he did not even recognize them. He died in the year of Our Lord 1628. His death was also

13. Regarding the five years Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres suffered in a mystical Hell so that the soul of the sister who had headed the revolution inside the Convent would be saved, see vol. 1, chap. 27.

foretold by Mother Mariana, to whom this Father rendered paternal affection as well as the veneration and respect due a saint.

ORIGIN OF THE *CUADERNON*

Fr. Francisco Anguita was a priest who wrote the complete life of this humble and hidden servant of God, Mother Mariana. Having been an eyewitness to her life and possessing great knowledge of her soul, he wrote with agile pen of all the favors she had received from Heaven, which, considering how many they were, would seem incredible to persons little versed in the supernatural life. But to us, who are religious and have a better notion of the interior lives of faithful religious souls, spouses of Jesus Christ, they occasion little surprise, but rather gratitude and love for our good God. The Infinite Grandeur finds His delights in those who are poor and simple of heart, and makes them His *confidantes*. For I assure you that whoever wants to find heroic sanctity will find it in the silent recesses of the cloisters, where victims of divine love live like angels under the most diverse forms.

Fr. Francisco Anguita and Fr. Angel Francisco Perez, both praiseworthy Franciscans who lived during the time of Rev. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres and who dealt closely with her, were the depositories of the private workings of her soul. They assure us that Mother Mariana is a saint of the stamp of the worthy Doctor of Carmel [Teresa of Avila].

These fortunate priests had the opportunity of associating with this incomparable religious, whom the Seraphic Family is honored to have as a daughter, and I, to have as my sister!

These priests adeptly wrote the full life of this holy Abbess and left their writings in one large volume known as the *Cuadernon*,¹⁴ which is preserved in the Convent of the Conceptionists of Quito, together with the precious ivory-wood statue of the Child Jesus that Mother Mariana brought with her from her homeland Spain as a child embarking upon her voyage to this Colony.¹⁵

14. The *Cuadernon* is a collection of writings preserved in the Convent that includes the full relation of Mother Mariana's life written by herself at the command of her superiors. This account was approved by the Most Reverend Pedro de Oviedo, Quito's tenth bishop, who was privileged to know and direct her. It also includes biographies of Mother Mariana and all the other Founding Mothers that were written after their deaths by Franciscan Fathers who knew them and had been their spiritual directors. For more, see vol. 1, chap. 15, footnote 27.

15. For more on the voyage and the terrible tempest at sea that the Founding Mothers experienced on their voyage to the New World, see vol. 1, chap. 4.

TWO VIRTUOUS ANCESTORS OF MOTHER MARIANA

Upon taking leave of her daughter, Mariana's loving mother had given her this precious statue of the Child Jesus as a remembrance of her affection. The good and virtuous matron had always guarded this statue with veneration, having inherited it from a grandfather of noble ancestry who died in the Province of Castile in the odor of sanctity.

There were two brothers in this family: Joaquim Alvaro and Santiago Alvaro.

Joaquim was the grandfather of Dona Maria de Berruichaoa Alvaro, the mother of Mother Mariana de Jesus.

Santiago was a holy Benedictine religious, a profoundly humble man of prayer and great penance who experienced mystical ecstasies in his spiritual life. Gifted in the art of sculpture, he had carved this statue of the Infant Child after a marvelous vision in which he had seen and caressed the Divine Infant laying on the straw of the Manger on Christmas night. He also made a box in which he placed the statue, and then gave it to his brother Joaquim, saying these words, "Take this precious Child, which will be a witness to the heroic virtues of your great-granddaughter in times to come."

After receiving this beautiful statue, Don Joaquim asked his brother Santiago to make a silver cradle for it plated with gold and inlaid with precious stones and fine pearls, which he provided to adorn the work. His brother happily agreed to do this.

As already mentioned, Joaquim and Santiago were brothers, sons of Count Santiago Álvaro y Vasconez and Countess Maria Solá y Fernández, a renowned family of noble lineage and great wealth.

Don Santiago distributed half of his inheritance to the poor when he became a religious. The other half he divided into two parts: one designated for the conquest of the Holy Land, and the other for his brother Joaquim. In addition to inheriting nobility and wealth from their parents, these sons had also inherited their virtues and a profound Catholic sense.

These strong trunks produced the verdant branch bearing a most exquisite fruit – the Franciscan Conceptionist virgin Mariana de Jesus Torres, whom the Colony would hide in its innermost recesses, like a jewel of inestimable value.

SHE PREPARES TO SPEAK WITH THE BISHOP

Let us return to the narration of the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres.

On February 3, 1610, she spoke with her father director, Friar Juan of the Mother of God Mendoza. This Spanish religious was of noble ancestry, but he lived hidden in the Colony, setting aside his surname and taking for himself only the name of Friar Juan of the Mother of God.

This dignified, humble, and penitent man always fled the honors of this world, so often cherished by souls who are weak and devoid of virtue. Under obedience he was forced to accept the office of assistant Provincial of St. Paul of Quito in 1605.

Wise and well-versed in the ways of the spiritual life, this religious for many years had directed Mother Mariana de Jesus, who confided to him her soul. Each grace that the humble religious received from the merciful goodness of God resonated to enlighten this friar as well. He esteemed Mother Mariana de Jesus as a chosen daughter of Our Lady and a privileged spouse of the Sacred Heart, Who takes His delight among the lilies.

After she made a report of all that had happened, he asked her several questions and told her that, together with her community, she should pray that whole day with the intention that this matter of such great importance for the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, and also for the Church in general, the Colony itself, and so many souls who, by this means, would return to God and be saved, might come to its proper fulfillment.

Mother Mariana communicated all this to the Founding Mothers. Together with the whole community, they prayed to the Father of light and the God of all consolation that He would resolve this matter according to His pleasure and divine will.

Friar Juan, in turn, closed himself up in his cell where, like a hermit in the desert of his monastery, he passed the whole day in prayer. He extended his austere penances into the night, continuing his humble and insistent pleas at the foot of the Tabernacle inhabited by the thrice holy God, living and glorious.

At three in the morning, he fell into ecstasy. For an hour and a half he remained kneeling, his arms crossed on his chest, his gaze fixed on the Tabernacle, and then returned to his senses. Filled with joy and in holy transports of love, he prepared to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which he began at a quarter to six, drenching the altar

with the tears that flowed from his eyes. He seemed like a Seraphim, or rather, it seemed as if our Seraphic Father, ordained a priest, had come to the Colony to celebrate the Holy Mass in this monastery.

The Mass ended, and after discharging his duties at the monastery, he directed his steps to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception to speak with Mother Mariana de Jesus, who also had prayed and made austere penances for the same intention.

The holy religious went to the confessional to speak with her director, who asked her what she had done that night and throughout the previous day. She gave him an exact account of all her actions.

NEW REVELATIONS

After listening to her in attention and silence, Friar Juan opened his lips and spoke:

“My daughter and sister, let us give thanks to God All-Powerful for the many gifts that the love of His Sacred Heart graciously bestows upon us! During my prayer at 3 o’clock this morning, I fell out of myself and saw the Queen of Heaven and my Mother, just as she appeared to Your Reverence. She manifested to me her desire that this holy Statue be made as soon as possible revealing to me the ends for which God intends it until the last day of the world and the benefits and graces that souls will receive through this devotion.

“The Holy Trinity confirmed the desire of my Queen, giving me assurance that God will bless all those who, by their support and resources, will contribute to the making of this holy Statue as well as all those throughout the centuries who will help to spread this devotion, and those in the 20th century who make these apparitions and its origin known. It will be a time of great corruption of customs, and this devotion will be the safeguard of this land in the times to come when it will no longer be a Colony, but a free and dissolute Republic. Let us weep, pray, and do penance so that this time will not be of long duration. God desires and asks this of us.

“I will not take any more of Your Reverence’s time. I am going now to implore Our Sacramental Lord to give unction to the words of Your Reverence and docility to the Bishop. I order you to call upon him immediately and tell everything simply and clearly, as you have done with me. Relate to him all the apparitions and answer every question he might have. I will return tomorrow to learn the result of your conversation with the Bishop and to see if I can help in anything.”

Giving her his blessing, this good Father returned to his monastery.

Accompanying the Father was Brother Pedro of the Conception, who remained praying during the visit. He heard all that was said while the priest conversed with Mother Mariana.

Upon leaving, Friar Pedro said, "Father, Your Reverence spoke well. In but a year we will anoint here with holy oils the miraculous Statue of our Queen, who will be most beautiful. I will assist with my prayers in this splendid work, which will be made not by the hands of mortal men but by our Seraphic Father St. Francis and the supernatural action of the three Archangels.

"When you will preach the novena of preparation for the anointment of this holy Statue, make clear to the faithful the goodness of our Queen to the simple of heart, whom she treats with such great familiarity. The world in general does not have a living faith in the maternal love of our Queen and, because of this it does not love her."

* * *

CHAPTER 2

Mother Mariana de Jesus told the Founding Mothers everything that had been said during her talk with Friar Juan of the Mother of God. They had all been waiting anxiously for the outcome of this matter of such great interest to them. Pleased with his advice, they insisted that she should speak to the Bishop as soon as possible so that her conscience would not be weighted with going against the will of God and Mary Most Holy.

Mother Mariana forthwith sent a message to the Bishop expressing her urgent need to speak with His Excellency, if possible, that very day.

THE BISHOP WONDERS WHY MOTHER MARIANA HESITATED IN COMING TO HIM

Upon receiving the letter from Mother Mariana, the Bishop thought that new persecutions had begun against her. He exclaimed: "My God! This angelic creature suffers innocently! But I will come to her aid. I will arrange matters and command her to return to Spain with the rest of the Founding Mothers. I will inform the King who these Spanish sisters are and ask that he close the foundation of this Convent of the Immaculate Conception, where these insubordinate *criollas*¹⁶ live." And he quickly set off for the Convent.

He called for the Mother Abbess, who told him that she would like to speak in the confessional. The Prelate agreed, and once there, his first words were, "Mother, what is happening now? I suspect that these *criollas* have begun another strong persecution against Your Reverence. But this time I will not tolerate it, and I will finish with them."

"No, Your Excellency," responded Mother Mariana de Jesus. "All my sisters are angels of peace; the Convent gives no cause for suffering. I praise God and Mary Most Holy for placing me with souls so upright and docile in all things.

"My urgent need to speak with Your Excellency is for another reason" And she proceeded to reveal all that had occurred in the apparition of February 2.

16. *Criollas* refers to the daughters of Spaniards who had married the native Indians of Ecuador.

The Bishop, who listened with attention and astonishment, finally spoke: "Mother, why did Your Reverence not call me sooner? It is God Who so disposes this, and we should not remain deaf to His voice and requests. He is free to ask of His creatures whatsoever pleases Him."

From the depths of her heart Mother Mariana breathed a great sigh of relief upon hearing these words.

The Prelate added: "Mother, it is hard to know that I shall die so soon. What are two years? If it were possible to ask Our Lord to prolong my life, it would be good for me! I ask Your Reverence to solicit this grace for her Prelate. I will take the necessary measures to carry out the divine will to fulfill this celestial request. Meanwhile, pray much to God for me. Recommend this matter to the Holy Ghost and make a novena with your Convent. I, on my part, will also make a novena, after which I will return to speak with Your Reverence about how to proceed in this matter."

Mother Mariana faithfully carried out his orders.

FIRST STEPS

The Bishop remained quite moved. Throughout the nine days of his novena, he felt no glimmer of hope that he would live for more than two years, and he began to prepare himself for his journey into eternity instead of going to Spain in three years to rest from the fatigues and trials of his pastoral offices. Now he recognized his imprudence in governing the Diocese and resolved to amend himself.

At the end of the nine days, he returned to speak with Mother Mariana de Jesus. He asked her many varied and captious questions to see if she would contradict herself on any point and to determine the spirit that animated her. Each response of this humble religious constituted for him a torrent of light, through which he discerned the spirit of God. The Prelate again realized the great intelligence that Our Lord had conceded to this holy soul, and he asked her to tell him all the graces and favors with which the Lord had favored her throughout her life.

Mother Mariana de Jesus, docile and obedient, made a full account to him of all these things.

After listening to her, the Bishop said, "Mother, I realize that Your Reverence unjustly suffered that which should be reserved only for a great sinner. I confess that in your place I would not have borne it."

“Such sufferings and unjust humiliations, Your Excellency, are jewels of priceless value that God places in our hands so that we might purchase Heaven with them,” she replied. “Why should we refuse them?”

She continued: “I shall never complain of my past sufferings. Only should I see my Convent failing would I remind God of my past sufferings, telling Him that I suffered silently and patiently in order to conserve the Convent until the last day of time. Unless this happens, I would never mention them because I am certain that I deserved those sufferings and that with them, I pleased God.”

Hearing this unexpected reply, the Bishop realized once again the grandeur of the soul of Mother Mariana. He said:

“I have reflected long and hard, Mother, about the making of the holy Statue. Let Your Reverence follow the orders given to you by the Queen of Heaven. I will command the silver keys to be made at my own expense; at the opening of these keys, I shall order a cross to be placed, since without the cross the gates of Heaven will not open for us. But I continue to be deeply moved knowing that my end is already so near.”

Mother Mariana responded:

“To live in this arid desert of our earthly existence is not to live, Your Excellency. Leave this mortal life and soar to the land of eternity! Strength and courage! Put your soul in order before God and tranquilly rest in the sleep of the just, awaiting the final resurrection! We will not forget you in our prayers. I will await you in Heaven for, even though I shall die long after Your Excellency, I will ascend before you to Heaven.”

The Bishop gave her his blessing and took his leave, telling her to come to him with complete confidence should she need anything for this great work requested by Our Lady. He also asked that he should not be forgotten in the prayers of her Convent, upon which he had bestowed such great affection.

After the Bishop left, Mother Mariana de Jesus sent a message calling for her spiritual director, Friar Juan of the Mother of God. This priest soon arrived and entered, accompanied again by the same brother, Friar Pedro of the Conception. She told him all that had taken place a short time before.

Shedding tears of joy, the priest gave thanks to God. Then he addressed her:

“Mother, let us go to work! This very day you should ask to see *Señor* Francisco del Castillo in order to initiate the work requested by my Blessed Mother. He is a good Catholic with a

delicate conscience and has a great love of God and my Immaculate Queen. I confess him and his wife, and I know well the virtue that they both possess.

“Friar Pedro of the Conception sends his regards to Your Reverence and asks that I tell you to waste no time in this. He and I will assist the work with prayers and anything else we can do to help.”

The good Father gave her his blessing and departed.

All this Mother Mariana de Jesus then related to the Founding Mothers.

THE SCULPTOR IS ASKED TO MAKE THE HOLY STATUE

On February 5, 1610, the Abbess sent for Francisco del Castillo. This good man presented himself without delay and placed himself at her disposal, saying, “Mother, in what way can I serve the Convent of the Immaculate Conception?”

“Knowing that you are above all a good Catholic and, in addition, a skilled sculptor,” Mother Mariana de Jesus replied, “I want to confide to you a very special work that will require great care.”

“And what might this be, Mother?”

“We want you to sculpt a statue of the Blessed Virgin under the consoling invocation of Good Success. This statue will not be like the one that is venerated in Spain,¹⁷ but she will be Our Lady of Good Success of this Colony. The statue should have celestial features like those of our Most Holy Mother who is in Heaven, body and soul. This will not be any ordinary statue. It should have life. I will give you its measurements, for the statue will have the exact height of our Heavenly Queen.”

While the Abbess was saying these words, the artisan felt something ineffable in his soul; his love for God and the Blessed Virgin augmented rapidly, giving him vehement desires to better serve them and to die in order to contemplate their infinite beauty face-to-face.

THE FAMILY OF SEÑOR FRANCISCO DEL CASTILLO

Francisco del Castillo was a man of noble lineage. Born in Valladolid, Spain, he now lived in Quito with his wife, *Señora* Maria

17. Devotion to Our Lady of Good Success in Spain in Madrid dates from the 16th century, when a statue was found miraculously in a cave by two Spanish brothers of the Franciscan Order of Minim Friars of St. Francis of Paola. In 1607 Pope Paul V approved the devotion, which rapidly spread throughout Spain and into the New World.

Javiera Paredes. Both were upright, virtuous souls who had a profound love for the Queen of the Angels and fasted in her honor every Saturday in conformance with a vow they had made when they married.

Their Heavenly Father blessed them with only three children. The first, Maria, entered the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito with the name Maria of the Angels after the holy Statue was sculpted and anointed with holy oils.

Francisco, the second, became a Franciscan, distinguished for his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the Immaculate Conception. Gifted by God with many talents, he was sent by his superiors to one of their monasteries in Spain, where he became renowned as a preacher and man of great virtue.

Manuel, the last, contracted Holy Matrimony with a nobly-born and virtuous girl from the Colony. From this marriage the “del Castillo” family descends, which exists even today in Quito.

This, then, was the family of the sculptor who made the holy Statue, a worthy participant in this wholly celestial work. He was a sculptor of considerable fame who was in great demand because of his talent, sense of honor, and delicate conscience.

FRANCISCO DEL CASTILLO AGREES TO SCULPT THE STATUE

When Mother Mariana de Jesus finished speaking, *Señor* Francisco responded with great emotion: “Mother, I do not know what has happened to me, for I cannot express how my heart is palpitating. I believe that Your Reverence knows something divine for you moved my heart with words of fire. Never in my life have I experienced what I now feel upon considering this work, which will be neither the first nor the last that I shall undertake.

“When Your Reverence gives me the measurement of the statue’s height, I will receive it with veneration, considering myself fortunate to make such a work and grateful to have been chosen for it. On my part, I will strive to do my best. But, regarding the celestial features of the Queen of Heaven, who can transfer them to a piece of wood? For this, the Angels would have to descend. Moreover, since it is to be such an extraordinary work, I would like to use a wood of special quality so that, if possible, it could last until the end of time.”

After finishing his prior commitments and delivering those works, he left Quito to find the special wood. He returned with it toward the end of August. He then spoke again with Mother

Mariana and the Founding Mothers, who asked him how much this work would cost.

He responded: "Mothers, I have already been paid more than sufficiently by the fact that I, rather than some other sculptor, was chosen to carry out this work. But, since you are very good, I ask and beseech that you never forget me in your prayers and that, just as this holy Statue will endure through the ages, your successors will continue to pray for me and my family. I will begin to sculpt this statue on September 15 after I, together with my wife, receive Confession and Communion in this Church of the Immaculate Conception."

ENTHUSIASM IN THE CONVENT

The Founding Mothers suggested to the Mother Abbess that she ask permission from the Bishop to have the holy Statue made in the upper choir of the Convent, since this was the place where Our Lady had appeared as well as where she had chosen to be placed to govern her Convent.

Mother Mariana presented this request and the reasons for it to the Bishop, who conceded with delight. He had already decided that he would donate the keys for the Statue. The crown would be given by the Chapter of the Cathedral, which would establish a collection for this purpose. The crosier – as it had appeared in the apparitions – would be provided by the Conceptionist Convent itself, with the help of the Marquesa, who bore so much affection for the Convent.

After receiving this answer from the Prelate, Mother Mariana de Jesus asked the sculptor if he would work on the holy Statue in the upper choir. Francisco del Castillo willingly agreed to this. He began his work on September 15, 1610 after he and his wife had confessed and received Communion in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, where he implored God for the light and grace to make a statue worthy of His Blessed Mother.

The sculptor had selected the best of the highest quality woods he had found in his long search outside of Quito. But neither the added work nor inconveniences were in the least distressing to that good man, who considered them worthwhile.

As he sculpted the holy Statue, Francisco del Castillo seemed a man transformed, and he was often found working with tears streaming from his eyes.

The enthusiasm reigning in the convent was remarkable. The sisters frequently visited the sculptor to see if they could ren-

der him some service. The Founding Mothers followed the progress very closely. Everyone was interested in the work. At different times, one sister would hand the sculptor some necessary instrument, another would pick up fragments of wood, and other such things, even though many of them did not know the reason behind the making of the Statue. For only the Founding Mothers knew of the apparitions of Our Lady.

The Mother Abbess simply told the community that it was the will of God and His Blessed Mother that a precious statue of the Queen of Heaven and Earth be made under the invocation of Good Success. She told them that it would be placed in the Abbess' seat, and that the keys to the cloister and the crosier would be placed in her right hand so that she might rule and govern the Convent *in aeternum*. The statue would carry the Divine Child in her left arm in order to placate Divine Ire and so that the Statue might always give good successes not only to the Convent, but to all the peoples who had recourse to this holy Statue with faith and love. She exhorted the sisters to pray much that the work be made according to the good pleasure of God.

The Bishop personally visited the work from time to time. He would leave quite moved, for all was going well.

He would tell Mother Mariana, "Pay attention even to the smallest details, Mother Abbess, for even though Your Reverence is not skilled in the art, you should indicate to the sculptor exactly how it should be made. And the whole Convent should pray very much for this project that so greatly interests it."

THE MARQUESA OFFERS THE CROSIER FOR THE STATUE

When the Statue reached the height of Mother Mariana's cord (which was the size given by the Queen of Heaven, and all the sisters fervently helped in ascertaining this height without knowing the origin of the measurement), Mother Mariana asked the Marquesa to come to the Convent.

She addressed her, saying:

"My Lady, since you are very good to me and a solicitous sister, I want to tell you some news that will bring great happiness to your Christian heart and ardent spirit. I am convinced that this is the will of God. The Bishop has determined that a statue should be made for this Colony of Mary Most Holy, Queen of Heaven and Earth, under the consoling invocation of Good Success. It will be

different, however, from the holy image of that name which is venerated in Spain.

“That statue holds the scepter of Queen in her right hand. This statue will hold the crosier and keys of the cloister so that she might rule and govern this house, her property and foundation, until the end of time. In her left arm she will carry the Divine Infant in order to placate Divine Ire and to pour graces and favors on all those who have recourse to her with contrite and humble hearts.

“My Lord the Bishop will provide the keys. The crown will be offered by the Chapter of the Cathedral, in accordance with the Bishop’s wishes. As for the crosier, he has directed me to have it made with the help of the good friends of the Convent.

“And since you, Lady Marquesa, are our best friend, I decided to communicate this to you before any others, asking that you indicate to me how much you can contribute so that I might request the remainder from other good friends of the Convent.”

“Mother,” responded the Marquesa, “I would have been sorely resented if Your Reverence had not come to me first. I thank you for your attention and affection, and I tell you that I most absolutely will not consent that anyone else contribute toward the making of this crosier for the Statue of my celestial Mother and Lady. I will furnish all the material and cost of labor. I have sufficient means for this; and even if I did not, I would sell my possessions in order to have this crosier made. I only ask Your Reverence to tell me how you would like it to be, and nothing more. I will take full charge of all the rest.

“I also beseech Your Reverence to allow me to cover all the expenses for the sculpting of the Statue. I will go immediately to call upon *Señor* Francisco del Castillo, a skilled sculptor and very good Catholic. He can work in my house, under my sight, and for this end I will provide him with dignified and comfortable quarters with all the necessary domestic services.”

To this kind offer, Mother Mariana responded: “God Our Lord will abundantly recompense your generosity and devotion, increasing your spiritual as well as temporal welfare. I expected no other response from the nobility and piety of the Lady Marquesa. But the holy Statue is already being made by *Señor* Francisco del Castillo in the upper choir of our Convent, according to the desires of the Founding Mothers and with the permission of My Lord the Bishop.

“As for the work of sculpting the holy Statue, *Señor* Francisco del Castillo desires no payment, for he considers himself very

well compensated for having been chosen to do this work and for the prayers he has requested of our Convent and our successors. The work is going ahead; the Statue already possesses the height that the Queen of Heaven desired.”

The Marquesa replied: “Mother, what is this that I hear? I will not return to my home without seeing the height of the Statue. My heart is pounding within my breast, for I sense something divine in this. I can and should participate in the mercies of Mary Most Holy, since I also call myself *Maria*, Maria de Yolanda, child and slave of the Queen of Heaven. My left arm is inert, as a consequence of a severe fall that I suffered three days ago in the wretched streets of this city, and I wish I could return home cured. I ask Your Reverence to show me this measurement. With this favor I will already be well paid for the little that I am going to do!”

THE CORD WORKS A MIRACLE

Mother Mariana de Jesus returned with one of the cords (for she possessed two girths and cords with which she had measured the Queen of Heaven on different occasions, as already narrated).¹⁸ She put the cord into the hands of the Marquesa, who gave a cry of happiness and pressed it against her heart with both hands.

A moment later, she returned to herself and said, “Thank you, Mother, for this great favor. I return this cord with gratitude.”

The Abbess received the cord and responded, “The Blessed Virgin will recompense your faith and devotion, good Lady.” She then took her leave.

During this time, the arm of the good Marquesa had regained movement. Mother Mariana had perceived this, but had not pointed it out to the Marquesa, who was so deeply moved she had forgotten her fracture and its pains. She returned to her house, moving her arm as if nothing had happened.

Her maids, however, marveled to see this and talked among themselves, “What has happened to our Lady Marquesa, who left with a broken arm and returned cured? To which saint did the *Señora* recommend herself?”

Meanwhile the doctor arrived for a routine examination. Seeing the Marquesa moving her arm freely without the sling, he asked,

18. *Editor's note:* There would seem to be some discrepancy in the relation of Fr. Pereira on this point. He describes three measurements being taken, but now refers to only two girths and cords.

“What is this, *Señora*? Only this morning your arm was hurt and banded, and now you are cured?”

Only then did the Marquesa realize what had happened. She responded to the doctor: “It is true, *Señor*, that something has happened. All memory of this infirmity had left me and I did not realize I had been cured until now that you pointed it out to me. You see how I am restored, and this sudden cure can be attributed only to the maternal goodness of Our Lady, my good Mother, to whom I offered a small favor with all my heart. In return, she cured me by means of her chosen daughter, my holy *Españolita*, the Mother Abbess of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception,”

The doctor replied: “*Señora*, this is certainly a miracle! Humanly speaking, no one could have cured that arm for the break was severe and should have been set for at least three long, pain-filled months. I have faith in the virtue of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, for that angelic creature has passed through great trials.”

That afternoon, the Marquesa returned to speak with Mother Mariana de Jesus. She said: “Mother, even before receiving my small offering, my Queen has recompensed me. I came to tell Your Reverence that she cured my broken arm here this very morning. What is most interesting is that I only noticed it when the doctor arrived to treat it. The Queen of Heaven cannot be outdone in generosity. Now I have come to ask whether the crosier should be made of gold or of silver. It seems to me that it should be of gold, for I have sufficient means to provide for this.”

“A thousand thanks, good Lady,” Mother Mariana replied, “but the Bishop has said that the keys should be of silver, plated with gold.”

“Very well, Mother, but at least the ruby star should be set in gold. As for the rest of the pearls and precious stones, I already have them ready.”

This took place at the end of September 1610.

The Marquesa earnestly searched for a goldsmith who was highly skilled in the art but could find no one who satisfied her. For this reason, on the first day of October she wrote to Spain, the home of her noble Catholic family, which was also quite wealthy.

The Marquesa had many properties in Spain as well that provided her with considerable income. In the Colony she had three houses, but because of her devotion to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, she lived near it. The Marquesa was closely

related to the King of Spain, and for this reason enjoyed many privileges and was highly respected in the Colony.

A SHORT PARENTHESIS: THE STORY OF THE UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED SHOEMAKER

It seems convenient here to briefly interrupt the narration of this biography to narrate an incident that involved this good lady and demonstrates her authority and valor.

A simple man of the people, an honorable Catholic, lived in the neighborhood of San Blás. He was a shoemaker, and his wife supplemented their income by making food to sell, in this way helping her husband provide for their six children.

It so happened that one day as our shoemaker was delivering orders to some affluent homes, he came across a man who, like a bolt of lightning, ran past him at breakneck speed. Since he was unable to see who the man was, the shoemaker ran after him to see if he could recognize him. The shoemaker himself, however, was then apprehended by the police, who were closely following on the heels of the fleeing criminal. That wretched man had just cruelly murdered a man, cutting him into various pieces and scattering his members in diverse places of the area.

Thinking that the shoemaker was this criminal, the police seized him indignantly and brought him before the authorities, who, informed of this atrocious crime, sentenced him to death immediately.

The poor shoemaker protested his innocence, weeping and swearing that he had killed no one. With simplicity he recounted where he was going and why he was running, but he was not believed.

His confessor, an Augustinian priest, was called to attend him before his death. The priest asked him in astonishment, "What has happened to you, my son, for you have always been a God-fearing man?"

"Father, they accuse me of something I did not do, and they will kill an innocent man. I am sorry for my wife and children who will be left beggars, and for me, who am not guilty of this crime for which I am accused."

The priest intervened with the authorities, but to no avail. The unfortunate man was sentenced to die. The priest confessed him and encouraged him, reminding him of the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who died innocent for the sake of mankind.

The unhappy man replied, "It is true that Our Lord died for mankind, but he died in order to redeem us. I, however, will redeem no one. On the contrary, I will leave my children orphans and destitute. Such injustice cries out to Heaven!"

His poor wife, meanwhile, was going from house to house in crazed grief, begging help to save the life of her innocent husband. She finally reached the house of the compassionate Marquesa, whom she told everything and implored her protection for her innocent husband.

The Marquesa, who had already heard of the murder that had left her horrified, asked, "Woman, are you telling me the truth?"

"Oh, *Señora*," the weeping woman cried in anguish, "only a few moments before he was apprehended, my husband was with me, for he spent the whole night working so that he could deliver some goods and receive the money to pay the rent on the shop, which is three months overdue. He could not have committed such a murder in the short time he was gone."

On the day of execution, the Marquesa directed a letter to the President of the Royal Assembly, requesting that he delay this sentence because the matter had caught her interest.

The President respectfully responded that he could not do this, for the evidence had already been established.

She replied to the President saying that she would write immediately to the King. When he received this answer, the President delayed the sentence. The Marquesa did, indeed, write forthwith to the King in the month of November.

Meanwhile, the poor innocent man remained in prison, humiliated because of the scorn that he faced and fearing that each day would be his last.

HOW THE IMPASSE WAS RESOLVED

During this interim, the Marquesa spoke to Mother Mariana de Jesus and asked her to pray to Our Lord that justice might be done in this matter: If the man were guilty, then he should pay for his crime with his life. If he were innocent, he should not leave a widow and orphans completely destitute.

Moved with compassion, the holy Superior promised to ask God to manifest the innocence of this poor man.

That very night an artisan entered into his last agony, having fallen victim to a severe attack of colic. He asked to receive

Confession, and it so happened that the same Augustinian priest who had confessed the supposed criminal arrived at the bedside of this dying man.

This man confessed to the priest that he was the author of the crime. After long deliberation, in vengeance he had committed the terrible crime against the poor murdered victim. He had repented of his sin immediately after the murder, and his suffering had increased when he learned that he had also caused the condemnation of an innocent man. He had not known what to do in such a difficult predicament.

The dying man recounted that he had gone that very day to the Church of the Immaculate Conception to hear Mass and implore God's pardon and ask that he might become sick and die so that he could confess his sin and die tranquil, and in this way free the innocent man.

He beseeched the priest to go to the judicial authorities to tell them that he was the true culprit and that, as a consequence, they should free the man who had unjustly borne so much suffering.

The good priest went immediately to the President of the Royal Assembly and told him all that the guilty man had authorized him to say. He then asked for the release of the shoemaker.

The President ordered the judges to convene to follow all the proper procedures of law for re-judging the case. The judges were given the new information, but they adjourned the session until the sick man had regained his health and could testify. This man, however, with a good disposition of soul and consoled by all the assistance of the Holy Church, died at around nine o'clock in the morning, begging pardon for the terrible scandal that he had caused.

After hearing this news that night, the President of the Royal Assembly wrote to the Marquesa relating all that had taken place. He also gave the order that the innocent man should be freed.

Upon his release, the poor man went as quickly as he could to the house of the Marquesa. Kneeling, he thanked her for having delivered him from death. He then explained to her once again why he had been walking on those streets, speaking with the sincerity of an innocent soul.

Hearing this, the Marquesa said, "My good man, I see that you are very poor. Take this money, therefore, to pay your past rent. Tomorrow you must come and move into one of my houses, where you, your wife, and your children may live without paying

anything. I only require that you and your wife frequent the Sacraments and live honorably.”

The man thanked his benefactress and then ran to the house of his grieving wife to tell her what had happened. He opened the door without warning and ran in, finding his wife and children praying the Rosary for him. Seeing him, she embraced him with joyous disbelief.

“My husband, what has happened?” she asked.

“My wife, let us give thanks to God and to the Marquesa who is a saint,” he responded. “She has given us a large house where we can live. She also gave me money to pay the rent that is already past due. Tomorrow we will make the payment.” He then explained how his innocence had been revealed.

The next day they moved to the house offered by the Marquesa. His wife and children served her faithfully until her death. Moreover, in her will she left them considerable means for their support.

THE CROSIER IS ORDERED FROM SPAIN

Let us return now to the making of the holy Statue of Our Lady of Good Success.

The Marquesa wrote to her family in Spain on the first day of October, giving a precise description of how she wanted the crozier to be made, and asking that it be done with the greatest perfection by the best of artisans and as quickly as possible, without regard to cost.

She then reported the arrangements she had made to Mother Mariana de Jesus, who thanked the Marquesa, telling her that the Blessed Virgin would recompense this great generosity.

* * *

CHAPTER 3

While the beautiful crosier that the holy Statue would carry in her right hand was being crafted in Spain, the crown donated by the Cathedral Chapter and the keys offered by the Bishop were being made in Quito.

One night during this time when the Statue was being made, Bishop D. Salvador de Ribera had a dream. He saw himself stricken with a violent illness, which after only two or three days took his life. In his last agony, he saw at his bedside Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who, with her eyes raised to Heaven, begged mercy and pity for her Prelate, who was being accused of the many serious faults committed in his government. He understood then how terrible was the judgment of God, and he searched for something to assert in his favor but could find nothing.

In this anguished situation, the Blessed Virgin approached, carrying in her hands a set of silver keys. Kneeling before the dread judgment seat of God, she said: "This son of mine delivered to me the keys of the cloisters of the Convent of my Immaculate Conception. With these keys, therefore, I will now close the terrible tribunal of justice and open the one of infinite mercy in response to the unceasing prayers of the daughters of my Immaculate Heart for this servant of mine."

With this, a judgment of mercy commenced. Afterwards he saw before him the long years in the expiatory fires of Purgatory assigned to him for the purification of his soul before he could enter Heaven. He also saw that during this time Mother Mariana de Jesus would leave this mortal life and enter into Heaven before him, just as she had predicted.

Overtaken with terror and grief, the Bishop awoke with a cry. Uncertain whether he was even still alive, he got up, dressed himself, and began to pray the Rosary, his favorite devotion that he had learned in the Order of St. Dominic when he had made his religious profession in Lima.

A WORD ABOUT BISHOP RIBERA

Bishop Ribera was very young when he entered the Dominican Order and became celebrated for his vast knowledge in the ecclesiastical sciences. Because of his discerning and perspicacious insight, he came to occupy teaching chairs not only inside

but also outside of his Order. In his Order he held many high offices and also enjoyed fame as an excellent preacher.

None of this, however, would be of any value at his judgment, for these things account for nothing in the eyes of the God of Sanctity and Justice.

For Bishop Ribera was greatly damaged by his pride regarding the nobility of his family. Hence he imagined that the people of Quito were all lazy, superficial and unreliable *mestizos*. He thought the clerics negligent, and believed the friars to be superficial, curious for gossip.

The result was that he did not love his flock with a compassionate and supernatural benevolence, the only sentiment proper to the heart of a Bishop. Consequently, he lacked the wine of generous charity and the oil of prudence to cure the wounds of his people. His zeal, instead, was hard and cold like steel, a fact which moreover, he never recognized.

Mother Mariana de Jesus, however, a most noble person as well as a humble and saintly religious, had seen and understood the heart of her Prelate. How many penances and prayers she had offered with the intention that he might be infused with the necessary light and understanding! Unfortunately, there was little time left to amend his life when the Bishop finally came to terms with himself.

This terrifying dream was also a salutary warning. He received it on December 15, 1610 while work was progressing on the sacred Statue.

OUR LORD REVEALS HIS MERCY FOR THE BISHOP

That same night, after making her penitential exercises, Mother Mariana de Jesus was making her customary prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, which was illuminated only by the tenuous light of the small sanctuary lamp that burns night and day before the God of Majesty. Because of His love for His ungrateful creatures, He makes Himself a prisoner in the narrow confines of the Tabernacle, awaiting the adoration and caresses of His chosen souls whom He loves with special predilection and makes participants of His sorrows and delights in the cloisters.

As Mother Mariana prayed, she saw the Tabernacle opening and the whole area becoming illuminated with celestial brilliance. Amid this light she contemplated the Holy Trinity present in

the Host and the Divine Word at His most perfect age, vested like a Bishop and Pastor of His beloved flock. He told her:

“My chosen spouse, how My Heart yearns for Prelates and Pastors to be true fathers to each and every one of their children. But, oh sorrow! The vain pleasures of learning, nobility, and wealth obscure the minds of Prelates and incline them to favor certain persons, thus toppling that great edifice of pastoral charity that should stand strong and high in the Pastors of the Church.

“For I have entrusted to them the care of souls – all souls – without distinction to age, sex, or state of life – which have cost Me so much. Earthly nobility is nothing but the smoke of straw that dissolves in the vast region of eternity, where only the practice of virtue and the fulfillment of one’s duties have any value. How many times a poor country peasant, ignorant of human sciences but a good Catholic who fulfilled his duties, has more glory in Heaven than the learned in high offices, who, vain about their nobility, studied the stars without studying themselves!

“All souls, without exception, are most noble beings, made by the hands of God and destined to reign one day in Heaven as princes in their realms. For all, outside of the devils, share in the benefit of the Redemption. All are children of the same Father Who is in Heaven, and to each one of them a throne of glory is assigned, which depends upon his correspondence to the graces he receives to sanctify himself in the state in which Divine Providence chooses to place him.

“Today you see I am vested as Pastor and Bishop so that I might manifest to you my love for my cherished flock, mankind in general. And in particular I manifest My love for this Colony, which suffers in many ways from the imprudence of its present Bishop. You do well to interest yourself in his salvation, for a great doubt hangs over it.

“He is, however, a religious of the Dominican Order, so beloved by My Blessed Mother. There he learned that harmonious devotion of the Marian Psalter (the Rosary). Divine justice will never remain deaf to guilty peoples or souls who practice this devotion with careful diligence. The Bishop loves My Most Holy Mother; he honors her with the Rosary, and he will place in her almost omnipotent hands the keys to this cloister that is so dear to her. Because of this, he will be viewed with mercy on the day of his death, which will take place on March 24, 1612, one year after the Statue of my Blessed Mother has been placed in this choir.

“He will anoint the Statue with holy oil, making her Abbess and Mother of this Convent to watch over it until the end of time. She will be here in this sanctuary for all sinners and afflicted souls to find pardon for their sins, and consolation and remedies for their needs and tribulations. For this reason My Blessed Mother wanted to adopt the tender invocation of Good Success.

“While I speak to you, My favored spouse, I am giving the Bishop a grace and succor as he sleeps. He is dreaming that he has suddenly died and sees himself before the divine tribunal where he must give an account of his actions and receive the sentence of long years in the expiatory fire, which will really happen.

“Know that the prayers of religious souls penetrate the Heart of God and obtain what the world is powerless to attain. The daughters of My Immaculate Mother are My favored children, for they are severely tried and persecuted by the treacherous serpent, which will succeed in nothing but in making them suffer here on earth and earn greater merit for eternity.

“My Blessed Mother loves them as chosen daughters and cares for them with maternal love. Since she is the all-powerful intercessor, her prayers for them are always heeded. You and your religious, therefore, should pray for Prelates, the Church, and this guilty Colony. Know that here I live and will always live with My beloved daughters, who will never be lacking to Me.”

After saying these words, the vision vanished. Restored to her senses and her heart overflowing with love of God and her fellow man, Mother Mariana de Jesus continued praying in the choir until her fervent community arrived to recite the Little Office to their Immaculate Mother at 4 o'clock in the morning, in accordance with custom and their promise that this devotion would endure from the first day of the foundation until the last day of time. This devotion, which invisibly sustains the religious spirit, brings great blessings to the city of Quito.

* * *

CHAPTER 4

On January 2, 1611, the Marquesa received the beautiful crosier from Spain, her gift to the holy Statue to be offered on the day of its anointment. With it was a small, finely worked gold brooch in the form of a peahen. In its beak it carried a small letter, also of gold and adorned with precious stones, which was engraved with the monogram of the Marquesa and the date “February 2, 1611.” For this was the day that the statue would be anointed with holy oil and baptized with the name *Mary of Good Success of the Purification*, or *Candlemas*.¹⁹

On January 9, the Marquesa went to see Mother Mariana, bringing with her the beautiful crosier and the brooch. Opening the door, she delivered these precious objects to Mother Mariana, saying: “Here you have the promised crosier, Mother, and this small brooch to be fastened on the breast of the holy Statue so that the memory of Marquesa Maria de Yolanda, the least of the servants of the Queen of Heaven, will always be preserved. Then the religious who will live in these blessed cloisters can raise their fervent and valorous supplications for my soul every time they see it.

“I wish that I could do something more to satisfy my great desire to serve Our Lady, but since only this was asked of me, I offer it with the greatest good will. On that day I will also provide dowries for five young women who want to embrace the religious state in this blessed and beloved Convent – five dowries in honor of the five letters that compose the name of *Maria* Most Holy, my Mother. Since I do not merit the good fortune to be a religious, I will give sisters to my Convent.”

Mother Mariana de Jesus received these precious jewels and closed the door silently. Then, speaking through the turnbox, she invited the Marquesa to come to the reception room where the Founding Mothers were awaiting her. With great pleasure the Marquesa accepted.

19. Candlemas is a traditional Catholic feast day that commemorates the ritual purification of Mary 40 days after the birth of her Son and the presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple. The Feast of Purification is called *Candlemas* because on that day the year's supply of candles for the church were blessed. To commemorate the entry of Christ, who is the Light of the World, into the Temple of Jerusalem, the priest leads the congregation who carry lighted candles in a solemn procession inside the Church.

Mother Mariana and the Founding Mothers were all there to speak with her. Greeting her with great joy and tears, they thanked their charitable benefactress. Mother Mariana de Jesus wept, her tears mixing with those of the deeply moved Marquesa. And the Angels joyfully carried those tears to the throne of their Queen; in exchange for them, they brought these good creatures an abundance of graces and the peace that belongs to the just here on this earth.

The Marquesa asked how the work was proceeding. She was quite pleased to hear that it was very near to being finished.

“We have another favor to ask of you, *Señora*,” said Mother Mariana. “We ask that you would accept the office of being the godmother of the holy Statue. Mary Most Holy, our Mother, has chosen you for this and requests your acquiescence.”

The Marquesa immediately responded:

“Mother, what am I hearing? I am not worthy of such a great honor, but if my Queen grants me this grace through her beloved daughters, then I am most willing and I thank you. My reply is yes. Now I am certain of seeing Heaven, for it is in the hands of my godchild, and she will open it for me ... A thousand thanks, a thousand thanks!”

The next day the Bishop came to see the work and found it practically completed. He was very pleased with the work. He congratulated the artist and exhorted him to take the greatest care with applying the final coat of paint so that that the work would be worthy of the Mother of God. Except for this, the Statue was finished.

The Bishop retired, and the sculptor told the Mothers that there was nothing further he could do at the moment in the Convent. In order to paint the skin of the sculpture, he would look for the best and finest of paints. He would return with those paints to execute this final step – the most delicate and important one – on the 16th of that month, after having received Communion.

THE GREAT ANTICIPATION IN THE CONVENT - ADMIRATION FOR MOTHER MARIANA

The great joy of the religious cannot be described. One would say to another: “How fortunate we are! The Queen of Heaven with her Most Holy Son is going to live among us and govern us. Now more than ever we should sanctify ourselves! And we have as model our Abbess, for it is because of her that the holy Statue was made with such perfection.”

“For it was she,” they would add, “who described to *Señor* del Castillo how the features should be. And it was under her direction that the sculptor reworked the piece many times.”

“Our Mother Mariana is a saint,” they would say. “It is enough to recall her life filled with indescribable sufferings, persecutions, imprisonments, and injustices. She suffered all this with unaltered peace, never opening her lips to make even the slightest complaint or murmur. Consider the way she pardoned her persecutors and treated them with such great love and charity, above all the poor Captain, who owes her salvation to Mother Mariana. How much she endured to win her back to God!”

These were the only subjects of conversation among the sisters during those happy days. Each one strove to become more perfect, and the penances and other public acts of humility in the refectory multiplied. They all implored God that the final work of the sculptor might be the best possible so that the Statue of their Blessed Mother might be venerated through the centuries.

The 15th of January arrived.

“Mother, tomorrow the sculptor will come to finish the holy Statue.” the sisters said to their Abbess. “We are going to pray the Little Office with redoubled fervor this morning and ask our Blessed Mother to complete her Statue herself. Our Queen is so powerful and good, and she always heeds the humble supplications of her children, above all when they seek to render her devotion here on this earth.”

Mother Mariana responded, “You do well, my daughters. Let us ask this with humble insistence and she will do as we request. Our supplications will please her beloved Son, Who will assist us in attaining this. For no one loves His Blessed Mother as He does.”

THE ANGELS FINISH THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS

On January 16, the fervent religious arose in the early morning to pray the Little Office, as was the custom. As they drew near the choir, they heard distant refrains of melodious music. They hurried their steps to the upper choir, and there – wonder of wonders – they saw the whole choir enveloped in a celestial light and heard the resounding voices of Angels who, accompanied by ce-

lestial music, were intoning in sweet and enchanting harmony the *Salve Sancta Parens*.²⁰

The holy Statue had been finished by the Angels!

From her face issued rays of intense light that diffused through the whole choir and church. Little by little they became less brilliant so that the sisters could draw near and contemplate more closely the miracle worked by God for His Convent and mankind with the angelic completion of the holy and venerable Statue.

Haloed by this brilliant light, the physiognomy of the Statue was not severe, but majestic, serene, sweet, amiable, and attracting, as if she were inviting her daughters to approach their Heavenly Mother with confidence to give her a filial embrace of thanksgiving and welcome.

The Divine Child was a masterpiece. His countenance expressed love and tenderness for the spouses so beloved of His Heart and so dear to His Mother.

The hearts of these fortunate religious, consumed by the fire of divine love, were beside themselves with gratitude to God for such favors. Each one received celestial lights about her vocation and advanced in the spiritual life. They all grew in the love of God and pledged themselves to the exact fulfillment of the Rule, regular observance, and the fulfillment of their particular duties.

Overflowing with love of God and His Blessed Mother, they recited the Little Office with redoubled fervor on that happy morning. The Angels of Heaven certainly accompanied them in their prayer, for, overwhelmed by transports of celestial joy, these fortunate sisters were rendered almost incapable of singing.

THE SCULPTOR TESTIFIES THE STATUE TO BE A WORK OF THE ANGELS

At the prearranged hour, *Señor* Francisco del Castillo, after receiving Communion, arrived at the Convent to give the last coat to his great work. He brought with him the best and finest paints that he could find for that purpose.

Mother Mariana de Jesus and the Founding Mothers decided that they would have the sculptor enter the choir to verify

20. *Salve, sancta parens, enixa puerperal Regem: qui caelum, terramque regit in saecula saeculorum* [Hail, holy Mother, thou who didst bring forth the King who rules Heaven and earth forever and ever]; from Psalm 44.

what had taken place. Without telling him anything, they brought him into the cloisters.

Arriving at the choir, he looked at the Statue in astonishment and exclaimed with great emotion: "Mothers, what has happened? This magnificent Statue is not my work! I cannot express what my heart feels! This is an angelic work, for a work such as this could not be made on this earth by hands of mere clay. No sculptor, no matter how skilled he might be, could ever imitate such perfection and unique beauty!"

He fell to the feet of the holy Statue, his heart overflowing with sentiments of faith and piety while a flood of tears poured from his eyes, the reaction of a truly Catholic soul before the marvels and grandeur of God.

Then, rising, he asked for paper and ink so that he might draw up a written testimony swearing that this blessed Statue was not his work, but that of the Angels. In it, he testified that he had found the Statue different from the way he had left it in the upper choir of that Convent six days earlier.

He explained how he had left the Convent to search for the best and finest paints with the intention of returning on the 16th of that month [January] in order to give it the final coat of paint it lacked. But throughout his whole life of 67 years he had never seen – neither here nor in Spain – a skin color equal to that of the miraculous and blessed Statue.

Profoundly moved, Sr. Francisco del Castillo left the Convent and hurried to the house of Bishop D. Salvador de Ribera. He told him how he had exerted all his effort and skill to sculpt this holy Statue and how he had left the Convent only to search for the best and finest paints so that he might apply the final coat of flesh to his masterpiece.

Entering the Convent with this intent on the designated day, he had found a magnificent work, different from the one worked by his hands. Everything had changed – the sculpture, the painting, and the color of the flesh.

Seeing such a marvel, he recounted, he had fallen almost unconscious at the feet of the holy Statue, which, without a doubt, had been worked and finished by Angels, as vassals of their Queen. He ended by saying that the matter was of such importance that he had deemed it proper for this fact to be confirmed in a written sworn testimony that should be preserved in the privileged Convent as evidence for the centuries to come. From that moment onward, if permission were granted, he would consider himself a

servant of that Convent. He was disposed, therefore, to render his services for anything that the Mothers desired.

Profoundly moved, the Bishop quickly rose and said, "Let us go, *Señor*. I want to verify with my own eyes in your company what has taken place. For I also saw this work only a few days ago, and I am in the position to confirm what you and the sisters have seen."

THE BISHOP OF QUITO CONFIRMS THE MIRACLE

He and the sculptor soon arrived at the Convent. The Bishop called for Mother Mariana de Jesus and told her that, accompanied only by Francisco del Castillo, he wanted to see the work and verify its completion so that he might command a novena to be made before the day of its anointment on February 2.

The Mother Abbess and the other religious immediately opened the doors to their Prelate who, accompanied only by the sculptor, entered the cloister and directed his steps to the upper choir to see the finished work.

What a marvel! He found the blessed Statue miraculously changed, just as the sculptor had described to him only a short time before. But it was even more perfect than he had imagined it to be from the account of *Señor* Francisco del Castillo. The heart of the Bishop was so profoundly moved before the miraculous Statue of Our Lady that he fell to his knees before it.

With tears running down his cheeks, he exclaimed, "Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy, in life and above all at the hour of my death, be with me. Beseech your Most Holy Son, my Lady that He grant me more time here on earth – for I have great need of it!"

Then, rising, he told the Mother Abbess to go down to the confessional, where he wanted to speak to her about procedures for the novena, which would end on February 2. Sensing that something supernatural had taken place between God and this holy soul in the miraculous event, the Bishop wanted to know what had occurred.

THE MARVELS THAT MOTHER MARIANA WITNESSED DURING THE MIRACULOUS COMPLETION OF THE STATUE

Mother Mariana de Jesus presented herself in the confessional with her customary nobility of action, along with the characteristic grace, sweetness and simplicity proper to her great virtue.

The Bishop asked her, "What has happened, Mother, regarding this miraculous change in the holy Statue? Tell me all that you saw and heard for, as your Prelate, I have the right to be informed of everything."

"Most excellent Lord and my Father," responded Mother Mariana, "during the community prayer on the afternoon of the 15th, God Our Lord forewarned me that during the early morning hours of the 16th I would witness His mercy toward our Convent and mankind in general. He asked that I prepare myself to receive these graces with nocturnal penance and prayer.

"I did as I was ordered. At midnight, ending my prayer of the Way of the Cross, I entered the choir. As I made my customary prayer, I saw the choir and church become illuminated with celestial light. My spirit was lost in the immensity of God, and divine love expanded my small heart. Then the Tabernacle opened, and I saw that in the Holy Host were the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I saw the sublime mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin take place. Then I understood the infinite love of the Three Divine Persons for Mary Most Holy, Our Lady, who was present there, so magnificent, beautiful, and captivating.

"The nine choirs of Angels sang praises to her and rendered her homage as their Queen and Lady. The Blessed Trinity manifested Their full satisfaction for this beautiful and holy creature free from the stain of original sin.

"At a gesture from the Holy Trinity, the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael came before the throne of the Divine Majesty, prepared and ready to carry out some sublime mission. I did not understand what order they had received, but I saw that, after bowing in profound reverence, they approached the throne of the Queen of Heaven.

"St. Michael, saluting her dutifully, said, 'Mary Most Holy, Daughter of God the Father.' St. Gabriel said, 'Mary Most Holy, Mother of God the Son.' And St. Raphael said, 'Mary Most Holy, Most Pure Spouse of the Holy Ghost.'

"Then, joined by the celestial hosts, they intoned together, 'Mary Most Holy, Temple and Sacrament of the Most Holy Trinity.'

"In an instant, swifter than a flash of lightning, this august trio was in the choir where the Statue was being made so that they might finish and illuminate it with heavenly splendor.

“My Seraphic Father also appeared. From his wounded hands issued celestial rays which, without blinding my eyes, penetrated my heart and transported it to the heavenly spheres. Accompanied by the three Archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, and followed by the celestial hosts, he approached the almost-completed statue of *Señor* Francisco del Castillo and, in an instant they had transformed it.

“I was unable to see how this instantaneous transformation took place, but they left it most beautiful, just as Your Excellency saw it.

“Then my Seraphic Father took the white cord that he wore around his waist and, wrapping it around the waist of the holy Statue, he said with love and reverence:

“My Lady, I entrust to your maternal love my sons and daughters of the three Orders I founded that continue on their earthly pilgrimage. I deliver to you today and for all times this Convent established under my custody. Difficult times of barrenness and spiritual hunger will come over it, with my sons withdrawing themselves from it for a long period of time. In their absence, I beg you to be the seraphic life for my daughters who will live in these cloisters during that unfortunate time. There will be illegitimate daughters, it is true, but they will be happy only in appearance, for in their depths they will lack virtue. They will become sharp tools to chisel and polish my true daughters. For the latter, I give my blessing and ask your support. But for the others, final justice!”

“My Seraphic Father then placed the cord on the sacred Statue and departed.

“Meanwhile, the Statue was completely illuminated as if it were engulfed by the sun itself. The Holy Trinity looked at it with pleasure and the Angels sang the *Salve Sancta Parens*.

“Amid this great happiness, the Queen of the Angels approached the Statue and entered into it, just as the rays of sun penetrate beautiful crystals. At that moment the holy Statue took on life and sang the *Magnificat* with a celestial voice. This took place at 3 o’clock in the morning.”

“WOE TO THE FALLEN AWAY RELIGIOUS OF THE 20TH CENTURY”

“I then saw my Founding Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada,²¹ who, pleased with what had taken place there, gazed

21. Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada was the first Abbess of the Royal Monastery of the Immaculate Conception and the aunt of Mother Mariana de Jesus. After her death in 1593, Mother Mariana de Jesus was elected Abbess. She

with love and reverence at the holy Statue. She turned her eyes toward me and said:

“My daughter, I congratulate you for the great graces that Divine Goodness now concedes to you and to my Convent. During this ill-fated time of the separation of the Franciscans, this support and sustenance will be necessary to insure the life of this Convent, founded by me at the cost of great labor and sacrifices, as you know so well. Centuries will pass before the Friars Minor will again have jurisdiction over it. Until that day comes, bitterness and tears will be the daily bread of my good daughters who will live in these cloisters. All these daughters I recognize and I bless; their names are written in the Heart of God and Mary Most Holy, and also in my heart. They will strive to be good in trying times that work against their perfection, and their efforts will be blessed by God, Who will recompense them abundantly.

“There will also be illegitimate daughters here, who with hypocrisy will pretend to virtue, concealing in their depths a secret pride.

“Woe to those in the 20th century! Together they will want to discontinue the observation of the Rule of Pope Julian II, under which I founded my Convent, alleging as pretext a hypocritical rigor. But in reality, they will have left off the early morning Little Office and many other holy customs that are mainstays of the spiritual life.

“I repeat: Woe to those who will cause these things to come about! They will tremble before the dread judgment seat of God, Who only takes into account the persevering and combative practice of solid virtue, acquired by dint of relentless battle fought under the most holy gaze of God. Those who will triumph in joy will be those who with valor and strength will not waver in the faithful observance of their rules and constitutions. Their tears, shed in the presence of God and their Blessed Mother, Who from Heaven will guide and protect them, will be gathered up by the Angels and presented before the throne of God, where they will assume immense valor because they will be united to the sufferings of their celestial Spouse.

“Moreover, great calamities will befall the people throughout that epoch. The prayers of the faithful religious will be powerful in holding back the arm of Divine Justice.

would often pray at the foot of her aunt's sepulcher during the years of bitter internal trials in the Convent, asking her guidance and intercession to preserve it. See vol. 1, chaps. 14-26.

“It is now 3:30 in the morning. Go immediately to the dormitory, call your sisters, and come to pray the Little Office.’

“I returned to my senses instantly. I saw the beautiful sacred Statue, filled with light as if it were engulfed by the sun.

“I left to awaken the sisters, telling them absolutely nothing of what had occurred. As we went up to the choir to pray the Little Office, we all heard angelic voices intoning the *Salve Sancta Parens*.

“When *Señor* Francisco del Castillo arrived, upon seeing such a marvel, he did not recognize his work and declared that it was the work of Angels. He bore witness to this in writing in the signed sworn testimony seen by Your Excellency, which will be conserved to perpetuate and attest to the memory of this prodigious event in the centuries to come.”

**THE LIFE OF MOTHER MARIANA
WILL BECOME KNOWN IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

“This document, as well as other precious things, will be hidden by my successors in a closet hidden in a wall of this Convent because of the public tumult of war when this Colony will be trying to make itself a free Republic.²² They will do this moved by fear of losing these precious articles, for they will not have the light to understand that no earthly power can cause harm to my Convent.

“On one hand, Your Excellency, this will be desirable, because my life will not come to light until the 20th century. The other things will be found when the Franciscans return, unless humble violence is made to Heaven imploring their recovery so they might be guarded as precious treasures here in my Convent. Otherwise, no merely human recourse will suffice to discover them.”

The Bishop listened to the whole account with emotion and tears in his eyes. He asked Mother Mariana, “Why does Your Reverence say that your life will be written and it will become known in the 20th century?”

“Because my person and name are inseparable from the apparition of Our Lady of Good Success,” responded Mother Mariana. “All this will be recorded so that its truth might be verified

22. The *Cuadernon*, the original statue of the Infant Jesus completed by the Archangels, and other precious items were hidden in a wall of the Convent during one of the revolutions in Quito. They still have not been found.

in those times that will be so decadent in faith. At the present time it is not convenient to reveal any of this because of the propensity of the people to idolatry.”

“Mother, I seem to have heard you say that this Colony will become independent from Spain and be made a free Republic,” the Bishop added. “How can this be?”

“Your Excellency, this will take place after two centuries.²³ It will not take place in our time. We will witness it from Heaven.”

“Mother, if it is necessary for the Franciscans to return to care for this Convent, what can I do to assist in this? For this is virtually impossible due to the critical circumstances now existing.”

“Your Excellency may be at peace about this matter, for your time to do something already passed. You have only enough time to prepare yourself to die.”

Hearing this, the Bishop trembled, and said, “Mother, can we not ask God to prolong my time a while longer?”

She returned, “It is late, for the day and hour of ending our mortal course is fixed for each one of us. Moreover, it is better to die than to live.”

NOVENA AND SERMONS

The Prelate said: “Mother, it is now time to begin the preparations for the anointment of the sacred Statue. The Marquesa, benefactress of this Convent, will be the godmother, and I the one who anoints. The Cathedral Chapter and religious Orders will be present and the public should also be invited. Remain silent, of course, about everything that you deem fitting in this matter. As for me, I will keep this secret, carrying it with me briefly into eternity.

“I command that a novena of preparation should be made. I will now enter the cloister to bless the holy Statue so that it might be exposed for public devotion.

“Each day of the novena, you should arrange to have instructive sermons preached in the church to the people about the grandeur and virtue of Our Lady so that God and His Blessed Mother will be better known. Your Reverence should invite priests and friars from all the monasteries for this purpose.”

23. The Republic of Ecuador was declared almost two centuries later on August 19, 1809.

At the end of the conversation, the Bishop re-entered the cloister and went to the upper choir. There, with great devotion, he blessed the miraculous Statue with the name of Mary of Good Success of the Purification or Candlemas. After enjoining the sisters to great love of Mary Most Holy and to the imitation of her virtues, he left the Convent to return to his house. Before leaving, he recommended himself to the prayers of them all, especially the Mother Abbess.

The Abbess then discussed the matter with the Founding Mothers, who, together with her beloved Convent, determined to begin the solemn novena ordered by the Bishop on January 24.

With her characteristic diligence and charm, Mother Mariana succeeded in arranging that all the sermons would be given free.

On the first day, a Mercedarian religious preached; on the second, an Augustinian; on the third, a Dominican; on the fourth, the virtuous cleric Miguel Sánchez Salmerón; on the fifth, Friar Alonso de Salazar, a Franciscan; on the sixth, another Franciscan, Friar Juan Farfán.

The sermon on the seventh day was given by Father Juan of the Mother of God, the spiritual director of Mother Mariana de Jesus, who, knowing everything about the apparitions, preached with such devotion and sublimity that his words brought tears to the eyes of the listeners. The eighth sermon was preached by another Franciscan, Friar Pedro Flores.

The ninth and final sermon was given by Canon Archdeacon Gaspar Centurión Espínola, a learned priest renowned for his preaching. Inviting the people to celebrate the public anointment and blessing of the holy Statue on February 2 in the Convent, this great man of learning encouraged them to have recourse to this most efficient remedy in their tribulations. For, he said, this Statue had been given to them as a very special grace from the goodness of God to console them in all their sufferings.

He told the people that on their part, they were obliged to love, serve, and support these good sisters who were entrusted with this precious treasure because of their virtue and love of God. For these heroic souls had left their homes, families, and properties to enclose themselves inside the cloisters as victims for the people. The Colony owed its well-being and happiness in all things to them.

He ended by praising the sublimity of the religious state, saying: "Blessed are those peoples who possess the treasures of the cloisters!" He again reminded the people that the solemn anointment of the blessed Statue would take place on February 2 at 9 o'clock in the morning. The anointment would be celebrated by His Excellency the Bishop, he announced, and the people should assist with their consciences purified in the waters of Confession and their souls nourished with the Bread of the strong.

* * *

CHAPTER 5

On February 2, 1611 all the nuns without exception rose at early dawn to fervently recite the Little Office, preparing themselves to receive in their upper choir the gift Our Lady had given them. These early morning praises most undoubtedly flowed from pure hearts and were joyfully carried by the Angels to the throne of God. In exchange, they returned bearing a multitude of graces for these fortunate religious souls and for the people of the Colony in general. After the morning meditation during which they prepared their souls for Communion, the sisters heard Mass and received Our Lord with redoubled fervor.

The Bishop, on his part, had called together the Chapter of the Cathedral and the Royal Audience to assist at this solemn public ceremony. At this time, the Chapter had a reduced number of ecclesiastics.

At 9 a.m., the hour scheduled for the ceremony to begin, the church was already overflowing with men and women of all ages and from every state of life. The Bishop, who arrived a little late, had to be almost carried through the thick crowd to reach the altar. The Marquesa occupied a place of honor and, dressed in the greatest gala, appeared almost royal.

At the conclusion of the Mass, said by Friar Juan of the Mother of God and served by two other Franciscans, the Anointment of the honored Statue began.

SOLEMN ANNOINTMENT OF THE SACRED STATUE

The Statue was carried down from the high altar where it had been venerated during the novena and placed on the main altar, along with the beautiful crosier, the crown, the brooch, a precious dress and two strips of a long belt made of silk, along with a golden mantle of silk interwoven with threads of silver that the Marquesa had ordered to be made under her supervision in her own house for the Blessed Virgin, her godchild.

In addition to these treasures, there were also a beautiful necklace of fine pearls and three rings of gold, one with a precious emerald, another with a diamond, and the third finely set with rubies in the form of a small royal crown. These fine pieces were also offered by the Marquesa and had been placed on a small gold shell made for this purpose and engraved in letters adorned with

precious emeralds: "I am Mary Most Holy of Good Success, February 2, 1611."

The Canons and various clergy were at the altar for the anointment, rendering their assistance to the Bishop. The Franciscans, as well as other Orders, also helped. There were large numbers of Mercedarians who assisted with great dedication at the Mass and the anointment.

As godmother of the sacred Statue, the Marquesa was allowed to be in a place close to the main altar. By order of the Bishop, she ascended to this place of honor.

At the ceremony's close, in a climate of touching devotion, a very virtuous and wise Mercedarian friar addressed the multitude from the pulpit. His sermon moved even those skilled in oratory. He was a good religious who labored much for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, catechizing and civilizing the savage tribes on the coasts where he suffered greatly. He had great fame and renown for being a virtuous and distinguished preacher.

THE PROCESSION THROUGH THE CLOISTERS

After this instructive and magnificent sermon, the Bishop spoke, saying:

"Now, let all the people recite three Hail Mary's with me, saying after each one, 'God salutes Thee, Mary Most Holy, Daughter of God the Father. God salutes Thee, Mary Most Holy, Mother of God the Son. God salutes Thee, Mary Most Holy, Spouse of the Holy Ghost. God salutes Thee, Mary Most Holy, Temple and Sacrament of the Most Holy Trinity.'

"I will begin the solemn procession through the lower cloisters of the Convent and end in the upper choir where the holy Statue will be enthroned so that there she might govern this Convent and watch over the people in general. She will be carried by Franciscan and Mercedarian religious, who will alternate through the course of the procession with clerics and other religious. The only ones who will be allowed to enter the cloisters for this procession will be the priests and the Marquesa, who, as godmother, has received a special dispensation to enter. The people may return to see the holy Statue on February 2 of next year, for henceforth she will be carried out by the priests only for the days of her novena and feast day and then will be returned by the priests to the cloisters."

After this brief explanation, the Bishop began the solemn procession preceded by the tall cross. The participants held lighted candles in their hands. As there were not enough candles for all, some of the sisters carried bouquets of flowers from the country – roses, irises, and lilies. The floors of the cloisters were covered with rugs or flowers, a befitting ambience for the abode of the virgin spouses of the Immaculate Heart.

Suspended from the upper windows and balconies of the church were flags of Spain and the royal coats of arms, blue and white banners, others that were completely white, and others the color of dawn, from which flowed long streaming ribbons of silk. There were also beautiful floral arrangements, as well as exquisite silk draperies. All this had been lent to the Convent by the Marquesa, godmother of the holy Statue. She had exerted every possible effort to provide a ceremonial air for the baptism of her godchild, doing all that one might expect from a lady of such faith and piety.

During the course of the procession, the clergy and friars from all the religious Orders, to their great joy, alternated in carrying the Queen of Heaven.

“What is happening to us?” the people quietly whispered to one another in their great joy. “This is a simple procession, but how our souls are elevated to God! There is something supernatural in this! Indeed, it is because we are approaching a cloister whose center is a volcano of love for God, which communicates weak sparks to those outside.”

The procession continued at a slow, solemn pace. At the doors to the cloister, the people attempted to circumvent the order of the Bishop and enter the cloisters to remain with the procession. But the police sprang into action to prevent this.

As the procession moved forward, the choir sang the *Ave Maria* and the Litany of Loreto, which was answered by all the priests as well as the sisters, whose voices were angelic. The choir was composed of Franciscans and Mercedarians. The Marquesa, brimming with piety and faith, also responded to the canticles with her melodious voice. Her whole demeanor expressed her devotion and fervor of heart as she slowly processed forward, her eyes lowered and her hands crossed piously over her breast.

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN TAKES POSSESSION OF THE CONVENT

The Abbess' chair had already been prepared in the upper choir just as the Queen of Heaven had requested so that from

there she might rule and govern her Convent. A beautiful crimson silk curtain with golden cords and tassels was draped along the outer contours of this niche, which had also been made with great care and perfection by Francisco del Castillo.

Here and there figures of cherubs "flew," suspended in the air so gracefully that they truly seemed to hover in the air. Some carried various inscriptions at their chest: "Viva, the Most Holy Queen of Good Success!" "God salutes thee, Mary Most Holy, Daughter of God the Father," "God Salutes thee, Mary Most Holy, Mother of God the Son," "God salutes thee, Mary Most Holy, Spouse of the Holy Ghost," and finally, "God salutes thee, Mary Most Holy, Temple and Sacrament of the Most Holy Trinity."

The drapery had been carefully arranged by the artist, who had topped it with a beautiful imperial crown. The fabric fell from either side of the crown, allowing full view of the golden niche. Atop the niche was a cross with a bust at its base representing the Eternal Father in the heavenly clouds; upon His breast was the Holy Ghost in the form of a white dove.

This, then, was the niche for the Virgin carved in the upper choir by *Señor* Francisco del Castillo. The whole choir was festively decorated, giving it the appearance, one could say, of the antechamber of Heaven.

The procession ended here, and the holy Statue was placed in her niche by the priests. Then the Bishop, wearing the *asperges* cape, intoned a solemn *Salve Regina*, followed by the Litany, which was also answered by the people who were waiting in the church for the procession to reach the upper choir. After the Litany, the final corresponding prayer was sung, as well as the *Salve Sancta Parens*.

During this singing, the Bishop ascended to the niche where the friars had placed the sacred Statue. The clerics handed him the crosier and crown, and then the keys, rings, brooch, and necklace, arranged by the Marquesa in the small golden shell that had been placed shortly before on the main altar during the blessing and anointment.

With tears, the Bishop reverently and tenderly placed the crown on the head of the holy Statue, saying, "*Señora*, I deliver to thee the Church."

Then he placed the crosier in her right hand, saying, "*Señora*, I deliver to thee the government of this Convent and of my flock in general."

Finally, he placed the keys in the same hand holding the crosier, saying, "Señora and my Mother, I deliver to thee my soul. Open the doors of Heaven to me, for the time remaining to me in this life is quite brief. Watch over this Tabernacle and these cloisters of your daughters with care and affection. Defend them always and conserve in them the religious spirit that should characterize the spouses of thy Most Holy Son."

After this prayer, the Bishop gave an order that the *Salve Regina* and the Litany should be solemnly sung after the Convent's Mass on every Saturday of the year in memory of this solemn procession and blessing. They should be intoned by the chaplain wearing the *asperges* cape, this custom being maintained *in aeternum*. The Litany should be answered by the faithful, and the chaplain should sing the prayer corresponding to the *Salve Regina*. All the sisters should assist at this ceremony, carrying lighted candles in their hands with fervor and devotion, thanking God for the many favors that they had received from Him.

He blessed the sisters and, after making a profound reverence to the holy Statue, he took his leave, saying these words: "Queen of Heaven and Earth, thou who remains in thy sanctuary governing thy beloved flock, do not forget thy poor children who are pilgrims on this earth, exposed to falls at every step. Let thy arm sustain us and let the sweet love of thy maternal heart console us in our heavy tribulations."

THE CONCEPTIONIST COMMUNITY GROWS

Upon leaving, the Marquesa warmly embraced Mother Mariana de Jesus and the Founding Mothers, leaving in the hands of the Abbess a large sum of money to pay for the expenses of the past days. She also sent food, desserts, wine, and as many presents as possible from her house so that these might be served and distributed in the name of the godmother of the Virgin Mary of Good Success of the Purification, or Candlemas.

The whole day was one of holy joy for this fortunate Convent, who with one heart and one soul rejoiced in the possession of the treasure which the goodness of God had deigned to grant them.

The next day, the Marquesa returned to see the Founding Mothers in the parlor. Again she affirmed her perpetual affection and begged them the great favor of counting her as one of their sisters. In every need, be it great or small, she told them, they should come freely and confidently to her with the certainty that

she would never deny them anything. She assured them that everything she possessed should be considered the property of the daughters of the Immaculate Conception and all her delight lay in serving and pleasing them.

This generous offer permitted many young girls to receive endowments to become religious in that beloved Convent where Our Lady lives governing her daughters, watching over them with maternal affection and defending them from the infernal dragon, which utilizes and will always take advantage of every occasion and creature to torment these frail religious. Safeguarded, however, by the power and love of their Mother from Heaven, they will travel confidently on the road of high perfection until the end of time.

This weak vessel will be strongly attacked, but never conquered. Rather, they will see the wicked, astute serpent contorting in death throes at their feet, destroyed and annihilated by his own pride. They will always emerge the victors, and God and Mary Most Holy will forever be glorified and praised. Throughout time, the power of God will always be triumphant over all human powers in this Convent.

The great secret that this Convent possesses to assure itself of the power and love of God and His Blessed Mother is the practice of humility, regular observance, and hidden penances. These virtues, along with the rest make the prayers of the faithful spouses of the Immaculate Lamb strong and powerful, so that He might take His rest among the lilies, roses, and irises inside the religious cloisters, the choicest and most preferred of His gardens of delight.

These faithful souls – as Mother Mariana de Jesus affirmed and the Queen of Heaven herself manifested many times – will never be lacking in this Convent until the end time. For the loving goodness of God desires that in this Convent there will always be shields to protect the ungrateful people. Like other Queen Esters, they will save these lands and the souls of their brothers, ungrateful sinners, from death of both soul and body.

As the days and months passed, the community began to grow, with the number of vocations multiplying so rapidly that the Bishop was forced to suspend admission of novices until the death of an older sister left an opening.

From February 2, 1611 until December of the same year, five religious died, who were then replaced by others who took the same names as the ones who had died.

BISHOP RIBERA DIES – HIS LAST DAYS

Finally, on the night of March 24, a Saturday in the year 1612, His Excellency Bishop Salvador de Ribera unexpectedly died. Some minor carelessness brought on a severe case of pneumonia, which, in view of his already advanced age, caused his death.

He was not mourned and much less wept over by his people. Bishop Ribera descended into his grave without a single tear from his flock being shed, for he had exercised a rigorous and despotic authority. He was not remembered for his benevolence, and thus he was forgotten on the same night that he expired, for he had not tread the right roads to make himself loved by his people.

When the holy Statue descended from the upper choir to the Church for the days of the novena and feast in mid-January of 1612, Canon Treasurer Jorge Ramirez de Arellano gave a magnificent panegyric, which became famous both inside and outside the Colony.

On February 24 of that same year, the sacred Statue was again returned to its niche in the upper choir, placed there by priests. The Bishop, wearing his *asperges* cape, also desired to enter once again and place the holy Statue on her throne, sensing that this would be the last time that he would enter that blessed sanctuary of the virgin spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the daughters so dear to His Immaculate Mother.

At the time the Bishop was quite concerned and suffering greatly. He had just committed a great imprudence that had made him the object of criticism of his flock, which was now split into different factions and parties. Consequently, his heart was an abyss of sorrow.

He knelt for a moment at the feet of the holy Statue in the upper choir before she was returned to her niche, and there he unburdened his bitter sorrow with an abundance of tears. Mother Mariana de Jesus, who understood all that was passing in his heart, prayed for her Prelate. She suffered to see that the Bishop, in order to please his niece, had displeased God, giving a pretext for criticism from the people, who wanted to see their Bishop as a model in the practice of all the virtues.

The prestige of Bishop Ribera suffered further by comparisons with his predecessor His Excellency Bishop Solís,²⁴ who

24. His Excellency Bishop Luis López de Solís governed the Diocese of Quito from 1594 to 1606. It was under his rule that the Royal Monastery of the Immaculate Conception left the jurisdiction of the Friars Minor and became subject to the Ordinary in 1601. See vol. 1, chap. 18.

was truly a holy Prelate, a model for his people, detached from himself and all his family, in short, a man of God. The faithful compared the consummate virtues of that true apostle with the ways of Bishop Ribera and ended by judging the latter worthy of censure, even in inconsequential matters.

With the death of Bishop Ribera, the hatred and rancor against him abated, and for him the silent and solitary peace of the sepulcher began.

80 YEARS IN PURGATORY

According to the account she later made to her spiritual director, Mother Mariana de Jesus found herself at the deathbed of Bishop Ribera. She was accompanied by the Queen of Heaven, who, grateful for the devotion that the Prelate had showed to her holy Statue, had now come to assist him during his final throes. In her blessed hands she carried the keys that the Bishop had offered her with such great love.

Then everything took place just as Bishop Ribera had dreamed two years before.

He descended to the expiatory fires for the long period of 80 years to be purified of the debts he had incurred during his five short years as Bishop. It would have been much better for him had he never been a Bishop! For what had value for him in eternity was to have been a Dominican friar, as well as his great devotion to the Rosary.

Mother Mariana and the Convent wept for their Prelate and Pastor. They recalled all his good actions and the great care he had taken in the sculpting of the holy Statue, his fervent devotion to it, and all that he had done at the blessing and solemn anointment. They said many prayers for the eternal rest of his soul. Some prayed more, and others less, but they all tried to relieve his time in Purgatory for they did not know the time assigned for his expiation. Only Mother Mariana de Jesus and the Founding Mothers, whom she had informed from the first, knew this.

In this way, the prayers of Mother Mariana, the Founding Mothers, and the whole Convent of religious of the Immaculate Conception provided great relief for Bishop Ribera in his expiatory prison. They were the only prayers unceasingly raised to Heaven for his eternal rest, for he was forgotten by almost everyone else, even in their prayers.

Thus the prediction of Mother Mariana de Jesus was fulfilled that she would go to Heaven before him. For, in 1635, when she died, only 23 years had passed since the death of Bishop Ribera.

It was, in fact, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres who understood how to be both a religious and a Superior. Would to God that His Excellency Bishop Ribera had tried to practice even a little of the humility, sweetness, discernment, prudence, and meekness that Mother Mariana possessed to a heroic degree!

The common virtues did not suffice for Bishop Ribera. He lacked the heroic virtues, indispensable for every Prelate and Pastor for the good government of his flock, who must harmonize firmness with the spirit of sweetness, meekness, and prudence. For this is the spirit of Jesus Christ our Divine Redeemer, Who said, "For My yoke is sweet and My burden light. Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11: 29-30).

But, in conclusion, he has already crossed the threshold of eternity. May he rest in peace!

* * *

CHAPTER 6

After this solemn anointment, devotion to Our Lady of Good Success grew. Her feast day of February 2 was commemorated annually with great solemnity in the Convent and Church of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, with the Mother of God being honored under the invocation of Good Success.²⁵

The Statue was taken from its niche in the upper choir for the feast day celebration and returned by the hands of priests, who carried her on their shoulders through the cloisters as the sisters sang litanies and other canticles to Mary Most Holy.

When one century passed, by divine permission, this devotion abated for a time, due to the particular life introduced into the Convent. This continued until the moment when the Blessed Virgin herself reprimanded one of her fervent and holy daughters, for such daughters have never been and never will be lacking in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

It should be noted that even during this period, the holy Statue remained on the abbatial chair, the place she herself had chosen and where she will always remain so that, as Mother and Superior, she might govern and direct her beloved flock. Her cult, novena, and feast day are safeguards of the Convent. How many secret and plentiful graces, like life-giving rain over fecund plants, have the Conceptionist daughters received from their Heavenly Mother!

The three years of the government of Mother Mariana de Jesus, from 1610 to 1613, passed happily and tranquilly. All the religious without exception were most fervent, having a great love for God, their Heavenly Mother, and their holy Abbess. Imitating her example of the practice of solid, heroic virtue, they thus made themselves pleasing to God, Who desires truly holy souls for His cloisters so that they might placate His ire for the many crimes committed in the world.

25. The devotion to Our Lady of Good Success has been celebrated uninteruptedly for the last 395 years by the Convent of the Immaculate Conception and the people of Quito. In 1991, the Archdiocese of Quito was granted permission by Rome for a canonical coronation of Our Lady of Good Success as *Queen of Quito*, a ceremony that took place on February 2, 1991. The same year, the Church of the Conceptionist Convent was declared an Archdiocesan Marian Sanctuary.

MOTHER MARIANA IS RELIEVED OF THE CHARGE OF ABBESS

At the end of her Priorate, Mother Mariana suffered a severe fall on the stairs that seriously hurt her left arm. The Devil had instigated this accident, such was his ire at the great sanctity possessed by this grand soul who impeded a multitude of evils that the wicked Tempter set up to trap souls. How many souls she freed from his infernal clutches with her humble prayer and unremitting penances!

During the course of the treatment the doctor administered for her injured arm, she suffered unspeakable pain in admirable silence, without making the least complaint. The intensity of the pain could be perceived, however, by the abundant tears that, against her will, flowed from her eyes and by some few gasps that escaped her lips.

With this, she edified not only her religious sisters, who admired her mortification and spirit of sacrifice, but also the doctor who attended her. Amazed, he would exclaim: "Strong, robust men cannot contain their desperate cries of pain during this type of treatment, but this indomitable creature, a weak, fragile woman, makes not the least complaint! One sees the profundity of her heroic virtue, for she is like one of the martyrs, imitating Our Lord Jesus Christ like a faithful spouse."

Amid such cruel suffering, she insistently implored her Divine Spouse from the depths of her heart that He might relieve her of the hard cross of being Abbess so that she might dedicate herself more freely to the spiritual life and disengage herself from all earthly concerns to unite herself more intimately with her Divine Majesty.

Her prayer was heard, for when the time arrived to elect a new Abbess, she was left in peace, and another superior was chosen.²⁶

26. According to Convent records, Mother Inés de Zorrilla was Abbess from 1613 to 1616. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres re-assumed the abbess chair in 1616, followed again by Mother Inés de Zorrilla in 1619, and then by Mother Maria de San Rafael for a brief period in 1622. From September 1622 to 1631 (the next three terms of office) Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was Abbess. Mother Mariana de Santo Domingo held the role of Abbess from 1632 until 1635, the year of Mother Mariana's death. Msgr. Luis E. Cadena y Almeida, *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria: Mariana Francisca de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa* (Quito: Libreria Espiritual, n.d.), pp. 205-6.

With great joy, Mother Mariana de Jesus stepped down from the official government of the Convent so that, alone with God, she might strive more diligently for the greater perfection of her beautiful soul. Daily she offered practical examples of humility, docility, obedience, and abnegation, as if she were the least of the novices. In fact, to see her in the Convent, one would think she was just a simple religious for she would be found performing the most humiliating and heavy of all the monastic duties, those most repugnant to weak human nature. She was, in addition to this, very gracious in appearance, a person who attracted the warmth and affection of all who saw her – so courteous, simple, amiable, and at the same time, dignified. Such are the saints!

SHE IS AGAIN ELECTED ABBESS IN 1616 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERIORS AND NOVICE MISTRESSES

The year 1616 arrived, and Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was again elected Abbess of the Convent, to the general delight of all the religious. Humble of heart, she was convinced that she should not be the Superior and that the only fault of the community lay in the fact that they always chose her for this office. For it seemed to her that there were many religious better than she to whom Our Lord had conceded the gifts and aptitude for government. Even though she was one of the Founding Mothers, she did not consider herself suitable for such a delicate office. This was her constant suffering.

But because she was humble, she also knew how to be obedient. Compelled by obedience, she took upon her shoulders with edifying resignation the heavy cross of Abbess.

This servant of God, so well-tested not only in the ways of the spirit but also in high earthly offices – much coveted by weak, proud spirits – understood perfectly the immense responsibilities these charges incur for eternity. She would confess with simplicity that the offices of Superior and Mistress of Novices had been for her the heaviest crosses of her whole life.

She would add that the Novice Mistress bore an even greater responsibility than the Superior herself, because she provided for the sisters' future and their eternal destiny. Through the course of time, she had seen that many Novice Mistresses had condemned their souls for not discharging their duties properly. Either because they exercised too much rigor or an imprudent flattery, they had destroyed the religious spirit of the youths who had

entered the cloisters to serve God with perfection, carrying the cross of the monastic life all the days of their lives and transforming themselves into victims for their fellowmen in order to placate Divine Justice.

When the designs of God are thwarted through the fault of Novice Mistresses, they take upon themselves all the responsibility for the little or complete lack of spirit of their disciples throughout their lives. They are the cause for the lack of holy religious, for sanctity always depends on the formation received in the novitiate, where the foundation is laid for the practice of all the religious virtues.

Without this foundation, a religious cannot possess solid virtue. Without solid virtue, a sister cannot persevere in the religious life unless the Superior or Superiors allow concessions for their faults in order to keep them from the disgrace of returning to the world. These persons for whom such compromises are made become even laxer inside the Convent and, like rotten fruit, threaten to contaminate the healthy ones.

May Divine Goodness grant that all the branches of the Seraphic Order be preserved from such individuals, who cause so much damage to religious Orders.

THE SEED OF GREAT SANCTITY

During this period of her government, as in all the years of her life, Mother Mariana de Jesus enjoyed intimate and frequent communications with God Our Lord, Who bitterly complained to His faithful spouse of the many outrages He received from His ungrateful but favored Colony. He asked her to make amends to the offended Divine Majesty.

One night, after her habitual penitential exercises, she was praying at one o'clock in the morning in the lower choir next to the sepulcher of the Founding Mother, Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada. She was imploring her to intercede with God to shorten the days of her sad pilgrimage here on this earth so that she might leave this world to join her in Heaven, where it was no longer possible to offend the Divine Majesty.

From the sepulcher, the Founding Mother responded:

"My daughter, if I gave you my maternal love while I was on earth, be assured that today, in the happiness my soul finds itself in Heaven in the pleasure of the Sovereign Divinity, my love for you is doubled. So clearly do I now understand the merit of suffer-

ing in mortal life that I cannot ask that your death be hastened. While your life still continues, these sufferings amass great merits for eternity. Certainly life is bitter for one who loves God and thinks on the grandeurs of Heaven, but this very bitterness is converted into sweetness and joy in Heaven.

“Have patience and confidence in God! Know, moreover, that it is very necessary for you to live and suffer so that you might leave your successors – superiors as well as subjects – practical examples for them to imitate.

“Without this, they would say in the future: ‘We do not have a saint in our Convent.’ The sanctity of your life will be the seed of the great saints that this Convent will have throughout the course of time.

“Strive, then, my beloved daughter, to teach the novices well. Impress upon the Mistresses the importance of good formation of their disciples, for regular observance and the preservation of our Convent depends on this.

“Days of disgrace and calamitous times will come upon our Convent in the 20th century because the formation of religious in the novitiate will be neglected. From Heaven we will watch over our beloved Convent so that it will not come to an end.

On the other hand, during this time there will be hidden souls who, in their private prayers and holy lives, will bewail the moral and material state of the Convent. These prayers and penances will sustain the agonizing community during this epoch. On your part, do violence to yourself and beseech God that He shorten this time of affliction for our successors.”

OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS GOVERNS THE CONVENT

After the anointment and placement of the holy Statue in the upper choir as requested by Our Lady, her government over the Convent became very apparent. All the religious, in their moral sufferings as well as other hardships never lacking in life by the simple fact that we are pilgrims in this transient world, would hasten to the feet of their Blessed Mother to insistently supplicate and implore remedies for all their needs.

Like a solicitous Mother, the Sovereign Virgin watched over her dear daughters; she never left their prayers unheeded, pouring over them all the healing balsam of consolation.

Above all, Mother Mariana de Jesus, like a loving child, would have recourse to her Blessed Mother in all her troubles. When she was perturbed over difficult problems inherent to the

office of Superior and her already overburdened heart was unable to support more, she would run to the feet of her Blessed Mother. There, renouncing her charge, she would deliver the keys to her.

How prodigious is the goodness of Our Lady, who takes her pleasure in communicating with humble daughters who seek to imitate her virtues! She would speak through the holy Statue and consoling Mother Mariana, she would teach her what to do in this or that matter in order to have good success.

She would encourage her daughter, telling her that if her Divine Spouse had carried His heavy Cross with such strength and heroism moved by the love He had for her, then it was most just that she should also carry her small cross in order to show her love for Him, for love is repaid with love.

This would happen not infrequently, but often.

OUR LORD PRESENTS MOTHER MARIANA WITH THE CROSS OF INTERIOR SUFFERING

As the term of her government came to an end in the year 1619, Mother Mariana prayed insistently to God Our Lord and to the Blessed Mother that they spare her the great cross of being Abbess, burdened with so many responsibilities. Our Lord heard her prayer and, appearing to her as He had been in His mortal life, He said:

“My favored spouse, your humble and insistent petition has reached My ears, and so immense is My love for you that I can deny nothing that you ask of Me. Your sisters would like for you to continue governing, but I have heard your prayer and assure you that you will step down from the Abbacy.

“But during these three years when you will rest from the government of the Convent, I desire to present you with the precious cross of interior suffering. During the first year, My beloved, you will accompany Me in My prayer in the Garden of Olives, suffering what I suffered there.

“During the second year, you will keep Me company in the prison. And during the third, you will share My profound and grievous suffering when, abandoned by men, I stood condemned like a vile criminal in the houses of Annas, Caiphas, Herod, and Pilate.

“I will be with you always. Your humble and afflicted prayers will rise before the throne of My Celestial Father like a delicate perfume, and all your sufferings will be presented by My

Blessed Mother. With this, you will further purify your soul and accumulate great merit for eternity.

“The years remaining to you on this earth of tears and pain are few. Throughout the course of that time, you will accompany Me on some of the most important steps of My sorrowful Passion, until the moment when you will deliver your soul into My hands, just as I delivered Mine into the hands of the Eternal Father. Unite yourself to My sorrowful Heart and, in the company of My Blessed Mother, bear these tribulations and carry with valor and perseverance the cross that I will place on your shoulders during these years.

“For in all times I have need of valiant souls to save My Church and the prevaricating world, that is, to save the souls for whom I suffered unspeakable pains. Since so many souls are being lost, I desire that you, as a good spouse, lend Me your assistance.”

Penetrated by a ray of celestial light, Mother Mariana realized the immensity of the interior suffering that awaited her. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Master, the Spouse of her soul, the Man of Sorrows, silently awaited the response of His beloved spouse, so that He might share His agony with her and make her an apostle of His love.

Mother Mariana de Jesus trembled before the magnitude of such suffering. Reflecting a moment, she hesitated to accept them, fearing that she would lack the strength to bear them and would thus stain her soul with sin. Seeing this, Our Lord reassured her:

“Do you not know, My favored spouse, that I am the strength of the weak? And that when I ask the consent of your will for a thing so arduous, it is because I know that you can overcome all things when I am with you? Do you not realize that you will not sin, but you will win great merits? Take heart! Courage!”

Prostrating herself on the ground, Mother Mariana replied: “My Beloved Lord, before Thee is Thy slave. Do with me what Thou wilt. Fulfill in me Thy most holy will. I accept these and whatever other sufferings Thou dost desire to send me. I thank Thee for the precious gift that Thou wilt place in my heart. I only request strength, audacity, and love.”

Then Our Lord, with a breath, infused His spirit of sorrowful love into this pure and humble virgin.

Rising from the ground, her soul was filled with the spirit of God. Her heart overflowed with happiness and she felt herself

most fortunate to take part in the Passion of her Divine Savior in order to save the souls of sinners, her brethren whom she loved so dearly.

ELECTION OF THE NEW Prioress – DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

While these sentiments of joy inundated her whole being, the time for the election of a new Superior arrived. Because of their great affection for her, the sisters thought it better to let Mother Mariana rest for one three-year term so that they could elect her again in the future. For this reason, another sister was elected Superior.²⁷

Mother Mariana rejoiced at the election of the new Abbess with the good disposition natural to her elevated spirit, always joyful without giddiness, serious without dejection, and humble without affectation. She gave practical examples of all the virtues for her sisters and all who came into contact with her.

How true it is that sanctity is attracting and appealing! Those outside the Convent envied the sisters who had the good fortune to live with a saint. How many persons desired to be in their place!

Many young girls embraced the religious state after conversing with Mother Mariana, who also possessed the gift of discernment of spirits.²⁸ She perceived which youths were gifted with the sublime grace of the religious vocation, and to these she would speak of the sublimity of this state and of how much God Our Lord loves those who enter the religious life.

To those who did not have this vocation, she would explain that in order to serve God and save one's soul, it is not necessary to be a religious, but rather to know the state to which God calls each creature. She would not accept those without vocations into the Convent.

Many of these youths believed that Mother Mariana was trying to dissuade them from their intent only because she did not want to admit them into her Convent. They would then decide to

27. See footnote 22.

28. Her discernment of spirit was not merely an acquired discernment, but rather that power of discernment that comes from God as a *gratia gratis data* [gift freely given]. This discernment which is granted by God to certain individuals does not err because it is the result of an interior movement or inspiration received from the Holy Ghost, who cannot err. It is rare, and not all the saints possessed it (cf. Antonio Royo Marin and Jordan Aumann, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, NY: 1987, p. 552).

travel to Spain or other countries so that, far from their flesh and blood, they might serve God with liberty.

Perceiving such intentions, Mother Mariana would recommend to them that they forsake such futile travels to foreign lands, for Our Lord was not calling them to the religious life, but to the state of matrimony, where they would please God and give Him children.

Everything would happen as she predicted. Many of these young women would travel to convents in foreign lands and later find themselves obliged, for various reasons, to leave the religious life. Then they understood very clearly that this was not their vocation. Returning to the bosom of their families, they awaited the opportunity to contract Catholic marriages.

In this way many of these young girls who had desired to live in the religious state become the mothers of daughters who became sisters in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

MOTHER MARIANA BEGINS TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR LORD IN THE PASSION

On the third day of the celebration of the election of the new Superior, Mother Mariana was praying at 10 o'clock in the morning in the lower choir when an intensely brilliant light issued forth from the Tabernacle. Like a luminous ray, this light penetrated her heart.

As she continued her prayer, she felt herself greatly fortified. Immediately afterward, she was overpowered by a mortal sadness. It was the beginning of her internal suffering during which she would accompany the sacrifices of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives.

She was conscious of being in the Garden, just as her Celestial Spouse had told her, and she resigned herself with humility and love to every torment. This extraordinary creature suffered, year by year, everything that Our Lord had described to her without ever losing her holy peace, sweetness, and imperturbability of spirit. During this time, she was constantly immersed in an ocean of sorrow, for the waters of tribulation flooded her soul.

From this time until her death, life for her was one prolonged agony. She accompanied our Divine Redeemer year after year in His sorrowful Passion, with only the very few respites that Our Lord granted her spirit. This agony continued to her deathbed, where she experienced the glorious Resurrection of Our Lord, as I will later describe.

THE PRECIOUS WRITINGS OF MOTHER MARIANA

After this three-year term, the sisters convened in chapter to elect another Superior. This time, they elected Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres to the general satisfaction of all.

It came as a profound suffering to this humble religious to see herself again at the head of the Convent when her greatest desire was to remain always a subject. Docile and obedient as always, she bent her shoulders to accept the heavy cross, uniting herself to Our Lord Jesus Christ, her Divine and Celestial Spouse, Whom she loved more each day.

For to the measure that she suffered what He had suffered in His Passion, her love for Him increased, as well as her tenderness and consideration for the Divine Majesty, Whom she called "Jesus Christ, my sweet and sorrowful Love." Whenever she spoke of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, her eyes would become oceans of tears, bringing tears to the eyes of all who saw her.

During recreations or gatherings with her sisters, she would speak about the dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, making most beautiful applications to the Eucharist. Later she wrote these down at the request of her sisters. They are conserved in the Convent, together with the story of her life and some other writings. It is my hope that, through the course of time, these might be brought to light for the spiritual benefit not only of the religious, but also for the rest of the faithful and even for priests, for they contain very salutary and profound doctrine concerning the dogmas of Faith and the ascetic and mystical sciences, so well-understood by this grand soul that Spain gave to her Colony.

It would be impossible to narrate here all the heavenly communications of this privileged soul with God Our Lord. In this small biography only the most significant events of her life can be related. As for the rest, let the curious reader go to the *Cuadernon* in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, where all the details of her admirable life are recorded.

RESPITE FROM HER SUFFERINGS EVERY CHRISTMAS

In the year 1622, therefore, the Superior of the Convent was this holy religious who year by year accompanied Our Lord Jesus Christ in His dolorous Passion.

During these years of government, she always received many heavenly favors on the night of Christmas, which she commemorated with indescribable tenderness and fervor. It was inspiring to see her teeming with a holy and communicative joy, for during these years of interior suffering, Our Lord would grant her a respite in the holy season of Advent, Christmas, and the Epiphany. Afterward, she would again be immersed in that ocean of sorrows.

In the Convent there is a large well-proportioned room that was chosen by Mother Mariana for the nativity scene to be assembled. Every year, the sisters exerted special efforts to make a beautiful and devout crèche scene. The Marquesa would provide all that was necessary for this. Without being asked, she would send to the Convent in early December everything needed for this purpose: draperies, Christmas ornaments, moss, flowers, and branches of fir, as well as money to buy anything else that might be required.

The Convent also had a charming Child Jesus, which the Marquesa had given to Mother Mariana de Jesus in the year 1610. It was given the name “*Niño de la Calenda*” [Child of Christmas] because they would sing with indescribable solemnity the *Calenda* of Christmas to this Infant.²⁹

The sisters would spend the night of the 24th before the Crèche, each one making her praises of the Child Jesus. They would sing sweet songs and recite beautiful eulogies, celebrating and laughing with happiness. They would also dance in praise of the Christ Child, just as our father St. Francis had done on that Night so truly good. No one should be scandalized by this, for we read in Holy Scriptures that King David played the harp and danced before the Ark of the Covenant. So these good sisters, the religious of the Immaculate Conception, would dance before the Manger on this night – not with profane worldly dancing; rather, they danced like religious, the spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ, filled with jubilation and celebrating the Birth of the Son of God on earth. For dancing in itself is not a sin. It is the perverse world, with its common depravity, that corrupts and perverts it, introducing its shamelessness and vomiting its infernal venom into worldly men.

29. The *Calendas* in Spanish, derived from the Latin *Kalendae*, the celebrations for the Roman New Year's Day, or the first day of January, came to apply to the songs and special procession of Christmas Eve. By extension, special carols came to be sung also on the eves of the New Year and the Epiphany.

This night was, therefore, one of great celestial happiness in the Convent. Absolutely no one would sleep – the sick and the healthy all gathered before the Manger to celebrate Christmas with their eulogies, acts of thanksgiving, songs, and dance.

After these praises and other manifestations of affection, Mother Mariana, accompanied by her harp, would sing the following stanza:

“Rejoice! Rejoice! In the middle of the night

“A flower has been born, without breaking the clasp!”³⁰

A procession followed, with the sisters carrying the Child Jesus, dressed with great dignity and adorned with flowers. Each year after the supper in the refectory, the Superior would select the religious who would sing the *Calenda*, the one who would carry the Child during the procession in the *Noche Buena* (Happy Night, the Vigil of Christmas), the candle and incense bearers, the singers in the procession, those who would carry lanterns, and those who would play the role of shepherds.

Each one would carry out her function most perfectly, and the procession would proceed in a most beautiful manner.

The cloisters were a Heaven. From each archway pine branches and moss hung.³¹ It seemed as if they were walking along a mountain path. The floor was covered with flowers, and at each corner the procession would stop, and the incense bearers would make a profound reverence to the Child Jesus, incensing Him.

They would then intone Christmas songs in Spanish and the procession would continue, with the sisters singing the *Matins* and *Lauds* of the Vigil of Christmas, while the “musicians” and lantern bearers, who brought up the end of the procession, played their whistles, flutes, and other instruments used on this festival.

How beautiful all this was! The souls of the sisters were elevated to heavenly regions. Indeed, they felt as if they were at the Manger itself of Bethlehem as they processed carrying the Divine Infant, cradled in the arms of one of the sisters, up to the choir of their Convent so that he would not weep from the cold of that night.

30. Albricias, albricias!
A la media noche
La flor ha nacido,
Sin romper el brochel!

31. In South America there is a kind of silver dry moss that hangs from the trees in long flowing strands. It is often used in decorations and flower arrangements.

CHRISTMAS ECSTASIES

During that joyous night, Mother Mariana seemed in permanent ecstasy. Her glowing, rosy cheeks, her recollected demeanor revealing her profound contemplation, her lowered eyes, and the large tears that rolled down her cheeks all gave her a beautiful and appealing aspect, that of a saint who peers into the fathomless depths of this most tender mystery of our holy Religion.

Finishing its course, the procession arrived in the upper choir. Mother Mariana de Jesus then took the Child from the arms of the sister carrying him and laid him in a manger, where he would remain from the song of *Matins* until the Feast of the Three Kings, which marked the end of the joys and festivities of the Christmas season in the Convent.

The statue of the Child Jesus had been specially made, but it was not particularly beautiful. Its eyes were blue, and because its little hands were connected directly to its legs, it could only be dressed in a tunic, which every year until her death the Marquesa would order made to clothe the Infant.

These tunics were always requested by the great ladies of the Colony for the Baptism of their children. In face of their great insistence, the sisters would accept offerings for them with the permission of the Marquesa, who acceded with great pleasure. The mothers who managed to obtain these relics for the Baptism of their children considered themselves quite fortunate, for they were convinced that a child who was baptized in the vestment of the Child God would be blessed in all things.

With great solemnity, devotion, fervor, and faith, all the sisters – both the sick and the healthy – would sing the *Matins* and assist at Mass. After Mass, they would pray the *Lauds*, but without the presence of the sick, who would return to their beds with warm water and a fine cognac sent by the Marquesa. The others would enjoy this drink after the recitation of *Lauds*.

After this, the sisters could choose to remain in the choir with the Manger or go to take some rest. Mother Mariana de Jesus always remained.

When she sang the *Matins*, her soul was raised to Heaven. Penetrated by a ray of celestial light, she saw the love that God Our Lord had for mortals and how the Second Person of the August Trinity descended to the most pure bosom of the Virgin Mary.

taking the form of a servant in order to redeem the human race. She would hear Mass with extraordinary fervor.

When she received Communion, she saw the Child Jesus and, falling into ecstasy, she contemplated the beauty of that Divine Child, exchanging fond expressions of endearment and affection with Him. She saw herself, as it were, transported to the Manger site, and there she implored Our Lady and St. Joseph to communicate to her their fervor and their hearts so that she might better love her Spouse, her Master, and her Lord.

During the Christmas season, Mother Mariana would often receive the privilege of holding the Child Jesus in her arms. On one of these occasions, she contemplated the Holy Trinity in this ineffable mystery of Christmas. She was submersed in an unearthly light and the Three Divine Persons manifested to her that perfection in the celebration of the mystery and feast of Christmas, as well as of Forty Hours and Holy Week, would be the guarantee for the preservation of the Convent both in those times and in the future.

For these three devotions contained everything needed for a religious, who, leaving the world, is cloistered to live only in God, for God, and through God.

HER TRIBULATIONS RETURN

At the end of the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany and its octave, this servant of God was again fully submersed in her bitter tribulations, accompanying her Lord and God along the dolorous steps of His Passion. Her sorrows, anguishes, and tribulations were doubled during Holy Week.

During the Mysteries of the glorious Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost, however, Our Lord would again temporarily suspend her interior afflictions. In faithful imitation of her Blessed Mother without stain of sin and following the Rule of the religious of the Immaculate Conception, this great soul would closely participate in all the joys and sorrows of the lives of Jesus Christ and Mary Most Holy.

VISION OF THE CROSS THAT TOUCHED THE SKY

During this period while she was Abbess, Mother Mariana was praying on one occasion in the lower choir at the foot of the Tabernacle. Shedding humble tears, she begged Our Lord to pro-

vide for the needs of her Convent and of people in general. She also asked Him to remove from her the heavy cross of Superior.

Suddenly she saw the Tabernacle open and a magnificent cross embellished with pearls and precious stones issued from it. This cross began to grow, rising higher and higher until it was lost in the clouds, with only its trunk remaining on earth. She noticed that in several places the cross was missing pearls and precious stones, and she yearned to see the cross fully embellished, without any empty spaces.

Lost in thought, she contemplated this beautiful cross, but without understanding its significance. Then, her Divine Spouse, so beautiful, amiable, and attracting, came forth from the Tabernacle. He directed this question to her:

“You see, my beloved, this precious cross whose roots are still on earth while its arms reach the heavens? Know, then, My chosen one, that this is your cross, carried by you in life. Since only a short time remains to you on earth, its arms are already in Heaven. Look, however, at the empty spaces: they are the years remaining of your life, which you should fill with good works and in the uncomplaining exercise of the difficult office of Abbess, which you will occupy one more time, your last.

“During the years left to you, you will have the great sorrow of seeing the last three Founding Mothers die. The souls of these three, Lucia of the Cross, Anna of the Conception, and Francisca of the Angels, abounding with great merit, are fruit ripe for Heaven. See their last trials and assist them with your prayers, for these sufferings are only given to them to completely purify them, so that they will neither know nor pass through Purgatory.”

Then she saw the trial that Mother Anna of the Conception would suffer at the hour of her death, as well as the painful sickness that would assail Mother Lucia of the Cross, and the doubts concerning her salvation that would torment Mother Francisca of the Angels.

Mother Mariana de Jesus suffered for each of them as if it were herself, and she insistently implored the Heavenly Father that, through the merits of Jesus Christ His Son and Mary Most Holy, He might deign to shorten the time of these great trials of His favored Founding Mothers, her companions in suffering and the foundation of the Convent.

And all took place just as she had seen. Each one of these Founding Mothers suffered that which Our Lord Jesus Christ had

showed her, but He gave them the grace of opening their souls to Mother Mariana de Jesus, whom they loved so much.

She consoled them with words filled with supernatural unction, which helped to lighten their crosses and make their sufferings more meritorious. Therefore, when the hour of death arrived, their souls were tranquil and serene, and their passing away was only the sleep of the just, who awake in Heaven to enjoy the brilliance of the eternal day.

THE DEATH OF MOTHER LUCIA OF THE CROSS

In the year 1622 Mother Mariana's term as Abbess came to an end. This year also saw the death of the saintly Mother Lucia of the Cross, whose life, along with those of all the Founding Mothers of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, is found in the aforementioned *Cuadernon*.

She lay prostrate on her bed of pain suffering from a rare illness where the violent beating of her heart suffocated her, causing her to sweat violently and vomit blood in large quantities, resulting in an appalling weakness. She could not sit, for her whole body felt as if it had been frightfully beaten. She suffered from generalized contusions, which did not permit her to move herself and made her dependent on others for her every need. Whenever she was raised, she would tremble terribly and shed copious tears although she never let out the least cry of pain.

Added to this, she suffered a cruel desolation of spirit, which made her believe that she was completely without merit and would not gain Heaven. Her conscience, it is true, could not accuse her of any mortal sin or even a conscious venial sin throughout her long existence of 78 years. Nevertheless, her soul suffered an indescribable agony.

Mother Mariana de Jesus, who stayed with her at her bedside as much as possible, encouraged and consoled her with the sweetness and unction of her words and truly maternal care. She saw how this great soul was being purified on her sickbed of even her slightest imperfections and how, *pari passu*, Our Lord Jesus Christ was shaping in her heart all the insignias of His dolorous Passion. It was in these moments that she felt most afflicted and abandoned, sweating and vomiting great quantities of blood.

This saintly patient remained wholly occupied in prayer and examining her conscience. Opening her soul to her Superior, she would say:

“What is happening to me, my Mother? I feel as if something were being molded in my heart, causing me an almost mortal sorrow and weakness. The fire of the love of God wants to explode in me, for it is alive and burning, hidden under the cinders of my sorrow. But an irresistible force calms it, and from the shock comes this terrible agony that I suffer. Such suffering constitutes a cruel hell for me. In addition, my poor body, through necessity, must be taken care of and viewed by my sisters. This is a very difficult sacrifice that causes me mortal shame. What sustains me is to know that they are spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ and, at such instances, will act as such. My gratitude is great, and should I go to Heaven, I will recompense them there for their heroic charity, obtaining special graces for their good souls.”

Mother Mariana listened compassionately to her. Pressing her to her breast, she made her see how Our Lord Jesus Christ has unlimited confidence in His spouses and, for this reason, gives them many precious sufferings so that He might thus live in them. Mother Mariana assured her that Heaven awaited her since just as she had lived her life in the cloisters loving Him, so also she would die in the cloisters loving Him. She spoke to Mother Lucia of the Cross: about the marvels of Heaven, leaving this amorous spouse eager to abandon earth and unite herself with the Beloved of her soul in the Celestial Jerusalem. Her sickness was caused more from supernatural reasons than, properly speaking, from her physical illness.

This should cause no great surprise to anyone, for this is proper to souls that tread an extraordinary pathway and deal familiarly with God, Who communicates to them His intimate secrets and makes them drink to the last drop from the bitter chalice from which He Himself drank during His mortal life. For the life of the Divine Redeemer was one continuous agony, from His conception in the most pure womb of His Virgin Mother to the moment when, hanging from three large nails on the gallows of the Cross, He delivered His soul to His Eternal Father.

HOW SHE TREATED THE SICK

After her term as Abbess had ended, this truly angelic soul dedicated herself entirely to the interior life, unmindful of creatures or the things of the world that might perturb her. She enjoyed a sweet quietude of spirit in her long-desired recollection. For just as inferior souls live in anxious pursuit of positions of honor, this great

soul sought the last place in the house of the Lord. She did so with so much good will that it seemed to her that she really deserved the least place.

Therefore, after her term of government concluded, she lived docile, humble, and obedient to all without exception. She would only make use of her authority as a Founding Mother in order to assume the most difficult and humiliating duties. She would help in the kitchen, infirmary, and laundry room, and every day she swept a section of the Convent, doing everything with the same happiness with which another would discharge some honorable office. The very way of being of this serene creature was evidence enough of her high degree of sanctity.

The way she treated the sick was most edifying. She always showed solicitude without any disgust or fear as she attended them. Her words were filled with divine unction as she invited them to practice resignation and unite all their sufferings to their dolorous Spouse in His Passion and Crucifixion.

If some of the patients, either because of the violence of their pains or the length of their sickness, became annoyed and impatient, discontent with the services rendered through the charity of their sisters, then Mother Mariana de Jesus would take such persons under her care. She would explain to them that it was by means of these grievous sicknesses that Our Lord Jesus Christ awaited proof of the love of His spouses, who should preserve their peace, patience, and holy imperturbability of spirit amid their pungent sufferings. Rather than fill the air with their impatient complaints, they should transform themselves into instruments of martyrdom for their poor sisters, who must support all this by the mere fact they are religious.

“Sickness, my daughter and sister,” she would say, “is the gauge that measures the virtue of every religious soul now and in all times. To feel and manifest love for God when everything is going well for a religious is not to love God, but to love oneself. To feel and manifest love for God with patience, sweetness, tolerance, and consideration for our good sisters who attend us in a long, serious, and painful sickness – this is, indeed, true and great love. Our Celestial Spouse asks this love of His daughters of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother. Because He loves our Convent so dearly, throughout the centuries it will never lack sick persons and rare diseases, which will be the crucible of purification for my beloved sisters and daughters, just as this Convent will never lack saints.

“At the moment, you are a fortunate hidden soul whom Our Lord gives sufferings and wants to sanctify. By complaining, you say to Him: ‘Couldn’t Our Lord let me off and find someone who knows how to suffer better than I?’

“I do not believe it! Should I hear such words, I would be sad unto death at seeing my Jesus thus despised, when He Himself – without availing Himself even of the Angels of Heaven – came to present this gift to His chosen spouse. This is how my daughters and sisters throughout time should face grievous sicknesses or sufferings of spirit and, at times, the two combined. For the more they are oppressed by sufferings, sorrows, and tribulations, the more they should consider themselves fortunate and closer to God.

“This is when they should raise their gaze from the earth so filled with sorrows and fix it on Our Lord Jesus Christ nailed to the Cross with three large spikes. His most holy Body had become one wound, and His Soul was enveloped in such bitter desolation that no soul, mortal or blessed, could comprehend the intensity of this suffering. If we compare this with the pains that we suffer in our bodies and spirits, we would think them nothing and feel shame for our cowardice and lack of love of God, Who suffered incomprehensibly simply because He loves each one of us with the infinite love of the Redeemer.”

TWO LEPERS

Mother Mariana would continue: “For you and for my future sisters, the cross consists of this bed on which you lie crucified. Your pains and sorrows are the wounds that Christ suffered in His Body. I will also tell you this: Toward the end of the 19th century, there will be two religious in our Convent with leprosy.

“God Our Lord, our most loving Father, will allow this: *first*, to provide the occasion for our sisters of those times to exercise charity in a heroic degree toward these creatures tested by God; *second*, He desires that by this means these sick sisters should achieve the palm of martyrdom; *third*, they will placate His righteous Ire at the ungrateful people, and *fourth*, this will accomplish certain high designs that His loving Providence has for our Convent.

“Now, see how you are not lepers. Why, then, these complaints, this moaning, this sharpness with your sisters? Appreciate the goodness of God and give thanks for all the benefits He has granted you, calling you to the cloisters. Be generous and ask Him to increase your afflictions of body and soul. Reflect upon the two

leprous sisters who will live here. One will die in the Convent and be buried with us in the lower choir.

“The other sister will receive the crown of her martyrdom outside the Convent, entering a common leper colony.³² How great will be the suffering of this unconquerable and beloved sister! Her beautiful soul will be the delight of the Holy Trinity and will hold back the arm of Divine Justice for the many secret and public crimes of those times. By virtue of this sacrifice, God will not punish our country with the worse chastisements that otherwise would have fallen on this ungrateful soil.”

Shamed, the sick sisters ceased their complaining. Seeing themselves so much less afflicted than the leprous sisters foretold by Mother Mariana, they considered themselves fortunate, and patience and resignation gradually took possession of their spirits. Then they bore their pains and sufferings in an edifying way.

Such was the conduct of this guardian angel who thus quieted complaints and led the souls of her sick sisters to God. The sisters who had Mother Mariana de Jesus at their bed of suffering considered themselves fortunate, and they would all pray, “My God, grant us the grace of dying before Mother Mariana, so that she might be for us an angel of peace and charity to calm us in our final agony and graciously introduce us into Heaven.”

As she attended these sick sisters, this holy creature would pray and make penances so that they might have tranquility, peace, patience, resignation, and holy deaths. She, however, remained plunged in the ocean of her interior afflictions, accompanying Our Lord Jesus Christ in the steps of His dolorous Passion. She suffered in body and soul more than any of her sisters, both then and in the future. Her counsels were not, therefore, empty words, but were based on her own experience. She understood what it was to suffer.

32. These prophecies made in the year 1623 were fulfilled at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Msgr. Cadena y Almeida, postulator for her cause of beatification, noted that he had spoken to older sisters in the Convent who in their youth knew of the first case and could point out the place of the tomb of this sister. As for the second, some of religious still recalled the name of the sister, Mother Rosalia Endara, known for her austerity and sanctity of life, who had been obliged to leave the Convent in 1908 and go to a leper house, St. Lazarus Hospice of Quito. There she had died a holy death, offering herself as a holocaust to Our Lord for the crimes of the city, for her country, and for her Convent which was threatened at that time by the vicious anti-clerical politics of the government (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profético*, p. 105).

MAGNIFICENT FUTURE PROCESSIONS FOR THE BLESSED SACRAMENT – REVELATIONS ABOUT THE MASONIC CONSPIRACY

On one Feast of Corpus Christi during this time, Mother Mariana was humbly and fervently praying at the foot of the Tabernacle during a public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the main church.

As she prayed, she fell into ecstasy. She saw in a vision that this region would be favored with graces and mercy as a result of the public and solemn devotion that would be rendered to the Blessed Sacrament in future centuries.

She saw devout processions that would be made through the main streets of the city that would include religious men and women, children, youth, and persons from all the social classes. She saw the profound recollection of all, and the great respect and devotion of the diverse groups, with many of their members using instruments of penance on their bodies. She saw the faith and piety of the faithful and the complaisance of Our Lord Jesus Christ as He passed through the streets of the city in those fortunate times to come.

But, alas! She also saw how all this aroused the fury of the Devil who would strive to raze this solid edifice of Catholic piety founded upon the faith of the children of God. To achieve this evil intent, he would avail himself of the sons of this country who would lose the sentiment of faith bequeathed to them by their parents and elders. These countrymen would work to oppress the Church in their assemblies and prevent this public devotion, for they would have already entered the party of Satan by becoming members of the Masonic lodges.

She saw that this generation of men without faith would be formed by unworthy children of the Catholic Church who would impiously oppress her and put an end to the reverent processions that attract the blessing of God. This would be a time of sorrow and grief for all the faithful children of the Church, who, with their Prelates and pastors, would be few in number. He showed her how the hideous and pestiferous wild boar of masonry would enter the beautiful, flourishing vineyard of the Church, leaving it destroyed and in complete ruins.

She also saw the fortunate times to come in the Convent when devotion will be rendered to the Blessed Sacrament, carried in processions through the cloisters. In its corners beautiful altars

would be erected upon which the Divine Majesty would rest in pleasure.

She saw the fervor of the sisters of this time in arranging those altars and the innumerable graces bestowed on their souls and the Convent, as well as the special reward awaiting them in Heaven. For to those who are devoted to the Sacred Eucharist, God reserves a special reward at the moment of death, and afterward in Heaven.

But she saw as well that persons without true vocations would make their religious profession in her Convent. After some years of religious life, these sisters, by their ways and manners, as well as their secret actions, would abolish these and other practices that maintained the fervor.³³ On the other hand, she saw the secret chastisement that these sisters would receive during their lives and also what was reserved for them after their deaths.

Then they would realize the evil they had done and how they had failed to correspond to the inspirations and good examples of their sisters, always attributing bad intentions to them. They themselves will find their penalty in the place of expiation far from eternal glory.

On this occasion, Mother Mariana understood more clearly than ever before – for Our Lord revealed this to her – that the devotions to the Passion, the Blessed Eucharist, and Our Lady constitute the support and mainstay of religious institutions and of her Convent in particular. This is also true for the celebration of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE INFIDELITY OF PRIESTS

Mother Mariana returned to herself in the arms of her sisters, who were weeping, believing her to be dead, for it was now five o'clock in the afternoon and she had shown no sign of life since nine o'clock that morning. She had a deathlike pallor, but it caused no fear. She made an attempt to speak, stand up, and walk,

33. In his book demonstrating the truth of the prophecies of Mother Mariana, Msgr. Cadena y Almeida, noted the solemn and grandiose character of the Corpus Christi procession and other religious processions in the 19th century in Quito, when dignitaries of State and representatives of the Judicial and Legislative powers would process behind the Blessed Sacrament alongside the ecclesiastical authorities and the simple faithful. For example, shortly after his reelection on March 13, 1875, the President of Ecuador Gabriel Garcia Moreno carried a penitential cross on his back through the streets of Quito in a Holy Week procession.

but despite her greatest efforts, she could not succeed, for her body would fall to the ground. Her sisters supported her, weeping from their fear of losing her.

She went with difficulty to the dormitory and lay down on her poor bed. There she remained, like a cadaver, robbed of all strength by the incomparable sorrow that had fallen upon her soul. Her heart beat with such violence that it could be heard from a distance.

Her mind, far removed from all earthly concerns, was sunk in apprehension for her Convent and this country. She suffered without consolation, even more than when she had experienced and seen the sorrow of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives.

In this weakened state, she again lost her senses. This time she saw the infidelity of the ministers of the altar to their holy vocation, and the unworthy way that some would approach the Holy Sacrifice. She considered the causes of this and her soul was overcome with a profound, unearthly sorrow. She passed that night and all of the next day, Friday, until six o'clock in the evening in this way.

HER RESTORATION

Fearing that the hour of departure had arrived for Mother Mariana de Jesus, whose soul would soar to the throne of God, the sisters wept disconsolately, searching for some remedy to detain her a while longer among them. The doctor exhausted all his recourses, but everything proved futile. He tried to think of something but declared himself powerless in this case.

He told them:

“Mothers, if I were dealing with any other person than the great Mother Mariana de Jesus, I would tell you that you should prepare and lay out the corpse for burial, carry out the obsequies, and bury the body. But, since it is this singular creature, we can continue to hope for three days. For just as the Prophet Jonah passed three days in the stomach of a whale, Mother Mariana can remain still living in the arms of death. We will use every human means to bring her to her senses, and with your prayers, also the divine recourses. May God concede a little more time to this holy creature, our consolation and support.”

At six o'clock on Friday evening, she opened her beautiful eyes and fixed them on the crucifix that she had in her bed. It was the crucifix that Bishop Ribera had left to her. Her sad gaze, accompanied by copious tears, was the mute expression of the love that penetrated her soul. She was unable to speak a single word.

When the doctor asked her if she were better, she could only shake her head in the affirmative.

The sisters surrounded her, each one striving to serve and attend her. They wanted to lift her from her bed so that she might accompany them in all the community acts and instruct them with her example and holy life.

Mother Mariana perceived and understood everything, but in her humility she was perplexed to see how these holy religious showed such great interest in her, who was unworthy of notice because of her deficiencies and lack of valor. This is how the saints of God think and reason!

Mother Mariana passed more than a week in this weakened state, without strength. After that, she returned to monastic life with her customary vigor. During that time, her countenance expressed her sorrow, even though it did not alter the sweetness of her face or the rosy color of her complexion. It was a sadness that raised her soul far beyond the inferior boundaries of this earth.

This took place on a Thursday of the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1623.

DURING HOLY WEEK

The following took place on Holy Thursday in the year 1624. Every Holy Week, beginning on Palm Sunday, the days were filled with sadness and deep sorrow for this holy creature. Her loving and pure soul penetrated the most intimate depths of the Heart of the God-Man, Who suffered and died on the cross to save His ungrateful creatures.

She would participate closely in His afflictions of body as well as spirit. Her desolate, loving soul sought refuge and relief in continuous prayer and redoubled penances, which were even more severe than normal during these days.

Daily, morning and night, she would apply the discipline, drawing blood. On Holy Thursday, after the offices of the Church when all the bells fall silent and die away, the ringing of the small bell of her heart would also die. As the movement of her heart came to a complete standstill, she would be sustained supernaturally and miraculously by God Our Lord, absolute Master of all creatures, Who, prodigious in His grace, concedes this gift to those He pleases and in whatever way He so desires for the realization of His designs. Completely detached from earthly life, Mother Mariana de Jesus remained totally absorbed in God, without failing,

however, to assist at every act of community life or omitting the least of her duties.

On her body she wore rough hair shirts; on her forehead she wrapped a rough band to imitate her Divine Spouse in the crowning of thorns. Her feet were bare and around her neck she placed a horsehair rope. With her gaze fixed on the ground and her expression grave and sweet, she inspired veneration and love for God.

She would visit the "monument" daily,³⁴ traveling in spirit to the houses and places where her Spouse and God had been scourged and maltreated. She would direct her steps from the upper choir to the lower choir to the balconies. Seeing her so completely absorbed in her amorous, consuming contemplation, none of the sisters would dare to interrupt her, even for the greatest necessities. She took her meals with the sisters, seating herself at the table to take her frugal nourishment after kissing the feet of all the religious, who, greatly edified, contemplated her marvelous countenance.

This is how she would pass the day until the moment of the singing of the *Tenebrae*.³⁵ Overflowing with a sorrowful love, Mother Mariana would intone these canticles with her beautiful, delicate voice, like that of a mysterious swan which as it dies celebrates with mellifluous notes the love of its God.

THE COLLECTIVE ACT OF FLAGELLATION ON THE NIGHT OF HOLY THURSDAY

After this, the whole Convent would process with cords around their necks and praying the *Miserere* ³⁶down to the lower cloisters and into the prison, where they would lay prostrate. Under a frail light that only permitted her to see where she was walk-

34. The monument refers to the tomb, or altar, which is set up in churches on Holy Thursday. A Host consecrated that day is placed on it so that it might be reserved there for the ceremonies of Good Friday, when it is consumed.

35. *Tenebrae*, or the Office of Darkness, is the name given to the singing of *Matins* and *Lauds* on the last three days of Holy Week. On these days, *Lauds* follow immediately on *Matins*, which terminate with the close of day in order to signify the setting of the Sun of Justice and the darkness of the Jewish people who did not acknowledge Our Lord and condemned Him to death on the cross. During the singing of these offices, the lights are gradually extinguished until the darkness is complete. For this reason, the service came to be known as *Tenebræ*, Latin for "darkness" or "shadows."

36. The first word of the Vulgate text of Psalm 1, which reads *Miserere mei, Deus* (Have mercy on me, O God). The *Miserere* has a prominent place in the Divine Office and in various Church ceremonies. In monasteries and convents it was said during the customary taking of the discipline.

ing, the Superior would then pass by each one, who would bare her back. After this act of humility, the Superior, moved and weeping, would read the passage of the cruel, sorrowful, and humiliating flagellation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Ending the reading, she would encourage the sisters to imitate in some small way their Divine Spouse by partaking in His sufferings. After this short talk, the sisters would respond, "Amen."

The Abbess would then take reeds with rough nettles, and reciting the *Miserere*, she would flog each of the religious from their shoulders to their waist as they lay prostrate on the ground awaiting this public penance.

After this act she would remain there a moment for prayer. Unable to contain her grief, the Superior would weep copiously, while the religious, prostrate on the ground, bathed the floor of the blessed prison with their tears. After this brief time of prayer, the Superior would take a leather whip and again reciting the *Miserere*, she would apply another strong discipline, her soul filled with bitter pain.

All the Abbesses confessed with simplicity that this was the hardest act of their whole term of office.

At the end of the flagellation, the Abbess would return to cover the backs of the religious and also the novices, who always participated in this act. When all were covered, the Superior gave a signal for them to kiss the ground and arise. Standing, they would cover themselves completely, also veiling their faces.

Then the Superior would go to the center of the group, saying: "Mothers and sisters, this vile creature carries out the bitter duty of scourging the holy spouses of my Lord Jesus Christ. Each blow penetrated my heart, and since my love for God does not permit me to excuse myself from this grievous humiliation, then I ask you in charity to allow me to participate in your penances. For if you, my innocent sisters, suffer, then I, a guilty creature, also desire to suffer."

She would then remove the veil from her face and command under obedience one of the novices to scourge her with the nettles and another to flog her with the leather whip. She would prostrate herself on the ground amid the community, who wept loudly. Trembling, the designated novices would approach her, and one would flog her with the nettles, as described above. After a short prayer, the other would scourge her with the leather whip. Each of the flagellations lasted the time it took to slowly pray the *Miserere nobis* three times.

This done, the Vicar-Abbess would approach, cover the shoulders of the Abbess, and command her to stand, saying, "Arise, Reverend Mother, from the ground on which you lay prostrate. May God Our Lord accept from Your Reverence and from this whole community the humiliation and penance that, united, we made in imitation of Jesus Christ, our Good, Who for love for us was scourged publicly at the pillar. May this be a curb to help us overcome our passions."

Before the Abbess would arise, she would kiss the ground and the feet of all the sisters.

This ceremony was called the "community act of flagellation on the night of Holy Thursday," a most tender act made by these holy creatures that disarmed the Divine Ire.

PRIVATE PENANCES

At the end of this ceremony, the sisters would take a light repast, after which they were free to remain with Our Lord Jesus Christ or retire to sleep.

From eleven o'clock to midnight they would gather again for a Holy Hour in the upper choir. Some would pray prostrate on the ground in the form of a cross, for a matchless fervor reigned in this holy Convent. Mother Mariana de Jesus would play sad, tender music on her harp that elevated the soul and transported it to the Garden of Olives to accompany Our Lord in His prayer.

Mother Mariana was always in charge of directing this Holy Hour in the Convent. Her fervor and love communicated itself to her sisters as she made the readings on various points of meditation each quarter hour.

After the Holy Hour, the sisters would again be free to retire or remain with Our Lord. Mother Mariana de Jesus would never go to rest, for she found her repose in prayer and penance. In anticipation, she would prepare a large quantity of nettles for her penances.

At midnight, after the Holy Hour, the religious would prostrate themselves on the ground, their arms extended in the form of a cross, so that their sisters would have to step over them as they left the choir. Mother Mariana de Jesus was the first to prostrate herself and the last to rise.

At 12:30 p.m., she would go to the upper choir, leaving behind her blue mantle. Her whole body would be covered with rough hairshirts and she would wear a rough band around her fore-

head in imitation of the crown of thorns. Placing a heavy, coarse rope round her neck, she would take off her sandals and walk with bare feet through the lower cloisters carrying a heavy cross on her shoulders. As she walked, she was completely absorbed in the contemplation of the sufferings that her Spouse and God had suffered on the night of Holy Thursday, the vespers of His dolorous death.

She would also make the Stations of the Holy Cross, crossing from the upper to the lower choir. At each station, she would flagellate herself with leather disciplines. At 2:30 in the morning she would end this devotion with the visit of the seven churches.³⁷ Prostrate on the ground in the lower choir with her arms in the form of a cross, she would pray seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys, saying in place of the Glory Be:

“Jesus of Nazareth, love of my soul, I adore Thee as my God and absolute Lord and Creator. I implore mercy for myself, my Convent and poor sinners, my brothers. Relieve also the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory and grant them eternal rest.”

With the cross on her back, she would then direct her steps to a hidden corner in the lower cellars of the Convent where she had previously placed a large quantity of nettles. She would kiss the cross and fasten it securely to the wall with a large bolt or by means of tie straps. In the spirit of penitence, she would bare her innocent body and rub it with nettles from head to foot, after which she would place herself onto the cross. At four in the morning, she would again apply a long, bloody flagellation.

Unfastening the cross from the wall and placing it again on her shoulders, she would retrace her steps to the lower choir to visit her imprisoned Sacramental Love. From there she would descend to the lower choir for the prayer in common; afterwards she would assist at all the Holy Friday ceremonies without any rest or showing any weakness.

FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF OUR LORD ON GOOD FRIDAY

On Good Friday, Mother Mariana would take three bloody disciplines and spend the day united to her suffering Lord. Missing no step of His dolorous Passion, she would follow each hour of His

37. The visit to the seven altars or churches is the practice of visiting and saying specified prayers at seven churches and their altar of repose during Lent and especially on Holy Thursday. It commemorates the pious tradition of the early Christians of visiting the seven churches of the Stations in Rome, where the sacred memorials of saints and martyrs are preserved.

unspeakable sufferings. She asked to suffer in union with the Divine Majesty, all that He had suffered on the day of His death.

In fact, she was allowed to feel each hour of the day what Our Lord suffered on Good Friday. At the hour of the flagellation of the Divine Redeemer, she applied her second bloody scourging of the day. The third she took at 11:30 p.m. The whole afternoon of that day she would pass in profound contemplation and mortal sadness.

Starting at noon, she would suffer in her body the Crucifixion of Our Lord. Her arms, as if dislocated, suffered unspeakable pains. Her feet and hands took on a dark purplish coloration in the places where the nails had penetrated Our Lord. Her tongue became parched, becoming almost glued to the roof of her mouth. She could only manage to speak a few words if, for some urgent matter, something was asked of her. Her interior torments also greatly increased.

In this way her soul and body detached themselves from all earthly realities as she lost herself in the amorous immensity of God, contemplating her Love, Our Lord Jesus Christ, dead on the ignominious Cross, His most holy Human Nature almost completely destroyed. She was also immersed in the grief and desolation of her Queen and Mother, Mary Most Holy, to whom the Virgin Apostle John, the holy penitent Magdalene, and the devout women kept company.

This swoon lasted until five o'clock in the evening, when Mother Mariana would arise and go to sing the *Tenebrae* with her Convent, for she was a soul of song and music.

In fact, all the Founding Mothers were knowledgeable in singing and music. Should any inconvenience arise, one could always replace another without any difficulty. The Founding Mothers taught music and singing to all the novices so that the divine worship would always be as worthy as possible for the Sovereign Majesty.

After the office, the sisters took a short discipline, which lasted only through a *Miserere*, three *De Profundis*, and the *Respice*. After this, they went to the refectory for a light repast. Mother Mariana assisted at everything, never omitting a single community act.

SOLEDADE OF OUR LADY

At eight o'clock in the evening, the *Soledade de Maria*³⁸ would begin with a sweet, sorrowful song and silent meditation that followed the reading of passages from a book of devotions that Mother Mariana had for this purpose. The work had been given to her by Friar Pedro of the Conception; because he was such a holy man, she conserved this book with great veneration.

At the end of the *Soledade*, all would go to rest. Mother Mariana would retire somewhat later, after flagellating herself one more time.

HOLY SATURDAY

She would pass all day Saturday in a sweet sadness, accompanying her Queen in her bitter solitude. On this day she would not increase her usual penances, restricting herself only to her customary practices. And the reader already knows the extent of the normal daily penances of this invincible religious.

It rouses great admiration to see so many penances made during these days by a weak woman. Despite all this, she always conserved her sweet disposition and assisted at every common act. One can clearly perceive the extraordinary spirit that God had given her and that He had traced a special pathway for her to follow so that this firm column would hold back Divine Ire, which threatened the guilty and criminal Colony.

This spirit should be admired – and God Our Lord praised in it – but not imitated, because without an explicit call from God, it would be foolhardy to copy it. What we should imitate in this holy religious is her profound humility, her love of God and neighbor, her observance of the Rule, and her spirit of continual mortification in both small and great things.

THE RESURRECTION

After a brief repose on Saturday night, she would rise hastily and go to the choir.

At three o'clock in the morning she would see the Divine Savior, her Spouse, rise glorious and triumphant from the sepulcher

38. A special form of devotion under the term of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* (Our Lady of Solitude) is practiced in Spanish-speaking countries to commemorate the solitude of Mary on Holy Saturday.

through His own virtue and power. And it would seem to her that her own soul had returned to her body.

Filled with great joy, she would offer praise to her Beloved for freeing her from all suffering and sorrow. She would also offer a thousand felicitations to her heavenly Queen for Her Son was resurrected and glorious. Then she would pray the *Regina Coeli Laetare* with great devotion. Directing herself to the Apostle St. John, Mary Magdalene, and the holy women, she would thank them for accompanying her Queen and Mother in her bitter solitude.

With holy joy, she would hasten to the dormitory to awaken her sisters. She would ring the small bell of obedience that is always rung very early in this holy Convent to lift the silence of the night. Throughout the year this bell is rung at 4:30 every morning by the novices, calling the sisters for the recitation of the Little Office. On this day, however, Mother Mariana de Jesus would ring it at 3:30 a.m., for the Convent would sing the *Matins* of the Resurrection at 4 a.m. There was no Little Office on this day.

The physiognomy of Mother Mariana de Jesus was beautiful to behold. The pallor that had come over her face the last three days of Holy Week was replaced by a rosy tone, making her radiant in her joy. This is because she also was resurrected with her celestial Divine Spouse.

* * *

CHAPTER 7

Mother Mariana would experience all that was described in the last chapter each year during Holy Week. On Holy Thursday of 1624, she had the following vision during her penitential prayer:

Toward the middle of the 19th century, she saw that the high altar of their church would catch fire and burn in a terrible fire. Her beloved sisters of that time would be extremely afflicted, for they would think that this fire would burn down the whole Convent, leaving the religious in the street. Their cries, tears, and prayers would ascend to the throne of the Most High like pleasing incense (for there would be good souls of solid virtue there at that time).

In a flash, Mother Mariana saw in her spirit this formidable fire, which was large and strong enough to consume the entire block in a short time. She implored God to have pity and to not permit such a catastrophe for her daughters and sisters.

Then Our Lady appeared to her and spoke these words:

“Why do you fear these material flames, my daughter? I, the Mother of Good Success, of Charity and of Holy Hope, I am the absolute mistress of this House in all its parts, just as I have manifested to you on other occasions. I dearly love this place and this House, and I will watch over it throughout time.

“In order for my daughters to always emerge victorious, I ask only their cooperation, that is, the daily exercise of humility, simplicity, obedience, and holy sincerity that every daughter of my Immaculate Conception should possess without dissimulation or guile. For a false and deceitful soul cannot be close to me, who am the Mother of Divine Truth, which is light and clarity.

“If I permit my church to burn, it is so that it might be rebuilt during that favorable time, when the authorities will pose no obstacles. For later, they would be unable to rebuild it because serious contentions will arise that will modify the order of monastic life, instigated by the Devil who never rests. He will not only try to play a part in this fire, but he will also try to completely obliterate this Convent. To this, however, I will not consent, so long as God wills it. Now I want you to see what the Devil will do. Look!”

Looking in the direction of the burning altar, Mother Mariana saw all of Hell spreading the fire with infernal torches amid satanic laughter. These evil spirits said:

“Finally we have the opportunity to put an end to this accursed foundation, which wages war against us. Those Founding Mothers came to the heart of this city to impede our schemes with their holy lives. And it is not only they – we will have enemies here throughout time. They frustrate our plans and hurl us far from this city.

“What is even worse – this is the work of weak little women. It is not possible for us, with our angelic nature, to tolerate such insolence. This is the only chance we will have to destroy this house, burning it to the very ground so that no one can raise up a new convent of nuns in its place. Let each of us strive to ignite this place with our own fire, taking advantage of the fact that our enemy, the Woman, is silent, showing no sign of defending her property, for otherwise we could do nothing.”

And the envious and furious demons spread the fire on the altar, trying above all to burn the Blessed Sacrament.

OUR LADY INSPIRES A SOLDIER TO SAVE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

When she saw this, Mother Mariana penetrated the flames and opened a pathway, just like the three youths who passed through the blazing furnace (cf. Dan. 3:24). Then the Blessed Virgin sent a strong and irresistible inspiration of grace to a soldier – a man of the people and a good Catholic.

Because of his docile correspondence to this holy inspiration to expose his life to save the Blessed Sacrament from the fire, his family would be privileged to possess a great devotion to and love for Our Lady, who would bestow on them a multitude of graces.

This good man intrepidly walked through the flames as if some force were impelling him, following the pathway made by Mother Mariana for him. Filled with faith and love for his Creator, he was neither burned by the flames nor asphyxiated by the smoke. Trembling, he took and pressed against his breast the sacred chalice that held the God of Heaven and of Earth, Prisoner of Love for ungrateful mankind. He then returned through the fire without suffering any burns, guided, without his knowledge, by Mother Mariana de Jesus.³⁹

39. The future event revealed to Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres on Holy Thursday of 1624 came to pass exactly as she described it almost 250 years later. Without reference to or knowledge of this prophecy, Carmelite historian P. Lorenzo García described the fire that started in the presbytery of the Conceptionist Church on Holy Thursday of 1873, which destroyed the high altar

The fortunate man, bearing at his breast Our Lord, Who is the Heaven of the Blessed, then asked for illumination to know where he should deposit the Sacred Host – either in the lower chapel or some place outside the Convent. Immediately, the voice of Our Lord in his interior spoke to him, inspiring him with this thought: “Place this great Treasure nowhere other than in the hands of the Superior. Amid the great suffering of the Mothers, their Spouse should remain with them in order to be their consolation.”

Cautiously and discretely, this man sought out the Mother Abbess. As soon as he found her, he tenderly placed the God of Heaven and Earth into her hands.

Mother Mariana de Jesus inspired the Abbess, a prudent and good religious, to entrust the Blessed Sacrament to a sick sister who was in the infirmary. Many were the sweet colloquies made by this faithful soul who, on her bed of pain, suffered united to her Beloved!

“RETURN, ACCURSED ONES, TO THE ETERNAL FIRE!”

The Blessed Virgin continued to speak to her chosen daughter Mother Mariana, telling her, “Let us go, my beloved daughter, and prove to the order of men that nothing was lost. Then it will be clear that this fire was not a disaster, but an advantage.”

And she, together with Mother Mariana and the other Founding Mothers, passed through the entire Convent, safeguarding even the smallest things.

When the moment determined by God for the fire to end had arrived, the Blessed Virgin, surrounded by the Founding Mothers of the Convent, exclaimed with queenly majesty:

and its contents.

His report was confirmed in the investigation of Msgr. Cadena y Almeida, who in 1952 spoke with a Conceptionist sister who witnessed the fire when she was a child. Mother Mercedes of St. Agnes testified that the fire was blazing and threatening to spread and destroy the whole Convent when suddenly it seemed to die down of itself and was able to be extinguished. Mother Mercedes also recalled the soldier who risked his life to save the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle. He delivered the Sacred Host into the hands of the Mother Abbess, who took it to the infirmary and confided it to the care of a sick and holy sister who was recuperating there.

Everything took place exactly as Mother Mariana had seen and described it two and a half centuries earlier. The renovated and richly decorated new Chapel was finished in August of 1889 (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profético*, pp. 114-6; *La Mujer y la Monja Extraordinaria*, pp.155-57).

“Return, accursed ones, to the eternal fires, where you suffer in your pride! I command this in the name of my Most Holy Son, Whom I carry in my arms as a tender Child for the salvation of souls.”

Immediately, like a flash of lightning, the demons hurled themselves with a great roar into Hell. At that very moment, the ceiling and beams of the main altar collapsed.

The Queen of Heaven again spoke, this time to the fire itself: “Fire, element created by my Most Holy Son for the benefit as well as for the chastisement of humanity, I bless you and order that you moderate your violence so that you might be extinguished. Blessed be you, who have fulfilled your mission, but do not overstep the boundaries assigned by the All-Powerful.”

Without delay, the fire attenuated its intensity, and the men could put it out, leaving the rest of the Convent standing and all its inhabitants safe.

This is related by the first author of the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres in a biography that is conserved in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception⁴⁰ together with those of the rest of the Founding Mothers. I recount it here with the objective of making it better known and appreciated.

I will not live in the epoch when this fire will take place, but I hope to see from Heaven the fulfillment of this vision. My Franciscan brothers and my sisters, the religious of the Immaculate Conception, who will live in that time will, however, witness this fire. And the sisters who follow them will see the fulfillment of everything. May they be humbly pleasing to Our Lord, His most holy Mother, and the Founding Mothers, who solicitously protect them and the Convent.

May these sisters love this Foundation with all their hearts and strive to fulfill their monastic duties for the love of God, as well as in homage to the memory of their holy Founding Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres. They should try to imitate her incomparable virtues of humility, observance to the Rule, holy simplicity, charity,

40. After the death of Mother Mariana in 1635, Fr. Martin de Ochoa, a Franciscan, was assigned the responsibility of writing her biography. Fr. Francis de Anguita, her spiritual director and confessor, also wrote an account of her life based on her relation to him of her visions and his personal knowledge of her virtue. Both of these early biographies are conserved in the *Cuadernon* and were used as sources for this biography of Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira.

and love of God, as well as her absolute detachment from the things of this earth.

SUPPLICATION

O my holy sister, what would I not give to have lived in the times when you were a pilgrim on this earth! How happy I would have been to be allowed to know the interior of your beautiful soul, a faithful mirror of the Queen of Virgins! From Heaven, where you enjoy eternal happiness under the blue mantle of our Immaculate Mother, look with favor on your brothers and sisters and lead us to Heaven so that we can be happy in your company.

I am convinced that you are one of the greatest of the saints, comparable to the seraphic Teresa. She shines like a candelabra of the Holy Church, her voice echoing from one end to the other. But you, like a humble, fragrant flower in the garden of the Immaculate Conception, lived hidden, your fragrance always perfuming the secret recesses of these cloisters, which have the glory of possessing your mortal remains. In the centuries to come, the echo of your heroic virtues will awaken sluggish souls and lead them to God.

Why do I admire such great virtue? It suffices to let my gaze fall on the Seraphic Family to find in it every type of virtue and sanctity.

O human seraphim, Francis of Assisi, my Father, because of your humility the Lord gave you sons and daughters to swell the ranks of your Order and live on earth like other seraphim, loving the Creator. I implore from you a spark of this seraphic love to warm the coldness of my heart!

MARIANO AND MARIANA

I return now to the narration of the life of Mother Mariana de Jesus. From the year 1624 until her death, she led a life more angelic than human.

With each apparition and communication with God, she became more saintly. Her amorous heart could no longer control her desire to leave this earth. When she heard that a religious had died in some convent, she would weep like a girl, saying, "This happy spouse has taken wing and soared to the heights where she will find her Spouse. But I, unfortunate creature, remain here on

earth. My sister, Death, has flown far from me and refuses to give me her embrace, so anticipated by me.”

The religious of this epoch, as well as persons outside the Convent, already venerated Mother Mariana as a saint.

She cured many sick persons, giving them anise water that she made with her own hands, for this was her favorite remedy. She also worked many miracles, above all for women in childbirth, saving the lives of many mothers and newborns. Because of this, the names Mariana and Mariano came into common usage during this time, for the thankful mothers would honor her by baptizing their sons and daughters with her name.

When persons came to ask her prayers, warning her that an unbaptized child was in danger of death, she would go hastily to make anise water to send to the sick child. Then she would rush to the feet of the Tabernacle, imploring God that He not permit the innocent to die without Baptism. Very often she would perform severe penances for their recovery.

THE VENGEANCE OF THE DEVIL

All this thwarted the evil designs of the Devil who furiously pursued her, trying to cause her bodily harm since it was impossible to touch her soul. He would cruelly make her fall down the stairs; other times, he would embarrass her, tripping her and making her fall, even during collective acts of Convent life.

In the refectory her great desires were to serve the tables, do the reading, kiss the feet of the sisters, or eat on the ground. The Devil would intrude in all this: When she served, he would try to make her fall with the dishes and spill the food all over herself; when she read, he would blur the letters; when she would eat on the ground or kiss the feet of her sisters, he would make the food spill on her, and a thousand other things of this nature.

Despite the ruses of the devils, this invincible creature, always serene and living in God, would preserve that holy imperturbability of spirit proper to truly pious souls. At times, when her eyes would be filled with tears, she would be questioned as to the cause of this. She would respond, “Alas, my dear sister! I weep because the poor devils cannot ever be satisfied. I weep because they are more solicitous in losing our souls than we are in saving ourselves.”

Her spirit of prayer was extraordinary. Wherever she was, she would pray and contemplate; everything spoke to her of God.

Her charity was admirable and exceptional. She would use her authority as a Founding Mother to take charge of the dying sisters, attending to them and helping them to die well. Then she would prepare their bodies for burial and do everything she could to free them as soon as possible from Purgatory. Her zeal and charity for the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners was immense and heroic. In short, she possessed all the Catholic and religious virtues that characterize creatures hidden by God to carry out His great works.

* * *

CHAPTER 8

It was the year 1628 and Mother Mariana de Jesus was completing the third year of her term as Abbess of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.⁴¹

One night, she was praying, as was her custom, in the upper choir at midnight when she saw the whole Colony in agitation. She turned her eyes to God Our Lord, Who revealed to her that this indicated the time when the Colony would separate itself from Spain and become a free Republic.⁴² This would happen because the authorities sent by the King to govern the country would act capriciously and commit innumerable abuses, oppressing the innocent people and generating many sufferings, without possibility of remedy.

She saw the war of independence, the great sacrifices of its heroes, and the land bathed in blood. She felt great pity at seeing this and begged Our Lord that His Holy Will might be done and that His interest should triumph.

END OF THE BEAUTIFUL DAWNS

Then she understood that the Colony would become independent from Spain. However, the beautiful dawn that each morning would break forth with grand refulgence over this land – so enthrallingly spectacular that some persons would rise at daybreak just to contemplate this work of the Creator – will lose its brilliance.

According to what was revealed to her, this favor would cease because in less than 200 years after the Colony would become a free Republic, it would already be criminal and ungrateful for the benefits received from God, Who would be outraged at the secret crimes committed against the Sacrament of His Love. There would be an increase in the number of obdurate and malicious Judases who, inspired and possessed by the diabolic spirit, would sell their Lord for a few coins. She saw the miserable and disastrous fate of those poor souls for all eternity.

41. In this year, she was also re-elected Abbess to serve her final term of office, which ended in 1631, when she requested her sisters to elect another superior to leave her time to prepare her soul for death.

42. This confirms the prophecy made in the second apparition, January 16, 1599, about the coming War of Independence, which took place in the 19th century (p. 122).

She also saw the secret and public chastisements that this poor Country, then with the name of Ecuador, would suffer during those times. It was also revealed to her that the Republic would have been swallowed up and buried under the debris of an earthquake if Divine Goodness had not called heroic and just souls who in diverse and secret ways would be expiatory victims, like other Moses, to placate Divine Justice during that epoch.

Souls like these would exist in the world as well as in the convents and cloisters, and also in her beloved Convent, where she saw many things that filled the depths of her heart with profound grief. The Devil, under the appearance of good and making use of imprudent members of the Convent, would subtly introduce relaxations there. These relaxed habits would only come to light after they had acquired deep roots and seemed irremediable to human eyes.

But then she saw with great joy of heart that, at the cost of enormous sacrifices, God would end by being glorified and would be pleased with the foundation of this Convent.

WAR BETWEEN THE ANGELS AND DEVILS

After seeing the end of the war and the Colony transformed into a free Republic, she was favored with other admirable visions.

In the first, she saw the four borders of Ecuador completely surrounded by a black cloud made up of countless devils. With great clamoring, bewailing, diabolic laughter, and horrible gestures they tried to overpower the new Republic to govern and rule it from its very inception. As foundation for their work, they laid the malice of the seven capital sins and hatred for Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. They abolished all the convents and cloisters, and impeded the existence of every pious institution.⁴³

43. The rule of the anti-clerical Liberals dominated by Freemasonry began in 1895. Eloy Alfaro took power and established a constitution separating the Church and State, and declaring the State supreme. During the first year of Alfaro's presidency, Ecuador was ravaged by a bloody civil war in which the faithful rose up in rebellion against the atheist *alfaristas* and were brutally repressed. In 1908, a law was issued that allowed the government to confiscate Church property to benefit public assistance activities.

Other measures of the "Liberal Alfarista Revolution" included the suppression of monasteries and convents, obligatory secular education, the introduction of civil marriage and divorce, the expulsion of foreign clergy, and the abolition of the Concordat with Rome, which made the State the protector and guarantor of the Church's independence and granted the Church control over education.

That cloud polluted the whole atmosphere with a dense smoke that obscured the precious light of Faith in souls, encouraged blasphemies, and hardened the hearts of the people.

In the second vision, the Heavens were opened wide over the Republic, and a clear, overpowering light streamed over all of Ecuador. From every convent and cloister a spray of stars issued that rose to Heaven, and she heard the voice of the Prince of Angels St. Michael give this command:

“Descend immediately to the depths of the abysses, cursed and black legions, for here God lives, God triumphs, and God reigns in all times through His chosen souls. The more triumphant you think yourselves to be, the nearer your defeat approaches! Woe to this new Republic without its religious Orders! For without them, it could not subsist!”

Over the four extremes of the land heavenly beams of light fell. Thunder sounded; lightning flashed and swords of fire fell right and left. These heavenly swords seemed directed by hands experienced in warfare, and they defeated the diabolical legions, which vanished amid horrible clamors and cries, like those who fall mortally wounded. At the same time, they threatened to never cease waging their cruel war against this small portion of earth, where the Woman, their Enemy, will be so venerated and loved. For, the devils made it very clear that if they could only succeed in extinguishing the people’s devotion to her, the victory would be theirs.

They added: “The time will come when we will have excellent agents who, with force and violence, will win for us a good portion of this land. We will support them and give them earthly pleasures, comforts, and riches, and afterwards torment them in Hell for eternity because these ungrateful wretches ignored the mercies and benefits of their Creator.”

After the devils were expelled, Mother Mariana saw a calmness return to the land. The atmosphere and sun shone with a greater luminosity.

VISIONS OF THE CHILD JESUS ON MOUNT PICHINCHA

Then Our Lady of Good Success appeared to Mother Mariana with her Sweet Infant in her arms and said:

“Poor daughter of my heart, this formidable vision has already so weakened your natural strength that it would not be humanly possible for you to return to life. But the time still has not arrived for you to leave this earth. For seven more years, in memory

of my seven sorrows and joys, you will remain a pilgrim on earth, suffering my sorrows and rejoicing in my joys.

“Then your Love will call you to His house and company in Heaven, where your long life will seem to have lasted but a day and you will smile at your great sufferings in this life, which will seem insignificant. Then you will desire to return to life in order to suffer and merit double.

“Henceforth, the esteem of your sisters and those devoted to my beloved Convent will be the greatest suffering of your heart, which will so avidly desire humiliations, contempt, and calumnies. But that golden time has already passed for you. It will, however, come again for our daughters in future times, because some very beautiful souls will inhabit this beloved place.

“Your spirit will live secret and hidden in them, and they will be despised even by their own sisters, whose minds, obscured by concealed pride, will not understand or know how to value the treasure they possess in their holy sisters. How many of these religious will desire to have lived in your times, not realizing that you yourself will be living in the most forgotten and oppressed of their sisters!

“Blessed are my good daughters, whose souls, united to God and to His Mother, will be forgotten. Tranquil in their obscurity and suffering, they will do good for their sisters and others outside the cloisters.”

The Queen of Heaven continued:

“Raise your eyes now and look at Mount Pichincha,⁴⁴ where you will see this Divine Infant Whom I carry in my arms crucified. I deliver Him to the Cross so that He might always give good successes to this Republic, which will enjoy great happiness when it will acknowledge and honor me under this invocation throughout the land. For then there will be good success in souls, homes, and families, and this invocation will be the pledge of salvation.”

Mother Mariana saw the three Archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, take the Divine Child from the arms of their Blessed Mother and carry Him to Mount Pichincha. Leaving Him there in reverent obedience, they then vanished from sight.

The Divine Child seemed to be about 12 to 15 years of age, handsome and filled with Divinity, although hidden under His

44. Quito, Ecuador's capital, sets on a high plateau at 2800 meters above sea level surrounded by mountains. The Pichincha is still an active volcano about 6 miles west of the city and is easily visible from the capital.

holy Humanity. He prostrated Himself on the ground with His arms in a cross and prayed to His Eternal Father, saying:

“My Father and Eternal God, look with favor on this small portion of earth that today Thou givest to Me so that My loving and tender Heart might reign here as absolute Lord, together with the Heart of my Blessed Mother, a creature more pure and beautiful than all others.

“This land will have the liberty belonging to a newborn Nation, and My Heart is filled with infinite tenderness to see the many heroes who will lose their temporal lives.⁴⁵ A thousand times blessed will they be for their heroic sacrifices! Their souls will be received in Heaven where they will enjoy the reward for their efforts!

“I pray for this here [on Mount Pichincha], just as I prayed at Gethsemane, asking Thee in My Name for all the souls who inhabit this land, which might be free from the diabolical rage that threatens them. I desire to save them all. For this, I have virgin spouses, who in union with Me, raise their arms in supplication to the throne of Thy Majesty, like innocent doves uttering plaintive notes at the foot of My Tabernacle.

“Above all, look upon My House and Convent, the property of My Immaculate Mother, founded by Thy holy Will in the very heart of this city to make amends for the many crimes that will be committed in it throughout time. There we have and shall have until the end of time crucified and just souls who will imitate Me and My Immaculate Mother. They will hold back the enraged arm of Thy Divine Justice and prevent great physical and moral evils in their beloved homeland.

“For this reason, the Convent will be persecuted and the Devil will try to destroy it, availing himself of both the good and the evil. But my beloved Mother, like a luminous star, will shine over it in all times. She will be its strongest support, its impenetrable wall, and she will always give it good successes.

45. On May 24, 1822, at the decisive Battle of Pichincha, Sucre and his 2,971 South American and European mercenaries defeated 1,894 Catholic Royalists under Melchor de Aymerich. In the battle 400 Royalists and 200 revolutionaries died. A year later, in Ibarra, a militia of mercenaries defeated the Royalists; 800 corpses were left on the field. On December 8, 1824, at the battle of Ayacucho, 9,310 Royalists were defeated by 5,780 Colombians, with 1,800 Royalists killed and 700 wounded. According to statistics from Robert Scheina's *Latin America's Wars*, the population of Ecuador decreased from 600,000 to 480,000 [a loss of 120,000] during the period of the War of Independence (1810-1823).

“For this reason, we appeared there many times and left her precious Statue as the strongest pledge of our love and protection. Bless them, My Father, and sustain them in their battles and sufferings.”

At the end of this prayer, Mother Mariana heard a voice from Heaven filled with tender majesty that said, “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him and imitate Him, chosen and beloved souls.”

ON THE MOUNT ENVELOPED IN LIGHT

The whole mount was then enveloped in a celestial light. Raising himself from the ground, the Child Jesus found himself before a cross of flat, leveled wood with the inscription *INRI*⁴⁶ at the top. On its left arm hung a crown of sharp thorns, and, on its right, a white stole.

The three Archangels reappeared. With great reverence St. Gabriel carried a white host; St. Michael, a long white tunic speckled with stars; and St. Raphael, a mantle of a magnificent rose color never seen on this earth.

With great contentment, the Child Jesus vested himself in the white tunic, which He took from the hands of St. Michael, while the Archangel adjusted on Him the stole that had been hanging on the right arm of the cross according to the usage of deacons (falling from the shoulder to the waist diagonally). Over the tunic, the Child Jesus placed the magnificent mantle, taking it from the hands of the Archangel St. Raphael.

Thus vested, He approached the cross, gazing at it with love. Large tears streamed down his rosy cheeks, which were immediately collected by the Archangels St. Michael and St. Raphael, who dispersed them through the new Nation.

Lovingly He took the crown of sharp thorns from the left arm of the cross and placed it on His Head. Drawing near the cross, He extended His small hands and was crucified on it, without, however, the nails appearing on his hands and feet.

He then ordered the Archangel St. Gabriel to place the host behind his Head. This done, three resplendent beams of light streamed from the white host, giving it an extraordinary brilliance, for the host had a golden aureole and was embellished with exquisite emeralds. On the ray directly over His head was written the word *Love*; on the ray to His right, *Ecuador*; and on the ray to His left, *Spain*.

46. Initials for the Latin title *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum* [Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews] written on a plaque over the head of Christ on the Cross.

The Child Jesus assumed a majestic and somewhat sad demeanor, as if reflecting the pain that intensely afflicted His tender, divine members. At the same time, He showed a joy to suffer for those whom He loved so much. From His crown of pungent thorns fell large drops of blood that ran down His forehead. Blood also flowed from the wounds on His hands and feet, which stood on the soil of the mount. The nails, however, did not appear on them.

His gaze from the cross embraced the ensemble of the new Nation. His Head did not move, remaining inclined a bit to the right. He repeated these words:

“I can do no more to show My love for you. Ungrateful souls repay the great love and attentions of My Heart with contempt, sacrileges, and blasphemies. At least you, my beloved and chosen spouses, be My consolation in My Eucharistic solitude; keep watch in My company. Do not be overcome by the sleep of indifference to your God, Who loves you so much! Always be the heroines of your Country in the bitter and dire times that will come over it. Your humble, secret, and silent prayer, together with your voluntary penances, will save it from the destruction toward which its ungrateful sons will lead it. These wretched ones, humiliating and despising the good, will exalt and praise the bad new disciples of Satan.”

Around the cross were thorn bushes bearing delicate flowers. Thus was the Child Jesus crucified on the great Pichincha.

ABOUT THE FUTURE DECADENCE OF THE CONVENT

After these marvelous visions, Mother Mariana de Jesus returned to herself. As a mortal vulnerable creature, her Spanish heart suffered to consider the separation of the Colony from her mother country Spain. Often, alone, she would weep like a child.

Almost all the Founding Mothers had already died – or, better said, had fallen into the tranquil sleep of the just. Only Mother Francisca of the Angels still lived, for she would die, as will be related, one year before Mother Mariana, that is, in 1634 at five o’clock in the evening, at the very moment when the glorious passage of our Seraphic Father St. Francis is sung in the Franciscan Order. Her death coincided with extraordinary circumstances, proper to a soul wounded so deeply by divine love. We will leave this, however, for the narration of her death, or, more properly said, her sweet sleep in the arms of her Beloved.

Mother Mariana found consolation, therefore, in her, for these two great souls, sisters in sanctity, homeland, and the religious life, kept nothing from each other, one sharing with the other all the favors received from the hands of the Omnipotent God.

At times, Mother Mariana, who was younger than Mother Francisca, would weep like a child and cry out:

“Alas, my sister, I thought that these lands would always be Spanish. But the day will come when they will become independent from the mother Country. And decadence and disgrace will come to our beloved Convent. I pray God will not permit it to be wiped out by the plague of such evil people! Also, I ask that the imprudent conduct of our successors in that epoch not be fatal to our Convent. Moved by a false charity, they will introduce in this Convent, whose foundation cost us so much, persons without vocations or the proper spirit. Our successors will not realize that what matters most is the future of the Convent, and not to promote and shelter imprudent persons.

“Under the appearance of virtue and false zeal, these foolish, hypocritical, and proud persons will subtly undermine the pure and true observance of the Rule. Through their caprices, this kind of person will end by introducing extravagant customs, and they will eliminate those that we, guided by the spirit of God, established with the founding of this Convent by our beloved mother, mistress, and Foundress, Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, who led us in everything, as you know, under obedience to and the orientation of the Franciscans. Let the truth be said: this Convent has already lamentably felt the loss of the Franciscans, and will feel it still more in the future.

“The consolation that remains to us is that from Heaven we will govern and watch over this Convent that has cost us so many tears and sufferings. When it will seem that our faithful sisters and successors are on the verge of doing away with the Rule, then the Star of Heaven, Mary of Good Success, and we – the Founding Mothers – shall save the Convent and its life in a most amazing and providential way! Woe to those illegitimate daughters! Better for them had they never set foot in our Convent!”

Mother Francisca responded: “My Mother and sister, console yourself. You seem like a child in your bemoaning! What you say about the independence of this Colony from Spain, our beloved homeland, is true, but why weep at what our eyes will not see? Come now! Do not be so small of heart! Those grievous evils,

worthy of being lamented, are those that the Church – and our beloved Convent as well – will suffer in that difficult period.

“But look to God Our Lord: in His most amiable goodness, He deigns to manifest to us the destiny of our Convent. *First*, so that we might rejoice over the fact that there will always be good souls here. *Second*, so that we might weep for the illegitimate daughters, and the folly of Mistresses and Superiors who will admit this type of soul into it.

“And *finally*, so that we might beg mercy and pity for those Mistresses and Superiors, as well as for those poor souls who will profess without having the true religious spirit, neither knowing nor realizing the gravity of the obligations they will contract. For they will enter the Convent only for human purposes, moved by a false spirit of piety.

“Let us weep, yes, but let us pray that Divine Goodness will shorten the time of such trials for our faithful and suffering daughters, freeing them from such hard captivity.

“In this most unhappy epoch through which our Convent will pass, we will watch over our sisters from Heaven so that they might sustain the observance of the Rule, even at the cost of great sacrifices and sufferings. We shall preserve the lives of many of them miraculously, for, humanly speaking, it would be impossible for a soul who understands what it is to be a religious and a spouse of the crucified God to remain healthy and alive amid so many sufferings.

“Religious of this temper will have their spirits formed to be daughters of the Immaculate Conception of our Most Pure Mother. They will be prepared first in their paternal homes, and then in the novitiates by Mistresses and Superiors who understand how to give daughters to God. Great will be their glory in Heaven, because, without flattery or human respect, they will infuse the true religious spirit in the souls confided by Divine Goodness to their care.

“In every circumstance of life, sad or joyful, they will bear themselves as religious sisters; and, after their deaths, they will leave behind the treasure of their good example. How much good will be done for souls by those holy sisters who will live in these cloisters following their true vocation and practicing the virtues – in health and sickness offering their trials and sacrifices. Such virtues will always be the secret sustenance of the Convent’s life. These good souls will always watch with us over this Convent.

“Take heart, therefore, Mother. Set aside your sadness. Soothe your downcast heart and animate your spirit. Let us play the harp and sing the poignant notes of those verses that Your Reverence composed when you were young and suffering.”

THE SONG OF THE HARP CONSOLES HER

To the strumming of the harp played by Mother Mariana, they sang with such harmony and sweetness that they seemed again to be youths of 25 years. They intoned the canticle *Hermosa doncella* [beautiful maiden], along with verses dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, and all the songs that Mother Mariana had composed in her youth and other circumstances of her life.

In the middle of 1634, she composed most tender verses filled with divine unction that elevated the soul to the highest regions in homage to Mother Francisca of the Angels. In them, she announced to Mother Francisca the good news that her earthly existence would soon end and disclosed that shortly afterward she herself would follow her.

This is how the saints console each other!

After these visions so filled with bitter sorrow for the holy Spanish Mother, her life continued more angelic than human. Always docile and obedient as a child and with a soul continuously serene and tranquil amid the most distressing circumstances, she gave courage to all and was the consolation of those inside the Convent and outside.

She passed her life doing good not only inside the narrow walls of the Convent, but also for the Church and her Country by her daily practice of solid virtue, prayer, and austere penances despite her advanced age.

Her spirit, therefore, remained always youthful. And her body, while it became weaker, did not prevent her from carrying out her penances, following the Holy Rule, and leading an austere life. This is because penance is the best remedy for the slight illnesses of the body for good sisters with a true religious spirit. They only suspend their penances when their God and Lord tests them with serious sickness, a suffering that gives them satisfaction because then they see themselves nailed with the same spikes and on the same cross as their Spouse, Jesus Christ Our Lord.

CHAPTER 9

The year 1634 arrived, the others passing with Mother Mariana practicing the most heroic virtues.

On February 2, Mother Mariana was praying at midnight in the upper choir of her beloved Convent. Shedding abundant tears, she opened her heart to her Spouse Jesus Christ Our Lord and His Blessed Mother of Good Success, imploring them that this handful of dear souls might be preserved until the last day of time, reminding Our Lord and Our Lady how much the Convent's foundation and preservation had cost them. At the same time, she had a presentiment that her end was approaching.

MOTHER MARIANA PRAYS FOR HOLY SUPERIORS AND THE CHASTISEMENT OF BAD RELIGIOUS

Amid her sobs, she prayed:

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Blessed Virgin of Good Success, my dear Mother and Queen of the Universe, I, the most vile of creatures to issue from Thy omnipotent hand, prostrate before Thee in my nothingness, give Thee thanks for all the benefits that I have received through no merit of my own. Despite my ignorance and ingratitude, I was favored with familiar treatment by Thy Sovereign Majesties, and Thou hast manifested to me such marvels that they will cause great astonishment in the centuries to come: That is, those times when my name will be known and also the great and admirable prodigies that took place in this Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the city of Quito, erected in the very heart of the city so that it might always be its salvation.

"I implore Thee to preserve this beloved garden where Your Majesties will always have precious and fragrant flowers in the holy religious who, until the last day of time, will live behind these secret walls. Maintain the observance of the Rule, which is the soul of contemplation. Make holy silence, the ornament of religious houses, reign here.

"Let this, my Convent, always be governed by superiors with a discerning charity, who correct abuses with a strong hand, applying an iron rod to those who will infiltrate here in the sad times ahead with the aim of disturbing the holy charity and union that we, their Founding Mothers, have left to them, together with

this beautiful Statue of the Queen of Good Success who will always govern in the abbatial seat because she so desires it.

“Let there be superiors who also know how to be gentle and mild with those humble, suffering religious who will shed secret tears of consternation upon seeing the abuses, like invisible termites, gnawing away at the life of contemplation and solitude that should characterize the Franciscan Conceptionist religious who are the rightful heirs of our Convent.”

THE HOLY ABBESS REQUESTS THE EXTENSION OF HER LIFE

“The sight of these foreign, intrusive souls who will live here in those unhappy times consumes my heart with grief. For this reason I ask Thee to conserve my life so that I might at least subject them to what is holy, just, and reasonable or expel them without pity as the rotten and corrupt members that they are. Flung into the world, there they will pay for the abuses and infidelities committed under the appearance of good beneath the clear blue sky of this cloister of Mary Immaculate.

“For this cloister is from the divine stock of the Heavenly Father of religious families, where all the branches should be united to the vine, which is Christ Our Lord, through the imitation of His holy life and the fulfillment of the Rule. Otherwise, let them drift in the fire of the world, where dissipation and self-will abound, paths that lead so many souls to the infernal pit. For the branches must either be connected to the vine or thrown into the fire.

“I fear that such bad example, like a formidable plague, will subtly spread in my chosen Convent, extinguishing the virtue and sanctity of my good and docile daughters. For unless the guilty ones are corrected and despised, evil will install itself and usurp the government of the Convent. I fear that then the cursed Devil will succeed in destroying my dearly loved Convent through these false members and illegitimate daughters since he could not achieve this by means of the enemies of the Church.

“My God, this is most grievous! I beg Thy abundant charity to not permit this!

“To prevent such a disgrace, I ask that the Convent be governed by Abbesses with holy vigor and free of accursed human respect, which always frustrates the magnificent designs of Thy charity toward souls, standing in the way of portentous works that would be the seed of heroic sanctity and give great glory to Thee. For this reason, I desire to live in that epoch in order to reprimand

the insolent ones with my authority as Founding Mother and to prevent the great evils reserved for those ill-fated times.

“For Thy divine power, nothing is impossible, and Thou can arrange the longevity of the life of a human creature in centuries rather than years. If my humble petition, animated by loving zeal for the observance of the Rule in my Convent, pleases Thee, and Thou would desire to extend my earthly existence – for my life belongs to Thee – then manifest Thy will to me so that I might arrange things in my Convent so that everything will run naturally, without anyone from within or outside perceiving anything extraordinary.”

**PREAMBLE TO A NEW APPARITION
OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS**

Concluding this formal and truly difficult petition to make, the holy Founding Mother fell into ecstasy. She saw the Tabernacle opening, and the sanctuary was inundated with a celestial brilliance transcending the light of this miserable, tenebrous earth. Next to such radiance, the light of the sun seemed obscure.

With extraordinary sweetness and meekness of soul, she understood how the Father, the Son with His Holy Humanity, and the Holy Ghost were present in the Eucharistic Host; and she understood how the One Triune God granted creatures – according to the correspondence and docility of spirit and heart of each one – the graces to sanctify their souls and the seven gifts and fruits so that they might achieve perfection, and how these graces were given with preference to the souls of well-disposed religious.

She understood how the Blessed Virgin was preserved from original sin *ante praevisa merita* [in prevision of the merits] of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that this most beautiful and immaculate creature could carry out the Divine Will without obstacle or personal resistance in the great work of Redemption and salvation of souls.

She saw the Immaculate Virgin also as Queen, Mother, and Protectress of the Catholic Church, founded by Christ Our Redeemer with such great sufferings, and that the Church would be preserved by the protection and support of this Sovereign Queen and embellished by the blood of martyrs, who would never be lacking in any epoch.

She was also given to see all the pious institutions, congregations, and religious communities that would be founded until the end of time, as well as those that would be destroyed, from either

the decadence of their members or relaxations that entered from the careless acceptance of unfit members because of the lack of correspondence to grace.

She was given to know an exact and unequivocal account of the dire times that her beloved sisters and Convent would pass through, above all in the middle of the 20th century.⁴⁷ It was also manifested to her that the preservation of her material life would not be necessary for this epoch, because she could help her beloved Convent with more liberty and authority from Heaven than she could on earth. The Convent will be so embattled and suffering during these times that only Divine Power and the love of Our Lady for her Foundation could sustain it, so long as the prayers of just religious souls soar to Heaven. For such souls will exist in the convent during this period as in all others.

She saw a tempest break out over the Convent, provoked by members unworthy of living within its walls. She also recognized the lack of prudence and discernment of the Superiors for allowing such a situation to exist, the oppression of the Bishop, and persecution by evil ones. Her much-loved Convent seemed immersed in a dark night and bitter solitude.

Facing this scenario, she cried out in a loud voice for Divine Goodness to send the brightness of day with the return of the Franciscans, whose government would end the long, cruel winter that impeded the growth and vitality of the precious flowers of virtue under the salutary shade of meticulous observance of the Rule. Because only by this means can religious enter directly into Heaven after their deaths, without the many stumbling blocks and heavy encumbrances imposed by men.

OUR LADY PLACES THE CHILD JESUS IN THE ARMS OF MOTHER MARIANA

Our Lady then spoke, saying: “Beloved and favored daughter of my love, it is not necessary that your earthly life – nor the life of Mother Francisca of the Angels – be prolonged for so many

47. It would seem that this text refers to Vatican II, both its preparations and consequences, which completely changed religious life everywhere, including the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito. To be more precise, since the late 1940s a general tendency toward relaxation of the religious life began to insert itself in many Catholic Orders and Congregations. This constituted a conscious or unconscious preparation for Vatican II. This prophecy, therefore, could not be more precise in pointing to the mid-20th century as a crucial point in the crisis.

centuries. For the time has arrived for the sojourn of the last two surviving Founding Mothers to end. The Spouse is calling: Arise and meet Him with a burning lamp.

“On this day, when the Holy Church celebrates the mystery of my Purification in the Temple and the Presentation of my Divine Child, I desire to place Him in your arms as testimony that, one year from now, you will be dwelling in the temple of glory, where all sorrow and pain will come to an end. Remember that this date has always been for you an occasion of great gifts and mercies granted by me.⁴⁸

“I will live in and govern my Convent by means of the miraculous Statue that I ordered you to have made and placed in the upper choir on the abbatial seat. My favored House is, therefore, secure and firm. And you may tranquilly take leave of this mortal life, bequeathing to your successors this precious treasure, which was not and will not be given to any other convent because none will be as persecuted as this one from within and without – even reaching the point of being hated, and for this reason, much loved by God.

“But, woe to those who persecute it! Woe to those who through their lack of virtue, will be the cause of this Convent fallin into disrepute. Some will pay for this even in life bringing shame o their sisters.

“For others – woe to them! – the gates of Heaven will be closed. Like foolish virgins they will satisfy their own caprices while living in the paradise of my cloisters, receiving applause for their deceitful and apparent good deeds. These will descend to the abysses of Hell and will suffer for all eternity, as long as God is God, this being their due punishment for having tormented their holy sisters, whose only haven was their Sacramental Jesus before Whom they shed abundant and secret tears, lacking any recourse or human consolation.

“Receive in your arms my sweet Infant as proof of how much I love this Convent, which I will always guard and protect. Prepare yourself with this to tranquilly leave this mortal life. You will continue to live, however, in the persons of the good religious.”

Pressing the Divine Child to her virginal heart, the Immaculate Virgin then placed Him, well-content, into the arms of Mother Mariana, who received Him readily and with ineffable joy.

48. Mother Mariana received the first apparition of Our Lady of Good Success on February 2, 1594. After that, she was often favored with visits on that day. See vol. 1, chap. 17, footnote 36.

**PROPHECIES OF THE CHILD JESUS: THE APPARITIONS
OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS WILL BE DOUBTED**

Resting in the arms of Mother Mariana, the Child Jesus caressed her tenderly and said:

“My chosen spouse, how beautiful you are to My eyes! Throughout your long life, I was your only love. You loved the cross as I loved it, and you carried it serenely, making it your treasure and your wealth. It is just that soon I will grant you the eternal happiness in Heaven that I have prepared for My elect who follow Me closely during their earthly lives.

“I love this Convent because it is the foundation and property of My Immaculate Mother, and also Mine. I love it, moreover, because you have lived in it and I will see you living in it throughout time. In difficult periods, I will sustain it.

“At the end of this time of trial, I will gather up the dry branches with which I will have chastised this Convent and throw them into the eternal fire. Then the day of liberty will be born for it. It will be free, just as this Colony one day will be free from your mother-country. The winter will pass quickly, giving way to spring, and then all – both inside and outside this Convent – will see the precious treasure I had, have, and will have here, where you lived. But until then, My beloved spouses and your daughters of that time to come will suffer much.

“The imprudent sisters who lack solid virtue will doubt your marvelous life and the many rare and special favors that I and My Blessed Mother have bestowed on you.

“Well-placed persons in the world will wage an implacable war against this Convent, and unhappily, even among the Seraphic Family there will be doubt, opposition, and indifference. Only souls who are humble and simple of heart will be granted the assurance, certainty, and firm conviction of the truth of all that took place in your life, which will remain hidden during the first centuries of this Colony that will become a new nation.

“But, since my great works are always marked by the seal of contradiction, opposition, and even calumny, those who experience such doubts should not become disturbed when this happens. On the contrary, it is the hour to sing victory, for the day of triumph is near – just as My cruel and ignominious death preceded the moment of My Resurrection. After that, no one could take My life from Me again, and the power of the pagan Kings and Princes could not impede the foundation of My Church. Moreover, it pleased

Me to use for this neither the rich nor the noble of blood, but rather some few simple, ignorant fishermen, modest persons who earned their livelihood fishing on the seashore.

“I will preserve this beloved Church until the consummation of time. It will be strongly attacked but never conquered. For if men will be lacking, I will send down Legions of Angels from Heaven for its conservation, defense, and triumph.

“In these ill-fated epochs, I will govern it according to My pleasure and My will by means of My Vicars on earth residing in Rome, the city of the Popes of invincible and intrepid Faith. Those who subject themselves to him, recognizing him as My representative on earth and rendering him full obedience, will be blessed by My Celestial Father and will reign with Me in Heaven.”

PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE DOGMAS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND THE ASSUMPTION

The Divine Infant continued: “The Dogma of Faith of the Immaculate Conception of My Mother will be proclaimed during a time when the Church will be strongly attacked and My Vicar will find himself a prisoner.⁴⁹

“So also will the Dogma of Faith of the Transit and Assumption, body and soul, into Heaven of My Most Holy Mother be proclaimed.⁵⁰ But you, as well as my spouses and chosen souls, should always believe this as if it were dogma. With this, you will give Me great contentment, because it is an act of acknowledgment of My power and love as the Son of My Immaculate Virgin

49. In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception: “We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which asserts that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin is a doctrine revealed by God and, for this reason, must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful.”

Pope Pius IX and the four Popes who followed him up to 1929 called themselves “prisoners of the Vatican” and refused to leave its confines in protest against the new Italian State that had usurped the Papal States and the city of Rome, the Patrimony of St. Peter.

50. With the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII defined *ex cathedra* the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin: “We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

Mother. For, given My own honor and dignity, I could never have consented that her immaculate and blessed body be reduced to the dust of the earth, like that of any other of my common faithful ones.

“If, by My designs – incomprehensible to men, I conserve the bodies of some of my servants as incorrupt, how much greater reason do I have to conserve the body of My Mother, the Immaculate Virgin, raising it with her blessed soul into glory, to the great rejoicing of the Holy Trinity and the accidental happiness of the Blessed!

“This also constitutes, in a certain way, an act of justice toward My Blessed Mother, the Saint of Saints and the Queen of them all.

“A thousand times cursed be those heretics and their followers who place in doubt these mysteries concerning Myself and My Mother. Let them be cursed! And let their eternal abode be the center of the earth, together with the father of the lie, Lucifer, and his henchmen, inside the fire created by Divine Ire for the rebellious angels and the men who follow them, severing themselves from the truth and leaving the Catholic Church.”

THE DIVINE INFANT ANNOUNCES THE DEATH OF MOTHER FRANCISCA OF THE ANGELS – VISION OF PURGATORY

“Mother Francisca of the Angels, my faithful spouse who secretly bears My wounds, true daughter of the Stigmatic Seraphim Francis of Assisi, will end her earthly life to enter eternity on the fourth day of October at five o’clock in the evening. Only eight months of her pilgrimage on earth remain, and then, Heaven. She will not even see Purgatory.

“But, in order to cleanse her from the dust of the road, for three months (from the morning of July 19 to the end of the day of September 30), she will suffer indescribable torments of soul and temptations of every kind against all the virtues, the most difficult being those against Faith rather than holy purity. For the latter will not be very manifest, although very sensitive, because of her candor and chastity of soul.

“During this period of great affliction for My beloved spouse, I will enrich her soul with great merits. For when I give some souls who are beloved of My Heart their purgatory while they yet live in mortal life, it is so that this purification may be accompanied by merits, which cannot be accrued in the place of expiation outside of mortal life, where souls make amends for the

faults they committed without acquiring the least personal merit. They suffer, like indigent beggars, awaiting the charity of the intercessory prayers of the Church Militant.

“As it often happens that those who suffer in the Church Militant are forgotten, you have, before your eyes this city of fire, suffering, and pain, filled with a countless number of souls of every age, sex, condition, and state of life, suffering what is incomprehensible to mortals. But since they are souls already confirmed in grace, they possess an admirable peace, resignation, and patience, and give glory to God. Their greatest suffering results from their supernatural love for their God and Lord and their great desire to contemplate Him in Heaven, but they must remain far from His company.”

Raising her eyes, the holy Spanish religious saw this city inhabited by a multitude of souls afflicted by indescribable torments. With loud voices, they implored her prayers, penances, and intercession. Her compassionate heart felt great pity for these suffering souls, and she promised them that in the little time that still remained to her on earth, she would do all that she could to alleviate their pains and help as many as possible to enter Heaven.

The Child Jesus continued to speak: “Mother Francisca of the Angels will not be delayed even a moment here. Nor shall you, for you have loved Me with your whole soul during your life and put no earthly creature above Me. Neither the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, nor the pride of life have tarnished your soul.

“During the eight months remaining to her, tell My Francisca to prepare herself with joy to finally enter into her Celestial Homeland and end her earthly exile, and to give Me repeated thanks for this.

“During the time of her purification, the three last months of her life, you should help her with your prayers, penances, and counsels. Expand her heart, animate her soul, and support her spirit that will be so strongly tested by great tribulations. I will give unction to your words and discernment for you to know her interior sufferings. You will see how the souls of the just are purified before they can enter into eternal happiness, where they will find untold compensation.”

INGRATITUDE AND BETRAYALS

“If religious souls would only render docile hearts to the inspirations of My grace, how I would make them see – just as I

show you – the purity a soul must have to enter into My glory! I would also give them those special graces that I only concede to very recollected souls, detached from the world to the point that they avoid the least shadow of darkness. I speak not of sins, but even those deliberate faults and frequent imperfections that religious souls normally commit.

“These creatures, so dear to my Heart, cause me great revulsion and often wound Me. They oblige Me to let the arm of My justice fall upon My beloved cloisters – and even over cities – when those so close to Me and who belong to Me reject My spirit, leaving Me alone in Tabernacles, rarely remembering that I live there especially for love of them, even more than for the rest of the faithful.

“Lodged under the same roof, I ask them for their love and reparation when the ungrateful world torments Me, ignores Me, and wants to expel Me from their cities and towns, as if I were for them a noxious being. I warn you of these things because I live in the Tabernacle and have my spouses in the cloisters, and in the future this city will have many cloisters and Tabernacles.

“I tell you, however, that through the course of time in some of them there will be traitorous, ungrateful, and unfaithful souls who will hate Me. I will not support them long in My house and company. With My omnipotent power, I will avail Myself of a thousand hidden recourses – and at times public ones – to finish with such heartless beings.

“But in this Convent so beloved of My Heart, so often visited and sanctified by My presence and that of My Blessed Mother, We shall not tolerate such extremes. No, here we will always live and reign, guarding and defending the beloved part that belongs to Us. Here I will take refuge when the world will persecute Me. Here I will have some secret, rare, and always unknown souls who will give Me pleasure and make amends to Me, disarming Me when my justice will be tried to the limit by the evils and sacrileges of the 20th century.”

THE SIN OF ABBESSES

“Do not be excessively afflicted over the truly calamitous times through which this, my well-loved Convent, will have to pass at the approach of the middle of the 20th century.

“There will be internal injustices, delays in the admission of youths beloved of My Heart who are called by Me with true

vocations, and the unjust oppression by those who should be true mothers, zealously fostering the growth and perfection of the Convent.

‘Instead, these superiors, giving in to their own whims and allowing themselves to be motivated by injustice and fraud, will even go so far as to dismiss those whom I have destined to become religious here for the salvation of my diminished community of those times so that their prayers, regular observance, and well-accomplished duties would serve as shields to deflect the Divine Ire from descending on this city.

“Truly this is the worst of the chastisements that I, with a sorrowful Heart, will send to My favored Convent. Know, however, that this road was prepared by the indiscretion and lack of zeal and true charity on the part of the Superiors. These, whom I have called to be souls of prayer, will instead become dissipated by things foreign to Me, their Spouse, Master, and Lord. To this they will add an obstinacy in admitting into the Convent those who do not belong here, even though neither light, warnings, nor graces will be lacking to them. These are not branches that belong to My vineyard. Their works and conduct will speak for them.

“The Abbesses and the religious responsible for the admission of such novices will have a special judgment and Purgatory to punish them for their lack of discretion and love for the Convent.

“Woe to those members who will not set aside their own interests in order to properly fulfill their duties and who yield to pride and vain presumptions! Better for them if they would never have entered to profane My beloved House! Woe to them!

“But, as you have seen and know, during these times there will also be faithful spouses and beautiful souls who will console My Heart.

“Their tremendous sorrows, sacrifices, prayers, and penances will force the hand of Divine Justice of My Father to shorten the time of such desolation in My esteemed Convent, and will obtain His pardon and lift the chastisement. Then they will see themselves freed from their oppressors, whose evil deeds, however, will be felt by the next generations of religious.

“A single soul called by Me to a Religious Order is similar to a consecrated Host in the ciborium. My Providence will watch over each of them so that it will not be lost should it not be guilty.”

**DEVOTION TO THE CHILD JESUS,
A SECURE PROTECTION FOR THE CONVENT**

“Your exile is already coming to an end. One year from now you will be in Heaven, for I will close your eyes to the earthly light so that you might open them to eternal light on January 16 of the coming year. After the death of my Francisca, only three months of your pilgrimage on this earth will remain.

“Let the time that remains of your life be one of absolute union with Me, My Blessed Mother, My servant and your father Francis of Assisi, and all the heavenly courts. You will be joining them soon, and from there you will always watch over this beloved Convent of yours and Mine, founded at the cost of immense sacrifices.

“However, future religious – at least those lacking in spirit and virtue – will not fully appreciate these sacrifices. Because of this, they will squander the treasures of graces that I reserve for persons favored with the sublime gift of the religious vocation in these cloisters of My Immaculate Mother, where I will always be served, loved, and adored in spirit and in fact.

“For this reason, I inspired My spouse, your Mother Maria Taboada, to place this Convent under the patronage of My sweet Name of Jesus from its very beginning, and to bring a statue from your mother-country so that I might be venerated, loved, and acknowledged as Protector of this Convent.

“I desire that you know – and transmit to your successors through tradition – that devotion to the Child Jesus will always be the safeguard of the Convent in all its dangers. If this devotion will be lacking, the beautiful spirit of spiritual childhood, which is so pleasing to My Celestial Father, will disappear. While this devotion exists, no human power will be able to destroy this Convent so dear to Me.

“A thousand times blessed are those religious souls who will inhabit this House loving and worshiping Me! I will fill them with lights and graces so that their souls will be precious before My Celestial Father and the Holy Trinity; in them We will take Our delight. I will assist them in their last agonies and I will make their judgments mild, their times of purification short, and the degree of glory that they will have in Heaven great.”

CORRUPT MEMBERS AND IMPRUDENT ADMISSIONS

“Be attentive and ponder upon this interiorly: In all the apparitions with which My Immaculate and Blessed Mother has favored you, My poor little spouse, she always carried Me in her left arm so that, with Me, she might placate Divine Justice. In her right hand she carried the precious crosier in order to govern My dearly loved flock.

“Throughout time I will use this crosier – without pity – to fling out the imprudent, unfaithful, malicious, and guilty sheep after they have rejected all the graces, good examples, corrections, and even tolerance shown them by My good and faithful flock. Thus their bad spirit will not contaminate those who strive to serve Me with simple humility and with whom I will share My secrets and delights.

“In the first part of the 20th century, when in the eyes of man this Convent will be near its end, I will make a new foundation, started by persons who are docile, humble of heart, and capable. After immense tribulations, the first sister will take the name of Lucia of the Cross, and all those who enter afterward will take the name of each one of the Founding Mothers.

“Those without this spirit will not remain here. If they should remain because of some human attachment inspired by the evil spirit, they will become those putrid members who will wage a cruel war against this beloved House of Mine. In this Convent I desire only peace, unity, and true charity to reign under the rule of Superiors who should govern the sisters who are docile of heart with sweetness and mildness. However, the Superiors should exercise severe austerity toward those sisters who, with their poorly governed temperaments, try to introduce relaxations and destroy My beloved Convent.

“I repeat that imprudent admissions are the ruin of the Convent, which can only be preserved so long as there are those who make many penances and humiliations, and exercise the daily and solid practice of religious virtues.

“Woe to those putrid members during the future times of calamity! Weep for them, beloved spouse, and implore that the time of so much suffering for your dear sisters and my faithful spouses be shortened. Like you, their oppressed hearts will droop

like the weeping willows, and these captives will cry out, imploring Heaven for their liberation.

“They will say to each other: ‘How can we intone our canticles of joy in this cruel captivity? Oh, no! We will intone the canticle of the Lord when the day of our liberty dawns! When our choir and cloisters will burst forth with new buds of proven virtue! Then we will sing the *Nunc dimittis* ⁵¹ and tranquilly fall into our eternal sleep.’”

THE PUNISHMENT

“During this time of chastisement of My Convent, the Devil will labor to destroy it, impeding the admission of new sisters and putting up a thousand other obstacles characteristic of his luciferian jealous pride. He will even try to induce My faithful spouses to despair and lack confidence in Me, Who loves them so much. When this time will end, I will take My vengeance on those who took such unjust liberties to oppress those unfortunate beings who possess only their tears.

“I will also punish those putrid elements who cause horror and revulsion to my Heart and who have exhausted all means of appeal for true conversion.

“I will punish all of them. First, with secret chastisements, I will blind their hearts. Then, for some, there will be public humiliation. Others, however, will be punished for eternity. They will see with great clarity at the moment of their deaths the enormous consequences of their conduct in this heavenly cloister of My Immaculate Mother. Then they will know all the graces they were given to amend themselves and the aids they received from the good examples and prayers of their sisters. They will see then how they squandered all this with their pride, rejection of grace, and vainglory to appear important, when no mortal creature is more than a sack of putridity and a handful of dust.

“At that hour their earthly importance will be of no use to them, for in the divine Tribunal bribes and flattery are of no value – in short, God cannot be deceived. God is Light, Justice, Love, and eternal, and He reserves His rewards and eternal delights for His humble and faithful servants, just as He deals out punishments and

51. In reference to the passage in the second chapter of Luke “*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*” (Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord), which is commonly called the Canticle of Simeon. In the Roman Office this Canticle is assigned to *Compline*.

eternal torments for those who, dissipating His graces and divine gifts, wasted everything and filled their souls with darkness, ingratitude, and infidelity.

THE LUKEWARM

“Alas! If mortals – and above all, my priests and religious souls – would only realize how greatly wounded and displeased I am with the coldness, indifference, lack of confidence, and small inveterate imperfections coming from those who so closely belong to Me. Perhaps no one – or only those few souls whom I enlighten – has any idea of how many vocations, priestly as well as religious, have been lost after many years because of these deeply rooted infidelities.

“For such souls want to serve Me with a halfway dedication, keeping their personal quirks and caprices, following their own wills and taking liberties incompatible with the religious life and the profession of their vows.

“For this reason I do not tolerate them. Nothing that is done halfway pleases Me. I desire all or nothing – in accordance with My example. When I gave Myself, not a drop of blood or water remained in My ravaged Body on the Cross. Moreover, I have continued to live under the same roof with these chosen souls in the Tabernacle, exposing Myself to many profanations, hatred and sacrileges! For I knew well all that would happen in My sacramental life.

“I call these souls to share My bitter sorrows so that they might afterward have eternal happiness. They progress for long years, often at the cost of great sacrifice and heroism. Then, as the moment approaches when they might justly claim their crown of immortal glory, they deviate from the road, tiring of the sweet yoke of My Cross. Attaching themselves to mortal creatures and confiding in the embrace of the flesh, which ends in death, they distance themselves from Me and lose the spirit of religion ...

“Then I abandon them and leave them to follow all the desires of their perverted hearts. I do not recognize them before My Celestial Father since they were ashamed of humility, obedience, and the practice of virtues. For when they make violence to their nature, they form beautiful souls, making themselves like unto Me, Who am the Model of the predestined. Without this semblance to Me, no one can be saved.

“Woe to those souls! Woe!

“But I will bless the priests and Prelates, religious as well as secular, who love the Order of My Immaculate Mother and work for the growth and conservation of My Convent, doing all that they can to add to its renown and zealously defending it. I will reward them even in this life with graces and favors, and in the hereafter they will have a secure recompense, which will be a source of greater glory for the blessed and a special happiness for themselves. Their recompense will be so great that they will desire to return to earth so that they might labor even more for my Convent and increase their splendor in the Homeland of the elect.”

OUR LORD’S PREDILECTION FOR THE MERCEDARIANS

“I also tell you, beloved spouse, of My great predilection for the Order of my Mother that carries the title of *Mercês* (graces) and *Misericórdias* (mercies).

“I will unite the Order of Mercedarians to this Convent of Mine and My Immaculate Mother, who is venerated by so many religious Orders and honored under diverse titles. So that these bonds of fraternal union might be indissoluble, throughout the centuries there will be members of one Order living in the convent of the other reciprocally in order to propitiate this mutual support and assistance.

“In the calamitous and distressing times through which this Convent will pass, in the most turbulent period of this storm, this Mercedarian Order, so dear to Me, will come to swell your ranks, giving members with serious spirits, docile hearts, and truly contemplative souls.

“I am well pleased with it, for I have many faithful servants in places where it exists. And I have had and will continue to have in this Colony martyrs who will lose their lives because they will preach to ignorant and blind souls.

“Just as in this Convent I will always have faithful spouses, among the Mercedarians I will have faithful ministers of solid virtue who, hidden from human eyes, despised by the world and at times by their own, will always give glory to Me. It will be they who will bring souls for this Convent.

“Pray fervently for all the Mercedarians who will come to inhabit these lands throughout the centuries. Implore fervor, constancy, and perseverance for all those who will dedicate themselves completely to sanctity in the silence of the cloisters, where

some will have to engage in terrible and fierce combat with the infernal legions. See and recognize all these souls.”

Before the eyes of the Spanish Mother all these Mercedarian religious passed. She recognized each one through all the epochs. She clearly saw the virtues that each one – some more and others less – would have to practice to a heroic degree, as well as the sufferings and bitter trials they would have to endure and the relentless combats they would make against Hell. Finally, she saw the glory that they would give to God with their valorous triumph, won with the grace of God and the support of the Immaculate Queen of Mercy, their Mother.⁵²

Mother Mariana gave thanks to God because He would always have beautiful and beloved souls in all Orders. From that moment, she had a special love for the Mercedarian Order. She prayed fervently for all the members of this Order, those of her century and also of the times to come.

Thus ended this marvelous vision, during which the Child Jesus spoke so long to this holy Conceptionist Abbess, manifesting many secrets, the greater part of them terrible, which will take place in the times to come.

I will not see these things come to pass in my mortal life, but my future brothers of the Seraphic Family will see them. Even more, my good sisters of that time, the religious of the Immaculate Conception of this Convent of Quito, will see all this. The rest of the convents and the whole Conceptionist Order will also know these things so that they might praise and give thanks to the Author of such marvels and have no less Saints and Blesseds as the other Religious Orders.

* * *

52. Christopher Columbus took Mercedarian friars with him to America, where they founded a great many monasteries and convents in Latin America, throughout Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Ecuador. This Order took a very active part in the conversion of the Indians. They were also instrumental in spreading the devotion and cult to the Blessed Virgin under this title of Mercy throughout the continent.

The Mercedarian Order in Ecuador was solicitous about obtaining graces and privileges from the Holy See on the occasion of the feasts of the Virgin Mary. In 1911, the Order obtained the Proper Office and Mass in honor of Our Lady of Mercy, invoked as Virgin of the Earthquake for the Province of Quito.

CHAPTER 10

Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who was favored with innumerable and singular gifts from Heaven and was given to know the future, was always very humble and meek of heart. Moreover, she possessed that charming simplicity of a child, which made her so agreeable to others.

During His mortal life, Our Lord Jesus Christ let the little ones climb onto His divine lap, embracing and taking delight in them. On one occasion, He told His Apostles: "Unless you become like little children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Such childlike innocence adorned the grand soul of Mother Mariana, who was also endowed with gifts of nature and grace, prodigiously bestowed upon her by Our Lord.

She told Mother Francisca of the Angels all that had taken place in the last vision (cf. chapter 9), giving her the joyful news that within a few months she would soar happily to Heaven. With tender tears, Mother Mariana sent her recommendations to her beloved Jesus, her Mother the Immaculate Virgin, her Seraphic Father St. Francis, St. Joseph to whom she had a tender devotion, and the Mother Foundress, Maria de Jesus Taboada, as well as all the other holy sisters who, to their great happiness and good fortune, reigned with Christ in Heaven under the blue mantle of their Immaculate Mother, singing the new canticle that only virgin souls intone in the Celestial Kingdom.

Mother Francisca received the notice of her death with the serenity of a just soul who longs to break its mortal ties and soar into the heavenly abode.

She again gave thanks to God Our Lord for having forewarned her of her approaching death, and said that she suffered only upon considering the three months of severe trial that awaited her. She trembled to think that her strength might fail, and like a fragile little boat, she might be shipwrecked on the tempestuous sea of so many interior tribulations and lose God forever.

Mother Mariana encouraged her, replying that if God Our Lord did not want the eternal death of the sinner, but rather his conversion and life in the state of grace, how much more care would He have for His spouses, souls so favored and beloved of His Heart! For since the Divine Master gives no one trials beyond his strength, He would do more for those whom He loved so dearly.

She promised Mother Francisca that during her ordeal, or purgatory, she would assist her continuously, both personally and spiritually. She exhorted her to increase her confidence in God and Our Lady, for they would give her good success. On the other hand, she asked Mother Francisca to not forget her when she was in Heaven. Together with all the Founding Mothers, she should come to assist her at her death, which would take place on January 16 of the next year.

Mother Francisca promised her this.

I will not narrate here the virtues practiced by Mother Francisca or the details of her great sufferings during her purgatory on earth in order to relate them later in a short biography. For the full account of all the Founding Mothers of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito is conserved in the famous *Cuadernón*.

MOTHER MARIANA RELATES HER VISION TO THE BISHOP

Mother Mariana and Mother Francisca then agreed that all the details of the vision should be related to their spiritual director, a Franciscan priest.

This was done, and the Father commanded Mother Mariana to speak with the Bishop since he deemed it necessary to record this vision, not that it might be divulged in those times when such a strong tendency toward idolatry still existed in the people, but for future times, when devotion to Our Lady of Good Success would be propagated in the then free Republic, and the name of this favored religious would become known.

Mother Mariana, humble and ever-confident in God and His Blessed Mother, wrote to His Excellency the Bishop, Msgr. Pedro de Oviedo,⁵³ who was then governing the Diocese of Quito. She requested that he would deign to come to speak with her.

The Bishop, who was not ignorant of the name and virtues of this Spanish Founding Mother, came promptly. He said to her: "Esteemed Mother, before you is your Father, Prelate, and Pastor, disposed to assist Your Reverence in all that be the will of God. Speak freely and confidently to me on the matter that motivated your call.

"Your Reverence knows how much esteem I have for religious Orders and for each one of their members, especially for

53. Most Reverend Pedro de Oviedo was the tenth Bishop of Quito. He approved the cult to Our Lady of Good Success and highly esteemed Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, whom he directed to leave a full written account of her apparitions and favors received from Heaven.

virgins consecrated to God in full enclosure. I admire and venerate their generosity in abandoning everything for the love of God. I myself was a Cistercian friar, as Your Reverence knows, and among the religious souls there is a profound affinity of soul as members of the same family.

“Since God Our Lord has made me Prelate to govern this Diocese, I have resolved to be a father to all, consoling them in their many bitter trials of the past and making their lives more bearable and the yoke of Our Lord sweet. But my special deference is to contemplative sisters, above all the daughters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, whom I have loved with special veneration since I was a child in the hope that this devotion of love will open the gates of Heaven for me.”

Pleased with the paternal goodness of His Excellency the Bishop, Mother Mariana manifested to him that his government would be prolonged for some time longer, years characterized by peace, mildness, and prudence. She then related to him the whole vision. She explained that she had already given a full account of it to her spiritual director, and that he had ordered her to bring it to the knowledge of His Excellency so that he might decide what should be done.

The Bishop listened in admiration to the description of the long vision. While she was speaking, the Prelate felt himself inundated with celestial emotions and was given to understand the admirable simplicity and, at the same time, the high pinnacle of virtue attained by this great soul so favored by God Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. And he gave thanks to God that he should come to know such a creature during his government.

THE BISHOP PROPOSES A NOVENA TO KNOW WHAT HE SHOULD DO

After she finished her narration, the Bishop said:

“Esteemed Mother, the great Apostle warned against placing credence in apparitions, and I do not encourage puerile frivolities in matters so grave and far-reaching as this. But, since this is not the first time I have dealt with Your Reverence, I give praise to God for the great marvels and mercies that He gratuitously works in us, His servants.

“Your Reverence, Mother Francisca, and I should begin a novena tomorrow to the Holy Ghost, source of light and divine clarity, asking that He illuminate us as to what we should do in

respect to this matter that in the centuries to come will bring glory to the August Trinity. After the will of God is known, we will do what He desires and requests of us, regardless of the sacrifices this might demand. After all, the King of Spain, our lord, is a man of good hear, and will help us in this matter.

“I take my leave, Mother. Within ten days, Your Reverence and I will meet again with Mother Francisca, who is soon to depart to a better land. I give her my blessing. God be with Your Reverence and with all my daughters. I recommend myself to your prayers, and I offer you mine.”

After the Bishop had retired, Mother Mariana transmitted his command to Mother Francisca, who humbly acceded to his order.

The next day, the two holy Founding Mothers began a novena to the Holy Ghost, redoubling their fervor and also their penances so that the Prelate might clearly discern the Divine Will.

They also spoke with their spiritual director, who offered to join in the novena, praying it in his monastery and recommending the matter in his intentions at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

During this novena, the two Founding Mothers received many gifts and favors from Divine Goodness.

OUR LADY SPEAKS ABOUT THE INDEPENDENCE OF ECUADOR

Mother Mariana saw her Blessed Mother of Good Success with the Child Jesus in Her left arm and the crosier in her right hand, as she always appeared to her. With a smiling and joyful expression, she said: “My favored daughter, this earthly light will soon be extinguished for my Francisca and you. For the time has arrived for you to leave this land of grief and sorrow, and joyfully enter your true homeland.

“My sweet Infant spoke to you and showed you the war in which this Colony will separate itself from the Spanish Kingdom and become a free Republic (*cf.* Book 2, Chapter 8). You know the reason for this and, even though your heart suffered from this severing from your mother country, you submitted humbly. Your grief was just, for it is a great virtue to love your land of birth and have concern for its public welfare.

“To console you, I tell you that this independence is very convenient, for it will diminish the responsibilities of the monarchs who appoint representatives to govern this land who become ambitious, arrogate undue liberties, offend the Church, insult the ministers of the Lord, and consider themselves absolute masters over everything.

“You know the countless evils inflicted upon the Church of God in this Colony during these times, even on the part of its ecclesiastic representatives, appointed only by virtue of the favor of the Kings. Because of this, how many scandals have been given to the people! How many disputes and quarrels arose! How many sins committed that have offended God!

“We have a great love for this small portion of ground that will one day be Ecuador. And, taking into account the truly good souls who will live here, we will make it a free Republic that one day will be solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart of my Divine Son. It will be proclaimed with a loud voice from one end of the country to the other: *The Republic of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*”⁵⁴

**LIKE A TENDER CHILD, THE CHURCH WILL RESURGE
CRADLED IN THE ARMS OF MY MOST BELOVED CHOSEN SON**

“Dire times will come, when those who should justly defend the rights of the Church will be blinded. Without servile fear or human respect, they will join the enemies of the Church to help them accomplish their designs.

“Woe to the error of the wise, to he who governs the Church, the Pastor of the flock that My Most Holy Son confided into his care!

“But when they will appear triumphant and when the authority will abuse their power, committing injustices and oppressing the weak, their downfall will be near. Paralyzed, they will fall to the ground.

“And, happy and triumphant, like a tender child, the Church will rise again and will rest placidly, cradled in the capable arms and maternal heart of my beloved elect son of those times, who if he will render himself docile to the inspirations of grace – one of these being the reading of the great mercies that my Most Holy Son has given to you – we will fill him with graces and very special gifts.

“We will make him great on earth and even greater in Heaven, where we have reserved for him a most precious seat.

54. President of Ecuador Gabriel Garcia Moreno ratified the Decree that declared the Sacred Heart of Jesus *Patron and Protector of Ecuador* on October 18, 1873. Francisco Salazar Alvarado, *Encuentro con la Historia, García Moreno: Líder Católico de Latinoamérica* (Apostolate of Our Lady of Good Success, 2005), pp.116-20.

For, without fear of man, he will fight for the truth and dauntlessly defend the rights of the Church, for which he will justly be called a martyr.”

THE BLESSED VIRGIN ORDERS THAT PICTURES BE MADE OF THE VISION OF THE CHILD JESUS ON PICHINCHA

“You saw my Divine Child crucified on Mount Pichincha. This was not by chance. Since this mount dominates the city, my Most Holy Son wants to sanctify this site from which the Sacred Heart of Jesus wants to exercise its dominion.

“Just as, by my command, you placed my Statue upon the abbatial seat in the upper choir of this Convent to govern and defend it, as well as for the good of all the villages and cities, so also we desire that you have pictures made of this vision, availing yourself of the present Bishop, a prudent and virtuous priest who governs with great meekness of heart.

“The very words you heard from the lips of your Crucified Love on Mount Pichincha should be written on them.⁵⁵ These pictures will spread all over the world and will be the source of holy inspirations, but through the course of time their origin will not be known. The day will come, however, when it will be known by the sisters of your Convent – those of simple and docile hearts for whom I reserve my secrets.

“Your Bishop has already received the necessary light to tell you that it is desirable to make these pictures. You and my Francisca, who is also hearing what I am telling you here, should support the resolution of the Prelate, for Divine Goodness will dispense great favors to his soul and also to his government. Tell him this in my name.

“Do not fear to disclose your whole soul to him. He has resolved to know your interior, and I will ask you to reveal to him your whole life, its joys as well as sorrows. Do not hide anything from him. Open your heart. Confide your whole soul in him and call him father, for he possesses a beautiful soul.”

The beautiful Queen gave her blessing to Mother Mariana, Mother Francisca, the Convent, and the city, and the vision disappeared. The two Founding Mothers remained speechless and motionless for quite some time. For all this had taken place when the

55. This is in reference to the first sentence of the Christ Child after he ascended the Cross on Mount Pichincha: “I can do no more to show My love for you.”

two were praying in the lower choir of their Convent, recommending the matter with great fervor to God and His Blessed Mother.

After rising from prayer, they went to speak about what had just taken place.

Mother Francisca spoke first: "Mother, do not deprive me of the joy of hearing from your lips the mercies that you have just received from the August Queen and our Mother. I was also privileged to see this beautiful vision."

"Yes, Mother," responded Mother Mariana. "I will speak with pleasure, even though Your Reverence saw everything. We must support the Bishop in having pictures made of the vision of the Divine Child Jesus crucified on the Pichincha, but let us wait to see if His Excellency takes the initiative. Does this not seem prudent to you?"

Mother Francisca responded: "It is a good idea, Mother. Let us hope that the Prelate offers us his opinion, and then we shall support him. Since he has already received inspiration and light from Heaven, all will go well and give glory to God.

We would like to witness this in our mortal life but we shall not see it, for the local people have a propensity to idolatry. From Heaven, however, we will give our assistance and when the need arises, we will intervene so that all goes well. Some will believe; others will not. But this is the way of things in this mortal life. In compensation, our God will be glorified by many souls and there will be secret as well as public conversions. The rest is of no importance.

"How fortunate our sisters of those times will be! They will suffer, for this is the inheritance that we leave to them, together with our Convent and our spirit. In this way, they will sustain the almost extinct Institution until the dawn breaks, when the light extinguished in the candelabrum of the Church will be lit again. Then, these beloved cloisters of ours will be filled with good and holy religious, as Your Reverence, even better than I, knows."

THE DREAM OF BISHOP OVIEDO

The day after the novena ended, the Bishop came to the parlor of the Convent to speak with the two Founding Mothers.

After greeting them and giving them his blessing, he inquired, "Esteemed Mothers, what have you decided with regard to the intention for which you made this novena to the Holy Ghost?"

The two responded together, "As docile daughters, we have resolved to fully obey the orders of our father, taking the opinion of Your Excellency as our own."

The Bishop was so pleased with this response that, unable to contain himself, he said:

“Truly it is the spirit of God that guides your souls. For know that during the novena I have experienced heavenly sensations, and in dreams I seemed to see my Blessed Mother, full of love and maternal tenderness, who recommended this Convent to me, promising me special rewards if I look after it.

“Moreover, I seemed to contemplate the whole vision of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres with regard to the Crucified Child on Mount Pichincha, with this addition: I was asked to order that pictures be made of the vision, which would be spread throughout the world. The pictures should have on them the words pronounced by the Divine Child. I had the impression that these pictures would never be lost; on the contrary, they would be continuously reproduced and have the grace of winning hearts to love God.

“I am going to order a drawing to be made of this apparition of the Divine Infant and send it to Spain, along with letters of recommendation to His Majesty requesting that he use his authority to see that these pictures are made very soon.

“When the pictures return here, I myself will distribute them to all the religious of this Convent and to various priests and religious. I hope this will merit me great public and private goods during my government.”

After he had conversed a long time with the two Founding Mothers, he took his leave, giving his episcopal blessing. He told them that they should have no fear of him and that they should call him whenever they desired, for he would come with pleasure.

He added, “Mother Mariana, go to the confessional for I need to speak with Your Reverence there on interior matters of soul.” Then, leaving the parlor, the Bishop went to the confessional.

MOTHER MARIANA NARRATES HER LIFE TO THE BISHOP

Arriving there, the Bishop told Mother Mariana that in his capacity as Prelate, he felt the need to know the interior of her soul. And, as her father, he commanded her to make an exact account of her life from the time of the use of reason, omitting nothing.

Always obedient and docile to representatives of God, the humble Spanish Mother exposed her whole life to the Bishop with simplicity and childlike candor.

As she was speaking, the Bishop appraised her elevation of spirit and great virtues, and he recognized that God Himself had ruled and guided her steps from her first years until she had achieved this consummate union with her Divine Spouse that he was now seeing.

When he learned that on January 16 of the coming year she would leave this earth to soar to Heaven, he felt a great sadness and asked her, "Esteemed Mother, can we not ask Divine Goodness to prolong your life for the good of this Convent?"

"No, Your Excellency," she responded. "The mortal days of creatures are numbered, and the sentence is given. It is necessary to march resolutely toward our true Homeland. My exile has been long, and it is finally coming to an end."

The Bishop, captivated, for he was a true man of God, returned to his house. There, alone, he meditated on God's liberality and love for those with whom He chooses to communicate and overwhelm with His graces. Because he was a religious and well-versed in the ways of the Lord, he discerned and acknowledged the good spirit of this daughter of the Immaculate Virgin. He clearly saw the authenticity of all her revelations, as well as the intimate relationship she had with God and His Blessed Mother.

THE BISHOP COMMANDS THAT THE PICTURES BE MADE IN SPAIN

As soon as possible, the Bishop undertook to have these pictures printed in Spain. Until that day, nothing like this or even similar had been done.

He wrote the King a fairly extensive account of the matter, emphasizing the fact that the Colony harbored a holy Spanish religious, one of the Founding Mothers of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception. He also wrote about Mother Francisca, saying that these two holy Spanish Mothers, the last survivors of the group who had founded the Convent, were ready to leave this earth for a better life, and that their mother country, Spain, should be proud of daughters so holy and abounding in heroic virtue.

Henceforth, the Bishop, even without being called, would frequently come to the confessional to speak with Mothers Mariana and Francisca. He left them complete freedom to continue to deal with their Franciscan spiritual director on matters of the soul, but without hiding anything from him. These two holy sisters humbly complied.

CHAPTER 11

The moment has arrived for me to narrate the reason for my entry into the Seraphic Order. This grace is due to Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, Abbess and one of the Founding Mothers of this Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, who, from Heaven, was watching over me, even though I did not know it.

I believe that it was this Angel who protected me from my tender years and saved me from perdition in a military career, where there are so many abysses of evil.

THE SEARCH FOR A PROFESSION

I am Portuguese by birth, born in the village of Sotomayor in the Bishopric of Braga. When I was still a child, my father died, and my mother soon followed him. I then remained under the care and guardianship of a maternal uncle, a military man and General in the army.

He took charge of me and the inheritance left to me by my parents, which was sufficient since I was their only child. My uncle was a very good Catholic and an upright military man. He confessed and communicated every year during the Easter season. His wife, a noble and pious matron, frequented the Sacraments along with her children and myself.

Some of the family wanted me to study Law, and others Medicine. But in my heart I felt an ardent love for the military.

One night, when the whole family was gathered together, the topic of my future came up. It was decided that the time had arrived for me to begin my studies. Otherwise, they said, I would have neither prestige nor a profession, which would be difficult for them, as I would live under the responsibility of my relatives. But everything would go well if I would enter a university, since I had my inheritance to bear the expenditures of study. It only remained for me to decide upon a career.

Some suggested to me that I should become a lawyer; others proposed the field of medicine. Only my uncle held his tongue, and when all were silent awaiting my response, he finally spoke, "Manuel, to what career do you feel yourself inclined? Choose freely, without being swayed by the desire of pleasing the family. Speak now, for the time to begin your studies should be delayed no longer."

Encouraged by this question, which left me a free choice, I responded, "Uncle, I do not want to be either a doctor or a lawyer. The only thing that interests me is a military career. I will either dedicate myself to this or do nothing at all."

The family was astonished. My uncle's wife expressed her concerns, "Manuel, I do not want you to become a soldier because you will run the risk of losing your soul. Reflect well on the life you will embrace."

I responded, "I understand this very well, my aunt. But I am quite firm in my resolution."

Then my uncle closed the question: "If this is what Manuel wants, how can we oppose his desire? A good military man can give much glory to God and can even reform a military barracks."

Seeing that he approved of my choice, I spoke decisively before them all, "Uncle, enlist me in the military without delay and I will begin my career."

My uncle, who was a General, had considerable influence among the officers of higher rank, who held him in great consideration and esteem. He made all the arrangements and I had the great happiness of being enlisted in the military, the golden dream of my life.

The family was deeply moved by my departure, as was I, and I thanked them all for their care. I especially thanked the wife of my uncle, who had been like a mother to me. Receiving her blessing, I kissed her hands and took my leave.

IN THE MILITARY BARRACKS

From the time I started my military career, I applied myself with dignity and dedication, never wasting time on futile pursuits, unlike the other young soldiers, who were soon far behind me even though they had entered much earlier than I. My uncle watched out for my progress so that nothing was lacking to me. His wife also continued to be a true mother to me.

Living in close contact with all types of persons and the company of young men without morals had an effect on me. I felt a strong attraction toward the world and its pleasures.

My colleagues, some more and others less, spoke to me of marriage and pointed out possible spouses. I pondered this matter, but I did not feel the inclination to marry. When I was alone, I considered my strong propensity for the military and my indifference and distaste for marriage, and arrived at the conclusion that I was not called to this state.

One day when I was strolling with my uncle, he said to me: “Manuel, you have already reached an age where you might marry. I, who have taken the place of father to you, have an obligation to attend to your future so that it might be secure. For this reason, I should find a proper wife for you. I know several very good young ladies, and I will see which one of them would suit you best as lady of your house and make you happy, as I have been happy with my wife. I believe that you also desire this.

“Since you have said nothing to me – undoubtedly from timidity – I am speaking to you privately to settle this matter and arrange all that is necessary. I myself will see to everything. Your godparents will be my wife and I, who have also been your parents. I only desire to know your final decision. Speak to me freely and with confidence. You know that I love you as a son, the cherished jewel of my beloved youngest sister.”

I responded:

“I thank you, my dear uncle. My heart feels profound gratitude toward you. For, in truth, I consider you and your wife as my parents. I was very young when I lost my parents, and you did all that you could so that I never felt my orphanhood. For all this God Our Lord will reward you, and even more your children. For my part, I will try to fulfill my duties as a faithful and grateful son, wherever my future may lead me.

“Since you have spoken to me of embracing the state of matrimony in order to secure my future, I will tell you with frankness and unwavering resolution that I am not called to this state. I tremble to think of myself as married, no matter how good the spouse might be. I have already thought long on this matter, and always I arrive at the same conclusion. I will live until my death under the protection of you and my aunt, being, indeed, your affectionate and grateful son.”

My uncle embraced me and replied:

“Your forthright resolve pleases me greatly. I neither can nor should oblige you to marry. As for me, I have fulfilled my duty. I see your resolution and accept your decision. Henceforth we will consider you even more our own son, redoubling our parental care.

“In all that you do, always be an upright soldier and worthy of your family blood. Do not stain your soul with unsightly sins that so greatly degrade creatures before God, Who is our Father, yes, but also our just and severe Judge. Such sins also disgrace a man before creatures, for they give origin to scandalous and unfortunate offspring, causing the just disdain of judicious and upright souls.”

In my heart I guarded this advice, which was always beneficial to me in those moments when the bad company of dissolute soldiers tempted me to follow them into the snares into which they would so often fall.

**MANUEL SOUSA PEREIRA LEARNS
ABOUT THE LIFE OF MOTHER MARIANA**

At times my soul would waver in face of imminent dangers. On one occasion in particular, compelled on all sides to yield and fall into a snare, I felt ready to succumb. At the time, I was squadron commander in one of the companies.

I always confessed to a Franciscan friar, but at this time I was not frequenting the Sacraments and my soul was becoming weak, lacking the vigor of grace. Finally, with my head filled with such vain frivolities, I resolved to speak for the last time with this Franciscan friar, my confessor since childhood, to ask him not to forget me in his prayers and to tell him that it would no longer be possible for me to return to see him.

I had a great affection for this friar, whose counsels, together with those of my uncle and aunt, had sustained me in my battles against the Devil, the world, and the flesh.

Once in the presence of this priest, grateful memories of the past filled my heart with unexpected tenderness; unable to speak, I wept like a child. The venerable physiognomy of the priest, the warmth with which he received me, and the great virtue that shone in him made a silent but eloquent reproach of my behavior and the unequivocal abyss into which I was hurling myself with full knowledge.

The priest embraced me and asked, "Manuel, my son, what is wrong? Perhaps your aunt or uncle has died, leaving you a complete orphan and alone? Come now, take heart and speak to me with confidence, as you have always done since you were a child." With great affection, he began to wipe my face with his handkerchief.

I made a sign for him to sit and fell to my knees as if for confession.

The priest encouraged and consoled me, saying:

"My son, perhaps some grave sin has stained your soul in the barracks. Come now! The mercy of God is great. An Act of Contrition, a humble self-accusation made with the firm resolve not to fall again – this is all that must be done. Holy absolution will be the salutary bath to cleanse your soul and return it to friendship in the benevolent love of our good God. Speak, my son, speak to your father."

Somewhat encouraged, I responded:

“My father, no one in my family has died, but my soul is going to die. I already see myself hurling headlong into the abyss, and I come to you only to take my leave because of my regard for you, for I will never return to see you again. Notwithstanding, I beg you to pray to God Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, to whom I shall always have devotion, that they take pity on me and save me when my final hour comes.

“My uncle knows nothing of this, nor do I want him to know, for he has always counseled me to be an upright soldier. My sufferings are redoubled when I think that he could die from shock should he receive news of what I am going to do.”

And I made a detailed account to the priest, who listened with great serenity.

When I finished speaking, he gently patted my head and said: “Now, now, Manuel! You are drowning in a little water. The evil has not yet been done. You are only tempted to do it. I was concerned, thinking that you had already committed the deed. Put this out of your head for the moment, as I recount some marvels that will distract your mind, for you are wandering far from the truth.”

Raising me from the ground where I was kneeling, he made me sit in his old but spotless chair. He picked up a book from his desk and, sitting me at his side, said: “Understand, Manuel, that what you are going to hear is not a story, but the pure truth.

“This is the life of a Spanish sister who lived in the Colony of Quito, where the King of Spain established a convent of the Immaculate Conception. She is one of the Founding Mothers. What an angelic creature! Become devoted to her and you will be happy, because she will watch over you from Heaven.” And he began to read.

As he read, my mind became calm, my heart felt relief and my spirit was reanimated with confidence in God, replacing the desperation that I had formerly felt. Hearing how the Blessed Virgin had treated this human creature with such familiarity, I interrupted his reading and asked, “Excuse me, Father, but is this really true?”

He replied, “Yes, my son, it is the authentic and unadorned truth. God Our Lord and Mary Most Holy, our Mother, take their pleasure in communicating with the humble of heart, and those good and faithful servants are our intercessors in Heaven. For this reason, I have advised you to have a devotion to this holy creature

and invoke her so that you might be happy. Is it not true that this is now what you want also?"

"Yes, Father," I responded, "I desire this very much. Hearing the narration of her life, I have recovered my lost peace of soul. I now see, frankly speaking, what a fool I am. For if the sin was not yet committed, why was I consumed by despair? I do not want to commit the sin, and that is it! I am not a toy to be played with by my young companions, nor a child to be manipulated by them.

"A thousand times blessed be the hour that I came here! I am saved and my honor remains intact! Continue your reading, Father, for it is God Himself who speaks to me."

The priest looked at the clock and said, "My son, the hour for choir has arrived. Go in peace to your quarters; do not sin and return tomorrow. Then we will continue the reading and you can make your confession so that on the following day you can receive Communion."

He raised his eyes to Heaven and gave me a special blessing. I kissed his hand and left the monastery.

FACING HIS COMPANIONS

Meanwhile, the fatal hour to throw myself from the precipice had passed without my notice. My companions had sought me everywhere, including the home of my family.

Seeing their keen interest in finding me, my uncle became worried and also began to look for me. It was he who first found me. He addressed me in a severe tone: "Manuel, where were you? Your companions have been trying to find you for hours. Why did you leave the quarters? What kind of soldier are you? This behavior is not worthy of a soldier of honor. Tell me frankly where you were during this time."

I responded: "My uncle, a thousand pardons for the inconveniences I have caused you. I went to the Franciscan monastery for a short while, and then lost track of the time. I went there to seek consolation from the priest who as you know is my confessor, and truly I found it there. Moreover, my absence at the quarters was providential, which some day you will understand."

Reassured and satisfied, he accompanied me back to the quarters.

Seeing me enter, my dissolute companions approached me. Because of the presence of my uncle, however, they contained themselves in their respect for him. My uncle excused me before

my commanders, who rebuked me for my absence, but said nothing more after my uncle left.

My companions then arrogantly came to reproach me: "Because of you, the whole thing has fallen through. We were waiting for you, but you did not come, and, an hour later the family had already departed. You will not do this again, for we will oblige you to be there – by words or by force."

With a lofty and perhaps somewhat sardonic tone, I replied: "I am not your plaything to be manipulated at will. I am a free man and a noble youth. I will not stain my family name with these depravities, nor will I lose my honor or reputation. Go wherever you will, but do not speak a word of it to me or include me in your evil deeds. For if I learn of any such other shameless deeds that you intend to do, I will denounce you to my uncle, who is a General, and I will see to it that you receive the punishment you deserve."

Hearing the firm resolve in my voice, they became frightened and pensively withdrew.

MOTHER MARIANA APPEARS TO MANUEL IN A DREAM

I passed the whole night feverishly. How long that night was! I felt my heart beat with holy affection for the fortunate Spanish sister who enjoys the happiness of God in Heaven. I was anxious for the next day to come so that I could return to the monastery and hear new marvels that enthralled me and elevated my spirit to God.

When I finally succumbed to sleep, I seemed to see a Conceptionist nun dressed in white and blue, with a beautiful physiognomy and rosy cheeks, who said to me: "Manuel, young soldier, leave this earthly army and enlist yourself among the sons of the Seraphim of Assisi, so that you might fight under his banner to your advantage and gain. This army is superior to yours, and you will not regret your decision."

I awakened, frightened, and exclaimed, "Who has dared to enter here?" Looking around me, however, I could see no one.

Again I fell asleep, and again the same figure appeared before me, speaking the same words. Awakening with a start, I called out in anger, "Who is so imprudent as to dare to enter here? Beware!" And I threatened to take up my sword.

The new day finally broke and, with it, the hour to meet with my confessor. I asked my commanders for permission to go to the Franciscan monastery because of an appointment I had there

so that they would not become alarmed at my absence from the barracks. They readily acquiesced in view of the consideration they had for me, not only because of my uncle, the General, but also because of my irreprehensible conduct.

Happily I set forth and hastened my steps to arrive as quickly as possible. I entered the monastery and went to the cell of my confessor, who met me with the warm amiability characteristic of that holy religious. (In my opinion, he is one of the hidden saints of the Seraphic Order.)

He embraced me and took my hand, asking, "How are you, Manuel? How was your evening? What are your impressions of this Spanish nun? Tell me, for it will please me to hear anything about my sister who was so favored by God, Whose liberality is infinite toward His creatures."

I sat down at his side and said: "Father, this Spanish nun is indeed valiant, diligent, and enterprising. I retired with my mind filled with holy sentiments and good thoughts. I was sleeping tranquilly when I saw her, dressed in her Conceptionist habit of blue and white, with beautiful features and rosy cheeks ..."

And I related everything to him, including my conduct and response to my companions in the barracks on the preceding day.

Filled with joy, he listened to me. He approved my behavior toward my companions, and then added, "Ah, my son! You do not know or understand the pure happiness of a good religious who lives his whole life under the shadow of the cross! O holy religious life! In truth, the army of Francis far surpasses the human army. How fortunate if you were indeed called to it!

"You are still young, and the good God has gifted you with intelligence. You could still study to be a priest – but in Spain, because more opportunity for study exists there.

"You and I must ask Our Lord that He deign to manifest His will to us on this matter through the intercession of our Spanish nun. For if the biography you read is true, then she will not stand idly by.

"Moreover, since you are not called to the state of matrimony, your categorical and resolute response to your uncle may have been providential with regard to your final choice. Let us see, therefore, what God wants of you, Manuel!"

And taking up the book, he began to read.

My spirit, avid for truth, was enthralled by what I heard. My soul seemed to leave earth and my heart beat violently, longing for a pure, enduring happiness where, free from human concerns and affairs, I might live without ostentation or worldly pomp, a

stranger to the desire for honors and vanities. For in the world, hidden vices can spring forth when a man least expects, striking fiercely and hurling him into the abysses, estranging him from God and bringing about, as a fatal consequence, his eternal condemnation.

Finally, unable to contain myself, I broke my silence:

“Father, if a weak young girl can love God like that with a heart so great, magnanimous, and generous, how can I, who am a man and a soldier, not do the same? How shameful for us men that women should surpass us in the matter of heroism!

“Look, Father, the time is flying and the hour is soon arriving for Your Reverence to go to choir. I will be left without knowing the conclusion of this beautiful life. It would be better if you would lend me the book. I will read it with all my companions in the barracks. Perhaps some of them will even amend themselves and leave their lives of vice. Furthermore, it will not be easy for me to leave the barracks for such long intervals in the coming days. For Your Reverence knows well the duties of a soldier.”

“With great pleasure, my son,” responded the priest. “You are right to be concerned about the exact fulfillment of your duties, for perfection in all states of life lies in this.

“Here, then, is the beautiful book written by the renowned Father Bartholomew Ochoa de Alácano y Gamboa,⁵⁶ Spanish by birth and a true son of my Seraphic Father and, therefore, my brother.

“He lived and died in our provincial Monastery of St. Paul in Quito, the Colony of its great motherland Spain. A man of great merit and virtue, his wisdom and prudence were established on the solid foundation of humility.

“Seven months after having been chosen Provincial for the first time, he sent out a beautiful, moving letter to the religious under his jurisdiction (for example, superiors of monasteries, *doctrineros*,⁵⁷ etc.). This epistle exhorted them to zealously and earnestly champion the cause for the beatification and canonization of the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda, also a Franciscan Conceptionist, the glory and honor of our Seraphic Fam-

56. During the years 1760-1770, Fr. Bartholomew Ochoa de Alácano y Gamboa published a series of articles that became a large book about Mother Mariana. It was widely circulated in the Franciscan monasteries of Spain, Portugal, and South America. Fr. Alácano lived many years in the Franciscan provincial house in Quito, serving several terms there as Provincial.

57. These were regular priests in the Colonies who were in charge of a *doctrina*, that is, a recently converted native village that had not yet been established as a parish.

ily. Her life also captivates me, because I see in her the innocence of a child coupled with the wisdom of a great mystical doctor. It is most profitable for the soul to read the doctrines that the Queen of Heaven and Earth Herself, Mary Most Holy, our Immaculate Mother, deigned to give to this beloved daughter. This work is entitled *The Mystical City of God*, and it is worthy of such a name.

“Through the course of time, this work will be read and esteemed by those privileged souls who have a great love for God and clean, pure hearts capable of receiving the truth, Such souls are marked by a solid humility that comes from the spirit of God, for without humility, Manuel, there can be no other virtue. There is only the vain appearance of sanctity, or, better said, a painted sepulcher.”

I took the book from his hands and with great happiness returned to the barracks.

THE READING IN THE BARRACKS BEGINS

Seeing me so content, my commanders inquired, “What has happened to make you so happy? Perhaps the General, your uncle, has arranged a marriage for you, undoubtedly with some noble and prudent young lady who will make you very happy.”

“It has nothing to do with marriage,” I responded, “for I do not have that vocation. I am called to the celibate life. Something else has happened. I have received a marvelous book, written by Padre Alácano, a Franciscan, which relates the life of a Franciscan Conceptionist nun, Spanish by birth and one of the Founding Mothers of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the Colony of Quito, whose foundation was made in the name of the King in the year 1577. If you would like, it can be read aloud in the barracks, for it is a fascinating and true story.”

These commanders were good and upright persons. They strove to see that morality and order prevailed in the barracks. They were also Catholics, even though they did not always make their Easter duty. However, they all prayed to the Blessed Virgin, invoked God and the saints, and never failed to hear Mass on all the days of obligation. Among the ranks, it is true, there were some young dissolute soldiers, but they would only commit their depraved misdeeds out of the sight of the commanders.

My superiors, therefore, with great curiosity and pleasure approved the public reading, which I immediately commenced.

Like a spark, enthusiasm for the work caught fire among all, so much so that soldiers would volunteer to read so that the recitation would not stop. The reading continued until the hour to retire, and, generally speaking, all were very interested. No one spoke of anything else. All admired the heroism of this young Spanish nun who had suffered so greatly.

As the reading continued, a change began to be noted in the barracks. By the time it ended, all unanimously requested a spiritual retreat, which proved most profitable, with great fruit reaped in many souls given to vices.

MOTHER MARIANA APPEARS TO MANUEL DURING THE RETREAT

During the days of the retreat given by the Franciscan Friars, among them my confessor, the beautiful Spanish nun in her blue and snow white habit appeared to me every night in dreams. Drawing near my bed, she would say, "Manuel, leave this earthly army and enlist under the banner of Francis, my Father, who has need of valiant champions to combat vice and save souls. You are a person most fitting for this army, and you will do much good for souls."

I would awaken, frightened. Piously moved, I felt inclined to abandon the temporal militia and enlist in that of Francis, but I could not make the decision to do so, seeing before me mountain of difficulties that, humanly speaking, seemed insurmountable. By the end of the retreat, I had become quiet and pensive, my mind occupied by this matter. I was well disposed to make a complete change of life, but I could not make a definitive resolution.

It was then that I again saw the Spanish nun – but this time it was not a dream. Her appearance was the same as the visions in my dreams. With a serene countenance, she stood before me and said: "Manuel, young soldier, why are you so slow and heavy of heart? Listen at last to the voice of God. Leave the army, the world, and all its foolish vanities, and enlist yourself under the banner of the Seraphim of Assisi. God awaits you there. For if you do not listen to the divine voice and remain deaf to so many inspirations, you will surely lose your soul, which will fall like lead into the deepest depths of the infernal abyss. To convince you of this, see now the place where you will stay for all eternity."

Then I saw the infernal abyss in the center of the earth opening in front of me. There was an empty place in it, filled with fire and atrocious torments. The infernal spirits were dancing around

it, making dreadful shouts and clamors as they anxiously awaited their prisoner.

One devil cried out to the others: "This is the place of the soldier Manuel Sousa Pereira because he did not listen to the voice of the Lord, Who called him to perfection along the path of the nauseating Francis of Assisi, my enemy, who snatches countless souls from me. Let us all strive diligently to prevent this soldier from becoming a Friar Minor. Then when he comes here, we will torment him without compassion."

I returned to myself as if roused from a dream, but completely changed and determined to leave the world forever, happen what may.

I entrusted the matter to the holy Spanish sister with these words: "Holy virgin, if it is true that you are in Heaven, having led the life of fidelity that we have read about here, then you yourself must dispose things so that I can enlist without difficulty under the banner of Francis to fight in the shadow of the standard of the Cross."

I had hardly finished pronouncing the last word when I again saw her, as beautiful as before. With a sweet and gentle voice, she said: "Manuel, my chosen brother, finally God has decisively conquered your heart. Do not fear; all will go well. Do not doubt the veracity of my life, for some day in the near future you will write another biography of me. In it you will also tell the story of your vocation and call to the Seraphic Order.

"You have seen how an eternity of torments awaits you if you do not respond to the divine call. If you are sensible, you will do now what you will wish to have done at the hour of your death."

When morning came, I was panic-stricken and confused, but my mind was made up. I spoke with my confessor, revealing all that had taken place. I told him that I was resolved to leave the world and enlist in the army of St. Francis of Assisi without delay in order to assure my eternal salvation, since it was no longer possible to doubt all that had happened to me in the preceding weeks.

My confessor listened attentively and tenderly. His eyes overflowing with tears, the venerable old religious told me: "What you have seen is no illusion, Manuel. It is God Who is calling you by means of my holy sister.

"How I wish I could travel to Quito, that Spanish colony, and pray before the tomb of the Spanish virgin Mariana de Jesus Torres, as well as before the venerable remains of all the Spanish Founding Mothers of that fortunate Convent! Because of my old age, I cannot hope for that consolation. I will see all my holy

Conceptionist sisters in Heaven, and there I will enjoy their presence.

“Do not fear. This very day I will speak with the Superior of my monastery so that when the retreat ends, you might pass from the human militia to the divine one. After you enter the monastery, we will arrange for your departure to Spain so that you might begin your studies to become a priest.”

“Yes, Father,” I responded. “Enlist me this very day in the Seraphic Militia. I promise that I will be a better soldier there than I have been here. For there, indeed, to fulfill my duties will be a point of honor.”

HIS UNCLE’S CONSENT

At the end of the retreat, the whole barracks made their Easter Communion with extraordinary fervor and enthusiasm. Soldiers confessed who had neglected the Sacraments for 10, 20, and 25 years. All were enthusiastic about the holy Spanish sister.

When the retreat ended, my uncle, who had participated in it with great fervor, called me aside and proposed that we take a short stroll. During the walk, he said to me, “Manuel, my son, what is worrying you? I see that you are pensive and withdrawn. Nothing amuses you. You seem overcome by sadness. Do you feel ill? Speak frankly to me, for I am your father.”

We were in a beautiful meadow. Seats placed here and there by nature herself invited us to rest. We sat down together under a sprawling tree whose shade protected us from the ardent rays of the sun. I embraced him, and replied:

“My uncle, I know that you are a good Catholic. For me, you are truly a father, for I was raised under your protection and custody and you provided my excellent Catholic formation. Various times your counsels have saved me from falling into degrading vices, into which there is such a great propensity to slide in a military career.

“We have just received the gifts of God in a deluge of graces during these days of retreat. With our hearts thus disposed to make sacrifices to God, I want to ask your blessing and permission to embrace the state to which I clearly discern that I have been called.

“First, however, I want to relate all that has happened up to this point so that you will know everything. Then, with your experience, judgment, and prudence, you can weigh the matter

well, and not attribute my firm, unwavering resolution to a puerile burst of emotion or some imprudent recklessness motivated by lack of respect, which I absolutely do not harbor.”

I then told him all that had taken place from the time that I had been missing from the barracks. I ended by saying:

“Our good God, munificent in His gifts and graces, overwhelmed this holy Spanish nun with remarkable favors, as you know well from reading her biography, which, I noted, you greatly enjoyed. From Heaven, this holy spouse of Jesus Christ seeks to attract and win souls to the service of God and to renounce the madness of the thankless world. I am one of these fortunate souls. I perceive that I am called to fight under the standard of the Cross in the militia of the Seraphic Father St. Francis. I must leave, therefore, the human militia, where I am exposing my soul to serious risks.

“Will you, my uncle and my father, accompany me now to the door of the Franciscan monastery to enclose me there, where I will serve God and assure myself of my salvation? Until now, there has been an emptiness in the depths of my soul that I have not known how to fill, for the things of the world could not satisfy me. But I see that the religious life will fill this void. My resolution is firm and irrevocable. No person or thing can make me desist in it. I have already spoken with my confessor, and tomorrow I will know if I will be admitted.”

Perplexed, my uncle embraced me, weeping so strongly that his tears bathed my forehead. Amid his sobs, he said:

“Manuel, my most beloved son, I feel my father’s heart breaking in two. You have been my favored son. I thought that you would close my eyes in death and make the funeral arrangements for my body, but since you are certain that God is calling you to the perfect life, I cannot offer resistance. Go and be happy, but do not forget those who were like parents to you and love you so dearly. Our time on earth is almost over. When you learn that we have died, do not forget to pray for our souls. And just as I enlisted you in the earthly militia, I myself will accompany you to enlist you in the militia of the Seraphim of Assisi, as you desire.”

INTERVIEW WITH THE FATHER GUARDIAN

The following day, I requested permission to go to the Franciscan monastery. I greeted my confessor, who received me with open arms and said, “Manuel, my son, you have been ac-

cepted to be a Friar Minor. Let us go, and I will present you to the Father Guardian.⁵⁸ Respond with simplicity to all the questions he will ask you.”

We passed through several corridors and arrived before a door upon which my confessor knocked. From within a gentle, serious voice responded, “Enter.” We walked in.

I found myself in the presence of a tall, thin religious who was still vigorous and strong. His blue eyes, which revealed sanctity of life and discernment of vocations, fixed themselves on mine. Touching my shoulders, he asked me, “What need brings you here, young soldier?”

“Father,” I responded, “I come to beg, submissive at the feet of Your Reverence, that you have the great mercy to admit me as a Franciscan religious, for I have discovered this to be my vocation. I assure Your Reverence that, with the grace of God, I will be a better soldier in the Seraphic Militia than I have been in the human militia.”

“My son, can you fast, obey, and lead a life of continuous sacrifice and austerity without respite for your whole life from morning to night? Do you have the courage to travel to distant lands – when you least expect it in accordance with the disposition of your superiors – in order to evangelize ignorant souls? Can you live alone and apart from your family, friends, and acquaintances, occupied in meditating on the last ends of man, carrying out the charges that your superiors choose to give you – whether they are to your liking or not – without contradictions or excuses?”

“Yes, Father, I seek all this. Only this can fill the vacuum in my soul. For life in the world was not made for me.”

“Very well, then,” he responded. “If you believe you have the strength for all this and you feel yourself called by God to the religious state in the Seraphic Family, you may enter the monastery, where you will subject yourself to the observance of the Rule from the moment that you become a member of the Order.

“You are admitted. But if you delay more than a week in entering, then the doors of this monastery will not open for you. This is how we shall know if you are indeed called by God. The monastery will pray for you, and I give you my blessing.”

I left the presence of the Father Guardian filled with enthusiasm. I conferred a short while with my confessor and, content, returned to the barracks, where my uncle came to meet me. I told him what had happened and asked him to take the necessary

58. The Superior of a monastery in the Franciscan Order.

steps to end my military career. I also asked to go to his home to prepare for my entry into the Franciscan Order. He attended to all that I had requested.

LEAVE-TAKING

Meanwhile, I made my final farewell to my companions in the barracks. No one dared to say a single word of opposition. The officers, who esteemed me highly, lamented my departure and suggested that I give the matter more thought, thinking that I would be happier as a soldier than as a friar. With my learning and military background, they pointed out, I could soon ascend to the position of General, like my uncle. I, however, thanked them for their kindnesses and took my leave.

Then I went to the home of my uncle and aunt, who were like parents to me. I made arrangements to leave to their children, whom I loved as brothers and sisters, my paternal inheritance, after reserving a third portion of it for the poor.

On the third day of my stay there, at four o'clock in the afternoon, I addressed the family with these words: "My dear parents, my brothers and sisters, my beloved family, the hour has arrived for my leave-taking, which will be forever. I will pass this very night into the sweet solitude of the Franciscan cloister. All has been arranged, and I possess nothing in this world. Now that I am an indigent beggar, nothing stands in the way for me to join my brothers, where I will await my daily succor from Divine Providence, asking the Lord to die rather than be unfaithful."

I knelt before my aunt and asked her blessing. I did the same before my uncle, and then embraced my brothers and sisters. Accompanied by my brothers and my uncle, I joyfully made my way to the monastery. The way seemed long to me, so anxious was I to see myself there.

ENTRY INTO THE MONASTERY

I pulled the cord of the bell. The brother porter inquired who I was and what I desired. I responded, "Brother, I am the soldier who leaves the world and comes to this holy asylum. Open the doors to me, for I have already delayed too long."

The brother replied, "Very well, but first I must advise the Father Guardian of your arrival. Wait one moment."

In a short while, the door opened, and the Father Guardian, accompanied by other Fathers, came out to receive me. Quite

pleased, they greeted my uncle and brothers and made us all enter. After a certain period of conversation, the Father Guardian directed himself to me, asking, "My son, then you have come to stay?"

"Yes, Father," I responded, "I no longer have anything in the world. All my bonds have been broken."

My uncle said, "Father, here you have my beloved son, who makes his final farewell to me. But since it is God Who asks this sacrifice of separation of me, it is not possible to deny it." Copious tears ran down his cheeks as he said these words.

The Father Guardian replied, "Señor General, you should consider yourself fortunate to leave your son in the cloister, for your family will be blessed by God for this."

Directing himself to me, he ordered, "Ask your father's blessing, embrace your brothers, and enter."

I did so, and the religious led me to my cell, while the Father Guardian remained with my uncle and brothers. From that moment I no longer felt that emptiness in my soul, that vacuum which nothing in the world had been able to fill. Everything around me seemed to be smiling.

MISSION IN THE NEW WORLD

The novice master, a religious still young although advanced in the life of penance, explained my obligations and duties, telling me that the yoke of the Lord was light and His burden sweet, and that good will and love were all that was needed to follow Our Lord Jesus Christ. With this spirit, all difficulties could easily be resolved.

He was a religious who was always austere with himself, but amiable and gentle with others, leading us, his disciples, so that we hardly felt the austerity of monastic life. However, he never digressed nor allowed us to stray from the exact observance of the Rule in all its details.

I passed three months there in full observance of the monastic life, my vocation solidifying with each passing day.

During this period, I constantly asked God to manifest His will for me, for my superiors wanted to send me to Spain to begin my studies for the priesthood. I then resorted to the intercession of my holy sister, the Spanish Conceptionist, whom I often would see in my dreams.

In one of these dreams, she said: "Manuel, my brother, God does not want you to go to Spain, but to Quito, the Spanish Colony. There, in the city where I lived, you will do much good and give much assistance to my Convent. Ask that they send you there. I will be your companion. Your soul will profit much more there than in my mother country Spain."

I told all this to the novice master, who promised to pray for me. I continued to entreat Our Lord and His Immaculate Mother, whose devoted son I am, that they might clearly manifest to me God's holy will for me in religious life, so that I could fulfill it during my pilgrimage on earth and thus merit Heaven, the one burning desire of my soul athirst for eternal happiness.

In my meditations, I would ponder the responsibilities of the Franciscan priests and the sublimity of the Priestly Order. This very fact had led my Father, the Seraphic Francis, to refuse to ascend to it. In his great humility, he did not consider himself worthy of priesthood. Then I would say to myself: If a person like my Seraphic Father declined the priesthood out of humility, then what should be said of me, who was a soldier and vile sinner, called gratuitously by the goodness of God to the perfect life through the intercession and prayers of that holy Spanish heroine, a Founding Mother of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito?

Certainly it would be rash and presumptuous for me to nurture the hope of calling down God Himself at the Consecration and holding Him in the same hands that had handled arms with dexterity. It would be better for me to be professed as a lay brother, humbly, respectfully and at the same time gratefully serving the holy ministers of the altar, wielding with even greater dexterity the arms of severe penances on my rebellious body.

In the monastery chronicles, I had read that there were innumerable lay brothers who were saints in the Franciscan Order. Why could I not be like one of them? Health, strength, and good will I had in abundance. I would ask my superiors to send me to Quito in the Colony, so that in that fortunate city, which possessed the remains of my holy sister, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, I might be vested in the Franciscan habit as a lay brother.

I was reflecting upon these things when the novice master, accompanied by the Father Guardian, called me. They led me to the novitiate's vegetable garden, where they addressed me:

"Brother, you have the health and capacity to study to become a priest. So that you might embark on your studies tranquilly and unencumbered, we will send you to Spain as soon as possible.

To be sure of your vocation to our Order, we tested it, and now we want to confirm it definitively. Most probably, your departure will be within two weeks.”

I knelt before the Fathers and spoke:

“Fathers, I am grateful for the great charity of Your Reverences toward me. But, having placed this matter before God these past months, I see clearly that I should not be so bold as to seek to rise to the altar. For if my Seraphic Father St. Francis, being who he was, resolved not to be ordained a priest, how much less can I – who was a soldier – dare to do so? I am firmly resolved to ask Your Reverences to have the charity to receive me in the Order as a professed lay brother, so that I might serve my brothers as a servant and adeptly exercise the arms of penance on my rebellious body, just as I handled arms in my military career.

“Moreover, knowing the great charity that exists in the Seraphic Family, I pray and beseech you, prostrate at your feet – nor will I rise until I have obtained this – to send me to the [West] Indies, that is, to Quito in the Spanish Colony, the country where the holy Spanish heroine, a Founding Mother of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, lived and died.

“In our Franciscan monastery there, I will wear our holy habit and be professed with all the happiness of my heart.

“Your Reverences know well that I owe my vocation to that holy heroine, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who has promised to accompany me on the voyage and has revealed to me that it is God’s will that I ask my superiors to send me to Quito. I have no other aspiration on earth than to be a holy and good Franciscan lay brother.”

**“I RECOGNIZE NO FAMILY OR KIN
SAVE MY SERAPHIC FAMILY”**

The Fathers were deeply moved. Embracing me, they made me rise, saying: “Son, what will your uncle the General say when he learns that you want to travel to such a distant land and renounce the priesthood to be professed as a lay brother? Given the nobility of your name, he will not be pleased with your decision and will place the blame on us.”

“No, my Fathers,” I responded, “I no longer have anything or anyone in the world. Upon entering these blessed walls, I became dead and buried to all my flesh and blood. I consider myself alone in the world, with no other family but the Seraphic Family,

which will assist me in my holy aims and resolutions, make me happy, and provide the necessary means for me to achieve religious perfection in whatever part of the world I might be. Therefore, without further delay, I ask that you send me to the Franciscan Monastery of Quito."

The Fathers pledged to do this. Confident, I submissively awaited the fulfillment of their promise.

During these days, a priest arrived from Spain to deal with various matters in the monastery. He said that his superiors wanted to send him that very month to the [West] Indies to the Franciscan Monastery in Quito to spend some time there to regain his health, since the climate was very beneficial for his recuperation. He was ready to go, but he lacked a companion.

The Fathers told him my story, adding that he could embark forthwith on his travels if he would take me as his companion. The religious looked at me attentively and then said, "Fathers, you have given me an excellent traveling companion. I will take him and present him to our Monastery in Quito, and there he will become a religious."

We were scheduled to depart shortly. I was mad with happiness at seeing my desires realized in this way.

During those same days, my uncle came to visit me. I received him with more affection than I normally displayed. Seeing me so elated, he asked, "Manuel, what new happiness have you received?"

"Uncle," I responded. "My heart rejoices to see my life's desire being realized. I have asked my superiors to send me to the Indies to the Franciscan Monastery of Quito so that I might receive my habit there and make my religious profession as a lay brother, for I know that God has called me to this. Everything is moving forward favorably for me, for a priest who just came from Spain is departing for Quito, the Spanish Colony, and I shall accompany him.

"Therefore, my uncle, the time has come for me to give you my final farewell and embrace, which I ask that you transmit to your spouse, my mother, and to my brothers and sisters and family, for I will not have time to do so myself."

My uncle became stiff as a cadaver. He spoke, his voice broken by sobs:

"Manuel, my son, you told me that you wanted to be a priest. The Fathers assured me that they would send you to study in Spain, and I have not ceased to question them about when you

would depart so that I could accompany you and leave you well-established and recommended, as befitting your noble blood and in conformity with my social condition. It seems to me that you are so inebriated with joy that you do not realize what you are saying. I will never consent for you to be professed as a lay brother. I will have you return to my house, and there arrange a brilliant future for you. Although you have already renounced a military career, to which you do not believe yourself called, clearly you can embrace another without straying from the path of a most Catholic life.

“I will speak with the Fathers, and this very day you will be in my home, where we lament your absence and still harbor hope of having you with us again.”

At that moment, the Fathers arrived to tell me that I should take leave of my uncle since the bell for choir would soon ring. My uncle, quite distressed, told them his intentions. They responded that they understood why he was displeased and that, if I so desired, I could return with him immediately since the religious life must be entered with a free will.

Speaking out, I responded: “My uncle, I am an orphan and alone in the world. I am a beggar and pauper of Christ in this holy asylum, asking from divine mercy daily sustenance for my body, which is mortal, as well as virtue and sanctity for my soul, which is eternal. Neither you, with your house, family, and nobility, nor anyone else can take this from me. You must consider me dead and buried.

“Nobility, riches, human and worldly aspirations no longer exist for me, just as I no longer have parents, who rest in the obscurity of their graves. I seek God, despising all worldly pursuits and free from parental ties and considering the worst enemies of a religious to be his family. Because of this, I am traveling far from here, so that none of my family might intrude upon my solitude and place obstacles in the way of the perfect life to which I have been called by God.

“I will have the incomparable happiness of making my religious profession as a lay brother in a land far from here, so that you will have no cause to be embarrassed. Consider me dead, I beseech you. Ask about me no more, since I no longer acknowledge family or friends, only my Seraphic Family, which will make me happy in time and in eternity.

“Farewell, the hour for choir is already here! Farewell for all time! May God be with you!”

I gave a final embrace to my uncle, who was weeping like a child, and I took my leave. The Fathers remained to attend to him, and satisfied, I rejoined my companions to go to choir. When it ended, the Fathers came to tell me that my uncle had left quite impressed by my resolve.

They then counseled me, "Think well, my son, on what you are going to do so that later you will not regret your decision. There is still time to change your mind."

I responded: "Fathers, I have considered the matter long and well, and my decision will not change. I have neither the whims of a boy nor the inconstancy of a woman. I am a grown man and a soldier. I shall leave here – nothing will change it! – and go where God is calling me. I am a member of the Seraphic Family, and I will never regret it.

"Those who live in the world, even the good, must contend with its vanities and desire for honors. Only the life of humility can satisfy me – the hidden life that my Lord Jesus Christ lived for 30 years. My Seraphic Father St. Francis founded his Order in accordance with the Holy Gospel. In it I desire to live, hidden from all, without ostentation. Let Your Reverences send me as soon as possible to the place God desires me to be."

They embraced me and gave me their blessings, assuring me on the part of God that I would always be very happy in the Seraphic Order, for our Father St. Francis recognized me as a true son. They then made all the arrangements for my departure.

DEPARTURE

O beautiful morning of January 10, 1777, I being 26 years and one month of age!

After receiving Communion and taking breakfast with the members of the Monastery, I embraced each of the friars, as well as my companions. With tears, all bid me their farewells. The Father Guardian and the novice master accompanied me to the door.

We had no sooner arrived at the entranceway than the outside bell rang forcefully, and the brother porter appeared before the Superior, saying, "The General, uncle of our dear brother Manuel, is here asking to speak with him."

"Patience!" I breathed. And we went out to meet him.

He took me into his arms and weeping, said, "Manuel, my beloved son, are you so hard of heart that you can abandon your

aged parents at the very threshold of their deaths? Can you not wait just five more years?"

I responded with great serenity: "Beloved uncle and my father, I have an immense love and gratitude for you. For this very reason, I am resolved to dedicate myself completely to becoming holy so that I can win graces and mercy for you in time and eternity.

"At this very moment I am leaving this monastery for the Indies to take the Franciscan habit and be professed there as a lay brother in our Monastery of Quito. This is what God desires of me. This is His most holy will.

"Bless me always and pray for your son. On my part, I can never forget you. You will be foremost in my prayers. But to delay my formal resolution and prolong my voyage – this I cannot do!

"You remember that passage in the Gospels where Our Lord Jesus Christ called a youth to follow Him. He responded that he would do so after a while because of his duties to his family. And what happened? He was not admitted, and it is believed that he lost his soul for not having attended to the divine call. I do not want to imitate this youth. God is calling me: Farewell!"

Then my uncle said to the Father Guardian, "Manuel is immovable in this resolution. If it is God Who is calling him, then let him depart for the Indies and be happy there."

Turning again toward me, he added, "I bless you, my son, my Manuel. Go and follow Jesus Christ in the Seraphic Army. Do not forget us, we who shall never forget you."

I knelt and asked his blessing, and then did the same before the other Fathers. This done, I left the Monastery with my companion Father Baltazar, and headed for Spain.

I set off most content of spirit. Nature itself seemed to be smiling around me. The birds sang with special sweetness and my spirit soared to celestial heights. My soul, tranquil at seeing its most ardent desires realized, was jubilant.

Father Baltazar said to me: "Brother, I see in you predestination for the Order. Never have I seen such happiness in youths who leave the world, especially in your case where you faced great trials. Tell me: Have you no regrets about renouncing your nobility, fortune, and honors in order to be hidden forever in a distant corner of the world in the humble state of lay brother?"

"No, Father!" I responded. "All those trifling things are of no importance to me. They are nothing more than a grass fire that the wind quickly extinguishes; or rather, deceptive and mendacious

glitter and tinsel, vanities of vanities, which, once tasted, leave one with the horrible bitterness of a guilty conscience.

“How holy the religious state is, and even more perfect the humble profession as a lay brother!”

When we arrived in Spain, the Fathers received me warmly, as if I were a long-established member of the Order. I remained there one week, as happy as if I were in my home, encircled by the solicitous care of an intimate family.

FINALLY, QUITO!

In the middle of January in the year 1777, I finally left Spain en route to the Indies in the company of Father Baltazar, who acted as my guide acquainting me with the various countries we passed through. We always went to the monasteries of our Order where I was never treated as a stranger. For the Franciscan Order is a solicitous mother to her faithful sons throughout the world.

In Quito, we were received with indescribable happiness by the members of the Monastery, who had already been informed of my coming. They all congratulated me for my firm resolution to renounce the earthly army and enlist in the Seraphic Family.

“The army of Francis of Assisi battles fiercely against the Devil and is most beloved of God,” they told me. “One lives and dies in it with admirable peace of soul. Moreover, in this Monastery there are holy religious who edify the others with their lives, and in these lands the Seraphic Family has engendered saintly lay brothers.”

And, weeping like a child, I unburdened my heart, telling them I desired to take the habit as a lay brother.

“Would it not be better, brother,” returned the religious, “for you to study and be ordained a priest so that you could win souls to God in the pulpit and confessional?”

“No, Father!” I responded. “In the humble state of lay brother, I will help the missionaries with my prayers and work. My steadfast resolve upon leaving the world was to be professed as a lay brother.”

NOVITIATE AND RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Days of true spiritual delight passed joyfully and swiftly in the religious cloisters. In this spirit I passed through my novitiate, tasting the true happiness that those in the world anxiously seek and rarely find, for it can best be found where God lives in a special way in the silence of the austere life of the cloisters, the ante-chambers of Heaven.

When my novitiate ended, I had the incomparable good fortune of pronouncing my religious vows in the humble state of lay brother, considering myself more fortunate than the King of Spain.

On the morning of February 5, 1778, at the age of 27 years and two months, the members of the Franciscan Monastery, filled with holy rejoicing, witnessed the act of my profession. Such was the bliss of my soul that I thought myself to be in the company of the Saints. No earthly concerns clouded the limpid heaven of my monastic life. Everything seemed easy to me. In a word, I was happy.

Suffused in this inexpressible joy, I lived in the Monastery of Quito.

IN THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

One of our priests directed some of the religious in the Convent of the sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Whenever he went there, I was permitted to accompany him, which pleased me greatly.

While the priest was in the confessional, I would draw near the grating of the lower choir. With holy envy and profound religious respect, I would gaze into that blessed, privileged place where God and the Blessed Virgin had communicated with that angelic creature Mother Mariana. I seemed to see her in all the facets that her biography described – her profound humility, her circumspect air, her gravity in step, in a word, her sanctity which was reflected in her exterior way of being.

I would say to myself: “Oh! If I could only have come here during the earthly life of my holy sister, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres!”

At times, my heart would be so deeply moved that I wanted her to resurrect from the sepulcher, and I would cry out in tears: “Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, my Spanish *niña*, I am finally in your house. Throw off the shrouds that cover you, and arise to draw near this grating! Bless me and speak words of divine fire that will set my cold heart ablaze. Hear your brother, for you have brought me in an admirable way from distant lands here to Quito, where I am content.

“What I would not give to have arrived here when you were living your earthly life, to hear the timbre of your voice, like that of a chaste and tender dove whose plaintive notes captivated the Heart of your beloved Jesus Christ and Blessed Mother, induc-

ing the Sovereign Majesties to descend from their Paradise to speak familiarly with you and communicate most intimate secrets, especially concerning the centuries to come.

“Blessed be the walls that guarded you, a red rose and white lily in this seraphic garden of the Immaculate Conception of the Queen of Virgins. Do not forget me now that you sing in glory the new canticle in Heaven, after having sung the divine praises in this choir.

“My holy sister, you know all that has taken place in my past life. It was you who kept me from falling into the abyss. A thousand times blessed and glorified is the infinite mercy of God in me!

“Even though I am content in the humble state of lay brother, my brothers continue to insist that I begin my studies to be ordained a priest. My cheeks blush to say this, for I do not consider myself worthy, and my heart trembles when I consider that, should I rise to the altar without being called by God to the priesthood, I might deviate from the true road leading me to Heaven and hurl myself into the abyss of Hell. For, living and praying in the state of a lay brother, I can securely be saved in the Seraphic Order.

“For how could I rise to the altar and, calling to Our Lord Jesus Christ with the sublime words of the Consecration, dare to touch His Sacred Body with these hands that have borne and handled arms as a soldier?

“Speak to me from your grave, holy sister. Tell me what Our Lord desires of me, for I am a worm, an ignoble piece of soot, an ignorant lay brother! Once I know the holy will of God, I will follow it, sparing no effort to do so considering how He sacrificed Himself for my sake to the point of allowing Himself to be suspended by three large spikes to a cross, His Sacred Body one wound and His Divine Blood shed only for love of me.

“Contemplating Him thus, I am consumed with the desire for martyrdom so that I might also shed my blood as proof of my love, just as so many lay brothers of this Monastery of Quito have done. If only I could accompany the missionary priests on the missions they preach to the Indians on the coast and other places in these lands!”

Weeping like a child, I would unburden my heart at the iron grille of the lower choir of that fortunate Convent, returning to my Monastery with a tranquil heart, well disposed to love God and resolved to follow His Holy Will in all that He asked of me.

THE PRIESTHOOD

One night, as I was soundly sleeping in that peace which stands as testimony to a good conscience, I again saw my little Spanish sister dressed in blue and white. Beautiful and smiling, she said to me: "Brother Manuel, I congratulate you for hearing the voice of God and leaving the world with the courage of a soldier. You will be blessed in time and in eternity.

"Know that the pious sentiments that you feel before the iron grille of the lower choir have not passed unnoticed by me. I look down at you tenderly as a brother, and I respect you as a minister of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has chosen you to rise to the altar and call Him down into your hands, treating Him with grateful tenderness and love.

"My Seraphic Father St. Francis has chosen you as his successor in the government of this important Monastery. In the future you will do much good here. Obey your superiors and allow yourself to be ordained a priest without fear of falling astray from the path, for not only are you called to this, but also especially chosen for it.

"After you become a priest, do not forget to assist my Convent, which will always need the support of its brothers, the Friars Minor, who will sustain it with their counsels until that longed-for day arrives when the Convent will be totally under their care."

I awoke from my mysterious dream, my heart filled with love of God. I resolved to study to be ordained a priest, even though I trembled to think of treating and handling the Sacred Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

My Father Confessor had been insisting increasingly that I should begin my studies. Therefore, I told him about my dream and the holy resolve that I had made upon awakening.

He listened with lively interest and then told me firmly: "Brother, delay no longer and attend to the divine call that the Eternal Priest is making for you to rise to the altar. Do not fear, for you have been professed a lay brother, and now, through the orders of your superiors, God is manifesting His Will to you, which was confirmed by the apparition of our Spanish sister. It would be a blatant sin if you remain deaf to this call."

"Yes, Father," I responded.

Taking my leave of him, I met with the Father Provincial and various members of the governing council. All were unani-

mous in their opinion: “Brother Manuel, put aside your fears. Do you want to trifle with God and ignore the Divine Will? Tomorrow you will begin your studies to be ordained a priest with no further excuses, which would no longer constitute virtue on your part but stubborn revolt. How unbecoming this is for a Friar Minor!”

I knelt and kissed the feet of my superiors. When they raised me from the ground, I responded, deeply moved, “Fathers, let the most holy will of God be done. I will obey you, being certain that I can count on your prayers.”

I began my studies, which progressed with amazing ease. I had recommended them to my holy sister, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, telling her that if it was the will of God for me to be ordained and if the things I had read in her life were true, then she should facilitate my studies. And this happened just as I requested.

After I completed my studies, my superiors took all the necessary steps for my ordination. Since I was Portuguese, the King of Spain, His Majesty Don Charles III, as well as the Franciscan Commissioner General of New Spain, Father Manuel Trujillo, had to incorporate me into the Province of St. Paul of Quito. This was approved in a decree in the year 1786.

Thus I was able to be ordained a priest in 1787.

Henceforth, I exerted the greatest effort to see that the Convent of the Immaculate Conception was well attended and that nothing was lacking to those religious virgins, inheritors of the spirit of their illustrious and holy Founding Mothers.

FATHER PEREIRA BECOMES THE CONFESSOR OF THE CONCEPTIONIST SISTERS OF QUITO

During a canonical visit to this Convent, His Excellency the Bishop requested that two Franciscans accompany him. I was one of those fortunate to be chosen.

My desire to enter its walls was great, and the night preceding the visit was long – very long. When morning came, we went first to the Convent church, where we awaited the Bishop. In accordance with the requests of the Rule, we then entered the cloisters with him.

In the lower choir, my heart leapt with joy. They were singing the responses for the deceased, but I said to myself, “What they should be singing is the *Te Deum!*”⁵⁹

59. The *Te Deum* is sung on occasions of joy and triumph. Its first verse is *Te Deum laudamus*: We praise you, God

The responses concluded, the numerous members of the Convent of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception, my dear sisters who had been assisting at the ceremony, all came to attend to their Franciscan brothers. The sisters alternated in accompanying the Bishop on his tour. I asked about the tomb of the Founding Mothers. When they told me that there before me lay Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, involuntarily I knelt and kissed that blessed spot.

I asked the sisters, "Could I see those most beloved remains? I would like to kiss her hands."

"Father, it is impossible," they responded. "The Bishop would find out, and then..."

While the others went through the lower choir, I remained at the sepulcher of my benefactress sister. I felt the efficacy of her virtue and an atmosphere of sanctity and love of God that issued from that beloved tomb. After all the others had left the choir, I remained there immobile until my companion came to call for me to leave. My soul and my heart, however, remained there at the tomb!

When they showed us the prison, tears flowed from my eyes. I seemed to see my holy sister imprisoned and shut up there. Seeing me weep, the Bishop asked, "Why these tears, Father?"

"Ah, Your Excellency," I responded, "how many holy memories there are in this venerable place, sanctified by the suffering of virtuous souls. Here Our Lord Jesus Christ was imitated, He Who was innocent but suffered as if He were a criminal."

As the visit continued, I felt myself overwhelmed by holy emotions, for everywhere I seemed to see my angelic sister.

It was during this visit that the sisters first came to know me. Seeing how devoted I was to their Convent, from then on they would call me to the confessional. I would go with great happiness and would stop any work that could be postponed in order to attend to them, even if this necessitated that I work into the night.

My soul delighted upon encountering these innocent virgins, most favored by God. And I, with the confidence of a brother, questioned them on all that they knew about Mother Mariana.

The sisters told me various facts that were not contained in the biography that I had first read in my homeland Portugal.

One of the sisters I directed was kind enough to present me with a diary in which Mother Mariana had written her weekly meditations. I carried this little notebook with me always, nor would

I trade it for anything in this life since it had been written by her. For me it was a precious relic.

In all the circumstances of my life I had the custom of recommending myself to my holy sister, whose protection toward me I visibly witnessed.⁶⁰

Prayer

O angel of innocence and purity, from the happy Homeland where you live, do not forget your brother who still navigates on this tempestuous ocean of life. From Heaven you see my difficulties, needs, and fears as I pursue my priestly life.

I was ordained because God desired it and because you insisted that I do so. Now, watch over your brother so that he might please and glorify God in everything. These are my only desires in this miserable valley of suffering and tears.

When the end of my life draws near, assist me then more than ever so that I might die a holy death and be with you for all time in Heaven under the blue mantle of our Immaculate Mother, contemplating and loving God for eternity without fear of losing Him.

* * *

60. It is known that Mother Mariana often concretely assisted Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira, appearing to him to give him succor when he found himself in dangerous situations during his missionary work. She was the guiding star of this soldier of St. Francis who died in the odor of sanctity.

CHAPTER 12

I interrupted the life of our religious heroine, dear reader, to narrate my own in view of its link with hers. I will now continue to describe the last months that this angel in human form passed on this earth.

After the death of Mother Francisca of the Angels,⁶¹ the solid virtue and grandeur of spirit of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, the last of the Founding Mothers, became even more manifest. So great was the fraternal love that bonded the Founding Mothers – who had gone through so many hardships, difficulties, and sufferings together in founding and establishing this Convent – that the death of each one profoundly wrenched the fibers of the hearts of those who remained. Since Mother Mariana de Jesus was the youngest of the Founding Mothers, she helped to prepare all the others for death. But with each one who passed away, part of her would also die, and her heart would experience more pain.

MOTHER MARIANA PROMISES TO REMAIN IN THE CONVENT AFTER HER DEATH – A NEW FOUNDATION IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The sisters understood and suffered to see the waning away of a life so precious that each one would have gladly offered her own in its place. They would frequently ask her:

“Mother, how is Your Reverence? How is your health? We see you becoming increasingly frail, and we fear that cruel Death will snatch you from us. For if Your Reverence dies, everything will die for your daughters, and the Convent will fall to the ground.”

To this she responded: “Daughters of my heart, your Mother senses that her prolonged exile is finally coming to an end. Sister Death already approaches. I await her with happiness and I call to her anxiously. She will open the doors of Heaven for me so that I might enter and be reunited with my Founding Mothers, for you know that I am the last of them.

“When I leave this mortal life, I will by no means die for you or my daughters throughout time who will be faithful to their

61. The chronological sequence of the chapters of this Volume is not rigorously exact. The death of Mother Francisca of the Angels will be narrated in more detail in Chapter 28.

vocations. Nor will I die for the Convent, which has cost us unspeakable and inconceivable sacrifices to found and firmly establish. I will not die but, to the contrary, all the Founding Mothers will live here until the end of time. Invisible to the human eyes of our daughters, we will be here sustaining the life of the cloisters, guarding the observance of the Rule, and always separating the good wheat from the chaff.

“When humanly speaking it will reach extinction, after purifying the spirits in the 20th century, we will bring suitable young women for a new foundation. Each of these youth will correspond to the grace of the vocation, received from God through our intercession. They will be faithful models of their Founding Mothers, whose names they will bear.

“At this moment you are well-organized and established. My presence is not necessary for you. I know your filial love which makes you think otherwise. The maternal love that I have for you will be perfected in Heaven, toward which I will lead each and every one of you. Physically speaking, my heart will cease to beat but my love will not be extinguished, not even in the cold dust of the sepulcher.

“Love one another. Strive to overcome your weaknesses. Daily recommend each other to God so that you might be good religious. Love and follow to perfection your holy Rule and Constitutions, so that you might live tranquilly and happily during this life and after your deaths be reunited with your Founding Mothers, who await you in Heaven.”

Each word was like a dart penetrating the hearts of her daughters, who daily saw that precious life being snuffed out, like the oil of the lamp that slowly burns itself out, a solitary witness before the Divine Prisoner of the altar.

More and more they came to see the perfection of the religious life of this faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, whose life was truly a living sermon, conforming perfectly to the behavior dictated by the Rule for the sisters of the Immaculate Conception with regard to Superiors.

She seemed more an angel in human flesh than a mortal creature – always even-tempered, humble of heart, and understanding, never taking sides, always obliging to all of her daughters in everything that did not imply the least imperfection for her noble soul. She was the first in the observance of the Rule and in monastic chores, and the last to rest from them. As soon as she

finished her own duties, she would hurry to go help her daughters with that tenderness and love proper to a real mother.

When some member of the family of her sisters would die, she would grieve as if it had been one of her relatives. She would weep with her sisters and console them with words of unction proper to the saints, given to them by divine munificence for the consolation of their fellow men. In addition to this, she would take upon herself intercessory prayer and penance for the eternal rest of the soul of the deceased.

* * *

CHAPTER 13

On a certain occasion, the brother of one of the religious of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito died, assassinated by thieves on his return from travels through the south. He was a youth named Robert, somewhat dissolute and careless in the fulfillment of his Catholic duties.

His sister, as well as Mother Mariana, had endeavored with great interest for the conversion of his soul; this, however, demanded much patience.

When he came to bid his farewell before departing for his journey, Mother Mariana directed these words to him: "Know, Robert, that God Our Lord is shortly going to call you to your judgment and if you do not amend yourself, you are placing your salvation at risk. How bitter for your family should death surprise you in your present condition!"

These words deeply penetrated the heart of this youth, who, piously moved, responded: "Certainly, Mother, I will return and amend my life according to the norms of the Gospel. If I could only delay my trip one day, I would do this immediately. But everything has already been arranged and settled – above all with my companions, because it is impossible to travel alone on these roads infested with thieves.

"On my return, attending to my soul's needs will be my first concern. For this, I recommend myself to the prayers of Your Reverence, my beloved sister, and this holy Convent, to which I will bring a remembrance of my trip."

"I assure you that I will help you in your greatest affliction," responded Mother Mariana, "because you are one of the souls chosen by God for Heaven. During your travels, do not let one day pass without praying the Rosary on the beads that I am going to give you. Pray with your companions, beseeching God for a good death and the salvation of your soul. Examine your conscience daily, so that you might confess afterwards."

Deeply moved, the youth took leave of his sister and the convent. He did all that Mother Mariana had counseled him. On the trip he conducted himself like a practicing Catholic. His companions related that he was pensive.

When they tried to divert him, he would explain, "I travel only compelled by urgent necessity and to take advantage of your

company. It seems that my death is near. Nothing can give me pleasure, and the only thing that I long for is to reconcile myself with God.”

“A SISTER OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PROTECTS ME”

Arriving at the destination, he carried out his affairs with great care. He prepared one package marked for his “little sisters” of the Immaculate Conception, whom he loved with his whole soul.

When we had arranged everything for the return trip, two of our companions became ill.⁶²

There were five of us who were traveling together, not counting the servants and pages. We decided to delay our return until our companions had recovered.

Robert, however, became restless, saying that he needed to return immediately and that he would go on ahead. He left all of his merchandise with us, as well as his servants, taking only one page to accompany him. We opposed his traveling alone but could not detain him. He departed after taking his leave with all the courtesy proper to a well-bred man of a good education.

We were impressed by the sadness of his countenance, and we ardently desired the immediate recovery of our companions so that we might hasten our departure and overtake Robert, for he did not have much experience on long trips.

Two days after his departure, as night was falling, we heard someone shouting for us in the distance, apparently in great affliction. We did not know who it could be, but our dear Robert came to mind.

Without delay, two of us, along with three pages and five servants, mounted and, so to speak, flew in the direction of the shouts.

As we drew near, we recognized Robert’s voice. Desperately we spurred on our mules. You can imagine our surprise when we saw that three tall, strong, armed *mulattos* on foot were pursuing Robert. The latter, mounted, called out to us for help, saying that he was wounded and his strength was failing, and that he was only being sustained by a sister of the Immaculate Conception.

62. From this point until somewhat later in the chapter, the story abruptly changes and is told in first person plural, giving the impression that this whole section was taken from the testimony of one of Robert’s travel companions. Interspersed are various paragraphs of commentary, which appear to have been written by Fr. Manuel S. Pereira.

(It is fitting here to clarify that God granted Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres the grace of bilocation on various occasions. At times she was seen assisting the Bishop; at other times, in the City of St. Francis of Quito and other places where her help was needed.)

We began to shout, "We're coming! We're coming!" and other words of encouragement to give support to Robert. The *mulattos* fled. We found Robert in his last throes, and he told us, "A sister of the Immaculate Conception is sustaining my life."

(The pious reader will remember that when Robert took his leave of Mother Mariana de Jesus, this good religious announced his impending death, telling him that he should pray the Rosary she had given him every day and implore the Blessed Virgin for a good death. She had also added: "I will help you in your greatest affliction." It was this Spanish religious who appeared to him here, sustaining his life until he could make his confession for he should have already died from the loss of blood from the first wounds he received. This is the power of prayer! How God Our Lord attends to the supplications of His beloved spouse!)

We were astonished to find Robert agonizing and the mule completely lacerated, its intestines hanging outside its stomach and trailing on the ground. Seeing it in this miserable state, we marveled at how this poor animal could have traveled so far carrying Robert. We were all convinced that it was a great miracle, worked by virtue of some devotion of Robert's or prayers made on his behalf.

Since we knew that he had a religious sister he dearly loved in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, we were certain that these sisters had sustained his life until he could make his confession, and that they were also responsible for the mysterious strength of the mule that allowed it to carry him.

With profound grief, we carried the bodies of Robert, his page, and also one of the thieves to a nearby village so that due procedures could be followed. By this time our companions had recovered, but we had to delay our departure date until these matters were concluded so that we could take the certificates and testimonials to present them to Robert's parents and family, as well as to the Royal Court.

HOW ROBERT'S DEATH TOOK PLACE

Now, let us explain how his death took place.

With the help of passers-by so that we now numbered 25, we hastened forward and surrounded the thieves to seize them.

One of the villagers who joined us killed one of the robbers with a sure shot. The other two fled, wounded, as we could see from the blood stains they left on the road.

We approached Robert, and he extended his hand. Near death, he fell in a faint atop the gentle mule that carried him. We placed him on the ground. Our poor friend, his eyes half-glazed, tried to speak but was unable to do so. He clasped our hands, which became drenched with his blood.

As soon as we had taken him off the mule, the animal fell to the ground covered with blood. At first, we thought that this was also the blood of Robert, whom we hastened to attend with great dedication. We managed to make him swallow several sips of wine. With this, he managed to speak, although with great difficulty.

Between long pauses, he said these words: "My friends, I am dying. Bring me a priest so that he can hear my confession and absolve me."

In the meantime, several groups of travelers had passed. Among them were some Franciscan friars, whom we begged to attend to our poor friend. With great haste they went to him.

Upon seeing them, our Robert extended his arms to them and copious tears rolled down his cheeks. We retired, leaving the two priests alone with him. One of them heard his confession, while the other held him in his arms, for his strength was rapidly failing. He spoke for a half hour.

At the end of his confession, the fathers called us. We approached and Robert said to us: "My friends, I am happy. Reconciled with God, I die tranquil. Nothing disquiets me. I beg you to deliver all my merchandise to my family. But one of the packages – you know which one – is destined for the sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Ask everyone not to forget me in their prayers for I have need of intercession for my soul. Go find the page who accompanied me so that if he is still alive, he might have the opportunity to confess."

Ten companions, three servants, and a page immediately set out and found Robert's page some distance away, dead and completely stripped. The mule he had been riding was also killed. They covered him with a poncho and carried him back to where we were, but we did not let Robert see him or learn of his sad end. The fathers examined him, and it was generally agreed that he had been dead for some hours.

Robert was slowly fading away. The fathers began the recitation of the Litany for the Dying. After Robert kissed the

Crucifix presented to him by the Franciscan missionaries, he gave a profound sigh and died in the arms of the priests, with no convulsions or any other movements.

In this affliction, we approached the mule to make it rise to carry Robert's body to the place nearby where the others awaited us. How great was our surprise to see that the animal was completely lacerated! We realized that it was a miracle that the poor animal had managed to carry Robert for such a long distance.

MEANWHILE, IN THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION...

On Friday evening in the month of December, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres called for Mother Manuela, one of her former novices, and said to her: "My daughter, you know that my heart belongs entirely to my daughters. Your sorrows are my sorrows, and your joys, my joys. I am going to prepare your heart so that you might tranquilly receive the gift of tribulation that your Divine Spouse desires to present to you.

"I have been very concerned about Robert. And today he is in need of assistance. Pray, implore, and cry out to the Divine Prisoner to help him. He is a soul beloved by God and for this reason, I have not ceased praying for him since he took his leave of us.

"Know, my daughter, this day he will fall into the hands of outlaws, who will try to take his life, but you and I will not permit this to happen until he can confess himself and reconcile himself with God, for he has already prepared his confession and is well disposed to pass to eternity. Moreover, some of our Franciscan brothers will be with him, and they will assist him in his last hour. But for all this to come to pass, much prayer on our part is needed."

The religious trembled to receive this news. Throwing herself into the arms of Mother Mariana, she began to weep in dismay. With broken words, she said: "My Mother, do violence to the goodness of God so that my poor brother will not fall into the hands of these cruel murderers and can return safe and sound to the bosom of the family. For you know that he is the only son and has been everything for my parents and sisters. Since you know that he will be assaulted, ask God to not let this happen."

"Child of my soul," responded Mother Mariana, "we cannot understand the impenetrable designs of God. This death has been decreed for our dear Robert. Show courage and generosity toward

God. Do not lose time weeping; rather, pray to God to assist that dear soul.”

Taking her into her arms, Mother Mariana embraced her and spoke words of consolation that soothed the first blow of sorrow and restored her strength so that she could pray fervently for her beloved Robert. The Superior then ordered her not to reveal this to anyone and keep it secret.

Sad and weeping, the sister assisted at all the collective acts. In her bitter sorrow, she found sweet relief in gazing at Mother Mariana, who tried not to be separated from her.

After the dinner grace, Mother Mariana addressed the religious in the refectory with these words: “My Mothers and sisters, we were informed that a very close relative of one of our sisters is in great anguish. I ask that you forget yourselves and pray to Our Lord to assist and save this soul. Let us offer all that we do until tomorrow morning for this intention.”

The religious had an inestimable love for the last Founding Mother who still remained to them. They were also keenly aware of her virtues and the extraordinary gifts that she had received from God, so the words of Mother Mariana de Jesus made a strong impression on their hearts. Each one, wondering if perhaps this person might be her own relative, offered all that she did for the salvation of this beloved soul.

But since the respect that they had for their Superior was as great as their love for her, none dared to ask her who the person was. Each hoped that Mother Mariana would take the initiative to call aside the one whose relative was in such great danger. Seeing, however, that she did not do this, they all redoubled their prayers and penances for that soul in need.

The bell for the hour of silence sounded, and all returned to the dormitory. Mother Mariana had the habit of making the rounds to ensure this silence each night in the company of the Vice-Superior, who was charged with this duty. She would enter the cell of each sick sister to give her blessing, and then would do the same with the other religious in the dormitory.

Even when she did not hold the office of Abbess, she would do this in her position as Founding Mother. She was respected and obeyed by all, beginning with the Abbess, who asked her help even in the smallest matters. That is to say, she directed the Convent until her death, be it directly or by means of the other Abbesses in turn. She helped them to exercise this critical office in such a way that only after the death of all the Founding Mothers did the

Abesses come to realize the great difficulties and responsibilities of this office, upon which the existence and conservation of the common life depend.

**VISION OF MOTHER MARIANA
DURING THE ASSAULT OF ROBERT**

At midnight, while she was in meditation, Mother Mariana had a vision of ten tall, strong *mulattos* who attacked poor young Robert and his page, attempting to kill them with a cruel, instantaneous death so that they could take the large sums of money that such travelers usually carried.

Upon seeing this, Mother Mariana called out to her Divine Spouse and His Blessed Mother of Good Success, imploring them not to permit such cruelty on the part of these men without God or conscience.

At that moment, she saw the state of the souls of these murderers. She was horrified, seeing them so black and depraved. She saw that only hours before, the worst one of the criminals had killed his own mother and brothers because they would not participate in his misdeeds and that he would descend to Hell even before the death of Robert.

She saw that the page was very Catholic with an upright fear of God. On the day of his departure from Quito, he had confessed and received Communion in the Church of St. Augustine, which he frequented, and that during the trip he had remained in the state of grace. Falling into the hands of the robbers as he tried to save his master, he had raised his heart to God, pardoning his aggressors and recommending his soul to God and Our Lady, asking them to save him. When he died, Mother Mariana assisted at his favorable judgment and saw the short time in Purgatory imposed on him.

As the murderers tried to overpower Robert, they all saw a very bright light. In the middle of it was a woman dressed in white and blue, who momentarily terrified them. This was also seen by Robert, who related it to his friends.

The thieves advanced against this person, forgetting Robert, who took advantage of the occasion to spur on his mule and escape from them. Moments later, they ran in pursuit of him and, from a distance, wounded him. They chased after him but could not manage to catch up. When Robert began to shout for his companions, they

all fled, with the exception of the miserable *mulatto* who was killed by the passers-by who came to Robert's rescue.

Mother Mariana saw how this villainous soul descended straight to the depths of Hell with the speed of lightning.

MOTHER MARIANA CALMS ROBERT'S SISTER

When the Convent gathered together again in the morning at 4 o'clock for the recitation of the Little Office, they found Mother Mariana already there. The sisters fixed their eyes on her in hope of some words, but she lowered her eyes with her customary religious gravity.

She then began the Office with her usual devotion and all prayed with extraordinary fervor. The rest of the common acts followed.

During the meditation, Mother Manuela could not resist. Slowly and timidly, she approached Mother Mariana, calling to her.

The latter, with the goodness and sweetness proper to a saintly soul, embraced her warmly, saying: "My daughter, calm your heart. Give thanks to Our Lord and communicate fervently for the soul of Robert. He is fortunate: he died well and is saved. Cease your weeping, for it causes a loss of merit; the Divine Spouse would be offended by this. It behooves us only to thank Him. Tranquilly continue your prayers."

The sister returned to her place, suffering but with her heart at peace, for she knew that her brother was saved. She wept in silence, resigned to the will of God.

MOTHER MANUELA RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO ACT WITH HER FAMILY

When the hour arrived for the sisters to receive visitors, the family of Mother Manuela came to see her, telling her that they were discouraged and deeply concerned about Robert. They had received no news of him for some days, when they should have received several letters by this time. Their apprehension was even greater because various merchants who had arrived recently had reported that the road was infested with thieves, making it safe only to travel in large groups.

Before speaking with her family, Mother Manuela had been counseled by Mother Mariana, who spoke these words: "My daughter, your family is coming to visit you with their hearts concerned about Robert. Do not say anything to them about what

you know. Console them and tell them that since God, being our absolute Lord and Creator, loves us as He does, we should expect only what is good and best for us from His loving goodness.”

Mother Mariana accompanied Mother Manuela to the parlor. Before entering, Mother Mariana said: “Robert is asking a great sacrifice of you today that can alleviate him greatly. This is that you do not weep in the presence of your family, thus demonstrating your knowledge of his sad end. This mortification will be most pleasing to Our Lord and very advantageous to the soul of your brother.”

The good religious obeyed the order and counsel of her Mother, Mistress and Foundress. She greeted her family, who expressed their bitter concern to her. Controlling herself heroically, Mother Manuela encouraged them with the words that Mother Mariana had recommended to her. Nonetheless, she shared the grief of her family, shedding some tears secretly and in peace.

Mother Mariana saw how God was pleased with this truly good soul and the great relief she had obtained for her brother’s soul. And she praised God, Author of all virtue.

Mother Mariana also directed words of comfort and consolation to the family, telling them that whatever might happen, we should be prepared to accept the holy will of God, Who never sends His creatures trials greater than what they can bear.

The family left the Convent suffering, but filled with peace. They remarked to one another: “What is it that happens in our hearts when we speak with Mother Mariana? Her words are filled with divine unction, which touch our hearts and soothe us even amid our sorrows! She is truly a holy religious, a blessed creature, and those who live with her are fortunate indeed!”

PRIVATE WORDS TO ROBERT’S MOTHER

After some weeks had passed, the mother of Mother Manuela returned to the Convent, weeping in despair. She explained that her son’s companions had returned from their travel and narrated the sad death of Robert, who had been assaulted by thieves. She begged insistently to speak to her daughter and Mother Mariana.

The latter instructed Mother Manuela about how she should conduct herself as a faithful spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ in such a sorrowful circumstance. They then went to the parlor.

When she heard the voice of her daughter, the distraught mother broke out into wails of distress, saying between sobs: “My

dear daughter, your brother has died, attacked by outlaws. Alas! He died far from his family! What has become of my Robert? Is he saved or condemned? He was a good Catholic, but in the last few years he had fallen away and no longer frequented the Sacraments. This is what is killing and consuming me. My sorrow would be abated if I knew that he had been saved!"

"Mother Mariana," she continued, "console the tormented heart of this disconsolate mother. Ask your Spouse to permit you to know if my Robert was saved. The spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ are persons who can approach Him and thus give relief to the anguished hearts of those who live in the world. God has taken my son and, with him, all my support. But if I knew that he were saved, my sorrow would be lessened."

Mother Mariana opened her lips and spoke to the distressed woman in such a way that her words, filled with divine unction, fell on that heart shattered by sorrow like dew on a withered plant. Among other things, she exhorted her to have confidence in the infinite mercy of God that Robert had been saved, for such sudden and unprovided deaths depend upon the designs of Divine Providence.

She told her that she should fix her mind on this consoling thought without despairing for a single moment. She should also keep praying much for the soul of her son, so that it might leave Purgatory as soon as possible for Heaven to enjoy God eternally. She offered, in turn, to do all in her power as well for the eternal rest of that beloved soul.

ABOUT THE FUTURE DEATH OF MOTHER MANUELA – ROBERT'S SOUL LEAVES PURGATORY

As a faithful disciple of Mother Mariana, Mother Manuela also spoke encouraging words to her mother and comforted her afflicted heart so that this poor lady returned greatly comforted to her home, where she consoled her family.

With utmost complacency, Mother Mariana saw the beautiful soul of Mother Manuela and how much she benefited herself and the soul of her brother with her sufferings, which she bore with a patience and resignation that was not only Catholic, but also religious. Mother Mariana praised Our Lord for this, and every day she would bless her spiritual daughter with loving tenderness. She would speak to her of Heaven, teaching her to have her soul

prepared to die at any moment that God might choose to call her to judgment.

This was because God Our Lord had revealed to Mother Mariana that this daughter would die a sudden death, for Mother Manuela harbored a great fear of the hour of death because of the temptations with which the Devil assaults persons during the last anguish – even just souls.

After the death of Robert, Mother Mariana took it upon herself to free that beloved soul from the expiatory prison as soon as possible, especially since he was the brother of Manuela. She offered her penances, prayers, interior sufferings, and all the merits of her heroic life for his behalf, demanding from Our Lord that He take this soul to Heaven as soon as possible.

Finally, one day after Communion Our Lord showed her that Robert's soul had risen to Heaven like a white cloud. The youth said to her, "May God reward your charity and zeal in freeing me from the expiatory prison, Mother. To you I owe my rapid liberation. I will await you in Heaven."

With her characteristic prudence and discretion, Mother Mariana communicated to Mother Manuela that her brother was in Heaven. Love and gratitude toward God augmented in this religious soul, formed as it was by the holy Spanish Mother and admirable mistress of souls

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CHAPTER 14

It was a Friday evening in the month of December in Advent, that cherished liturgical season for the Conceptionist sisters. Since the foundation of the Convent, the heroic Founding Mothers had taken great care to make this season holy as they anxiously awaited the coming of the Messiah. My dear readers will recall all that I have already narrated in respect to the festivities of Christmas, the Circumcision, and the Epiphany, and their respective octaves.

During the Advent season, the Convent's fervor took on new life. The sisters would draw invitation cards to prepare a layette and gifts for the Child Jesus. These cards would indicate to each one the piece of clothing that she should prepare for Him, along with a recommendation of some particular act of virtue, mortification, humiliations, penances, etc. to be carried out toward this end.

In these matters, the sisters were very dedicated, so much so that at times their zeal had to be strongly moderated. How beautiful to see some eating on the floor without their veils and cords around their necks, others kissing the feet of the nuns in the refectory, others prostrating themselves on the ground for the members of the Convent to walk over them, and still others eating from old clay dishes, taken from who knows where, and begging alms in the refectory. In short, they would invent a thousand and one forms of humiliation that would move even the most hardened heart.

It pleases God to see His spouses inebriated with love for the Infant God, Whom they await and call with tender words and ardent yearning, following the example of their Founding Mothers who set this precedent.

Since the Founding Mothers promised to live in spirit in their daughters, all this will be conserved, whatever the circumstances, until the end of time. For this Convent will never lack souls who fervently love the Child Jesus, a devotion that is a pledge for the preservation of the Convent.

APPARITION OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS OF FEBRUARY 2, 1634

During the year 1634 Mother Mariana was praying with redoubled fervor of soul on February 2 at three o'clock in the

morning in the upper choir of the Convent. With her eyes fixed on the Tabernacle, she said to her Sacramental Love:

“Jesus, my Divine Love, my soul is faint with love for Thee, the only Lord of my heart. Have pity on me and take me to Thee, for my exile has been prolonged too long. My only desires are to see Thee, possess Thee, and be engulfed in that love which belongs to the Blessed. When will the moment arrive when, leaving this mortal life, I shall soar swiftly to the land of eternal bliss?”

“I know that I am unworthy of Heaven and, even more, of possessing Thee, my sweetest Good. For, ungrateful of Thy favors and benefits, I am not what I should be. Prostrate on the ground, I adore Thee as my God, as well as my Supreme Judge. Fear and terror overcome me, but since I love Thee as my Father and Spouse, it is this love that emerges victorious. For I trust in Thy merits in order to be purified by Thy Precious Blood through the intercession of the Empress of Heaven, Mary Most Holy, my Mother, Whom I beg for good success at the moment of death and in the final judgment upon which my eternal happiness depends.

“Upon ending my exile in this mortal life, I deliver to Thee, my Love, this House and Convent, with all its inhabitants, not only those of the present time, but also all those who will come to live here, for I love my sisters of future centuries with the same love that I love those of today. They are my daughters, my beloved daughters, sisters, and successors. I love, above all, those who, throughout time, will find themselves suffering, prostrate, and persecuted in their own house as if they were strangers.

“I know what it is to suffer in the life of the cloister. For this reason, my heart is overwhelmed with tenderness for all those who, faithful to Thee and their divine vocation, will suffer, and with their sufferings sustain the Convent and the Faith in the ill-fated times to come. As weak creatures, they will feel their strength falter, but I pray that the power of Thy arm and the love of Thy Sacred Heart will be their consolation and support in their hours of bitter tribulation.

“My Love! Never shall my beloved Convent be lacking in hidden saints, who will implore Thee for its preservation and life!”

THE SANCTUARY LIGHT IS EXTINGUISHED AND OUR LADY APPEARS

After pronouncing these words, she saw the sanctuary light, which burned before the Sacramental Jesus, go out, leaving the main altar place completely dark.

Mother Mariana wanted to leave her prayer and rise in order to light a candle that could substitute for the lamp. But she could not do so, for she had lost all power of her senses. In this state, she saw a celestial light illuminate the whole church. The Queen of Heaven appeared, lighted the Tabernacle lamp, approached her, and said:

“Beloved daughter of my Heart, I am Mary of Good Success, your Mother and Protectress, who, carrying my Most Holy Son in my left arm and the crosier in the right, have come to bring you the happy news that within ten months and some days, your eyes will finally close to the material light of this world and open to the brilliance of eternal light.

“My Most Holy Son has heard your clamors and at long last will end your exile. Prepare your soul so that, increasingly purified, it might enter into the plenitude of the joy of the Lord.

“Oh! If all mortals, and in particular religious souls, could know what Heaven is and what it is to possess God! How differently they would live and they would spare themselves no sacrifice in order to possess Him!”

A GRAVE EVIL THAT DAMAGES CONVENTS: LUKEWARMNESS

“Some, however, are blinded by the false brilliance of honor and human grandeur, and others by unrestrained self-love, which gives rise to lukewarmness, a grave evil that causes great damage in religious cloisters. As you take leave of your daughters, inculcate in them fervor, humility, self-despise, and the constant practice of the religious virtues associated with that childlike simplicity which makes souls greatly beloved by my Most Holy Son and by me, their Mother.

“Throughout time this House will be combated with an infernal fury that will attempt to destroy and annihilate it. But Divine Providence and I will watch over it and conserve it, assisted by those who will practice the virtues here in it. But, woe, should these be lacking ...”

“Understand also, my favored daughter, that my maternal love will watch over the convents of the whole Order of my Immaculate Conception because this Order will give me much glory in the holy daughters I will have in it. I will take special care of the convents founded in these lands by the daughters of this House. Often they will be on the point of dying out, but they will miraculously

continue to survive. Only one will perish in accordance with the high designs of God,⁶³ which you will know when you are in Heaven.”

**FIRST MEANING: THE PROPAGATION OF HERESIES
IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES**

“The sanctuary light burning before the altar that you saw be extinguished has many meanings.

“The *first* is that at the end of the 19th century and advancing into a large part of the 20th, various heresies will be propagated in this land, then a free Republic. As they come to dominate, the precious light of Faith will be extinguished in souls by the almost total corruption of customs. During this period, there will be great physical and moral catastrophes, both public and private.

“The small number of souls who, hidden, will conserve the treasure of the Faith and the virtues will suffer an unspeakably cruel and prolonged martyrdom. Many of them will succumb to death from the violence of the suffering, and those who sacrifice themselves for Church and Country will be counted as martyrs.⁶⁴

“In order to free men from bondage to these heresies, those whom the merciful love of my Most Holy Son will destine for that restoration will need great strength of will, constancy, valor, and much confidence in God. To test this faith and confidence of the just, there will be occasions in which everything will seem lost and paralyzed. This will be, then, the happy beginning of the complete restoration.”

**SECOND MEANING: SPIRITUAL CATASTROPHE IN
THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

“The *second reason* is that my Convent, being greatly reduced in number,⁶⁵ will be submerged in a fathomless ocean of indescribable bitterness, and will seem to be drowning in these diverse waters of tribulations.

63. On July 9, 1874, Pope Pius IX signed the order of suppression of the Convent of Ibarra, which had been in existence for two centuries. Mother Mariana repeats this prophecy in her Last Testament, in which she says that the relaxation of monastic discipline was the cause for its suppression.

64. Certainly Our Lady was referring to Modernism, which had great influence at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, and was defined by St. Pius X as “the synthesis of all heresies.” Progressivism, the heir of Modernism, has continued and amplified the heresies of Modernism everywhere in the Catholic Church, including in Ecuador.

65. Promoted by Freemasonry, the Liberal and anti-clerical civil government of

“How many authentic vocations will perish because of the lack of discretion, discernment, and prudence on the part of the Novice Mistresses in forming them! They should be souls of prayer and well-learned in the varied spiritual ways. Woe to those souls who will return to the Babylon of the world after having been in the secure port of this blessed Convent!

“During this unfortunate epoch, injustice will enter even here, my closed garden. Disguised under the name of false charity, it will wreak havoc in souls. The spiteful Devil will try to sow discord, making use of putrid members, who, masked by the appearance of virtue, will be like decaying sepulchers emanating the pestilence of putrefaction, causing moral deaths in some and lukewarmness in others.

“They will thrust a two-edged sword into my faithful daughters, my hidden souls, making them suffer a continuous and slow martyrdom. These faithful daughters will weep in secret and complain to their Lord and God, and their tears will be presented by their Guardian Angels to our Heavenly Father, asking that they shorten such dire times for love of the Divine Prisoner.”

THIRD MEANING: SENSUALITY WILL SWEEP THROUGH THE WORLD

“The *third reason* that the lamp was extinguished is because of the spirit of impurity that will saturate the atmosphere in those times. Like a filthy ocean, it will inundate the streets, squares, and public places with an astonishing liberty.

“There will be almost no virgin souls in the world. The delicate flower of virginity, timid and threatened by complete destruction, will shine in the distance. Taking refuge in cloisters, it will find good soil there that will take root, grow, and live, its fragrance being the delight of my Most Holy Son and the shield against divine ire. Without virginity, it would be necessary for the fire of Heaven to fall upon these lands to purify them.

Ecuador at the beginning of the 20th century tried to do away with all Convents by forbidding the admittance of new aspirants to the novitiates. The 66 sisters present in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception when this anticlerical law was enacted had been reduced to 16 or 20 when this unjust law lost its effect 18 years later (Cadena y Almeida, *Mensaje Profético*, p. 137).

Even worse than this first crisis of vocations was a second one that began in the second half of the 20th century and is still afflicting all the Religious Orders and Secular Clergy today. It was caused by the adaptation of the Church to the world, one of the guiding principles of Vatican Council II.

“In his malicious pride, the invidious and pestiferous Devil will try to intrude into even these closed gardens of the religious cloisters to make this beautiful and delicate flower wither. But I will confront him and crush his head under my feet.

“Alas, how sorrowful! There will be careless souls who will voluntarily deliver themselves into his claws. Others, returning to the world, will be instruments of the Devil for the loss of souls.”

FOURTH MEANING: THE CORRUPTION OF CHILDREN’S INNOCENCE ...

“The *fourth motive* for the lamp being extinguished is that the [Masonic] sect, having infiltrated all the social classes, will be so subtle as to introduce itself into domestic ambiences in order to corrupt the children, and the Devil will glory in dining upon the exquisite delicacy of the hearts of children.

“During those unfortunate times, evil will assault childhood innocence. In this way, vocations to the priesthood will be lost, which will be a true calamity.

“It will fall to religious groups to sustain the Church and to labor with valorous, disinterested zeal for the salvation of souls. For, during this period, the observance of the Rule will shine in the communities and there will be holy ministers of the altar, hidden and beautiful souls in whom my Most Holy Son and I will take our delight, finding them excellent flowers and fruits of heroic sanctity.

“The impious ones will rage a cruel war against them, letting fall on them vituperations, calumnies, and vexations in order to impede the fulfillment of their ministry. But they, like firm columns, will remain unswerving and will confront everything with that spirit of humility and sacrifice with which they will be vested, by virtue of the infinite merits of my Most Holy Son, Who loves them as the innermost fibers of His most holy and tender Heart.”

AND THE CRISIS IN THE CLERGY

“In this epoch, the Secular Clergy will be far removed from its ideal, because the priests will be careless in their sacred duties. Losing the divine compass, they will stray from the road traced by God for the priestly ministry and they will become attached to wealth and riches, which they will unduly strive to obtain.

“How this Church will suffer on that occasion the dark night of the lack of a Prelate and Father to watch over them with paternal love, gentleness, strength, discernment, and prudence. Many

priests will lose their spirit, placing their souls in great danger.”

**“INTO HIS HANDS THE SCALES OF THE
SANCTUARY WILL BE PLACED”**

“Pray insistently without tiring and weep with bitter tears in the secrecy of your heart, imploring our Celestial Father that, for love of the Eucharistic Heart of my Most Holy Son and His Precious Blood shed with such generosity and by the profound bitterness and sufferings of His cruel Passion and Death, He might take pity on His ministers and quickly bring to an end those ominous times, sending to this Church the Prelate who will restore the spirit of its priests.

“My Most Holy Son and I will love this favored son with a love of predilection, and we shall gift him with a rare capacity, humility of heart, docility to divine inspirations, the strength to defend the rights of the Church, and a tender and compassionate heart, so that, like another Christ, he will assist the great and the small, without despising the more unfortunate souls who ask him for light and counsel in their doubts and hardships. With divine suavity, he will guide the souls consecrated to the service of God in the cloisters, making light the yoke of the Lord, Who said, ‘My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.’

“Into his hands the scales of the Sanctuary will be placed so that everything is weighed with due measure and God will be glorified.

“The lukewarmness of all the souls consecrated to God in the priestly and religious state will delay the coming of this Prelate and Father. This, then, will be the cause of the cursed Devil taking possession of this land, where he will achieve his victories by means of a foreign and faithless people, so numerous that, like a black cloud, it will obscure the limpid heavens of the then-Republic consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of my Divine Son.

“With these people, all the vices will enter, which will attract in their turn every type of chastisement, such as plagues, famines, internal fighting and external disputes with other nations, and apostasy, the cause of the perdition of so many souls so dear to Jesus Christ and to me.

“In order to dissipate this black cloud that prevents the Church from enjoying the clear day of liberty, there will be a formidable and frightful war, which will see the bloodshed of countrymen and foreigners, of secular and regular priests, and also

of religious. That night will be most horrible, for, humanly speaking, evil will seem triumphant.

“This, then, will mark the arrival of my hour, when I, in a marvelous way, will dethrone the proud and cursed Satan, trampling him under my feet and fettering him in the infernal abyss. Thus the Church and Country will finally be free of his cruel tyranny.”

FIFTH AND LAST MEANING: THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE WEALTHY TO THE OPPRESSED CHURCH – PERSECUTED VIRTUE, THE APATHY OF THE PEOPLE

“The *fifth reason* that the lamp was extinguished is due to the laxity and the negligence of those who possess great wealth, who will indifferently stand by and witness the Church being oppressed, virtue being persecuted, and the triumph of evil, without piously employing their riches for the destruction of the evil and restoration of the Faith. It is also due to the indifference of the people who will allow the Name of God to be gradually snuffed out and adhere to the spirit of evil, freely delivering themselves to vices and passions.

“Alas, my chosen daughter! If it were given to you to live in this tenebrous era, you would die of sorrow to see all that I have revealed to you here take place. My Most Holy Son and I have such a great love for this land, our legacy, that we desire even now the application of your sacrifices and prayers to shorten the time of such a terrible catastrophe.”

MOTHER MARIANA IS FOUND UNCONSCIOUS

After this admirable vision, in which the Queen of Heaven told her favored daughter what this poor land would suffer, all that had been narrated by Our Lady passed before the eyes of Mother Mariana like a silent presentation.

She was given to know the countless number of souls who would be condemned for the mentioned reasons. Seeing this, her heart, so amorous of God and the works created by His hands, was profoundly affected. She remained to all appearances dead there in the choir, without realizing that the hour to begin the Little Office had arrived.

The religious searched for her and found her lying on the ground, her forehead on the floor and her arms in a cross. They

lifted her and carried her to her poor, austere bed, in which they laid her and administered to her.

She did not show any signs of life, lacking the least symptom of respiration. They would certainly have thought her dead but for the fact that her heart was beating violently.

Exhausting all the means that their love suggested to them to make her return to herself, they finally called for the doctor.

The whole Convent was agitated. In every corner wailing and tears could be heard: "The light of our eyes has been extinguished!" "Our saintly Mother and the last of the Founding Mothers, the mainstay of observance, the column of this House, has abandoned us!" "To whom shall we orphans have recourse in our sorrows? Who shall wipe away our tears?" Such were the lamentations of the religious.

The doctor employed all the recourses of his science, but everything proved futile. Finally he retired, saying that a soul of such great stature should be disturbed no further, for the severe remedies he had applied would have been sufficient to make any other person return to consciousness. He recommended that they leave Mother Mariana to divine care.

Humanly speaking, her life would end as soon as her heart would cease to beat, for it had been extremely affected by the shock, and even a very robust person would not be capable of living one day after such an attack.

One after another, the sisters approached, calling to her, massaging her, moving her, embracing her. Their tears fell on her forehead, hands, and cheeks, but all was in vain. In this state she passed three days and three nights.

HER RECUPERATION

On February 4 at 3 o'clock in the morning, Mother Mariana exhaled a long, profound sigh that penetrated the depths of the hearts of her sisters. She crossed her hands over her breast and heart, and her livid color became rosy, making her youthful and beautiful. From her eyes fell large tears, which washed her cheeks and were then anxiously wiped away by her sisters. They called to her, but she did not respond or give any other sign of life or of hearing anything.

In fact, she was enjoying the delights of the supernatural life, a life hidden to the erudite swollen in their pride. The celestial

joy of this sublime life is reserved only for souls docile to the inspirations of grace – humble and mortified souls who despise themselves and are filled with love of God, through Whom and for Whom they live, conquering souls for Him with their penances and persevering prayer. Because of such beautiful souls, nations endure and will endure throughout time. Should they be lacking, iniquity oversteps its measure tolerated by God, and He allows those nations to sink into ruin, as History has always shown.

That whole February 4 passed without Mother Mariana showing any other change.

On the February 5, at three o'clock in the morning, she raised herself up on her poor bed, saying, "Yes, my beloved Seraphic Father, I thank you."

After a moment of silence, the Abbess spoke, "What is happening, Mother?"

She continued, "Drink this tea that I will personally administer to you to wet your parched tongue so that Your Reverence can speak a few words to soothe us. We have suffered greatly to see Your Reverence so ill."

The saintly patient raised her beautiful eyes, fixing them on the Superior with a sweet gaze, tender and filled with peace, revealing that she was ready to obey in all matters. In small swallows she took the tea presented by the Mother Abbess, whose tears fell into the cup ...

Then the Abbess embraced Mother Mariana, saying, "Mother Mariana, all of your daughters are here. It is five o'clock in the morning."

Mother Mariana opened her eyes and gazing at them all, she said: "How good and charitable you are, my beloved daughters and sisters. How great is your solicitude and love for your Mother, who holds you in the innermost fibers of her heart! I thank you for your attentions and your love. May Our Lord repay you. Now, manifest your filial love by directing yourselves to the choir for the fulfillment of your duties. Go tranquilly without concern about me. I am not leaving you now. I will remain among you for yet some months."

SISTER ROSA MARIANA DE JESUS

The sisters quickly left for the choir. Only the nurse remained, a sister for whom Mother Mariana had a special love because of her angelic character, humility, and docility.

She was the daughter of a distinguished family in the Colony. When she was coming into the world, her mother found herself at the very portals of death with the doctors giving her up for lost. The last recourse of the family was to ask Mother Mariana for her prayers and her "country anise water."

Tranquil and smiling, she gave them the remedy, telling the family domestics who were anxiously and tearfully waiting, "Take this remedy to your señora. Tell her to take it and fear nothing, for a child will be born to her who is destined to be a sister in this Convent. She will be the one who will prepare my body for burial."

They took the anise water and gave it to their mistress to drink. Shortly afterward, she gave birth with prodigious ease to a beautiful little girl, who received the name of Rosa Mariana de Jesus.

The family did not forget their benefactress and was grateful to her. When the mistress could go out again, her first visit was to Mother Mariana. She took her little girl with her so that Mother Mariana might know her, bless her, and recommend her to God in her prayers.

Mother Mariana told her, "You do not need to ask me to pray for this little girl, for she is more mine than yours. She is a soul chosen by Our Lord so that she might perfume this cloister with the fragrance of her virtues. Bring her always because I desire to see her."

And thus it was. When the child reached ten years of age, she came to live in the Convent. She was instructed and taught by Mother Mariana until she reached the proper age to be vested in the habit. The reader can well imagine the virtue of this youth. She was an exemplary novice, a fervent religious, and she never lost her baptismal innocence.

SISTER ROSA SPEAKS WITH MOTHER MARIANA

Once she was alone with Mother Mariana, this sister said: "Mother, we have wept much over Your Reverence. We thought you were dead. I was distressed to not receive your last blessing and counsels. But now that Our Lord, hearing my prayers, has conceded life to you, tell me what happened. We took you from the choir and you have remained here for these days. Surely the goodness of our God has granted you new favors, or perhaps He permitted the accursed Devil to enjoin you in hard combat so that you might once again emerge victorious and give glory to God."

“Daughter,” responded Mother Mariana, “the designs of the Lord for His creatures are unknowable and profound. They encompass all time. Religious souls, the fortunate inhabitants of the cloisters, are shields to hold back Divine Justice. Like other Moseses, their arms are always raised to Heaven praying, interceding for poor sinners, their brothers, so that Divine Justice might deign to pardon the crimes committed by nations.

“On your part, pray, plead, and weep before the Tabernacle that love of God and holy fraternal charity, along with holy observance of the Rule, might always reign in this Convent. Pray for this, my daughter, not only for these times, but, above all, for the future.

“Alas! If you only knew the most bitter chalice from which our poor successors will have to drink! They shall suffer as I did. Their future tears overflow into my heart, and I weep with them. God and my Blessed Mother know how much I love them.”

* * *

CHAPTER 15

When the morning works of the Convent were over, Mother Mariana's spiritual director came to see and speak with her. She related to him the vision of the Blessed Virgin. In her account of conscience she added these words:

"Father, on the last day that I remained without use of my senses, I saw my Seraphic Father St. Francis who extended his arms to me, saying: 'Glad tidings, faithful and cherished daughter! Only a few months remain of your arduous exile and then you will reach the long-desired port. At your last moments, I, Beatrice, the founder of your Order,⁶⁶ as well as your sisters in the Order and all your brothers of the Seraphic Family will be at your side.

"Also present will be Blessed Ignatius of Loyola, whom you love so dearly because of the ardent love he had during his life for Jesus Christ, conquering many souls for Him at the cost of great sacrifices. He is a servant most beloved by God, as is his Society [of Jesus], its whole spiritual life marked by the military character that its holy Founder left as his legacy. There will always be great men of learning, great saints, and invincible martyrs in the Society. As a special gift from Divine Munificence, it will have discretion and discernment of spirits. The serpent will not be able to hide its tail from them. Its spiritual masters will wisely direct souls favored by God, who, rejected by other priests, would have otherwise been lost, without light and guidance on the complex and baffling road of the supernatural life.

"This Convent, so beloved by God and our Blessed Mother, will suffer great tribulations, persecutions, and calumnies, which will purify the fervent and faithful souls and drive out the lukewarm, who are unworthy to receive these valorous gifts. For the latter are barren branches in this vineyard of God that I guard with great care, for it belongs to me.

"I have and will always have daughters who love me. I will imprint in them the seraphic spirit so that they might love God with their whole heart and be shields against Divine Justice. Seek to inculcate in your present and future daughters love of Jesus

66. St. Beatrice da Silva Meneses, born in 1424 into a noble Portuguese family, was a lady-in-waiting in the household of Princess Isabel and accompanied her to Castile when she married King John II. After many trials and difficulties, she founded the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Conceptionists) in 1484 in the city of Toledo. She died September 1, 1490.

Christ, the practice of the holy virtue of humility – which no virtue can exist without – and that holy simplicity which is the distinctive mark of my children. By this I recognize my own.

“Until the desired day of your departure arrives, practice all the religious virtues with the greatest possible perfection so that your Celestial Spouse will find you waiting with lamp in hand, burning with love and adorned with the meritorious works of the virtues practiced in this holy religious cloister, the nest of white doves, the daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Our Immaculate Queen.”

Her spiritual director listened to the account of conscience of this seraphic soul with great content and tenderness! After giving her his blessing, he, quite moved, departed for his monastery, giving thanks to Our Lord for having chosen him as confidante of His great marvels in this soul so beloved by the Divine Majesty.

AN EXAMPLE IN SICKNESS

After these last visions that portended such catastrophe for the times to come, Mother Mariana remained very weak. Her eyes were two continuous fountains of tears and her heart was greatly weakened, beating with only a tenuous movement in her breast. She found herself obliged to remain in bed for two weeks.

The doctor would visit her various times during the day, and the Bishop came to see her, arranging that she receive the best treatment available and every human means be taken to prolong the life of this saintly religious. The Superior and the sisters were very dedicated in serving her, disputing among themselves for that privilege.

She, however, remained as even-tempered as ever with her sisters and daughters. She would thank them, bless them, and give them advice and counsels. Always docile and obedient as a child, she would never refuse any remedy prescribed by the doctor and administered by the Abbess and her sisters. Considering herself unworthy of all this attention, she would thank them for the services rendered to her and the love manifested toward her.

Therefore, in health as in sickness, she edified the nuns with her inspiring example. During her intense cardiac pains, anguish, and fatigue, she was always seen with a smile on her lips, an admirable serenity, and an imperturbable spirit, proper to such a saintly soul whose life had unfolded in the peace of the shadow of the cross, passing through unspeakable trials, physical as well as moral.

The sisters were always gathered around her bed. In the hours not occupied by common acts, they would consult her about their doubts and ask her counsels. She helped and consoled them all, each according to her needs. Satisfied and tranquil, the religious would leave her, but they suffered profoundly sensing that they would soon be left without their Mother. They truly loved Mother Mariana with filial tenderness, for she led them to God and set ablaze in their souls the seraphic fires that consumed her as a voluntary victim, always united to the solitary Victim, the Sacramental Jesus.

PRAYER

My holy sister! How often I think of you in my sweet hours of solitude in the cloisters, and my cold heart is moved in holy rapture. How much, you, a weak woman, loved God, and how well you proved this love throughout your long life filled with sufferings! And I, a robust man who was once a soldier, what do I do for God, my fellow man, and myself to satisfy my many debts?

Knowing your life, I am ashamed of mine. Writing your life, my heart is inflamed with ardent desires to be holy in imitation of you. But my weakness and lack of virtue do not permit me to rise to the high sphere of sanctity where you dwelled during your earthly life.

Consider, nonetheless, beloved sister, that among all those whom you should remember and assist from your lofty throne of glory in Heaven, you should prefer your brothers of the Seraphic Family whom you love so dearly. Give me the alms of the love of God, just one spark of the seraphic ardor you possessed as a true daughter of our father, the Seraphim of Assisi.

RETURN TO CONVENT LIFE

After two weeks in bed, this holy religious got up and continued to follow the life of the Convent in all things. She strictly observed each act of common life, each item of the Rule, fulfilling it with religious scrupulosity as if she were a novice or a newly professed sister. And she did all this with a joy that manifested itself exteriorly and with that humble docility so characteristic of her.

In the hours of recreation she would sing and play her harp to entertain her sisters. These were songs composed by her, filled with divine unction and love. Some were dedicated to the Child Jesus whom she loved immeasurably, others to the Prisoner of Love in the Tabernacle, to her Mother the Queen of Heaven, or to her Seraphic Father. She would sing them with the melodious voice she retained to her death.

During this last year of 1634, Mother Mariana composed a beautiful drama for the night of Christmas. In it, the three Archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, were represented. The play was so tender and spiritual that it left the sisters transported. They affirmed that they had never made such a fervent Communion at Midnight Mass.

Afterward, Mother Mariana made a speech, lamenting her long exile and expressing her ardent desire to see and possess the Child Jesus without fear of losing Him. She concluded by taking leave of the nuns, assuring them that the next year she would no longer accompany them visibly – but rather invisibly. She told them that she would carry them all in her mind and heart after she was gone.

She said, moreover, that she would live in her Convent in all epochs in order to support her daughters in their hours of profound suffering. She would watch over the whole Order scattered over the globe, and especially those convents founded in this land (Ecuador) by sisters of her beloved Convent, which she referred to as the “jewel of my heart.” She would leave it safeguarded in the Heart of the Divine Infant, under the care of her Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and her Seraphic Father the Seraphim of Assisi.

MOTHER MARIANA DEDICATES HERSELF TO THE FORMATION OF NOVICES – REFLECTIONS ON HUMILITY

In this last phase of her precious existence for the Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Quito, obedience called her to dedicate herself to the formation of the novices, whom she taught and instructed about the religious life.

She was not officially designated Novice Mistress, but the Superior and the whole Convent petitioned the Bishop that he grant them the privilege of having her instruct and train the novices without the formality of naming her to that office. For more than anyone else, she knew the science of the saints, which she had learned

and practiced heroically throughout the long years of her arduous life.

I call it arduous, and after reading her life, the reader can see that it really was. One cannot help but admire her heroism in suffering and her firmness in the virtue of humility, without which all the virtues are nothing but dust in the wind. For when humility weakens, the edifice of the virtues falls to ruins. Without humility, every good work is worth nothing. Moreover, without humility, the greatest virtues degenerate into vices; the most severe penances become hypocritical, and the highest contemplation is nothing but a pernicious illusion, leading astray so many souls that can seem to be adorned with almost heroic virtues.

This was not the case with our holy Conceptionist Franciscan sister, who, in imitation of her Father the humble Seraphim of Assisi, knew how to seek the semblance of Christ. His semblance, yes, because since humility was the distinctive mark of Jesus Christ on earth; the soul that possesses this insignia is like another Jesus Christ and a most faithful copy of the Divine Model.

It was this solid humility that merited my Seraphic Father St. Francis the greatest of his favors, that is, receiving the impression of the Wounds of the Divine Redeemer on his blessed body on Mount Alvernia.⁶⁷

As his true daughter, Mother Mariana received countless favors in the many admirable ecstasies we have described. These favors were so great that they would not be credible if we were not convinced of the solid humility of this great soul, for as Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself stated, His Divine Father hides these things from the wise, and reveals them to the humble of heart.

What was the source of Mother Mariana's great and insatiable love of God? It was founded precisely on her solid humility, which preserved her purity of heart and made her avoid, as far as it lay within her power, the least shadow of voluntary imperfections. In hearts thus disposed, the fire of divine love burns ardently. But this divine love is not compatible with self-love, and even less with hidden pride, the termite that gnaws away the virtues in the spiritual life and has made tall cedars that seem to be lost in the clouds of graces and extraordinary gifts fall to the ground.

Let us listen to the words of St. John the Evangelist, the Apostle of Love, when he appeared to a servant of God who was

67. While in meditation on Mount Alvernia in the Apennines, Italy, on September 17, 1224, St. Francis received the stigmata.

devoted to him: "The soul that attains perfection of humility will easily come to possess love without need of other pious exercises. A heart filled with humility will always be filled with love, thereby uniting itself perfectly to God and making itself one with the Divine Majesty."

If I were to speak of the virtues that this holy religious possessed to a heroic degree, all rooted in solid humility, I would have to write whole volumes on each one. I leave this to the time and pen of other writers who with great pleasure may undertake this instructive and satisfying work. They will be like industrious bees, sipping the honey and delicious nectar of the great variety of flowers of virtue present in this soul so favored by the Divine Majesty and the Sovereign Queen of Paradise, Mary Most Holy, our Lady and Mother.

I content myself here to employ my rough pen in this brief narration of a life so worthy of admiration – and imitable, up to a certain point. I hope that it will be profitable to my readers. I ask that they take no note of the one who writes it or the avenue by which these springs of graces come to them, but rather that they receive the words of this unworthy minister of the altar as words that God directs to each soul who reads them with an upright heart, having present before them the verse of the beautiful Trisagion of the Holy Trinity: "Because of this Thou art forever wonderful in Thy saints."

ABOUT CONTEMPLATIVE SOULS AND THE MYSTICAL LIFE

This brings to mind a consoling truth: Since God is the absolute and only Lord of all creatures, He will always have some holy souls in His Catholic Church. Some will shine like refulgent lights in a great candelabra. Others will be like humble and hidden violets emitting their fragrance before their Lord and God. This is the case of the soul whose life I am now writing.

I have the conviction that contemplative cloisters are always gardens of hidden saints, however much the world – and even priests and learned men – ignore and despise them.

It is true that the Apostle of the Gentiles said that one should not give credit to every spiritual revelation, that is, to believe everything at first sight. When one finds souls favored by God with extraordinary graces, however, it is necessary to penetrate the depths of their interiors, examining their ways of being and natural inclinations, and then help them to walk in the high sphere of solid humility, where they can conserve absolute purity of heart and

follow the path upon which the Holy Ghost, the grand Master of souls, desires to lead them.

If priests despise such souls or obstinately refuse to believe them, they sin against charity. Even more, they frustrate the grand designs of God for these souls, not only for their personal good, but also – and much more – for the benefit and good of nations.

The sublime mission of the priest, the science of the ministers of the Lord – acquired not only by study but also by the practice of the solid virtues they ought to possess – should be employed in the direction of souls. They should not be content with just hearing confessions and giving absolution, but should dedicate themselves to spiritual direction in order to increase the brilliance of those beautiful, radiant stars that shine in the clear, cloudless firmament of the Catholic Church. Those stars are the ones favored by God, their Creator, with supernatural gifts.

Such souls do not enjoy lives of pleasure, as some erroneously believe. In their mystical life, they carry not only one but a long series of crosses, each one heavier than the one before. Their lives are one uninterrupted Calvary. How many times does the priest weep alone at the foot of the Tabernacle to see such sufferings, powerless even to understand them?

The interior sufferings of contemplatives, of those virgins and martyrs – permit me to call them this – are twice as great as those of priests and good and holy souls who live in the world. The latter, with their studies, consultations, and friendships with companions can find consolation and receive light. They also can and should seek some priest who understands them. This implies a certain amount of suffering.

However, the heroine martyrs in the contemplative life, closed in the cloisters under papal enclosure, suffer the unspeakable. God alone knows of their bitter hardships, tears, and incessant interior martyrdom, for they can not seek a guide to lead them.

How many times, lacking the right confessor in the convents, religious sisters encounter yet new torments, either from his inexperience or lack of special understanding in mystical matters! Justly indeed they can be called hidden martyrs.

**EXHORTATION TO THE RELIGIOUS
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Dear contemplative religious, you are the select and hidden blessing for the Catholic Church! You are precious and fragrant flowers in the garden of Christ, where He strolls in pleasure, taking His delight among the lilies, violets, daisies, and roses, and among the numberless flowers of religious virtues that you possess. I admire you, I love you, and I bless you!

If I say this about all religious, what should I say to you, my dear sisters of the Immaculate Conception of my Immaculate Mother? When my heart is afire with such sentiments of fraternal love, it is better that I remain quiet, for silence in these matters is more eloquent than words. Thus I find myself silent now.

But during my sad pilgrimage on this earth, I will assist you. I will strive to console, instruct, and teach you. I will dedicate myself to prayer asking the Divine Spirit to give me the light to direct you as the present day circumstances permit (for you no longer depend completely on the care of the Seraphic Family). However, when I have stepped over the threshold of eternity, then, free from earthly impediments, I will be your father, brother, and protector. When I enjoy the beatific vision of Heaven, then I will gaze down at you with affection and care for you solicitously. For your sorrows are my sorrows, and your joys, my joys.

Live always with happiness in your amenable Conceptionist garden, remembering that the most rare and exquisite flowers should, for their own preservation, be securely surrounded with sharp thorns, also precious and hidden, so that no curious passer-by might mar their beauty, much less steal the property of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother.

In your hours of suffering, raise your pure eyes to Heaven and extend your hands imploring assistance with confidence and humility, certain that your requests will be heard. For there you have your Celestial Father, your Divine Spouse, the Eternal Word, and the Spirit of Love. They take their delight in your pure souls. There you have your Immaculate Mother and your Father, the Seraphic Francis, who watches

you with ineffable tenderness and gathers up your tears to present them to God three times holy. There you have your brothers in the Seraphic Family; you have the holy Founding Mothers, and above all, you have your saintly Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres who promised to live with you, invisible, until the end of time.

Follow the examples given by her, especially in the practice of that profound humility which renders souls so amiable and appealing.

Do not fear your enemies, no matter who they may be. Certain of triumph, defy all of Hell. Be aware that the infernal serpent will wage an unceasing persecution against you more than any other Order, because you are daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy. The cursed serpent promised to do this when your Founding Mothers came from Spain to found this Convent. Raising a storm in the sea, it tried to prevent their arrival to this Colony, according to the testimony of your holy Mariana de Jesus Torres as we read in the first chapters of her admirable life.

But Mary Immaculate will crush the head of the accursed, nefarious, and wicked serpent, who will always end by being conquered and overthrown.

When you weep over the apparent failures in your Convent, do not lose heart: These are trials sent by God. Remember Job and Tobias: Because they were loved by God, He sent them trials and temptations. Thus it will be with you, beloved sisters.

* * *

CHAPTER 16

The life of Mother Mariana de Jesus during the last months of her earthly existence was one continuous prayer. Everything around her spoke to her of God and elevated her spirit. She employed all her free time in meditation, caring for and serving the sick, helping the nurse, and in the cleaning chores of the Convent. She labored with an ineffable interior joy that revealed itself externally. Her sisters would accompany her everywhere for they did not want to be separated from their beloved Mother, whose death they would soon be mourning.

Since she could read the hearts of her daughters, she would comfort them, telling them that it was necessary to die in order to enjoy God without fear of losing Him.

VISION OF ST. IGNATIUS DE LOYOLA

On July 30, 1634 during the early morning prayer of the Convent, St. Ignatius de Loyola appeared to her. He had a joyful countenance and as always, he appeared with a military character – since even in Heaven he did not lose this aspect. He said:

“Faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, valiant soldier of the Redeemer Christ, the time is now approaching for you to leave this miserable earth of sorrow and tears and rise up to the Celestial Kingdom where you will receive your crown of glory for the illustrious victories won during the arduous battles of your life of suffering. I congratulate you and hope very soon to enjoy your presence here!

“Oh! If only men would meditate upon those words which I insistently taught to my sons and all souls redeemed by the Blood of the Savior – ‘What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet lose his soul?’ – then they would live in a very different manner! And the infernal pits would not be filled with countless wretched souls buried in those abysses, suffering unspeakable torments for all eternity. Too late did they recognize the truth!

“What torments them the most is the memory of all that was available to them during their earthly life to help them avoid such a misfortune – all the graces, counsels, and other easy means to save themselves at the cost of a few sacrifices, which, if accepted with patience and united to the infinite merits of Our Lord Jesus

Christ, would have been meritorious and served to expiate their sins.

“What holds sway among those in the world is that cursed human respect, which makes one ask: ‘What will others say about this?’ Like iron chains, this enslaves them to every type of vice and passion. They clearly see that they are heading toward their eternal damnation and that there they will have to support greater sufferings and anguish than if they would follow Jesus Christ on the straight and narrow path that leads to Heaven. Even the greatest and most astonishing sufferings of this earthly life diminish and wane, and with death all disappear. But one single moment of suffering in Hell is most terrible, atrocious, and unspeakable – and this for all eternity!

“Oh, my sister, faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, how wise you were to live in the cloisters following the norms of the Gospel! You are ready to end your earthly existence having amassed great merit because you erected the colossal edifice of your religious sanctity upon the profound and solid foundation of humility, which Jesus Christ commands and asks of every creature – and above all of religious.

“If you had carelessly paid no heed to the divine invitation if you had not accepted your many sufferings and humiliations as precious coins to win Heaven, if you had drifted off into the heavy sleep of the lukewarm – what would happen to you now when you will pass to eternity, rendering a strict account of the graces you received, as well as your sorrows and sufferings, which are nothing more than means to obtain eternal happiness?

“Be joyful, Mother Mariana. Raise your eyes with confidence and tranquility to Heaven and tell your Celestial Father to hasten the hour for you to leave this exile and enter into your Homeland.”

ST. IGNATIUS PROMISES THE SUPPORT OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS FOR HER CONVENT

“Since you were always devoted to me and invoked me in your afflictions and needs, I will be at your side at your last hour. I promise that I will favor this privileged Convent now and always through my Society, which will be the consolation and light of the souls who will suffer and flower here in the shadow of the cross. Its influence with those in power will prevent many evils and prolonged sufferings that will come upon this Convent so beloved

of God our Creator and Mary Most Holy, Our Queen and Mistress. For these evils will be provoked even under the appearance of good by the malicious Devil, irreconcilable enemy of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy and all that pertains to her.

“This Conceptionist Order, because it belongs most intimately to her, will be persecuted with satanic fury until the end of time. The Devil will make every effort to impede the foundation of new Conceptionist convents and to destroy those that already exist.

“If he does not succeed in this, he will apply all his cursed, infernal cunning to introduce into convents persons without vocations, who will have at times the appearance of high sanctity (which will not remain for a long time). In this way he will try to destroy the simple, unpretentious religious spirit that characterizes the authentic sanctity and solid virtue of daughters of Mary Immaculate and the humble Francis of Assisi, who from Heaven watches over all who belong to him. With solicitous care, he separates the good wheat from the harmful chaff, zealously guarding his seraphic garden where Jesus Christ takes His delight among the countless precious and fragrant flowers of true sanctity that exist in His cloisters and convents.

“Upon taking leave of your daughters, leave them your spirit, counsels, and warnings as testament of your role as a Founding Mother. So that you might do this wisely and for the spiritual benefit of your daughters – both present and future – ask the Holy Ghost to illuminate your words and commands. Then, tranquil and confident, depart from this world, this place of sorrow and tears, and enter into the delight of your Lord in the Celestial Fatherland.”

The illustrious founder of the Society of Jesus disappeared, leaving the soul of this servant of God filled with spiritual sweetness, that sweetness which God Our Lord – directly or through His saints – customarily concedes to chosen souls who live in continual sacrifice for love of Him.

HER LAST MONTHS

Her fervor of spirit renewed, Mother Mariana did all things in a more perfect manner, being for her sisters a practical example and model of the perfect religious. In her they saw all the virtues practiced without affectation, hypocrisy, or fraud. On her countenance shone the pulchritude of her soul along with her childlike innocence, which made her so charming and attractive to others, a source of edification both inside and outside the Convent.

If a sister was suffering, Mother Mariana was the first to console her, at times speaking lightly to cheer her spirit, but always elevating it to the lofty heights where her heart and mind dwelled. During recreations, she would entertain the nuns with her harp and singing. In her, the sisters truly had a mother, counselor, and sister.

Each day that passed, they suffered unspeakably to see the end of their good fortune and the beginning of their orphanhood draw nearer. With her discernment of spirit, Mother Mariana understood all this, which constituted yet a new form of suffering for her tender and maternal heart.

At times, they would all approach her and, one by one without exception, they would embrace her, kissing her hands and bathing them in copious tears. Then she would take her daughters into her arms and pressing them to her heart, mix her tears with theirs and encourage them to expand their hearts and be generous, joyfully making the sacrifice that the Divine Spouse was asking of them.

She promised them that she would live invisible among them, and that from Heaven she would assist them in their needs and afflictions even more than she had done in life.

A VISIT FROM THE VEN. MOTHER BEATRICE DA SILVA

A few days after the visit of St. Ignatius de Loyola to this servant of God, the Foundress of the Conceptionist Order, the noble and invincible Beatrice da Silva, also came to announce to her the happy news of her approaching death.

Mother Beatrice da Silva had appeared to Mother Marian many times throughout her life, speaking to her of transcendent matters concerning the Friars Minor, as recorded in the *Cuadernón*, that precious treasure the sisters conserve in the Convent. For this reason, I will not narrate this apparition here in order not to tarry too long in my account, since I am persuaded that a light, brief reading gives more pleasure and produces more efficacious and immediate spiritual fruit.

MOTHER MARIANA CONTEMPLATES THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE FIRST YEARS OF THE LIFE OF OUR LADY

Mother Mariana de Jesus was praying at three o'clock in the morning on August 10, 1634 in the upper choir of her Convent when she saw a brilliant light issue forth from the Tabernacle. The ray penetrated her heart, making her lose her senses and consuming

her heart with the devouring flames of divine love. Naturally speaking, her earthly senses could not have endured this, for the human heart is not strong enough to support such divine fire.

In this ecstasy, Mother Mariana saw the Three Divine Persons in the Consecrated Host. It was manifested to her how They were truly distinct Persons, yet being at the same time only One True God. Then she was given to recognize the Eternal Word made Flesh, both God and Man, by means of the hypostatic union, Who loved man so much that He lowered Himself to take a human nature in order to redeem us, thus making us heirs of celestial happiness.

She also saw how the August Trinity, in prevision of the infinite merits of the Divine Redeemer, created a perfect body in the womb of St. Anne and infused into this body a most beautiful and pure soul without stain of original sin, so that it might be the Virgin Mother of the Word of God. She would live only three years with her parents, St. Joseph and St. Anne, in honor of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity. At the end of this time, this beautiful, celestial child would generously and valiantly leave her paternal home and the world, and retire into the solitude of the Temple, thus becoming in this stage of her holy life the model for virgins called by God to the religious life.

Mother Mariana was then given to know the life of Mary Most Holy in the Temple, a life filled with great sacrifices and sorrow. She saw the sufferings that she endured there caused by her fellow creatures by divine permission, and her sublime and heroic virtues, far surpassing those of any other mortal. All the saints together would not approach her equal. They can imitate her, it is true, but none can match her.

THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN APPEARS TO MOTHER MARIANA

In this beautiful vision, Mother Mariana saw the figure of Our Lady, true Mother of Jesus Christ and Virgin Most Pure, pure and free from original sin before, during, and after giving birth – a unique prodigy of God realized in this admirable creature destined to be the Co-Redeemer of the human race and the secure refuge of shipwrecked sinners. Whoever has recourse to her with confidence and filial love will not be lost, but will, with certainty, leave the abyss of sin and enter into friendship with God and win eternal salvation.

Mother Mariana saw and understood all this in this vision of her Immaculate Mother, who spoke these words:

“Faithful and beloved daughter, privileged spouse of the Spotless Lamb, the blessed Fruit of my pure womb, I bring you glad tidings! After your prolonged exile, you are nearing the threshold of your Celestial Homeland. Its inaccessible light is beginning to illuminate your eyes with this light that you have just seen.’

THE NORMAL WAYS OF SANCTIFICATION

“Poor, miserable mortals who blind themselves voluntarily! They hurl themselves from abyss to abyss, delivering themselves to sensual pleasures, searching for happiness and peace. But we [Our Lady and Madre Mariana] who are chosen daughters of God flee from such pleasures, for peace and happiness can only be found and enjoyed on the cross and in sacrifice. Those who live tranquilly in possession of this peace and happiness are those fortunate inhabitants of religious cloisters who, in imitation of Jesus and me, strive to be good religious.

“To do this – and even to possess and achieve a high sanctity – it is not necessary to tread an extraordinary way, or be favored with gifts of sublime contemplation or visions and revelations. These are very special graces that God, absolute and only Lord of His creatures, concedes to whom He so desires according to His designs. This constitutes an admirable and at the same time slow martyrdom for the souls He thus favors.

“To attain a high sanctity, my daughter, to which every religious soul is called and obliged by the sublimity of the vocation, it is only necessary to conform the will in all things to that of the Divine Spouse, in health and even more so in sickness.”

SICKNESS

“Know that sickness is the only sure means to measure virtue and love of God. Religious souls cannot imagine how much pleasure God takes in them when, tested by the hard cross of sickness and its consequences, they suffer tranquilly and patiently, drinking the bitter dreg from the same chalice of their dolorous Celestial Spouse.

“During such times, they are the mistresses of the Heart of God and their requests are powerful to win great graces. For it is precisely when Divine Goodness wants to be accessible and pardon the guilty nations that He sends prolonged and complicated

illnesses to His spouses, so that their sacrifices, united to His sorrowful Passion, will rise to the throne of the Most High and bring down the desired pardon.

“Tell my daughters and yours that the sick sisters are, and will always be, the precious treasures of the Convent. Consequently, their sisters should treat them with tenderness, and their superiors, even more, as true mothers. They should comfort and console them and help to lighten their heavy crosses, providing all that is needed for their cures and spiritual growth.

“Tell my nurses of the infirmary that everything they do, both physically and morally, for my sick patients, I will receive as if they had done it for me, as if it were I who were in bed awaiting their care. During the days and nights of fatigue that they pass in the company of the sick, I will be with them, keeping them company, helping them and blessing them. In the same way I will recompense the assistance that, together with the priest, they render to the sick in their last moments, as well as the care that they take in shrouding those blessed bodies, which throughout the long years of their penitential monastic lives were temples of the Holy Ghost.

“Know that illnesses are the best and most meritorious penance, free from the illusions, pride and arrogance that can at times exist in souls who are attached to their own wills and, because of this, ignore the advice and counsel of priests, such as their spiritual directors who indicate to them the number and type of penances that are pleasing to God in accordance with the spirit and virtues that moves them.

“As for the healthy, as I have told you, it is not necessary that they endure great trials to become saints of high stature. It suffices for them to conform their wills to God’s will, and to manifest to Him their true love, fulfilling their monastic duties with the greatest possible care and with the childlike simplicity that attracts the Heart of God. In this way they imitate me, the perfect model of this in the Temple and in every circumstance of my life. By corresponding with fidelity to the inspirations of grace, without anything else they can soar directly to Heaven.”

THE EXTRAORDINARY WAYS

“Concerning those suffering souls whom Our Lord has called to travel the arduous extraordinary and supernatural ways, He and I will watch over them with special solicitude so that they will not lack the light, counsel, and guidance they need to keep

from straying or becoming discouraged before reaching the desired port.

“You have traveled this dolorous Calvary, because it was the will of your Lord and God. Give glory to Him for the abundance of gifts that He has gratuitously bestowed upon you so that, corresponding to grace, you could confront all the difficulties and sufferings that you faced and bore. Now that you are valiantly ending your arduous course, prepare yourself to enter into the Celestial Jerusalem, that abode of inalterable peace and happiness where neither night, darkness, sufferings, nor difficulties are known, and where the just rest from their fatigues in an eternal day.”

THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE DIABOLICAL SECTS

“Insist with your daughters, those of the present day as well as those that will come until the end of time, that they should be good and holy religious, faithfully fulfilling the solemn promises that they voluntarily made to their Lord and God. Your future daughters will need this more than the present, for they will face terrible sufferings, persecutions, injustices, sicknesses, and interior trials, along with the unjust oppression of the one who should be their father and pastor in the likeness of the Heart of my most Holy Son. Only the power of God will be able to sustain them, and only my maternal love will be able to console them interiorly.

“This will be the time of purification for this Convent, which will come at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Church of what will then be Ecuador will see herself oppressed, enslaved, and persecuted by diabolical sects. This sectarianism will last for 30 to 33 years.⁶⁸ Its first defeat will be accomplished in a prodigious way, due only to the prayers, penances, sacrifices, and expiatory holocausts of good souls who, hidden from the eyes of the world, will live ignored by all, but known and loved by God and by me, their Mother and Model. They will be shields to prevent Divine Ire, justly angered by this guilty city and its environs, where true virtue will be found only with great difficulty during this unfortunate epoch,

“The hidden and public crimes committed in what will then be the Republic will cover the whole country like a dense, black

68. The “Rule of the Liberals” lasted 30 years, from 1895 to 1925. During this period the Church was virulently persecuted by the partisans of Freemasonry and stripped of the powers granted to her by García Moreno. The Liberal rule was overthrown in July 1925 by a bloodless *coup d'état* led by a league of young reformist officers.

cloud. The atmosphere that will pervade all the social classes will be poisoned and pestilent.”

**PRIESTS WILL BE TOO ATTACHED
TO FAMILY AND WEALTH**

“The most sorrowful thing is that even the secular clergy will be far from what it should be, for the ministers of the altar will forget their sublime mission to identify with my Most Holy Son through self-knowledge and humble, fervent daily prayer. They will be superficial regarding their souls, not detached from material things, and too greatly attached to family and wealth. They will think they can aspire to sanctity in the priestly state by practicing one or two virtues – without constructing the solid foundation of a profound humility, for without it no virtue can exist nor anyone give pleasure to God. For God resists the proud and exalts the humble and simple of heart, to whom He delights in manifesting and communicating His secrets.

“No one, though, is called to this more than the priest, who is another Christ. Each and every one of them constitutes a most delicate fiber of His Sacred Heart, all love, meekness, and humility. But they do not delve into the depths of their souls where they would find Him and where, without any difficulty, they would have their delight.

“How sorrowful it is! Those very ones so dearly beloved by my Divine Son remove themselves from Him, leaving Him alone and abandoned in the Tabernacles, where, like an orphan and beggar of love, weeping in His solitude, He vehemently implores them with tender words and lamentations to give Him their hearts. Their concerns about earthly things, however, will not permit them to hear and appease these divine lamentations. They thus lose their spirit and, as a consequence, immense graces in this life and glory in the next. This is why they will gather no fruit in the conversion of sinners and salvation of souls.

“They will be judged for this and punished in the Supreme Tribunal, because they will have squandered the most precious gift of their priestly vocation, conferred to them by Divine Goodness so that they might be the light of the world and the edification of the faithful.

“How great is the worth of even one soul! And the priest is called to save many. Blessed are they who by their example and works conquer many souls for God!”

OUR LADY INTRODUCES VEN. MOTHER BEATRICE DA SILVA

“Here, beloved daughter, is the Foundress of my Conceptionist Order, who had to pass through innumerable difficulties and trials to found it. She comes, as is natural, to announce the happy news that you will soon leave this miserable earth of sorrow and tears and enter into the Celestial Mansion where you will be eternally happy in her company.” Having said these words, the Queen of Heaven disappeared.

Mother Mariana then saw the Foundress of the Order, together with all her Conceptionist daughters, including the Founding Mothers of this Convent, who together formed a large company in Heaven. Mother Beatrice said to Mother Mariana:

“My beloved daughter, by the will of Jesus Christ, our Celestial Spouse, and of Mary Immaculate, our Mother who has just spoken to you, I come to congratulate you: first, because you have corresponded to your religious vocation and been a good and faithful spouse; and second, because within five and a half months you will have ended your arduous life and come to enjoy you. Lord, for Heaven was made for souls who suffer and love, as you have done.

“Moreover, your glory will be special in Heaven because by your meekness, humility, and charity, you have saved the soul of the ‘Captain,’ your rebellious sister, heroically suffering hell for her salvation. Know that if you had not interested yourself in her salvation, she would have surely been lost. From the place of expiation where she finds herself, she is aware of your charity, and loves and blesses you for it.

“Even more, by divine revelation you have known many secrets of God with respect to souls, and you have saved a great number of them. They will be your crown and your glory.”

UNION WITH THE SERAPHIC FAMILY

“I thank you because you have labored and suffered for the foundation and conservation of this beloved Convent, where you have edified your sisters by the practice of the religious virtues. You have made every effort to see that unity, peace, charity, and

observance of the Rule have reigned in it, as well as love for the Seraphic Family, to whom I owe everything for the foundation and conservation of my Conceptionist Order. Without its influence and action, our Order would have withered from its inception.

“Because of this, I desire and I demand that my daughters call themselves and be Franciscan Conceptionists. Only then will I recognize them as my own. Should convents be founded that do not adopt the prayers of the Franciscan Order, renouncing and removing themselves from that enormous, many-limbed tree, even though they might call themselves Conceptionist I will not recognize them as my own. For I do nothing without my Father, the seraphic Francis, and his sons, who are scattered in large numbers throughout the face of the earth.

“At the end of your life, leave your testament as the best legacy for your daughters and mine, present and future. Being a Founding Mother, leave them your seraphic spirit and love for the Franciscan Order, in whose arms my Conceptionist Order has been cradled since its most tender years and under whose maternal care it grew and developed. How much my Order owes to it!

“And now I desire that you see the glory that the Conceptionist religious who loved St. Francis and their Seraphic Family enjoy in Heaven. See also the lesser glory of those who were negligent in acknowledging this.”

Then Mother Mariana saw a countless number of sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who, under the blue mantle of the Immaculate Virgin, gloried in being her daughters.

The Holy Foundress Beatrice da Silva spoke again, this time to the group of sisters: “My cherished daughters, I recognize all of you as my own. There are a large number among you who were faithful imitators of my spirit and molded according to my heart, for you loved the Seraphic Father Francis and his Seraphic Family. Today, manifest yourselves to my beloved daughter, our sister, who will come soon to keep us company and swell our ranks. Intone with me that canticle proper to the Franciscan Conceptionists, which the others cannot sing.”

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI APPEARS

The Seraphic Father himself then approached accompanied by his principal sons who had defended the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, their banner of triumph carried by the

Ven. Fr. John Duns Scotus.⁶⁹ Directing himself to Ven. Mother Beatrice, he said: "Let us sing, Mother and sister, with our Franciscan sisters the sublime canticle of the purity of our Immaculate Queen."

A celestial light appeared over the heads of those blessed sisters. From it fell countless stars, which one by one fixed themselves on the foreheads of some of the sisters. Then, with their holy Foundress, they began to intone the canticle *Tota pulchra es Maria*⁷⁰ and *Conceptio Tua*.⁷¹ It fell to Mother Beatrice da Silva to sing the final refrain.

The rest of those religious took pleasure in this celestial canticle and the sweet harmony of the voices but they did not sing, for this glory is reserved only to those who in life had loved their Seraphic Father, St. Francis of Assisi, and his Seraphic Family.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

At the end of this canticle, the holy Foundress again addressed her faithful daughter: "You have seen, beloved daughter, the glory that awaits you for having been a Franciscan Conceptionist. Be courageous and valorous until you take that great step from time to eternity! Until that happy moment arrives, I promise to be with you at all times. I myself will fortify the despondent hearts of your disconsolate daughters, who with good reason will shed tears because of your absence. But this absence will only be temporary, for we will await them in Heaven."

Turning to Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada and the rest of the Founding Mothers, who gazed at her with love, the Ven. Beatrice de Silva said, "And you, Mothers and my holy daughters, bless this dearly beloved daughter of yours and mine."

The Founding Mothers, raising their right hands and turning their gazes toward their Immaculate Mother, blessed Mother

69. Fr. John Duns Scotus, 1265-1308, called the "Subtle Doctor," was a great Franciscan theologian and master of doctrine. Contrary to the opinion normally maintained by his contemporaries, he sustained and demonstrated the theological possibility of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

70. *Tota pulchra es, Maria* refers to a 4th-century hymn to Mary that speaks of her Immaculate Conception: *Tota pulchra es, Maria, et macula originalis non est in te* [Thou art completely beautiful, Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in thee].

71. The first words of the medieval hymn, *Conceptio tua dei genitrix Virgo gaudium annuntiavit in universo mundo* [Thy (immaculate) Conception, Virgin Mother of God, has announced joy to the entire world].

Mariana, saying: "Be consoled, faithful daughter and sister, for your longings will soon be fulfilled. The end of your exile is approaching and you will join us in the eternal praise and exaltation of the goodness of our God and receive the reward for your labors and sufferings.

"Meanwhile, unite yourself more and more to the Eucharistic Jesus. Embrace Him in your heart, telling Him that these are the last times that you will receive Him in the Sacrament of His Love. Do not forget to pray for the blessed souls in Purgatory, especially for our Conceptionist sisters, for large numbers of them suffer without merit in the terrible expiatory prison, powerless to do anything for themselves."

Having said these words, they disappeared, leaving the soul of their holy Spanish sister ever more consumed with love of God, awaiting that happy moment of entering the Celestial Mansion of eternal glory.

* * *

CHAPTER 17

What can be said about those few remaining months and days that the seraphic Mother Mariana de Jesus lived in the cloister? She was totally consumed by love of God: Her appearance, sentiments, words, and way of being revealed her sanctity and the intimate union she had with God.

During this time the radiance of her virtue was noticed even beyond the walls of her beloved cloister, and people flocked to her continuously, pleading insistently to speak with the “holy Foundress,” as she was known.

Could the reader believe that she would coldly send away these good people so that her monastic life would not be interrupted? Of course not. Where there is true sanctity, based on solid humility, the whole soul is engulfed in charity and affection for one’s neighbor.

THE BISHOP ASKS MOTHER MARIANA TO MEDIATE IN A QUARREL BETWEEN TWO FAMILIES OF QUITO

Since Bishop Oviedo spoke with Mother Mariana daily in the confessional, presenting various problems for her to resolve and ascertaining God’s will by means of that beautiful soul, she took advantage of this to humbly tell His Excellency that the poor and needy people wanted to speak with her. Since it was necessary to bring consolation to their afflicted hearts – for they found their refuge in her – she asked the Bishop to give his permission for her to attend to those who asked for her during the intervals between the common acts of Convent life.

The Prelate readily acceded: “Mother, you can attend to them without any fear. Your Reverence has full liberty to do this. But I also ask a favor: I am going to send to Your Reverence family “x”, telling them to disclose to you their difficulties. After this, I will send family “y”, and they will do the same. Both will ask your counsel.

“They are families quarreling over a personal misunderstanding, and each has sworn to take the life of the other. I have exhausted the recourses of prudence, gentleness, and even severity in attempting to achieve a reconciliation. In place of mind and heart, I find only stone and bronze.

“Pray much for these two families and ask Our Lord what I should do to give them that blessed peace. Each family believes that it is in the right and has become blind and deaf to everything. Because of this, they have passed years without fulfilling their Easter duty, which for me is a true torment, aggravated by the scandal they give to the city with this inveterate enmity.”

Mother Mariana responded: “Very well, my dear Father. I will appeal like a young child to the Heart of the God of peace, asking that He deny me none of my last requests on earth. I will tell Him that during these last months of exile, I will be most demanding in my requests, and that I will not rise from His divine feet until He has conceded all that I ask. Otherwise, He will find me constantly before Him like an unhappy child before her loving mother, weeping and imploring comfort.

“Let us have great confidence in His goodness and loving mercy, and we shall obtain everything with ease.”

With the Bishop’s permission, in her free hours Mother Mariana began to receive persons from every social class who sought her out. In a mysterious way, in a short period of time she would receive a large number of people, who would all leave most tranquil and content. At the same time, she never left off her life of prayer and consolation for her sisters. Great conversions took place because of this.

“FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES ...”

The families mentioned by the Bishop willingly directed their steps to Mother Mariana, who received them with angelic sweetness.

The first to come to the convent was family “x”. Mother Mariana greeted them and asked, “What matter brings you here, good family?”

“Mother,” they responded, “we want to unburden our afflictions to your heart, so that you might weep with us and see that we receive justice.” They then recounted their whole story.

As she listened to their account, she said in her heart: “My Jesus, Divine Child, God of peace, come to soothe these agitated hearts. Wash with the tears Thou did shed in the Manger these stained souls who live so far from Thee because of their hatred for their fellow man. Could Thou allow me, Thy chosen spouse, to be in such a situation? No, certainly not. So, do for them what you

would do for me, my Supreme Good, and draw them as soon as possible from this chasm that leads to the abyss of Hell.”

When they had finished their account, the family asked, “Mother, do you now understand everything regarding our distressing situation?”

“I understand it fully.”

“Does it not seem to you, Mother, that we are right and justice is on our side, and that the guilt lies with that rival, repugnant family, whom we shall never see or speak to?”

Mother Mariana returned: “The language of the true Catholic, which Our Lord taught us from the Cross where He was nailed, was the language of peace, mercy, and pardon. Every form of calumny, injustice, and infamy fell upon the Holy of Holies, the most sacred and most meek Jesus. It was jealousy, hatred, and contempt that brought Him to crucifixion on the scaffold, as if He were a villain, murderer, and the most pernicious of men, with even the criminal Barrabas preferred to Him.

“Should we poor creatures, miserable sinners that we are, revile our fellow men, whose souls, like ours, were redeemed at the cost of the bitter sufferings of the Redeemer Christ and His Virgin Mother? We can and we must hold the hands of one another so that we might ascend to Heaven. This hatred does not belong in hearts that know God through the precious gift of Faith and the Catholic Religion. It would be excusable, perhaps, among infidels and savages who never received Christ Our Lord.

“Go now and think for nine days about what I have told you, my good friends, and pray together as a family one Our Father each day. After that time, I will await you here so that we might resolve the matter. Lest I forget, add also a Hail Mary to the Most Holy Virgin of Good Success, the Queen of Peace.”

The family departed, pensive and in a profound silence. Arriving at their home, none of them could say anything about the matter. Thus they passed the day.

When the family gathered together that night, the father, who was the most inexorable in the quarrel, addressed them, saying, “Let us pray the Our Father and Hail Mary indicated by the holy Foundress.”

Upon reaching the words “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us,” not one could manage to say the words and finish the prayer because an interior force prevented them. They decided to pass over it and say the Hail Mary.

After a certain period of silence, they asked each other, "What is happening to us? God is angry with us and justly strikes with His irate hand!"

**MOTHER MARIANA ASKS THE SISTERS
FOR PRAYERS AND SACRIFICES**

Meanwhile, after taking leave of this family and before the beginning of their meal, Mother Mariana addressed the sisters with these words: "My dear Mothers, daughters and sisters, as spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not closed in our beloved cloisters so that we might live tranquilly for ourselves alone, but also for our fellowman. With our lives of prayer and sacrifice, we can and should save souls and offer them for the consolation of the Eucharistic Heart of our Divine Spouse.

"In this city, there are two quarreling families, each one hating the other. Should this continue, they will lose their souls, with one murdering another and causing scandal to the whole city. What will become of these souls? We can and should impede this so that they are reconciled and pardon each other.

"How can this be achieved? In a very easy and simple way: Every day at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when the priest elevates the Sacred Host, the whole Convent will prostrate itself on the ground and each religious will say interiorly with faith and fervent love: 'Eternal Father, I remind Thee that once Thy Son Jesus was nailed to the ignominious gibbet of the Cross in order to save souls. Because of that Heart burning with divine charity, let Thy merciful love, pardon for their sins, and peace descend upon those families.'

"Let us offer all our monastic life and the observance of the Rule for nine days for this intention. The sick should offer their sufferings and sacrifices. Let all be offered through the hands and intercession of Mary Most Holy, to whom we will pray in common three Hail Mary's asking good success for this matter, and one Our Father to the Holy Ghost asking light and grace for those souls. Above all, let us ask that when they pray this prayer taught by Christ Our Lord Himself, upon reaching the words, 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us,' they will feel remorse and divine grace will work in them."

Obedient and docile, the sisters did all this in union with their holy Founding Mother.

THE COMPLAINTS OF THE SECOND FAMILY

On the next day, the second family came to Mother Mariana, speaking to her in the same way as the first. They added that they hoped St. Michael, patron of the head of the family, would avenge the wickedness of the other family with the death of one of its dearest members, so that this might subdue in some measure their arrogance and presumption.

After they had finished speaking, Mother Mariana remained in a profound silence. They insisted: "Mother, did you not hear us? Perhaps you were scandalized by our last words. We said this to reveal to you what is in our hearts. Certainly we should not say this, but we are mere creatures and we can no longer bear such hostility. If Your Reverence will carefully and impartially weigh the grave matter, you will see that we are the offended party."

Mother Mariana gave a long, profound sigh that penetrated the hearts of all present. They looked at one another, and the father of the family continued, "Speak to us, Your Reverence, with full liberty whatever you desire. We have come to receive counsel and to alleviate our bitterness and sorrow."

Mother Mariana advised the same things that she had to the first family, adding, "What you were thinking did not scandalize me. Rather, it buried a mortal arrow in my heart to see charity so fractured and profaned among Catholics and to think of my poor Lord Jesus Christ so despised and abandoned. While He, from the Tabernacle, teaches His beloved souls to love and pardon their enemies, by your actions you say: 'We have no care for Thee. We resolve to take Thy life again so that we might be satisfied. Go away and leave us be.'

"This is my greatest torment: to think that a Catholic family by their actions would say this to their Creator. Is this the way you respond to so many benefits received from divine goodness? I implore you with tears in my eyes to recognize and reconsider your conduct toward Our Lord Jesus Christ. I will ask you a favor that you must not deny me."

"Speak, Mother," they responded in one voice, "and we will eagerly comply."

"For nine days," she continued, "pray with me an Our Father to the Holy Ghost and a Hail Mary to the Blessed Virgin, asking a remedy for your sad situation. After this time, return to tell me what has taken place so that we might resolve this matter."

“We will gladly do this,” they replied. “What you ask of us is nothing. But, Your Reverence, you must also pray for us, who suffer as the innocent party.”

And they took their leave.

A HORSE AND TWO OXEN

When the Bishop questioned Mother Mariana about the two families, she told him all that had taken place. She also informed him that the Convent was making a novena, and that she was hoping that God Our Lord, through love for His creatures, would provide the solution and resolve the matter, giving the families peace, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, granted to all creatures to love and serve Him. She also asked His Excellency to pray much that Our Lord give this grace.

The Prelate expressed his satisfaction and thanked her, saying that if this dispute would be resolved, his heart would be relieved of an enormous weight.

At the end of the nine days, the first family arrived at the Convent very early – that is, at the earliest opportunity for visitors to speak to the sisters – to talk to the holy Foundress.

She received them with pleasure and after greeting them, she said, “Well then, my good friends, God Our Lord has triumphed in your hearts. Tell me this good news so that I might rejoice with you and praise God, the Author of all good.”

The family was surprised at these words and newly convinced that Mother Mariana could read hearts. The head of the family spoke: “Mother, your words were two-edged swords that pierced our hearts. We passed the whole first day in deep thought, unable to speak a single word among ourselves although we were together. Even our servants noticed our behavior and wondered, although they did not understand the cause.

“That night, I, as head of the household, called together the family and servants to pray the prayers indicated by Your Reverence. We were all praying together in one voice until we reached the words ‘Forgive us our trespasses ...’ We could not manage to pronounce these words, for a fear and panic came over us upon considering that we would be lying before the God of Truth Who knows the hearts of men. For, by saying these words, we were asking Him to treat us as we were treating our adversaries.

“If it were necessary to sell our property and all our temporal goods in order to resolve this matter, I would happily do so. However,

upon thinking the matter over, I see that I need only deliver to that family one horse and two head of oxen, even though the death of their animals on our place was not our fault but due to the negligence of the servants of both parties, as Your Reverence knows.

“But since we have passed six years and nine months in discord, insults, and hatred – which have escalated to the point that we were thinking of murder! – I will give them two horses and six head of oxen and, with this, return to our former friendship.

“But, Mother, they are implacable. I do not know what to do, for if I present myself at their house, they will think that I am there to harm them and they will kill me. Now it falls to Your Reverence to implore God Our Lord insistently that He provide me an occasion to meet with the head of that family as soon as possible and resolve the matter amiably, and also that my whole family might wash their souls in the Tribunal of Penance, giving this consolation to our Prelate who has labored so hard in vain.”

Mother Mariana responded: “Blessed and praised is the merciful goodness of our amiable Redeemer Jesus Christ! And blessed are you, who cooperate with the inspirations of grace! May Our Lord bless you and make you happy in time and eternity. Do not fear. Remain steadfast in your generous and edifying resolution, for all will be arranged.”

She spoke to them about Heaven with great enthusiasm, in such a way that they all departed in peace, resolved to put into practice what had been said.

A PROVIDENTIAL MEETING

Upon their return to their house, the father of the first family crossed paths in the street with the head of the other family. Both greeted each other by raising their hats, the first time that this had happened in many years. (They later confessed that a mysterious force moved them to act in this way.) The two men refrained from exchanging the mutual insults they customarily made whenever they would meet, to the disedification and scandal of all those who witnessed such scenes.

This time, the passers-by marveled at the incident and asked each other, “What powerful person could have intervened to restore the friendship of these two scandalous families?”

When they learned that the holy Founding Mother had intervened in the matter, they remarked, “Only she, a saint, could convince both of the truth.”

THE TWO FAMILIES ASK TO BE RECONCILED

That evening, the other family came to speak with Mother Mariana.

After exchanging greetings, the head of the household said these words: "Mother, what did Your Reverence do to our hearts? After the day that we spoke, my whole household, including the servants, gathered together to begin the novena by praying the Our Father, but no one could finish reciting the prayer. I was stricken with terror. I tried to force myself to overcome this obstacle and conclude the prayer, but in vain. This happened for several evenings.

"I spoke with my wife and children, and we are all convinced that we will never be able to pray the Our Father so long as we harbor in our hearts such enmity, for we are asking God to treat us as we are treating our neighbor. Convinced of this truth, we ask God's pardon.

"We are resolved to pardon this family for the horse and two oxen that died on their farm – even more since the owners were not at fault, but rather the servants of both houses. It would not be right for us to lose our souls because of three animals.

"After making this serious reflection, we could finish the Our Father and the Hail Mary on the subsequent days. But we were ashamed before God Our Lord and distressed at having offended Him for so long a time.

"We then sought to find a means to reestablish our friendship, and I came to a decision to make a visit to my neighbor's home. My family, however, would not consent to this, fearing that my life would be taken since they might think that I had come with some evil intent. Day and night we have pondered how this reconciliation might be achieved, until it happened that we casually met them on the street, and both my neighbor and I raised our hats to each other in greeting, as if we had never had this dispute.

"This is already a good beginning, but our consciences are still not at ease. So many injuries should be met with worthy redress so that we might continue as good Catholics and frequent the Sacraments before death surprises us. Do you not agree, Mother?"

"Your edifying generosity is very pleasing to God, my good friends," affirmed Mother Mariana. "I am most pleased, and I congratulate you a thousand times for thinking of your future life as good and practicing Catholics. No one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven if they harbor hatred, vengeance, or anger toward their neighbor. Holy charity is supremely delicate. We should never forget

that God is eternal Charity and that, as His children, we should imitate Him. Having ended your quarrel, I desire that your friendship be reestablished immediately. Toward this end, permit me to make a suggestion.”

“Speak, Mother,” they responded in one voice.

“If you will agree,” she continued, “I will call the other family here at a certain hour when you will also be present. Then I will have the satisfaction of assisting at this reconciliation that God asks of you and that will give Him much glory. It will also be edifying to the city, which is scandalized by the conduct of both families. In this way, you can make amends for the bad example given, and you will have the right to hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

“Yes, Mother! Yes, Mother!” they responded immediately in chorus. “How happy we are! In this way neither they nor we need fear any betrayal. We will make our peace with all tranquility and reestablish our friendship so that it might never again be upset. Your Reverence will be the faithful witness of our pardons.

“At ten o’clock tomorrow morning we will await you here in the parlor to meet with the other family. Thank you, Mother, a thousand times thank you!”

And they joyfully took their leave.

THE MEETING IS ARRANGED

A few hours later, the first family called Mother Mariana to the parlor. They greeted her affectionately and then told her that when they had come upon the other family in the street that morning, they had greeted each other most courteously.

They had come to tell her this good news and to ask counsel and advice on how to fully reestablish their friendship, making amends for everything with words and deeds. They would gladly replace the dead animals for they only desired to be good Catholics, returning to their former friendship and asking a thousand pardons for the many insults hurled.

Mother Mariana addressed them: “My friends, how good God is to us! Note well and meditate upon His great love for His creatures and souls redeemed at the cost of such cruel interior and exterior torments of His Most Sacred Humanity. He shed all His Divine Blood, and He delivered His Most Holy Body to the infernal fury of the ungrateful Jews and envious Scribes and Pharisees, for the holy life of Our Lord Jesus Christ was a silent censure of their disordered, hypocritical lives. Under the pretext of following the

Law of Moses, they were in reality following no law. On the contrary, they gave full reign to their vices and passions, their perfidy reaching the point of taking the life of the Innocent One, the Holy of Holies, by means of the infamous and dolorous death on the Cross.

“This Divine Victim, however, from the ignominious gallows to which He was nailed with three large spikes, all bloody, afflicted, and lacerated, did not forget His beloved sons. Opening His divine lips, He left as His legacy the Seven Last Words that encompass all of Christian perfection, the first of these being, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

“In this way He forgave His worst enemies in order to teach us the generosity that we should have in mutually pardoning the small grievances that we encounter in this mortal life. Small in themselves, they nonetheless at times bring bitter consequences, ending even with the taking of the life of our adversary, burying a brother soul in the fires of Hell. This horrible sin of homicide brings in its wake the disgrace that falls upon the murderer and his family, as well as the orphanhood of the victim’s young children whose eternal salvation was linked to the lives of the father or mother, who would have provided them with a Catholic education. Lacking this protection, however, they could end by becoming bandits and thieves.

“See, my dear ones, the many consequences caused by one sin of hatred that is not duly restrained in time, that is, at the moment when the heart feels the passion seething.

“Humble yourselves and thank God Our Lord, Who has given you the grace to free yourselves from such misfortunes that would have befallen if you had you continued in this enmity.”

As the holy Spanish sister was speaking, the whole family felt her words as darts of divine fire that inflamed their hearts with loving thanksgiving to God Our Lord for the great benefit granted them. They perceived that this had come to them because of the prayers of the holy Founding Mother.

At the same time, they felt a great love for the other family, formerly their enemy, and ardently desired to see and embrace them to make amends for so many injuries. Their copious weeping accompanied the words of Mother Mariana.

At the end of her exhortation, no one wanted to interrupt the silence. Finally, the head of the family, with a broken voice said, “Our Mother and benefactress, what should we do to return to friendship with this family that is so dear to us? We will not rest until we have paid our considerable debt, putting an end to all enmity.”

"I am most edified by your generous behavior, my friends," said Mother Mariana. "The Angels are smiling, and the Heart of your Adorable Redeemer, filled with infinite tenderness, blesses and loves you. And what about our Immaculate Mother? Ah! You should come as close as possible to Her heart so abounding in maternal affection. She herself hopes to present you to God Thrice Holy and conduct you into Heaven when your abode on this earth has ended.

"If you so desire, I will await you here in the parlor with the other family tomorrow at ten o'clock in the morning so that I might have the ineffable joy of witnessing your reconciliation."

She had hardly pronounced the last word when all exclaimed: "How happy we are! Mother, you have never resolved a matter so well! We see clearly that the Holy Ghost guides and illuminates you. We will be here tomorrow even before ten o'clock awaiting with open arms that family which is already so dear to us. A thousand thanks for all your charity, and may Our Lord be with you in time and eternity, for you have freed our souls from eternal disgrace."

Most content, they took their leave.

A DEVIL IN THE FORM OF A BEGGAR

At the corner of the Convent, this family crossed paths with a beggar, who, his eyes filled with tears, begged alms. The lady of the house turned away from him, but her husband said, "I have never denied an alms, especially now, after we have just received a gift from God."

He took a coin and handed it to the beggar.

The beggar, however, said to him, "Señor, before receiving this money, I want to say a few words to you."

"Speak quickly, man, for I can not tarry here."

"I will not take much time," the beggar continued. "But I cannot speak in front of your wife and family. Come aside here, where we can be alone."

Pulling him aside, he continued, weeping, "Señor, I have always loved you greatly and even more so now. For this reason, I must tell you that only a short time ago in the public square, members of the family that is your enemy, like furious madmen, said evil things about you and insulted you. They promised to take your life this very night, or tomorrow when they go to meet you in the parlor of this nearby Convent. All the men will go there armed and at the

moment of giving the feigned embrace of friendship, they will thrust their daggers into you and all the members of your family who are with you. Your wife has only a few hours of life remaining, and this grieves me.

“I implore you not to go to the Convent or to have such faith in that poor little nun who possesses no virtue. She only tells you these false tales to pass her time, for she finds it most arduous to live there hidden and forgotten. Even now, she is striving to leave the Convent, for she is not satisfied in it. The proof of this – and I can assure you of this! – is that she has no love for me. This so-called ‘saint’ treats me only with contempt and scorn. I, a beggar! You can see very well what kind of sanctity she has!

“Do not bother to give me alms now. Keep this coin for another occasion. I only ask that you give me a meal in your house for having revealed to you the betrayal that awaits you and for helping you to escape such a terrible misfortune for your family. This evening I will come to your house to appease my hunger, for I have not eaten in days since I have no place to prepare a meal. Therefore, I will not take your money now.”

The head of the family was greatly astonished to hear such unexpected news. Contradictory and anguished thoughts bombarded his mind and agitated his spirit with a grief that bordered on despair.

When the beggar had finished speaking, he answered, “Where do you live and what is your name? I do not recall ever having seen you before. This is the first time.”

“There is no need for you to know my name,” responded the beggar. “Suffice it to know that I have known and loved you. For this reason, I am saving you from this great misfortune. I also know that Spanish impostor and all those who live with her in that Convent, which I abhor because they have done me such grave harm. Leave this place and never again return.”

“Be silent, evil scoundrel,” returned the patriarch. “Dare not show such disrespect, for I am noble, rich, and generous of heart. You are a liar and an enemy of grandeur and beauty. There is no one better than my saintly *Españolita* and her holy daughters. I am and I will continue to be their friend, enthusiastically loving this cherished Convent. Repugnant beggar, you dare to calumniate creatures whom I know much better than you do! You deserve to have received the scorn of those holy creatures!

“Convert or you will come to a very sad end. What you want is to sow discord in my house. Leave my presence and do not dare to appear at my house, for I will have you beaten and driven away.”

Raising his cane, he gave him some blows, and the beggar fell to the ground.

He then left him to rejoin his wife and family, who were anxiously waiting to find out what that dirty, repellent man had said. Deeply perturbed, he responded, “I do not know what is happening with me. Let us return immediately to our house.”

The lady of the house looked back and saw that the beggar was laughing loudly. Shocked, she turned to her spouse and said, “Look, the beggar who pretended to fall to the ground is mocking you and us. I fear that loathsome scoundrel. By his appearance he seems to be some evil spirit.”

MOTHER MARIANA FOILS THE DEVIL’S PLOT

Arriving at their house, the family all wanted to know what the beggar had said. The head of the family, confused and disturbed, narrated what had happened.

“Jesus help and protect us!” exclaimed the lady. “May the Blessed Virgin through the intercession of the holy Founding Mother protect us! He was not a beggar. He is some evil spirit. I am going right away to speak with my holy Founding Mother and tell her what has happened. Then we will see what we should do. The Devil is very astute and tries to impede everything that is good.”

She immediately left and, arriving at the Convent, called for Mother Mariana, saying that it was a very urgent matter.

When the doorkeeper gave her this message, Mother Mariana smiled and said, “My daughter, tell her that I am coming to speak with her.”

She had been praying in the lower choir as was her custom, for whenever she spoke with persons in the world, whoever they might be, she would afterwards go straight to the choir to tell her Sacramental Love everything that had been said.

The matron waited impatiently, those seconds seeming like centuries. Finally, the holy Founding Mother arrived and greeted her: “*Ave Maria Purissima!* What trouble brings you here so disturbed, good lady?”

“Oh, Mother!” she exclaimed. “After we took our leave of Your Reverence, we were returning home peaceful and happy

when we encountered a repugnant looking beggar, who called José [her husband] apart and spoke to him for some time. We all noticed that when he returned, José was disturbed and his countenance had changed." She related all that had taken place, breaking down in tears and asking Mother Mariana to intercede for her family.

With angelic sweetness and saintly imperturbability, the religious said to her: "Calm yourself, good lady. Do not waste your tears on so unworthy a matter. This was the mendacious Devil who, moved by luciferian envy, took the repugnant form of that beggar so that he might impede the reconciliation. He wants to maintain hatred and vengeance between the two families until he can succeed in staining one of you with the blood of murder. Do not believe anything that the miserable Devil said.

"After upsetting your husband, he did the same with the mistress of the other family. Afflicted and disturbed, she will also come to speak with me. She will find you here, and you should extend your arms to her, and she will do the same. In this way, we will expose the wicked Devil."

She had no sooner finished speaking when the doors of the parlor were thrown open and the other lady entered. Terror-stricken, she cried out, "Mother Mariana, we are victims of a horrible betrayal! Only a few hours of life remain to us, and I have come here so that you might help me!"

She was so nervous that she did not even notice that someone else was there with her in the parlor.

Mother Mariana then spoke: "Calm yourself, *Señora* Panchita. This is a diabolical work. That false beggar is the Devil, who first upset *Señor* José, the husband of *Señora* Joaquinita, and afterward went to your house. I assure you of this, and as proof, here is *Señora* Joaquinita."

Señora Joaquinita quickly rose and, embracing the other lady to her heart, said, "Dear Panchita, we should have reestablished our old and good friendship long ago. Do not believe this accursed Devil, who wants to prevent our reconciliation with his lies."

Surprised, *Señora* Panchita returned her embrace, and answered: "My Joaquinita, my heart is yours. I do not doubt your affection. As for the dead animals, let them, as well as our mutual insults, be forgotten by both families. Let us end all this so that we might begin to frequent the Sacraments. Tomorrow at ten o'clock

we will meet again in this holy sanctuary to make our peace. Do you promise this?"

"I promise, my good Panchita, and may God be pleased with our reconciliation."

The two ladies, now calm, inquired about the rest of the members of each other's families.

Meanwhile, Mother Mariana was praying for them. Afterward, she addressed them: "Now you see well, my dear ladies, how good God Our Lord is! He has come to your assistance at the moment of greatest affliction, when the fury of Hell was trying to prevent your reconciliation and with this, thwart the innumerable graces that will pour down on both families as well as prevent the edification and good example you will give to the city, which today is so scandalized by your behavior.

"Return now in peace to your homes, carrying like doves the olive branch, symbol of the peace and tranquility of your consciences. Let your two families return here tomorrow to put an end to this old contention and begin a new and enduring friendship, which, begun here on earth, will continue forever in eternal happiness."

"Yes, Mother, we will do so," they both responded. "We realize now that all this was the work of the Devil, and we will not listen to anything or anyone. Good-bye until tomorrow. We ask your blessing and many prayers."

And the two matrons took their leave with affable courtesy and affection.

MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

Mother Mariana hastened to her Sacramental Love to tell Him everything, as she always did.

Entering into prayer, she fell into ecstasy. She saw how the Holy Trinity in an ineffable and admirable way resided in the Consecrated Host in order to be the light of the universe, and how Jesus Christ lives a life of impressive activity in the Blessed Sacrament, unceasingly laboring for the salvation of the souls that He loves so dearly and cost Him so much.

She also saw that Mary Most Holy, that tender Mother and secure refuge of poor sinners, has a lively role in the salvation of souls, who owe her dearly because all conversions take place by means of and through the intercession of this blessed Mother, channel of divine graces. One goes to Jesus Christ always through Mary Most Holy.

Jesus washes us with His Precious Blood, the Holy Spirit inflames us with the fire of divine love, and thus we are presented, cleansed and purified, before our Celestial Father, so that He might look with mercy upon us and bestow on us His favors and graces. In this way we leave the darkness of sin and live the robust life of grace, which assures our eternal salvation.

**OUR LORD ORDERS MOTHER MARIANA
TO PERSONALLY EXPEL THE DEVILS**

Mother Mariana was also given to know the state of conscience of each member of the two quarreling families and how they were all heading for Hell. The cursed Devil was applying all his assiduous efforts and infernal astuteness to try to prevent the reinstatement of amiable relations, availing himself of a thousand ruses and intrigues. At that very moment he was even wanting to assume the figure of one of the heads of the families.

Seeing this, the holy Founding Mother, with that childlike confidence that she had in Our Lord and Our Lady, said: "My sweetest Loves, even at the cost of my life or great sacrifices, I desire to prevent this new diabolical intrigue that is capable of frustrating the conversion of the many souls that belong to the members of both of these families. And also of many other persons in this city who daily witness the scandal of this enmity, which, as Thou hast communicated to me at various times, will end in homicide and suicide, burying these souls in Hell. The cursed Devil would glory in having triumphed.

"Humble him, O Lord, and prostrate him for his foolish perfidy and pride. Have compassion and mercy on these souls so dear to Thee, redeemed by Thy Blood and merits and by the merits of the Co-Redeemer Mary Most Holy, Thy precious Mother as well as mine."

After she made this supplication, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of His Blessed Mother, directed Himself to Mother Mariana: "My favored spouse, in whose heart I live in sweet tranquility and find rest from My labors and fatigues, I can deny nothing to you, the faithful daughter of My Immaculate Mother, who has treated you familiarly throughout your mortal life. Today, as its end draws near, let your request be granted.

"You yourself shall order these furious legions of devils who have issued forth to prevent the conversion of these souls to descend to the depths of the infernal abyss. Command them in the

name of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity, of My Real Presence in the Consecrated Host, of the Immaculate Conception of My Blessed Mother and her divine maternity, being Virgin most pure before, during, and after the parturition. You will see how these foul spirits will flee in panic. So that you might do this, first see them.”

Then she saw a countless number of evil spirits of all shapes, forms, and sizes invading the homes of the two families, striving to penetrate their hearts. Among these multitudes was that loathsome beggar, who concealed a long tail covered with thorns, with which he was planning to hang the heads of both families. He was ready to carry out this plan, assisted by those innumerable evil spirits who issued forth to block that reconciliation which would give so much glory to God and such great fruit in the edification of their neighbors, who had been extremely scandalized by these two families.

She looked at them with despal, repugnance, and horror.

Then the holy and humble Spanish sister turned her eyes to Jesus Christ and Our Lady, saying, “Strength of the weak, accompany me on this mission. Otherwise I cannot do this, for these astute infernal spirits will jeer at me, a vile and wretched piece of clay.

“But since Thy Majesties have always given me proof of Thy merciful love, I beg Thee, prostrate on the ground, to accompany me as Thou hast always appeared to me, that is, with the Child in the arms of Mary Most Holy, my tender Mother. Accompanied and defended by Thy Majesties, I will have good success, hurling these proud and jealous spirits into the deep abyss.”

VICTORY OVER THE INFERNAL HOSTS

Concluding this plea, Mother Mariana saw the Heavens open and descend into the Sacrament. The whole main altar shone with a celestial light so brilliant that for a moment, she thought that she had already entered into eternity without experiencing death. The Angels were harmoniously intoning the *Salve Sancta Parens*.

Immediately the Queen of Heaven stood before her.

Then the three Archangels, followed by countless celestial spirits, flew to the Tabernacle. After making profound reverence before the Holy Host, the Prince of Angels, St. Michael, took the Host into his hands. It became a most beautiful Child, Who gazed tenderly at the Prince and his glorious angelic troop, and said:

“Place Me into the arms of My Mother, and then all of you shall accompany us so that you might witness the grandeur of the power of God, Who makes use of apparently weak instruments to

realize great marvels. See, then, a new confirmation of that enchanting truth: God hides His secrets from the proud and great of the world and reveals them to the humble and simple of heart.”

Without delay the Archangel presented himself before the Sovereign Empress and, bowing before Her, said: “Take into thy sovereign arms, my Lady, the divine treasure of which thou art the protector.”

He placed the Divine Infant into her left arm and withdrew, after again paying her reverence.

Then the Archangel St. Gabriel approached, carrying a beautiful crosier. After making a deep bow, he placed the crosier in her right hand, saying: “Take, o Lady, in thy sovereign right hand this crosier, which Divine Omnipotence has placed there so that, as Empress of Heaven and earth, thou might govern the universe and always quash the diabolical strength of the proud, tenacious Satan, who, filled with furious envy, employs all his cunning for the perdition of souls. He will, however, always be conquered and humiliated by thee, the Mother of the Divine Word.”

He made another profound bow and then withdrew.

Then the Archangel St. Raphael approached, carrying a small and exquisite cross about the size of a finger, which blinded the eyes from the light that radiated from it. It was made of precious rubies, emeralds, amethysts, sapphires, and diamonds.

Placing it into the hand of the Divine Infant, he said: “King of Heaven and earth, here is the gift that Thou dost guard and grant to Thy faithful spouses who serve Thee faithfully during their religious life. With it, they will triumph over the diabolical schemes until they close their eyes to the earthly light and open them to the splendor of eternal light. By the holy cross, the souls redeemed by Thee will be saved.”

Making a profound bow, the Archangel withdrew.

The Celestial Court then intoned a hymn of glory, whose melody only the soul could relish, the bodily senses being unable to support such sweetness without succumbing.

All this took place before Mother Mariana, who remained in the presence of God and His Blessed Mother with that humility proper to the saints – a humility acquired through a life filled with difficulties and humiliations, of which the reader is well acquainted by reading the life of this blessed disciple of the Divine Redeemer.

ABOUT THE APOSTOLATE OF RELIGIOUS SOULS

After the canticle ended, the Child Jesus directed the following words to Mother Mariana:

“My favored spouse, you are a most delicate fiber of My Heart, because you have passed your whole life in My service and loved Me with your whole heart and soul. Your love for Me, your Lord and God, has been dedicated and untiring, and won many souls for Me. To convert them, turn them away from vice, and direct their steps on the secure road leading to Heaven, you have had to endure great physical and moral sufferings with generosity and valor. You have not succumbed to that cursed human respect which impedes great graces designed for souls and makes them desist from such a grandiose undertaking.

“If all my spouses had this diligence and care for all the persons they deal with, how many souls they would secretly give Me!

“Know that I have placed in the hands of My spouses double-edged swords to penetrate the most hardened hearts. Even if to all appearances they are of little note, their words resound in the interior of souls night and day, germinating and producing the early or late fruits of penitence. And when they are accompanied by incessant supplications for those dear sinners, they are still more efficacious. I cannot resist the requests of My spouses in their undertakings for the salvation of souls.

“My favored spouse, tell your daughters to be My apostles in the silence of the cloisters. Assure them that if they do this, they will have a special glory in Heaven. Tell them that a single word proffered by religious persons can carry great weight in the hearts of those who live in the world, for however bad they might be, they see religious as creatures separated from the world, consecrated and dedicated to the exclusive service of God and, for this reason, worthy of respect and attention.

“Now hear the words of My Mother and yours. Then we will bury in the abyss those cursed legions that issue from Hell to conquer these two poor families, attempting to rob Me of souls so dear to My Heart. Receive this beautiful cross as a gift of the eternal nuptials so soon awaiting you.”

And the Child Jesus placed the precious cross in the heart of the privileged Mother Mariana, overwhelming it with ineffable consolations. She later told her spiritual director that these divine

flames were almost insupportable in her state as a pilgrim on this earth. When she returned to her corporal senses, Our Lord had to mitigate the violence of these effects, which mere human nature could not bear.

THE PRODIGAL SONS

Then the Mother of God spoke to her in this manner:

“My cherished daughter, your mortal days are already drawing to their close. During the few days remaining to you, I desire that you be even more perfect in the love of God and neighbor. Exert yourself in praying, laboring, and suffering to win souls to God.

“If religious only knew the merit that they gained for eternity in this hidden apostolate, they would not lose any opportunity in its practice. It is a great charity to work, pray, and suffer for those poor wayward souls. Like other prodigal sons, they have abandoned the house of their good Father and by their sins, have strayed from it to regions distant from God, dissipating their precious inheritance of divine grace until they are reduced to extreme spiritual misery. Like beggars they live in the world, which is a hard and cruel master, with its acorns of false honors and pleasures and the dregs of the hogs, which are the vices and unbridled passions that bury a considerable number of souls in Hell, rendering fruitless the Blood and merits of my Redeemer Son.

“This good and loving Father, however, daily leaves the Sacrament to enter pure and clean hearts. From there He extends His loving gaze further, in hopes of seeing His prodigal sons return so that He might receive them with open arms. After they are reconciled and washed in the holy tribunal of Penance, He lets them return to His friendship with the possession of the life of grace and the innumerable goods reserved for the Kingdom of Heaven.

“With precisely that aim of re-conquering these prodigal sons, Our Lord established the contemplative life in His Church, so that His chosen souls, hidden from human eyes, unknown, forgotten, and often despised, would intercede as active, fervent apostles with their incessant prayer and penance in the monastic life.

“Woe to those lazy and imprudent religious souls who do not want to fulfill their divine mission because of their cowardice! They will have no excuse at the Divine Tribunal. There those who

saved souls will be recompensed, and those who lost souls, because of their neglect in the vineyard of the Lord, will be chastised.

“Now, let us put to shamed flight the infernal legions who dare to snatch these souls from God.”

THE SPLENDOROUS CORTEGE GOES TO THE HOUSES OF THE TWO FAMILIES

After these words were spoken, Our Lord and Our Lady, together with the celestial entourage and the humble Mother Mariana, went to the houses of the two families.

With the light that illuminated her heart from the small cross given to her by the Divine Infant, the holy sister saw the minute details of the consciences of those souls. She discerned the subtlety of the devils in their efforts to prevent the mutual reconciliation.

They were sowing a thousand unfounded fears in the minds of the heads of both families, renewing resentments, and making them believe that the act of reconciliation was an insurmountable mountain, impossible to overcome. Their self-love made them resist the reconciliation in order to avoid humiliation, for both families were attached to the nobility and wealth of their houses. All were uncertain, perplexed, downcast, and irritable, even with members of their own families. In short, never had they felt so annoyed and never were they so infested as that evening and night.

Into this ambience radiated the celestial light of the King of Heaven, Who reposed in the arms of His Mother, Mary Most Holy, accompanied by the celestial entourage and the favored daughter of their Hearts.

The devils were terror-stricken and dumbfounded. They wanted to flee, but could not because the Angelic Prince St. Michael prevented them, addressing them with these words:

“Cursed, wretched, and envious legions, in the name of the Divine Word and His Virgin Mother, our Queen, I command that you remain here until the humble servant of the Lord hurls you into the deep abyss. For it is meet that your luciferian pride be humiliated by a human creature who, loving our God, rivals the angelic nature. Indeed, the Angelic Spirits who had humbly adored the Word Made Flesh, take pleasure in assisting and serving such servants of the Lord, lavishing care upon them during their earthly life until we conduct them to Heaven, where they enjoy God in our company, praising the mercies that the Lord had shown them.”

Hearing the imperious voice of the leader and Prince of the Angelic Army, the infernal hosts trembled and raised such a terrible roar that it seemed to resound throughout the entire universe.

Turning toward the light that eclipsed them, the devils saw themselves in the presence of Jesus Christ, His Virgin Mother, and the humble Conceptionist nun, raised to such a great honor by virtue of her life of continuous sacrifice and victories over the evil spirits. This infuriated them even more, for she was the object of their great hatred since they had always failed to make her fall into sin even though they spared no effort or energy. Seeing her, they wanted to hurl themselves against her, for since they had not been able to cause damage to her soul, they at least wanted to take her life.

THE EXORCISM MADE BY MOTHER MARIANA

Meanwhile, the Child Jesus spoke these words: "My chosen spouse, divine strength sustains you. Rise up and order these loathsome and impotent legions to no longer bother these souls and to descend into the deep abyss, acknowledging their weakness before human creatures who faithfully serve their Lord and God."

With these words, the heart of Mother Mariana was filled with an indescribable strength. Fixing the demons with a look of severity and despal, she addressed them:

"Evil and repugnant spirits, who because of your luciferian pride fell from Heaven, where the Lord created you as beautiful spirits, into the deep abyss, transformed by Divine Justice into hideous devils and condemned to suffer for all eternity in the fires lit by the ire of God!

"I, a poor, weak creature who glories in serving my Lord and God, obeying with pleasure all that He commands of me and loving Him with all of my small being, I abhor you with the abhorrence with which my God abhors you because of your insubordination.

"Lamenting that you have stolen so many souls from God, Who is the only Lord, I command you: In the name of the August Mystery of the Holy Trinity, of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Consecrated Host, and of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy, whose daughter I have the good fortune to be, and in the name also of her pure and integral virginity and divine maternity, she being Virgin Most Pure before, during, and after the parturition, I command that you depart from these two families, so that they might give glory to His Divine Majesty in

the fulfillment of the holy will of God. Vanquished, flee into the depths of Hell, your eternal abode, to your great shame! May the redeeming Cross be your greatest torment; I bear it with pleasure in my heart, for I have been nailed on it joyfully during my life.”

And she made the Sign of the Cross.

At that same instant the cursed beings, releasing horrible shouts and tearing at each other, hurled themselves into the center of the earth. This caused such a tremor of the earth that the inhabitants of the city were alarmed and began to call out for mercy, thinking that the Pichincha volcano would bury them. The Bishop ordered prayers to be said in all the churches of the city.

The two families, however, who had been so irritable and upset in their respective houses, immediately became calm. Each family gathered together with all their servants to pray the holy Rosary. An inalterable peace and tranquility came over them. The servants commented, “How good this tremor of the earth was! With it, our masters have become calm! For they were becoming truly insupportable!”

THE ACTION OF GRACE – THE VISION ENDS

After putting the infernal hosts to shameful flight, Mother Mariana turned her eyes to Jesus Christ and His Mother and said:

“My sweetest Loves, I give Thee thanks for the great benefits that every day Thou bestow upon me. I, a poor, weak woman, can do nothing to repay Thee except to humble myself and, filled with loving and profound gratitude, deliver my whole being to Thee to do with me what Thou desire. And while I live a pilgrim on this earth of sorrow and tears, I will strive to conquer souls for Thee along with my humble, constant, and incessant prayer, as Thou ask of Thy religious souls.

“And so I ask of Thee the grace to do this. Of myself, I am weak and miserable and can do nothing good. Assist me, therefore, with Thy power, Blood, and merits, and through the powerful intercession of my Blessed Mother, under whose mantle I desire to live in time and eternity, hoping for good successes in everything.”

The Blessed Virgin responded: “Beloved daughter, valiantly continue on your course. We are here with you to guard you from the infernal fury. Fear nothing. Receive the blessing that I, together with my Most Holy Son, give to you.”

The Virgin and the Divine Infant blessed her, and the vision disappeared.

QUITO BECOMES CALM AGAIN

Upon recovering her senses, Mother Mariana saw that all her sisters were around her and calling out to God for mercy. They cried out loudly for Him to protect the city from the earthquake, for the atmosphere was still uncertain and foreboding.

Mother Mariana quieted them, saying, "Calm yourselves, my daughters, nothing is going to happen, thanks be to the mercy of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother."

Since the religious knew the great sanctity of their Founding Mother, they immediately became calm. In the streets people were also hurrying to the Convent to beg the holy Founding Mother to ask God not to send the earthquake. They returned to their homes quieted by the response of Mother Mariana, and the city again became calm.

The Bishop sent her a letter about the matter, asking her to intercede with Our Lord so that He would pardon His people and free them from the scourge of the earthquake. She responded immediately, telling him that he should not worry because there had never been any danger. Sensing that something extraordinary had happened, the Prelate became tranquil and resolved to go to speak with her on the following day.

THE RECONCILIATION

When morning broke, *Señor Miguel*, his spouse *Señora Francisca* [Panchita], and their five children set out for the Convent at nine o'clock in order to arrive there before the other family. Twenty minutes later, the second family entered with haste, for they also desired to be the first ones there.

Señor José, his spouse *Señora Joaquina* [Joaquinita], and their four children went to the parlor and knocked on the door. They heard the word, "Enter!" They advanced and remained quiet.

Mother Mariana then spoke: "My dear friends, the peace of the Child of Bethlehem be with you. You may greet each other with heartfelt affection since everything has already ended and been forgotten, and neither party retains memory of offenses or guards resentments. Is this not true?"

The respective heads of the households greeted each other: "I wish you a very good morning, José!" "The best to you, Miguel!"

The women and children exchanged similar greetings. They all sat down together, asking with keen interest – after such a long period – about each other’s health and other subjects of interest.

Mother Mariana was praying for them, and she saw a light descend upon the families that inflamed their hearts with affection and tenderness, leaving them tranquil and joyful upon returning to their friendship.

Finally, *Señor* José and *Señora* Joaquinita directed these words to the other couple: “Let us turn now to the matter that brings us here, so that we can firmly solidify our friendship. Because of the neglect of servants more than bad will on our part, a horse and two head of oxen from your property died on our farm. This was the sole cause for our enmity, which brought us to the point of thinking of killing each other, causing such great scandal to the city.

“But today, since God has moved our hearts to make this much-needed reconciliation, I ask you, my dear Miguel, *Señora* Francisca, and your children, that you pardon us for all the many grievances caused by our gossip, scorn, and injuries.

“All this easily could have been avoided with the delivery of another similar horse and two head of cattle. We should have repaid you for the dead animals. Unfortunately, on that occasion we did not do this. I have, however, already set aside three horses and six head of cattle to be delivered to you. Have the goodness to accept them as proof of our love so that we might reinstate our friendship of old with redoubled affection.”

“Oh, no, my dear José, no!” *Señor* Miguel immediately responded. “The animals that died, for which we risked the loss of our souls, are already forgotten! Do not say another word on this matter.

“I am at fault, I and my family, for having become irate to the point of placing our souls in danger – and only because of three animals that we never even missed. It was the Devil who incited our mutual hatred in order to make us unhappy on earth and in eternity. I assure you that all is forgotten.

“Let you and all your family pardon us – myself and my family – for so many evil deeds. From this day forward we desire that our relationship be not only one of friends, but of members of the same family, my goods being yours as well. If you agree to this, I will believe in this reconciliation. If not, I will have reserves and withdraw from it.”

“Be it as your say, my dear Miguel. I accept only to please you and to give you proof of my true affection. Let us put all this behind us and our families will love each other even more than before.”

“Yes, Yes!” they all agreed.

And thus, at the end of August in the year 1634, this odious and longstanding dispute came to an end.

Shortly after the news spread that for the feast of St. Michael, the family of *Señor* José was invited to *Señor* Miguel’s house. Early that day the former had sent many valuable gifts. For they no longer treated each other only as friends, but as persons of the same household.

This reciprocal affection reached such a point that two sons of *Señor* José married two daughters of *Señor* Miguel, to the joy of both families. A firm and permanent happiness reigned among them, doubly edifying the city that had before been so scandalized.

After the mutual pardon, Mother Mariana congratulated the two families for their docility in listening to the voice of God and promised them that peace and happiness would endure among them. And this harmony, begun on earth, she told them, would continue in Heaven, where she would await them and solicitously watch over them.

They all thanked her, acknowledging her as the cause of this happy reconciliation. They said that they would ask the Lord to preserve her life for the well-being and consolation of the city.

She smiled, saying, “My soul, cloistered in the prison of my body, is demanding to leave and soar to the happy realm above.”

She counseled them to prepare for Confession and Communion, which she wanted them to make in the Convent church.

“It is most fitting,” they all agreed with one voice. “We will receive Communion here and without delay.”

What they had promised they soon fulfilled. Henceforth the two families were examples and models of piety in their frequenting of the Sacraments of Confession and Communion. They asked pardon as well of the Bishop for the sufferings they had caused him for not having listened to the voice of their Pastor and Father, who had warned them so many times.

THE BISHOP LEARNS OF MOTHER MARIANA’S VISION

The next morning the Bishop went to the Convent and called Mother Mariana to the confessional. He asked her, “Tell

me, Mother, why Your Reverence remained so tranquil yesterday after such tremors of the earth? It seemed to me as if God were angry at this ungrateful city and was going to chastise it with the scourge of an earthquake, making the grand Pichincha bury us. Do you not agree?"

"No, Your Excellency. Certainly the sins are multiplying and tempting Divine Justice to let His irate arm fall. On the other hand, labor is made so that these souls will return to God.

"Yesterday's strong tremors of the earth were caused only by satanic ire. Your Excellency should know that those two quarreling families have already been reconciled. The tender Heart of our most loving Lord and God could no longer delay in attending to the desires of Your Excellency, who has suffered so greatly because of them. Hearing the fervent pleas of Your Excellency, He moved the hearts of these prodigal sons. He opened His paternal arms and embraced them to His Sacred Heart, a consuming fire of divine charity. The families have already come to Your Excellency to give you this good news and to ask a thousand pardons for the grief they have caused you for so long a time.

"Until the last moment the diabolical legions tried to impede this reconciliation by means of a thousand and one ruses. But God the all-powerful Lord triumphed, putting to shamed flight the infernal hosts. Let us praise His mercy toward poor sinners, our brothers."

"As your Prelate and Father," returned the Bishop, "I order you in the name of holy obedience to tell me all that took place in this matter."

With childlike innocence, the humble and holy Spanish sister obeyed her Prelate, who represented God to her, and told him all that had happened.

The Bishop, a true man of God, then realized that the conversions had been worked only through the effort, virtue, and intimate dealings of this humble religious with God. He thanked her, asking her not to forget the many sinners who still remained buried in their vices in her prayers.

He added, "Mother, I would like for Your Reverence to plead with Divine Goodness to prolong for some time your life on this earth so that you might help me from within these silent walls of the cloisters to save souls. This is the greatest gift that we can give to our God."

"Your Excellency," the humble religious quickly explained, "my earthly existence has already been greatly prolonged, and my soul is anxious to breathe the air of my Celestial Fatherland. The

days of each creature are numbered, and mine will end on January 16 of the coming year. It is the will of our Creator, and we, poor creatures, cannot offer resistance.

“From Heaven I will watch over this country and city, where I received so many favors from God despite my unworthiness. In your charity and goodness, Your Excellency may pray that the night of my death be no longer delayed and that the eternal day might soon dawn for me.”

With great sadness, the Bishop took his leave, expressing his intention to visit her whenever possible. He asked her to remember him before God Our Lord, for a Prelate is a person with great needs because he bears an enormous responsibility for the many souls confided to his care. As holy Job said, it is difficult for a soul to justify itself before the Divine Tribunal for the least accusation made by the Supreme Judge

THE FAME OF MOTHER MARIANA SPREADS FAR AND WIDE

The reconciliation of the two families who had been such terrible enemies caused so many repercussions that news of it spread to neighboring areas and other parts of the Colony, and even far outside of it.

Letters poured in, directed to the humble Conceptionist religious requesting recommendations for a thousand and one needs. Perplexed, Mother Mariana told her daughters and sisters with that natural simplicity proper to the saints:

“See, my daughters, how fragrant the aroma of fraternal charity is. It is true that the reconciliation of these two families was achieved, but it is strange that the good and simple people have directed their attention to me, as if I were its author. How curious this is! It was you, with your prayers, who accomplished everything. I only relied upon your prayers.

“Furthermore, we have the rigorous obligation not only to pray for the conversion and salvation of the souls of these poor sinners, our brothers, but also to make sacrifices and offer our lives for them. This is the obligation of conscience that weighs over the cloistered spouses of Jesus Christ. We did nothing more than fulfill our duty.”

She read those innumerable letters together with her sisters. Seeing so many serious matters and so many needs calling for

remedies, Mother Mariana commiserated with those persons and shed many tears.

“My God, My God!” she exclaimed. “How many afflictions weigh like lead over the poor human heart! O my daughters, how grateful we religious should be to Divine Goodness, Who has removed us from the tumult of the world and placed us under the shelter of these sacred walls, preserving us from so many bitter problems and heavy responsibilities that disturb the conscience and place souls in the direct risk of perdition.

“What we suffer here in the religious life is nothing in comparison with the complex sufferings of those in the world. Moreover, our small sufferings have an immense value before God, while the sorrows endured in the world have much less. This difference resides in the fact that we have embraced the perfect life, following the evangelical counsels, living and remaining intimately near Jesus Christ and occupied solely with acquiring merits and virtues for Heaven, the only essential business of real importance. While those in the world – *pobrecitos* – even those who are good – are obliged to be distracted by many things, such as acquiring goods to guarantee the future of their children and family, for this is a duty of conscience.

“Our sublime occupation here is to acquire and lay away riches for our own souls and, consequently, to bequeath an immense quantity of good example and solid virtue to our daughters to come, who through the course of time will inhabit these cloisters as faithful spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ and victim souls. Uniting themselves with the Eucharistic Victim, they will hold back the irate arm of Divine Justice.”

IN THE CENTURY OF THE LIGHTS ...

“In all times these lands will be culpable, both as the present-day Colony or later, as a free Republic. Then it will be much more blameworthy because the Devil will take advantage of the Century of the Lights to spread his evil, with the almost general corruption of customs bringing about the loss of many souls. He will avail himself of imprudent men who will fall into his clutches and divert various intelligent men from the truth, robbing God of many minds that, had they continued in the truth of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, would have sustained it in those impious times of the Republic.

“Divine Goodness will raise up in this beloved cloister souls who, tested physically and morally by humbling and painful infirmities, will offer themselves for the conversion of the souls of various sinners. With their persevering prayers and humble, heroic sacrifices, they will succeed in rescuing some sinners from the pathway of error during their lifetimes, and others only at the last hour. Without these religious, those souls would have fallen from abyss to abyss, without returning to God in their last agony.

“These religious will be souls completely hidden from all human eyes. Living here in the very bosom of the Convent, no one will pay them any account. By the disposition of Divine Providence, they will receive humiliations, sufferings, and scorn from their sisters and superiors because of their perfect practice of the religious virtues.

“My daughters and sisters, we should rejoice to have such sisters through the course of the centuries! I consider quite well spent the sufferings, imprisonments, and persecutions that I underwent with the foundation of this Convent, where Jesus Christ, our Spouse will be pleased to find such exquisite, hidden violets when there will be nothing but vice, corruption, and degradation in the corrupt world of those iniquitous times.”

This is how the holy Spanish Mother spoke to her daughters during the last days of her life.

Further on we will see her admirable testament, in which she left the Convent an expression of her heroism and sanctity. This text resounds in my ears like a harmonious and melodic song of the swan at the close of its life.

How it pleases me also – in union with the holy Founding Mother – to think of these religious, my sisters, who will inhabit these blessed cloisters. If God would permit it, how much I would like to live then in order to inhale their extraordinary perfume and come to know the interior of those beautiful souls!

CHAPTER 18

As we have already related, Mother Francisca of the Angels passed through an immense purification three months before falling into the sleep of the just. During this period, Mother Mariana assisted that suffering soul in her purification (or purgatory) with her humble and fervent prayers, as well as sacrifices and counsels. The greater part of her free time she would stay with her. At times, to help her rest, she would make Mother Francisca recline her head on her own ardent heart, and from its pulse this suffering soul would find consolation and relief.

The full account of her life can be found in the *Cuadernón*, that precious, hidden treasure of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception. For this reason, I will not narrate here all the details of the last three months of her precious existence. I will speak only of some things that relate to our Mother Mariana.

TEMPTATIONS AGAINST THE FAITH

In her profound sufferings of temptations against the Faith, Mother Francisca's soul underwent a battle that cannot be described. One can be aware of such sorrows through reading and sermons, but one can only know it from personally experiencing this purification, apparently so cruel.

Mother Mariana saw how the Celestial Spouse was purifying the three powers of the soul of Mother Francisca of the Angels, who can well be called martyr. He took complete possession of her soul, and He veiled her shining light of faith, vivid and brilliant like a sun, with His shadow, making it obscure.

This caused a veritable martyrdom of this holy creature, who, in complete darkness, struggled to believe. Not the least ray of light illuminated her in those things concerning the mysteries of our holy Religion, the dogmas of Faith, the Four Last Things, in short, everything. On the contrary, it seemed to her that none of it was true. It was such a severe battle that she seemed to be suffering not just purgatory, but hell itself.

If she tried to engage in meditation, which had been the preferred nourishment and dominant passion of this favored soul who had even been honored by Our Lord with the hidden Stigmata of the five wounds (on her hands, feet, and chest), this pious exercise that had always given her light, relief, and consolation, even in her

most bitter sufferings, now offered her nothing. She was like a hard, cold rock at the feet of the God of Heaven and Earth.

She would run to the Tabernacle and, from the innermost depths of her soul, she seemed to hear only this: "God does not exist in this small wooden depository. He lives only in Heaven, and Heaven was not made for you, a poor, weak woman."

If she approached to receive Communion to nourish herself with the Bread of the strong, the idea would come to her that she was only making sacrilegious communions. In this way, everything augmented her suffering.

These thoughts were the hisses of the traitorous serpent, which under the form of a black seven-foot-long cobra would not leave her for one instant either day or night. It would follow her at a distance of about ten feet. The cursed serpent wanted to come closer and entwine itself around the body of the servant of God in order to torment her more and with greater cruelty. But Our Lord, Who had a great love for that privileged and just soul, did not allow this.

During her whole life she had been devoted to the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. For this reason, while the Three Divine Persons disposed that she might be purified in this way, the cursed serpent had to remain at a distance of three meters [about 10 feet] without touching her. All this Mother Mariana saw and later recounted.

None of these interior trials were hidden from the holy Abbess, who assisted her with unrivaled dedication and indescribable care. She prayed tirelessly to God and His Blessed Mother that they would give this cherished soul special graces and strength so that this purgatory would be meritorious for her eternal happiness.

THE DAWN OF THE BLESSED

On September 24, Mother Francisca was obliged to remain in her bed after swooning at nine o'clock in the morning when she finished her prayers. She fell in the lower cloister after leaving the choir, and she had to be carried by Mother Mariana and the other sisters to her bed.

When she recovered her senses, she felt very ill. Every single member of her body felt pain, her state being aggravated by her strong fall.

Personally and as often as she could on her knees, Mother Mariana would apply the remedies with that maternal tenderness

and love she bore in her pure, fervent heart. At the same time, she would speak words of relief and consolation such as are known to the saints, whose hearts overflow with love of God. This gave Mother Francisca much respite amid such profound suffering.

Day by day, her health declined. Slowly, her precious material existence waned away, like the oil consumed in the solitary lamp burning in the presence of the Eucharistic Jesus.

The physiognomy of this prudent virgin remained sweet, pleasant, and amiable toward all her sisters, who disputed among themselves to render her the last services. The holy sick Mother gratefully received these attentions, astonished that so much should be done for her, for she held herself to be of no account.

On the night of September 30, she was overcome by a general tremor that shook her whole body. She lost a great quantity of blood through her mouth, eyes, and nose. On her hands, feet, and chest, the wounds impressed by Our Lord became visible, for until then they had been hidden.

During the whole night Mother Mariana did not leave her side, standing constant watch at the bedside of the holy sick Founding Mother. She prayed her customary midnight prayers there and on that occasion Our Lord showed her the completely purified soul of Mother Francisca. She rejoiced to see the sublime beauty of a soul in the grace of God and ready to enter shortly into Heaven.

At one o'clock in the morning, Mother Mariana ended her prayers and called to Mother Francisca with a soft voice, but her dear and holy sick sister was sleeping soundly. At two o'clock in the morning, Mother Francisca gave a profound sigh and opened her eyes, beautiful and penetrating, and fixed them with loving tenderness on Mother Mariana. The latter gave her a drink prescribed by the doctor, which she took with a sweet smile.

She pressed against her heart the hand of Mother Mariana, who asked her, "How do you feel, Mother?"

"I already sense the end of my earthly existence, but my soul is at last completely tranquil. Blessed be God, Who has ended my purgatory. My Seraphic Father told me that on the fourth [of October], the date on which he died, I will also die and enter into Heaven in his company to praise Our Lord – news that leaves me inebriated with joy. Let Your Reverence now rest a little to recuperate your strength so that you can assist at the Little Office, which was, is, and always will be the sustenance of our Convent."

Mother Mariana was extremely happy that this beloved soul was enjoying an inalterable peace. Leaving her in a deep

tranquil sleep, she retired to the other side of the infirmary, as prescribed by the Rule, and there she rested until close to four o'clock in the morning, when she went to the choir for the recitation of the Little Office, which, with her sisters, she prayed with increased fervor.

DEATHBED CEREMONIES

Mother Francisca was declining little by little. Finally, the day she had desired for so long arrived: October 4. At nine in the morning, she received the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction with edifying fervor. She asked pardon before the whole Convent, which was gathered around her, for all the bad examples that she might have given.

How I would like to repeat all her tender, humble, and edifying words, but this would stray too far from the life that I am writing. I limit myself here to note that all this can be found in the invaluable *Cuadernón* that the Conceptionist sisters in Quito conserve in their Convent. Here I am narrating only what is most necessary.

In accordance with the Holy Rule, Mother Francisca handed over all the earthly goods in her use including her instruments of penance, except for several which she asked permission from the Superior to give to various religious who had requested them. She also asked that others be placed with her body to ornament it in the obscurity of the tomb as jewels proper to the spouses of Jesus Crucified and the daughter of the penitential Francis of Assisi.

She then requested, in the name of charity, a place in the Convent for her mortal remains, as well as a habit, the oldest and most worn, for her shroud.

After receiving all the Sacraments, her soul seemed submerged in sweet and tranquil contemplation. Her physiognomy was beautiful. The pallor caused by her rigorous sufferings during the time of her purification was gone. She was rejuvenated, and her rosy color returned.

No one dared to disturb her, but after an hour had passed it was time to administer a medicine prescribed by the doctor. Since the sisters greatly desired to preserve this precious life, they did not want to leave off any means toward this end. They appealed to the Abbess, who approached her beloved patient, touching her shoulder and calling to her. Mother Francisca opened her eyes,

limpid like the blue firmament, and responded, "Mother, here I am. What do you desire to say to your daughter?"

The Superior said, "Mother and beloved sister, all your sisters desire that Your Reverence take the medicine prescribed by the doctor, for an hour has already passed."

The patient promptly responded, "Yes, Mother. May God reward you for such great charity. I cannot repay you here on earth, but from Heaven I will watch over all my loved ones."

She took the prescribed medicine with gratitude. With this she seemed reanimated. She could move herself without difficulty and respond without fatigue to all that her sisters asked her. She recommended herself to their prayers, promising to remember them in the Heavenly Fatherland where she would enter within a few hours.

LAST EXHORTATIONS AND DEATH

Hearing this, one of the sisters cried out, "Dear Mother, you will leave us orphans this very day?"

She responded: "This day, dear daughter. I will leave this land of exile and enter the Fatherland. What happiness! For my Seraphic Father St. Francis, whose feast we celebrate today, has promised me this.

"You will not, however, be left orphans. No, Our Lady of Good Success is your Mother. We, your Founding Mothers, have left her to watch over you, our Convent, the families of the religious, and our benefactors until the last day of time. Love and venerate her, and do not permit the devotion to her to decline or become forgotten. Above all, imitate her in all her virtues, especially her humility, her pure and innocent life, and her ardent love of God.

"Daughters of my heart and my dearest sisters, as a Founding Mother of this Convent I counsel and command you to love the holy observance of the Rule, as well as this place that your Founding Mothers have left to you conserved at the cost of so many tears, sufferings, and privations!

"Love the recitation of the Little Office at four o'clock in the morning as we have established it, because this holy custom and devotion is the sustenance of the monastic life. By means of it, the Convent will be provided with good, solid vocations to renew and continue the ranks of the religious. It will safeguard our Convent, constituting an impenetrable wall standing against all the forces of impiety, which will make every attempt to destroy it.

“Remember that your Founding Mothers never abandoned the Little Office. Even when we were imprisoned, we prayed it with the greatest fervor, for Divine Goodness manifested to us that this simple practice gives great glory to God and our Immaculate Mother, as well as frees the city from crimes and disgraces, snatching many souls from sin by secret inspirations of grace. It also attracts the special solicitude of God over this Convent, and gives it a type of right to the singular and continual protection of Divine Providence in every material and moral need of the Convent and of each individual religious, and also for their families and the Convent’s benefactors.

“Because of this, I beseech you to continue transmitting from generation to generation all that I say to you on my deathbed, so that my daughters and sisters throughout time will know and carefully carry out all that their Founding Mothers have disposed and ordained for their temporal and eternal happiness. Upon these practices, which at first glance appear so simple, religious and monastic perfection depend.”

At three o’clock in the afternoon, her strength was completely exhausted. But until she died, she did not lose the power of speech, which she employed only in saying ejaculations with notable fervor.

Finally, at exactly five o’clock on the evening of October 4 in the year 1634, that seraphic soul delivered her spirit to her Creator. The last words her sisters heard were, “My God, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!”

After Mother Francisca died, Mother Mariana, who had not left the cell of her beloved patient for a moment and who had remained on her knees at her side while she breathed her last, kissed the ground and rose. She shrouded that blessed body with devotion and fraternal love, shedding a torrent of tears over her.

All the sisters felt a bitter sorrow over the departure of their Founding Mother. They consoled each other by reminding themselves that they still had Mother Mariana, but they would then say, “Alas! She also will be leaving us soon!”

THE SUFFERINGS INFLICTED ON RELIGIOUS SOULS IN PURGATORY

After saying with religious scrupulosity the obligatory prayers for her beloved sister who, filled with great merit, had passed from time to happy eternity, Mother Mariana found herself completely alone, for all of her holy companion Founding Mothers had died. Notwithstanding her virile courage, she had an extremely

sensitive heart. With Mother Francisca gone, she felt an immense loss, and when this was too heavy for her spirit, she would fly to the feet of the Tabernacle and weep like a child in the presence of the Sacramental Jesus, always there to console her with the intimate and true caresses that only God can give to faithful souls who serve Him with dedication.

From this time forward, Mother Mariana redoubled her fervor in monastic observance and the practice of the religious virtues that made her a model of the perfect religious. Her life – which could be called more angelic than human – was the delight of all her sisters, who loved her enthusiastically. The Convent was a true heaven on earth because charity, the queen of all the virtues, was enthroned there among the daughters of the Immaculate Virgin, Queen of Charity.

On November 2, 1634, Mother Mariana was praying her humble but insistent prayers. She asked the tender Heart of her Divine Spouse to alleviate the sufferings of the holy souls that were being purified in the place of expiation and to bring a considerable number of them into Heaven. With this intention, she passed the night in prayer and austere penances until three o'clock in the morning.

At four o'clock in the morning, she began the Little Office with the other sisters. During its recitation, Our Lord made her see the sufferings of the poor souls that were being purified.

She saw the suffering of the loss of God and the sufferings of the senses, which were inflicted with greater intensity and profundity upon priests and religious persons than upon those who lived in the world. It was manifested to her that in this way Divine Justice was glorified, because the former had received more lights, graces, and inspirations by virtue of the sublimity of the priestly and religious vocation, and that to whomever much is given, much is also asked. As for those in the world, they had received less, for while the secular life also has sublime graces, they are not the same as those of the perfect state.

She saw the special sufferings reserved for the souls of priests who had belonged to religious Orders but left their monasteries to affiliate themselves with the Secular Clergy, the only real reason for this being that they had not rooted themselves in solid humility, the primary virtue that sustains monks and sisters in religious life.

All their other excuses were nothing but vain pretexts to satisfy the opinion of the world. These souls thus lost great degrees

of glory in eternity.

She was also given to know the number of priests who are condemned, some by apostasy and others by debasing their divine vocation, becoming corrupt and dying in sin. She saw the purgatory and mitigated glory reserved for those priests who would later repent, change their life, and end by being saved.

For this seraphic religious, all this constituted a deep and bitter sorrow, a new thorn thrust by Jesus Christ into the heart of this grand soul so that, by her constant suffering, she might make amends to Our Lord for the sins of His ministers and religious.

VISION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS RIDDLED WITH SMALL, PIERCING THORNS

At the hour of Communion, she had no sooner received the Holy Host than she saw Jesus Christ, our supreme good, resting in her heart. He was, however, but one wound, especially His Sacred Heart, which was covered with small but piercing thorns that tormented Him with extraordinary cruelty. He shed a deluge of tears, accompanied by tender lamentations and sighs.

Mother Mariana embraced Him in her heart with all the tenderness and adoration for her Lord and God that burned in her soul. In an outburst of sorrowful love, she cried out:

“Esteemed and adored Love of my soul, if it is possible, tell me what causes Thee to suffer such a cruel martyrdom? Was what Thou suffered in Thy bitter and sorrowful Passion not enough, for until this day I have never heard of these minute thorns in Thy Heart? The Holy Evangelists tell us only of the thick, long thorns with which Thou wert derisively crowned King with such ignominy. Thou knowest that throughout the long course of my life, I have followed Thee closely in each of the steps of Thy dolorous Passion, suffering with Thee to the measure that Thou hast given me the strength, sharing Thy internal and external sufferings. Yet now I see Thy Divine Heart riddled with small thorns that torment Thee persistently!”

Jesus Christ gazed at her with loving tenderness. Releasing a profound sigh, He said: “Alas, beloved spouse! Alas! This Heart offended by so many small, cruel thorns, as you now see it, is reserved to be shown to mortals by a religious sister from your own Family. It will be after some centuries and after she has been purified by indescribable trials, which I will send her by means of

her own sisters, Prelates, and even the public in general. What great pleasure I take in her! See her.”

And Mother Mariana saw among her daughters this fortunate messenger of God, who in extremely calamitous times would be sanctified in her solitude, under the gaze of God alone. She would be scorned by her sisters and all those who would deal with her. At her side, however, there would be priests – both religious and secular – who, with divine light, would penetrate the interior of her soul, recognizing the marvelous works of God Who, prodigious in His mercies, confides His secrets and arduous tasks to those whom the world despises and considers stupid and useless.

Mother Mariana humbled herself and submissively gave thanks to her Beloved for this great favor bestowed on her House and Family.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TINY THORNS

Our Lord Jesus Christ continued:

“You see how these small thorns sting me cruelly. Understand that they are the grave as well as slight faults of my priests – secular and religious – who I take from the world and bring to the cloisters. I lavish on them a deluge of spiritual graces, giving them also serious, prolonged sicknesses so that they might become like unto Me. But, ungrateful and heartless, they complain about My loving Providence. They think I am being cruel to them and, withdrawing with indifference, they leave Me alone.

“The spirit of such souls will wilt like a parched flower, drying up and becoming unable to emit its fragrance in the garden of my Immaculate Mother to which such souls were called. With this ungrateful behavior, they will thrust these tiny thorns into My Heart, cruelly wounding It, which is all love and affection for My chosen souls. At the same time they will frustrate the great designs that I have for them, for which reason I test them in this manner, for the cross and tribulation are the patrimony of the just here on earth.

“Instill in your present-day daughters the love of the cross and sacrifice so that they can transmit this from generation to generation in this Convent as well as in the Order in general. Imbue them also with a love for their religious vocation and regular observance, as well as fraternal charity and love for poor sinners, and faithful correspondence to the inspirations of grace.

“The times will come when doctrine will be spread among the learned and the ignorant, accessible to priests and religious and even the common people. Many books will be written. But the practice of the virtues and these doctrines will be found only in a few souls: for this reason, saints will become rare. Precisely for this reason, My priests and religious will fall into a fatal indifference. Their frigidity will extinguish the fire of divine love, afflicting My loving Heart with these small thorns that you see.

“For this reason, I desire that there should be souls here in whom I can rest from My fatigues and in whom I might take complacency. Their afflicted, sacrificial lives will be the caressing, compassionate hands that remove these tiny thorns from My Heart and apply the needed balsam.

“Alas! If it were given to you to understand My intense interior suffering that accompanied Me from the Incarnation in the most pure womb of My Virgin Mother until the moment when My soul left its lacerated Body nailed on the cross. And this suffering is caused by the lack of correspondence to the deluge of graces with which I inundate My priests and religious and, consequently, by the sins that they commit!

**CHASTISEMENTS OF NATIONS ARE DUE ABOVE
ALL TO THE SINS OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS**

“Know, moreover, that Divine Justice releases terrible chastisements on entire nations not only for the sins of the people, but especially for those of priests and religious persons. For the latter are called by the perfection of their state to be the salt of the earth, the masters of truth, and the shields to hold back Divine Ire.

“Straying from their sublime mission, they degrade themselves in such a way that before the eyes of God, they increase the rigor of the punishments. When they detach themselves from Me, they end up living a superficial life of soul, maintaining a distance from Me unworthy of My ministers. By their frigidity and lack of confidence, they act as if I were a stranger to them.

“Alas! If they knew, if they were convinced of how much I love them and desire that they enter into the very depths of their souls. There, without a doubt, they would find Me and would necessarily live the life of love, light, and continuous union to which they were not only called, but chosen!

“Now, my spouse, in the few months of exile that remain to you, labor untiringly for the perfection of My priests and religious

persons. In union with My infinite merits and those of My Immaculate Mother, offer all that you do – even your last breath – for this. I am greatly pleased by religious souls who take upon themselves the sublime task of sanctifying the Clergy through their prayers, sacrifices, and penances. In all times I will choose such souls so that, uniting themselves to Me, they will labor, pray, and suffer to attain this noble end, and a special glory will await them in Heaven.”

After this moving vision, Mother Mariana seemed transformed into a new creature. She seemed an angel in human flesh and a seraphim filled with God. Her words were flaming arrows of divine love that sweetly wounded the hearts of the fortunate daughters who lived with her.

The Convent seemed an antechamber of Heaven. What union, what charity, what love of God! Each one strove to be better, more docile, humble, and observant. It was moving to see that there was always someone in the refectory who would eat on the floor, ask the other sisters the charity of giving her a little of what they were eating, or kiss the feet of the other sisters. Their fervent love of God engendered a thousand and one recourses of humility that can only be practiced by souls closely united to God. Without a doubt, they averted many chastisements from falling on the ungrateful and culpable Colony!

* * *

CHAPTER 19

The holy Spanish Abbess spoke frequently to her daughters about the Heaven that awaited good religious, the faithful spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the eve of the solemn novena of the Immaculate Conception, she addressed them with these words:

“Beloved daughters and sisters of my heart, my earthly exile has been greatly prolonged! All of my companion Founding Mothers have died, or better said, have fallen into the sleep of the just, and only I remain among you, certainly because I was the youngest. These sacred walls stand as testimony to my vows pronounced here before Heaven and earth.

“Today I am advanced in years, and the Celestial Spouse is already calling me to consummate my eternal union with Him. Consequently, I bid you an earthly farewell, for I will await you in Heaven. I will be in your company for a month and a half longer. I ask you to pray for me in this time that remains of my life so that, like the prudent virgin, I might meet my Celestial Spouse with my lamp lit, adorned, and provided with sufficient oil.

“I will fulfill my sacred duty of praying for you in Heaven. And even though you will not see me physically, I will continue to watch over the regular observance, the foundation for the conservation of our beloved Convent.

“Tomorrow we will begin the novena to our Immaculate Mother, and I desire that each one strive to please her with the practice of the religious virtues. Let us ask her to purify our hearts so all of us might be lively models of the Blessed Virgin and so that our Celestial Spouse might take His delight in our souls.”

The nuns listened to this exhortation with profound grief, realizing that the shining light that illuminated the Convent was being extinguished, and they all began to weep. Mother Mariana mixed her tears with those of her daughters, telling them that it was unavoidable that she be separated from them on earth by means of death, and that they should place all their love in Jesus and Mary.

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Finally the day of December 8, 1634 arrived, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

The novena ended, and all the sisters received Holy Communion with intense, edifying fervor. They rejoiced the whole day with their holy Founding Mother, sharing celestial colloquies.

Some, embracing her, would say, "Mother, we want to die first in order to await you in Heaven."

Another would add, "Mother, we want to die at the exact moment that Your Reverence dies. For it will be much easier to enter into Heaven in your company. While our loving Jesus is welcoming Your Reverence, we will slip quickly through the door of Heaven, which by all accounts is very narrow. He will pay no note of us, and thus we will take Our Love by surprise, telling Him, 'Surely Thou cannot complain that we are here' Then we will say, 'Daughters cannot be separated from their mother, and since she has entered into this happy Mansion, it is only just that we should be with her!' With this explanation, we will remain among the blessed – o marvel of marvels! – without being judged!"

Mother Mariana was charmed by these sweet arguments of her daughters. But her heart, which was all tenderness and love, suffered to consider the profound grief that would fall upon the spirit of the sisters with her death, the torrent of tears they would shed, and how much they would miss her until each one of them had also closed her eyes to the light of this world. She encouraged them with words and arguments proper to a soul so united to God.

LAST APPARITION OF OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS – THE VISION OF THE THREE ARCHANGELS

After the holy conviviality of the day – its joy mixed with grief because the sisters saw the time passing quickly and the hour drawing near for the death of the last Founding Mother who remained to them, they retired to their poor beds at the customary hour. Mother Mariana also accompanied them, but at 11:30 that night she directed her steps to the upper choir for her customary prayer.

There, shedding a torrent of tears, she presented each one of her daughters to the Divine Prisoner and her Blessed Mother. She implored good success for her own and their passages to eternity. She also pleaded that her daughters be free throughout their lives from diabolical snares and the loss of the religious spirit.

During this colloquy, she felt the vehemence of divine love and lost her bodily senses.

Then she saw before her the Queen of Heaven, beautiful and captivating as always, with her Most Holy Son in her left arm and the crosier in her right hand. She was accompanied by the three Archangels.

St. Michael carried a countless number of white tunics sprinkled with stars and adorned with burnished gold. Each tunic was trimmed with an exquisite collar of fine pearls, from which hung a beautiful gold cross set with every type of precious stone. In the middle of the cross was a shining star engraved with the sweet names of Jesus and Mary.

St. Gabriel carried a chalice bearing the Blood of the Redeemer, a ciborium filled with Hosts, and a large quantity of fragrant white lilies.

St. Raphael bore a large, precious ampulla, transparent and finely chiseled, which contained a superb balsam, whose suave odor floated from the receptacle and diffused in the air, purifying the atmosphere and causing the soul to feel a supreme joy and admirable tranquility. He also carried many violet-colored stoles that shone with a splendid brilliance and a writing quill of refulgent gold, marked with the name of Mary.

The three Holy Archangels stood before their Sovereign Queen, whose left arm sustained the King of Heaven and Prince of Eternity. The nine angelic choirs paid court to their Sovereigns, and upon a signal from Prince St. Michael, the first angelic choir began to sing with celestial harmony, with one choir succeeding another until the ninth.

SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

After this celestial symphony ended, the Queen opened her lips and spoke these words:

“My beloved daughter and chosen spouse of the spotless Lamb, leave this earth, the sad land of exile of the just, and come forthwith to your long-desired Fatherland. The hard winter of your mortal existence has passed, and your eternal springtime begins, where the good works practiced during earthly life are flowers of rare beauty and exquisite perfumes of great value because they are the price of the dolorous Redemption.

“If mortals understood how to appreciate the time given to them and would take advantage of each moment of life, how different the world would be! And a considerable number of souls would not fall to their eternal perdition! This disdain is the fundamental cause of their downfall.

“My daughter, have pity on your imprudent brethren sinners and weep for them. Implore your God and Redeemer to send their

souls many special, efficacious graces, powerful enough to withdraw them from the dark abyss of sin where they lie.”

OUR LADY EXPLAINS THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TUNICS CARRIED BY ST. MICHAEL

“Do you see what the three Archangels St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael carry with joy?

“Know, then, that the white tunics are destined first, for my faithful and fervent daughters throughout time who will live in this cloister: to some for having preserved their baptismal innocence, and to others for having purified themselves by austere penances.

“The stars signify their continual exercise of all the virtues, which will radiate light in the firmament of the Roman Apostolic Catholic Church. Such light will illuminate many minds that have strayed, making them return to the Catholic truth. The adornments of burnished gold are those serious and generous acts performed from the violence of divine love. The corresponding pearl collar of each tunic signifies the bonds of the three vows by which they voluntarily deliver themselves to God. And the cross that hangs from it represents all the physical and moral sufferings endured with religious resignation in accordance with the will of God. In the course of their sufferings, my Most Holy Son and I, like the star of the tempestuous sea of life, will illuminate and direct them to the secure port, delivering them from an eternal shipwreck.

“Second, the tunics are also for secular and regular priests and laity of both sexes, who, loving my Most Holy Son and myself with simple, upright hearts, also love this Convent of our predilection. Ignoring criticism and scorn, they strive for its conservation and dedicate themselves to propagating my devotion under the consoling invocation of Good Success, which will be the sustenance and safeguard of the Faith in the almost total corruption of the 20th century.”

THE CHALICE OF PENANCE

“Gabriel carries this precious chalice bearing the Blood of the Redeemer: This signifies the grace of the resurrection from death (from sin) and the restoration of souls by means of the Sacrament of Penance, which the ministers of my Most Holy Son make available abundantly to restore life to souls killed by the satanic jealousy of the infernal dragon.

“See and contemplate the grandeur of this restoring and life-giving Sacrament, so forgotten and even scorned by ungrateful

mortals, who in their mad illusions do not realize that it is the only sure means of salvation after losing one's baptismal innocence. What is most grievous is that even the ministers of my Most Holy Son do not value it as they should, viewing with cold indifference this precious treasure placed in their hands for the restoration of souls washed by the Blood of the Redeemer. There are those who consider hearing confession futile and a waste of time. Not at all!

"Oh! If priests would only recognize this divine gift, clearly seeing what you are now contemplating and being enlightened with the light that now illuminates you! How thankful they should be for the love of predilection with which God has loved them, choosing them from millions to make them depositories of this supreme wealth so that they might free from tyrannical slavery the souls that the jealous, cursed Satan has made prisoners.

"How beloved are the priests of my Most Holy Son and myself. I am the tender Mother of priests, whom I venerate for their sublime mission and love most tenderly! Longing for their happiness, I watch over them with secret dedication so that they will not wander from the pathway of truth. Because if they stray, what will become of the rest of the faithful? For the priest is the salt of the earth: If they fall short, the world, the devil, and the flesh take possession of poor souls, and concupiscence wreaks havoc on putrefied flesh.

"In the confessional, the priest assumes the most delicate roles of father, mother, doctor, and judge. To his care and zealous attention, needy, suffering, sick, and confused souls hasten seeking relief for their afflictions, health and remedies for their sicknesses, maternal tenderness and true justice. Woe to the priest who lets himself be led by a natural inclination to severity and harshness, and negligently dismisses souls who hoped to be washed and cleansed from their spiritual leprosy in his priestly heart! When he dies, he will be called to strict account before the Divine Tribunal for the delicate mission of directing souls."

THE MISSION OF THE PRIEST IN REGARD TO MYSTICAL SOULS

"The priest must withdraw one genre of souls from the abyss, set them on the right pathway to Heaven, and take care that they persevere on it. Another category of souls, however, has also been confided to him by the special love of my Most Holy Son:

These are suffering souls filled with the spirit of God whose delicate lives constitute an uninterrupted Calvary of secret martyrdom ...

“In eternity they wear the double crown of virgin and martyr – yes, they are secret martyrs who suffer a slow, prolonged martyrdom throughout their lives, walking the supernatural pathway and generally being the target of the scorn, derision, and calumnies of all types of persons. A difficult mission is confided to these souls, so beloved by the Celestial Father, and they likewise receive very special graces in order to fulfill it.

“Providence sends priests to direct and sustain such souls through the course of their existence – which for some will be short, and for others, long. They will marvel at seeing how admirable God is in His saints, who will never be lacking, although hidden for the large part.

“Here in my beloved Convent, I will have souls in which Jesus Christ – persecuted, hated, and proscribed by this ungrateful land in the 20th century – will take His delight. He will find consolation in His intimate dealings and communication with them. Bitter suffering and secret tears will be their daily bread, and these doves will utter their plaintive cries solely under the gaze of their Creator, Father, and Spouse.

“They will be the shields to prevent Divine Justice, so ready to chastise the terrible crimes of their guilty brothers, for whom they will offer themselves as continuous victims. They will communicate their maternal love to sinners and deliver themselves to rigorous, austere penances for their conversion and salvation. They will ignore themselves and their own concerns, just like a loving mother with her sick and agonizing infant.

“Woe to the priest who imprudently sets aside these souls, a gift to him from the merciful love of the Sacred Heart of my Son and Lord! I say gift because these souls are, for the priest, the messengers of God, Who speaks and teaches through them. This is a grace for which the priest will have to give strict account should he not profit from it and improve his spiritual and priestly life and, to the contrary, treat them as foolish visionaries without penetrating the depths of their souls. If, however, he deals well with them, he will experience the peace, happiness, and interior sweetness characteristic of true servants of God.

“As for hypocritical priests, they should also be unmasked. For, under an appearance of virtue, such souls hide a secret pride, harboring too great a love for themselves and making a show of their sacrifices and lives before God and neighbor. Their only

concern is their good name and their anxiety to be esteemed; they flee from every tribulation, however small it might be, and have no love for humiliation and the hidden life that Jesus Christ Himself assumed ...

“From the 19th century onward, priests should love with all their soul John Baptist Marie Vianney, a servant of mine whom Divine Goodness is preparing for those centuries as a exemplary model of the humble priest.⁷² He will not be from a noble family, so that the world will know and understand that in the eyes of God all that matters is profound virtue.

“This servant of mine, who will come to the world at the end of the 18th century, will love me with all his heart. By his words and deeds he will honor me and teach his companions to know and love me. I have destined him to care for a soul, being her guardian angel, tutor, and protector, as well as sustenance and consolation throughout her suffering life. She will know him from the very moment that she gains the use of her reason, which will be very early, as I have manifested to you ...”

**THE BLESSED SACRAMENT WILL BE
DISTRIBUTED COPIOUSLY**

“As you see, Gabriel also carries a ciborium filled with Hosts: This signifies the most august Sacrament of the Eucharist which will be distributed by my Catholic priests to the faithful belonging to the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, whose visible head is the Pope, the King of Christendom. His pontifical infallibility will be declared a Dogma of Faith by the same Pope chosen to proclaim the dogma of the mystery of my Immaculate Conception. He will be persecuted and imprisoned in the Vatican by the unjust usurpation of the Pontifical States through the iniquity, envy, and avarice of an earthly monarch.⁷³

72. St. Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney, known as the Cure of Ars, was born at Dardilly, Lyons, France, in 1786 and died in Ars on August 4, 1859. He is the patron saint of confessors and parish priests.

73. The dogma of Papal Infallibility was declared by Pope Pius IX in 1870. The same Pope had proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. These are *ex cathedra* teachings, that is, they bind the whole Church and demand internal assent from all the faithful.

In 1860 anti-papal revolutionaries led by Victor Emmanuel of Savoy demanded the papal territories of Umbria and the Marches; when his order was refused, he seized them by force. After defeating the papal army on September 18, 1860 at Castelfidardo and on September 30 at Ancona, Victor Emmanuel usurped all the papal territories except Rome. In September 1870, he seized Rome as well,

“See the filled ciborium so that you might comprehend the sublimity of this mystery and the reverence with which it should be treated and received by the faithful. It will be a antidote against sin and an easy and powerful means for souls to unite themselves to their God and Redeemer, Who, in the excess of His love, hides Himself under the white accidents of the Host, exposed to the sacrilegious profanations of His ungrateful sons.

“To make amends for these sacrileges is the work of contemplative souls and, in a special way, the daughters of My Immaculate Conception. Know that in the divine arcana, this hidden, voluntary expiation was one of the designs of God in disposing the foundation of this Order, so dear to Him.

“Those countless lilies – white, beautiful, and exceedingly fragrant – that you see together with the chalice and ciborium borne by my Archangel Gabriel are all the good religious of my Order (and they will be very numerous in cloisters throughout the world). Each one of them will have a distinct mission, and each will receive torrents of graces unceasingly from Heaven for that end. I recommend my daughters to suffer so that the Seven Sacraments are received with perfection by the faithful, above all, the third, fourth, and sixth Sacraments (the Holy Eucharist, Confession, and Holy Orders, respectively).”

THE AMPULLA OF THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL

“The large, transparent and precious ampulla carried by my Archangel Raphael contains an extraordinary balsam of the sweetest fragrance, which is diffused through the air and purifies the atmosphere, communicating to the soul a supreme happiness and admirable tranquility. It represents the cloisters and convents. They are chosen places that see the daily practice of solid virtue, as well as the observance of the Rule and austere penances of its inhabitants.

“The purity and chastity that exist there are the exquisite fragrance that perfumes the fortunate countries that possess monasteries and convents. They purify the air polluted by those in the world who are delivered over to the most shameful vices and passions. At the same time, they transmit to souls that ineffable joy

making it the capital of a new united Italy. He granted Pope Pius IX the *Law of Guarantees* (May 13, 1871) which gave the Pope the use of the Vatican but denied him sovereignty over this territory. The Pontiff, who termed himself a prisoner in the Vatican, officially rejected this offer (Encyclical *Ubi nos*, May 15, 1871), retaining his claim to all the conquered territory.

and admirable peace that cause sinners to fall into themselves and turn toward God. This takes place by virtue of the prayers raised up in these houses to Heaven incessantly, night and day. Like Moses with his arms raised to Heaven, religious souls supplicate and make penances for sinners to be converted and their nations saved from the torrent of vices and passions that call down the terrible chastisements of Divine Justice.

“Woe to the world should it lack monasteries and convents! Mortals do not comprehend their importance, for if they understood, they would use their wealth to multiply them, because they provide the remedy for all physical and moral evils.

“The Most Holy Trinity and I, the Mother and model of religious persons, love these houses with great tenderness. I am the channel for that river of precious graces that are not given to those in the world. For in each monastery and convent, I am truly and tenderly loved; their members have recourse to me with the confidence and love that sons and daughters have for their tender, loving mother. Under different invocations, they venerate me in all these places. The Archangels gather up their prayers, tears, penances, sighs, and lives of sacrifices and offer them to me. I then present them before the throne of God for the salvation of the world.

“No one on the face of the earth realizes whence comes the salvation of souls, the conversion of great sinners, the deferral of great scourges, the production and fertility of the lands, the end of pestilences and wars, and harmony between nations. All this is due to the prayers that rise up from monasteries and convents.”

THE STOLES AND GOLDEN QUILLS

“The innumerable violet-colored stoles carried by my Archangel Raphael, which shine resplendently and illuminate the altar place, symbolize the effective action and zeal of good priests, who with self-abnegation forget themselves to make Jesus Christ and myself known and loved. Faithful to the mission confided to them by the Father of the Family, they labor untiringly in the vineyard of the Lord to make it grow and prosper and to save souls ransomed by the Blood of the Redeemer. These are the good and faithful servants who will enter into the joy of their Lord.

“The quill of polished, shining gold marked with my name is for all the priests of both clergies (regular and secular) who write of my glories and sorrows. It is also for those who by means

of their writing diffuse my devotion of Good Success of this Convent, as well as your life, which is inseparable from this tender and consoling invocation.

“In the 20th century, this devotion will work prodigies in the spiritual as well as temporal spheres, because it is the will of God to reserve this invocation and knowledge of your life for that century, when the corruption of customs will be almost general and the precious light of Faith almost extinguished.”

DEVOTION TO THE THREE ARCHANGELS

“Now, my beloved daughter, you realize the significance of all the things that you have seen in the hands of my holy Archangels: Michael – ‘*Quis ut Deus*’ [Who is like unto God?], Gabriel – ‘*Fortitudo Dei*’ [The fortitude of God], and Raphael – ‘*Medicina Dei.*’ [The Remedy of God].

“Each Archangel fulfills a mission in assisting decadent mankind. Even if the rest of mankind neglects invoking and venerating these holy Princes, I desire that you and your present-day daughters, as well as those to come, should do this to receive graces and favors – material and moral – for yourselves and this Convent. I also verify that they will always take care of my Statue and of this beloved Convent so favored by the goodness of God.”

A TREE FOR THE GARDENS OF HEAVEN

When the holy Spanish nun returned to her senses, her heart was beating violently, the fire of divine love having augmented considerably in it. She hurried to find her sisters to pray the Little Office as an act of thanksgiving for this instructive and tender vision with which her Heavenly Mother had just favored her during that long interval when she had imagined herself already among the blessed.

After the early morning devotions ended, she recounted all that had taken place to her spiritual director.

Her life became increasingly fervent, as if she had already left this land of sorrow and tears and taken flight for the Celestial Homeland, the secure abode of inalterable peace and happiness.

Her sisters and daughters noted a celestial joy in her, as if she were already parting from this valley of tears and sorrows. Conversing among themselves, they wept inconsolably to see the time approaching when they would lose their mother and the model

of the observance of the Rule. Each of them assiduously frequented the lower and upper choirs in continuous visits to the Prisoner of Love, imploring Him to revoke the sentence of death for their Founding Mother and to extend yet longer the life of this faithful spouse who was giving so much glory to Him by her holy life and who was the consolation and counselor for them and persons outside the Convent.

But these pleas were not heard, for that tree was already laden with flowers and the mature fruit of sanctity, and was ready to be transplanted by the Divine Gardener into the Gardens of Heaven for the glory of the Immaculate Virgin and the illustrious Beatrice da Silva, Foundress of the Order of the Immaculate Conception, who took great pleasure in this beloved daughter who with time would be the honor and glory of her Franciscan Conceptionist Order.

* * *

CHAPTER 20

When the time came to begin the novena of the Child Jesus, Mother Mariana called together all the sisters and told them: "Beloved Mothers and daughters of my heart, tomorrow we will begin the Novena to the Child Jesus, a devotion that is and always will be the conservation of our Convent. Let us carefully prepare the crèche: all the figures, the greens, the moss, and so on. Each one should think of some way to express her enthusiasm and love for the Child Jesus so that this year Christmas will be commemorated with an ardent expansion of heart.

"The intentions will be these: that we might all be reunited in Heaven; for the conservation of our Convent until the end of time, and that it might never lack victim souls, true daughters of the Immaculate Virgin and the Seraphim of Assisi – simple, good souls who have their hearts and eyes fixed upon maintaining charity and fraternal unity, the fruit of daily, fervent prayer.

"As for us, beloved daughters, let us sanctify this place so that it might be a source of saintly sisters who leave to posterity the legacy of love and devotion to the Divine Infant. During the novena, let us all without exception, beginning with the Mother Abbess, make public acts of humility in the refectory, offering everything for our Convent and future sisters, at the same time preparing our hearts to be the soft manger of the Infant God. My daughters, love the Child Jesus and always live in spiritual childhood!"

All responded with one voice, "Mother, we will do all that Your Reverence desires with the greatest pleasure. We all want to be innocent like the Child Jesus and to pay court at His manger together with the humble shepherds."

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

The novena that year was observed with a swelling and new ardor. Each day in the refectory all the sisters, including the Superior and accompanied by Mother Mariana, would make acts of humility, which incited the fervor of all.

During this time, the Abbess was Mother Mariana of St. Dominic, an exemplary religious and model of observance. Because of her solid virtue and ardent love for the Seraphic Family, Mother Mariana loved her with her whole soul, calling her "my fervent *Dominguita*" before she became Superior. This Mother, like all the Abbesses, did nothing – however insignificant it might be –

without first asking the opinion and consent of Mother Mariana de Jesus, to whom she rendered obedience and submission as the Founding Mother.

The night of December 24, 1634, Christmas eve, arrived, and Mother Mariana seemed like a young novice, filled with ardor. She went from one side to another in the Convent stimulating her daughters to fervor.

Since the leading ladies of the city were devoted and grateful to the Founding Mother, that day they sent her the finest sweets and fruits with which she adorned the Christmas tree for the delight and holy enjoyment of the sisters. The novices were dispensed from their work, and Mother Mariana joined them at their recreation.

At the top of the tree she placed a picture depicting the Nativity. At its base she fixed the following inscription: "Viva the Child Jesus! Viva the sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Quito! Next year the last Founding Mother who remains here will bless you from Heaven. Farewell! From Heaven I will await you!" Amid this holy and fitting rejoicing, the sisters suffered to see the light that illuminated them being extinguished.

When the hour arrived to make their songs of praise before the crib, each sister's little speech before the Child Jesus asked Him to grant His Conceptionist daughters the Christmas gift of prolonging the life of their last Founding Mother.

Mother Mariana also made her song of praise, alternating the strains of the harp with the sound of her exquisite voice, like the swan that sings upon its death. Springing from her ardent soul, youthful in its vigor, her gracious words expressed her gratitude to God Our Lord for having made her a religious of the Order of her Immaculate Mother, a vital branch of the seraphic tree. She also took her leave with charm from her beloved daughters, expressing her hope that they all would be reunited in Heaven under the blue mantle of their Immaculate Mother.

The Convent seemed an antechamber of Heaven. It had been decorated more beautifully than ever before. When they carried the Child Jesus in procession for the singing of the Matins, there was general rejoicing in the jubilant orchestra with its whistles, little drums, and other instruments they had for this occasion.

After the Matins and Mass, Mother Mariana remained praying fervently at the feet of the Child Jesus. She implored insistently that He permit her safe arrival at the port of salvation and for good success in that great leap she would take from time to

eternity. She also prayed that He would console and fortify her daughters, who would be disconsolate and suffering at her absence.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The whole octave of Christmas she rejoiced in holy celebration with her daughters, as she always did each year on this feast so beloved of her heart, practicing and making practiced the solid virtues.

On the first day of the new year of 1635, she joyfully distributed new clothing to her daughters, saying that the spouses of Jesus Christ should, in a similar manner, vest their souls each year with new virtues in order to please their Celestial Spouse, who desired and longed for copious hearts renewed by charity and mortification.

On that day she arose somewhat weakened. Her daughters immediately perceived this and questioned her keenly about how she was feeling.

“My daughters,” she responded, “my physical strength is failing. My heart cannot be quieted. It seems to leap outside of myself. Already I sense my approaching departure. But do not become disturbed by this. It is necessary to die in order to see God. Moreover, my exile has already been quite prolonged. It must come to an end so that I can reach my eternal Homeland.”

At 6:30 that evening she fainted. Her heart beat with such violence that it seemed to burst through her chest and could be heard at some distance.

With floods of tears, her daughters held her fallen body in their arms and their tears bathed her face. They applied the remedies that they could, but all were futile. They then called the doctor, who came quickly.

After examining her, he said, “Our Founding Mother is leaving us. There is no remedy for her sickness. Only a brief time of her company remains to us.” He applied a remedy, which made her return to consciousness.

The sisters asked her how she felt and what she wanted. With admirable peace and calm, the holy religious responded: “Do not be disturbed, my beloved daughters, do not be disturbed. My end is drawing near, as it does for all mortals. You cannot retain me longer. Have patience and offer to Jesus the beautiful flower of resignation, so pleasing to the Celestial Spouse. What great worth a soul has that is resigned and conformed to the divine will! From

God we came, and to Him we return, ending our abode in this earthly life.

“I will not leave you orphans. No, I will watch over you from Heaven. Calm yourselves for now, for I will remain among you for yet more days. When my end is imminent, I will call you together to read you my last will and testament, which I will forthwith begin to write.”

* * *

CHAPTER 21

After the first day of the year 1635, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres remained very weak, becoming worse every day. On the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, she showed an improvement and during the hour of recreation, she seemed to be restored to health.

On that feast day, she gave an invaluable talk in which she taught the religious how they should offer to the Child Jesus the gold of love, the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of constant mortification and voluntary penance, the latter, however, with the knowledge and blessing of one's spiritual director so that it might be meritorious and pleasing to God.

"My daughters, how necessary holy penance is for religious!" the holy Founding Mother said. "It serves to prevent sicknesses of soul, such as lukewarmness with its germ that spreads so imperceptibly. Penance is also necessary to convert sinners and save the souls of our brethren, which are worth as much as our own.

"Love holy penance! Make it your favored virtue, for it is the jewel and ornament with which the bride of Christ adorns herself to make herself beautiful before her Divine Spouse, whose Holy Body was lacerated by brutal hearts precisely so that He might save our souls.

"As religious, we should always wear on our persons the insignias of the Cross and on the occasion of any public or private calamity, we should have recourse to holy penance, united to the dolorous Passion of our Divine Redeemer. You will see that the remedy will come sooner than you could imagine. Oh! How sweet and delectable are the fruits of penance!"

THE LAST DAYS

From the seventh of January, she began to suffer prolonged swoons daily. She was like a lamp that was slowly being extinguished.. She did not remain in bed, however, but forced herself to always be with her beloved sisters.

On January 11, after Communion, she lost consciousness again. When she came to, she tried to stand and walk as before, but could not do so and fell strongly to the ground. She was carried to her poor bed, but she asked to be transferred to the infirmary because these would be her last days. The sisters did as she asked with tears of sorrow.

She did not rise again from her bed. Her blessed body trembled like a whip. She felt very tired, and the beating of her heart was so strong that it could be heard from a distance. She vomited blood frequently and abundantly, day and night. Nor could she speak. Her physiognomy, however, was sweet and tranquil, like one awaiting the reward for arduous labor. She was always affable, affectionate, and grateful for every attention and service rendered her, which further captivated the hearts of her sisters.

ON THE VESPERS OF HER DEATH

On January 14, the Convent nurse asked her, "Mother, today is the blessed anniversary of the foundation of our Convent, which Your Reverence and your daughters have always celebrated with great solemnity. Since Your Reverence is quite ill, do you want preparations to be made for you to receive the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction?"

"You are right to remember this anniversary, my dear daughter," she responded. "We have always commemorated it, and this feast, so pleasing to the Heart of God and our Immaculate Mother, should continue to be remembered throughout time. As for the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, the hour has still not arrived. Do not think that I am deceiving myself. No. I will receive the Sacraments with fervor and joy of soul on the 16th, the last day of my life, after having read to you my testament. Do you understand my daughter? Answer me."

The young religious, overwhelmed with tears, threw herself into the arms of her Mother and with a broken voice cried, "Yes, I understand, Mother of my soul, I understand. But alas! How difficult life will be without my Mother! I beg you to take me with you and not leave me. Your Reverence knows that I have neither the physical nor moral strength to bear so hard a trial."

"Ask this grace of Our Lord. If it pleases Him to grant it, prepare yourself so that we might leave together," responded Mother Mariana.

This encouraged the sister greatly. Seeing her changed state, the sisters asked her the reason for her happiness, for only shortly before she had been the object of the Convent's tender concern because of her sadness and lack of resignation.

With the simplicity and innocence that characterized her, she explained: "My Mother told me to prepare myself so that we

might go to Heaven together. Since she is a saint, I have confidence that she will keep her word. She said to ask Our Lord, if it be His will, to grant me this grace. I am praying, and I ask Your Reverences to also assist me with your prayers. Then, from Heaven I will show my gratitude to you.”

The reader will recall the circumstances of this sister’s life and entry into the Convent (Book II, Chapter 14). She was that little girl who was born soon after the family of the mother came to ask for the prayers of Mother Mariana, who had ordered her to be given anise tea. On this occasion, with her prophetic spirit Mother Mariana had foretold that the child to be born was destined to be a nun in the Convent, the sister who would one day shroud her body. She also said that she would be a fervent novice and exemplary religious, perfuming the cloisters with the fragrance of her virtues and conserving her baptismal grace until death.

Everything happened just as the holy Founding Mother predicted. The girl was exceedingly humble and obedient, never giving in to self-will. Her angelic innocence and candor made her the mistress of the hearts of all the religious without exception. In addition, Divine Providence had bestowed upon her a great beauty. She was Spanish in appearance, tall of stature and well-proportioned, with sky-blue eyes, white skin, rosy cheeks, and golden hair.

But none of this mattered in the least to her. Her only desire was to love and serve God with perfection. She was very devoted to penance and solicitous in the work of the Convent. As soon as she had finished her own duties, she would go from place to place to see how she could help her sisters, taking upon herself the most difficult and humblest services. In all that she was ordered to do, she was quick to obey.

In religion her name was Zoila Rosa de Mariana de Jesus. She would often say to Mother Mariana, “Mother, I am the rose of Your Reverence. Take diligent care of me so that this rose will not have thorns that could wound the adorable Heart of our Celestial Spouse. If Your Reverence perceives such thorns sprouting on the stem, however small they might be, tear them off without delicacy or consideration.”

Mother Mariana loved her dearly, for she had formed her from the age of ten and had made her a fervent spouse of Jesus Christ. It is believed that she entered into Heaven with Mother Mariana.

JANUARY 16, 1635

January 16 of the memorable year 1635 finally dawned.

The holy Spanish Founding Mother asked the Abbess to call her spiritual director so that he might give her the Last Sacraments, since she would die on that day. Her confessor and spiritual director at that time was Fr. Francisco Anguita, a zealous missionary who recommended all his apostolic missions with the Indians to his saintly daughter. In his absence, she would confess to Fr. Pedro Becerra, who at that time had been Provincial for one month.

The Abbess heard this request of her beloved Founding Mother with indescribable grief. Weeping, she embraced her and said, "Alas, Mother, is it possible that you are going to leave us? What will become of us without Your Reverence? Ask Our Lord in His charity and goodness to leave you with us some time longer at least."

"Mother and beloved daughter," responded the saintly patient, "our hours are numbered. Now my hour has arrived on the divine clock, and I must go. I leave so that from Heaven I can watch over you and all my future daughters in this beloved Convent. I will always live here – unseen – until the end of time. Make haste, then, and call the priest so that I might receive the Last Sacraments soon, for I still have to read my testament."

Numb with grief, the Mother Abbess left to order that the priest be called. She communicated this sorrowful news to all that she met. Like a bolt of lightning, it traveled through the Convent and the sisters, in haste and weeping, began to enter the cell of Mother Mariana.

**MOTHER MARIANA ASSISTS AND
CONSOLES EACH SISTER IN PRIVATE**

The holy patient had awakened extremely weak, but upon seeing her numerous, afflicted daughters enter she drew strength from her weakness. Making a supreme effort, she sat up on her poor bed, supported by the nurse who had not left her for even an instant, day or night, since January 11 when Mother Mariana had first taken to bed.

She received each one with that sweetness characteristic of her. She was very tired and her heart beat violently, but this did not stop her from assisting, consoling, and speaking to each religious.

They told her that they needed to speak with her individually, one by one, and that she should order the nurse to leave her bedside.

“My Rosita,” their obedient Mother said immediately, “leave this cell so that each one of your sisters might speak freely and tranquilly with her Mother, who will soon leave them. Do not be afflicted, because you will come with me.”

Without the smallest delay, Mother Zoila Rosa de Mariana de Jesus left the cell of her agonizing Mother and directed her steps to the presence of the Sacramental Jesus. There, prostrate on the ground in a cross, she wept.

The Superior found her in the lower choir, raised her from the ground, embraced her, and said, “Do not weep, my daughter. There is nothing we can do. Our orphanhood will be difficult – most difficult. If we could, we would retain our Mother for still more time, but it is not given to us to do this. She promises to watch over us from Heaven, and this is our only relief in our incomparable grief.”

“Ah no, Mother, I weep from joy,” replied the nurse, “because Mother Mariana told me that she will take me with her. I came to ask the Prisoner of Love to fulfill the word of His spouse because I would not be able to live without her. Oh! I love her so much!”

The Mother Abbess paid little heed to these words. She thought to herself, “How simple this angel of innocence is! Mother Mariana probably told her this to calm her so that, as nurse, she might continue to attend her in her last moments. It was good of her to do this!”

Meanwhile, the sisters, one by one, approached their Founding Mother. Each one conversed, consulted, and left in peace. At the same time, they were overcome with oceans of tears, realizing the treasure that was escaping their hands.

They embraced each other and lamented, “The light that illuminates us is being snuffed out. Our dear mother is going away. The shield of this poor city is falling down.” In their distress some fell into the arms of their sisters, and their wailing and weeping could be heard throughout the Convent.

The Abbess ordered that Fr. Anguita be called for, and this news spread to several persons who happened to be in the environs of the Convent. Immediately such a crowd of people gathered, weeping and disputing among themselves to approach the Convent turn-box, that it was necessary for the sacristan to ask for someone to come and help calm the tumult.

The Mother Abbess, who was already suffering greatly, at times would stop to weep upon hearing the cries: “The mother of

the poor, the consoler of our sorrows, the light of our darkness, our refuge in all tribulation, the peace of our families, our intercessor with God – is dying!” And outside the multitude called out: “Our dear Mother Mariana, give us your last blessing! Mother Abbess, give us something from our Founding Mother as a relic! She is a saint and we hope for favors through her intercession. In God’s name, do not deprive us of this consolation!”

THE BISHOP IS ADVISED

Early that morning the Mother Abbess had sent news to the Bishop about the holy patient’s state of health and that she was asking for the Last Sacraments. For the Prelate had spoken daily with Mother Mariana since January 12th, and he had given orders to be advised immediately when her condition worsened because he wanted to personally administer the Last Sacraments and assist at the death of that truly righteous creature, who had been purified her whole life by the most rigorous and intense fire of tribulation.

Moved, His Excellency received this grievous news. He lamented, however, that he could not carry out his desires for he had awakened that morning with a fever. He authorized Mother Mariana to choose who should administer the Sacraments to her and assist her until her last breath.

This was communicated to Fr. Francisco Anguita. Together with the Father Guardian, they resolved to go without delay to be present at this sorrowful and moving ceremony. They entered the cloisters through the lower choir. Fr. Anguita then confessed Mother Mariana, and the two Franciscan priests went to the church to bring the Holy Viaticum.

The cloisters were exuberantly adorned with wreaths and draperies, the floor covered with flowers. A heavenly aroma filled the air, augmenting fervor of spirit and inspiring heavenly sensations.

There were twelve singers, among them the nurse who had a beautiful voice, and they intoned the *Pange Lingua* harmoniously, seeming like a choir of angelic spirits. The numerous sisters carrying large lighted candles accompanied His Divine Majesty. From their midst could be heard soul-wrenching sobs and sighs.

The procession halted a moment before entering the cell of that prudent virgin who awaited her Celestial Spouse with lamp in hand – a lamp adorned with heroic and solid virtues practiced

throughout her long monastic life; a lamp vigorously lit by the fire of an ardent love for God and neighbor, for whom she had offered herself as victim to achieve his conversion and salvation; a lamp filled with the abundant oil of sacrifice and complete abandonment to the will of God.

In her cell a modest but beautiful altar had been erected. Over it, a large agonizing Christ inspired devotion, tenderness, and love, elevating the spirit and inculcating the soul with contempt for the vain and perishable things of this earth, calling to mind the words of Solomon: "Vanity of vanities, behold all is vanity and affliction of spirit. To love and to serve God is the only thing of value" (Eccles. 1: 2).

Bearing His Majesty, the priests entered the cell. The Father Guardian, accompanied by her confessor Fr. Anguita, would administer the Last Sacraments to this faithful and true daughter of the Seraphim of Assisi. Divine Providence solicitously watched over this truly seraphic soul, permitting the Bishop to become ill so that no hands outside the Seraphic Family would give the Last Sacraments to this creature so fully united to the Franciscan Order.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

In front of the altar was the poor but tidy bed of the holy patient. With her face covered by her veil, she anxiously awaited the God of her desires. When she heard the ringing of the little bell that announced the arrival of Our Sacramental Lord, she began to melodiously intone the canticle she knew so well, "Come, Divine Host," inspiring all who heard her and filling them with holy emotions.

For several moments they waited for that human swan to end her strains filled with love of God, which were undoubtedly carried by the Angels to the Throne of the Lord as a melodious message from His beloved, who in a few hours would arrive at the Palace after having ended her sad exile, filled with such great merit.

At the end of the song, with the Blessed Sacrament already placed on the altar, the priests approached Mother Mariana, accompanied by the Mother Abbess and the congregation of the Convent. The Father Guardian directed to her these memorable words:

"Mother Mariana de Jesus, the great moment has arrived for your departure. You are going to make that great leap from time to eternity, upon which depends your eternal happiness or disgrace. To give you strength and valor in this supreme moment,

Jesus Christ comes in Person, veiled under the sacramental accidents, to enter your breast and take possession of your heart, so that there He might be your shield and defense against the diabolical cunning, which will redouble its fury so that you might be lost.

“But do not fear, chosen spouse of the Divine Lamb! The merciful goodness of God favored you with the sublime and precious gift of the religious vocation, bestowing upon you the honorable title of Founding Mother of this Convent, destined to engender saintly souls throughout time. You have fulfilled the mission given to you by your Heavenly Father. You can tranquilly await the reward for your labors and sacrifices.

“However, it is proper to human nature to err and transgress. Upon taking leave of your numerous daughters here present, I order you, by virtue of holy obedience – so that you might make yourself even more meritorious by this last act of humility – to ask pardon for the faults that you may have committed in your lifetime, in this way giving bad examples. Unite yourself to Jesus Christ, and united to Him, speak. Mother and sister, speak.”

As soon as the priest said the last word, the holy patient responded, “Yes, my Fathers, yes. I have greatly desired this.” Then, turning to her Zoila Rosa, she said, “Sister nurse, come here.” Mother Zoila Rosa drew near her holy Mother, who whispered something in her ear. She immediately left with haste, returning with a package that she handed to Mother Mariana.

Mother Mariana quickly opened it and took from it a black cord with many knots. She put this rope over her head and supported by the nurse, she knelt, crossed her hands over her breast, and spoke in this manner:

“Mothers, sisters, and beloved daughters, the end of my sad exile has finally arrived. In a few short moments you will no longer hear my voice, for I will be an inanimate cadaver. Hear the last words of your sister who from her deathbed, kneeling and with folded hands and a cord around her neck like a criminal, asks that in your charity and goodness you might pardon her for all the bad examples she has given to you during her long life. I should have been a model of sanctity and religious perfection by the fact of having been one of the Founding Mothers of this dear Convent and the only one remaining of the first Mothers, whom the younger religious have never even known. But my weakness and badness

prevented me from being what I should have been. Pardon me, I beseech you, a thousand and one times.

“And, now, on a different note, I tell you to hear my words and follow my counsels; do not, however, imitate my bad examples. Whoever excuses and pardons a sister for her bad examples and behavior when she humbly begs that pardon at the supreme moment of death demonstrates grandeur of soul and great religious virtue. Pray for me and do not forget how much I suffered and labored to sustain and conserve observance of the Rule. This I beseech you, prostrate at the feet of each one.”

At the end of this moving speech, Fr. Anguita, filled with emotion, said, “Mother, your daughters and sisters pardon you and love you. They pray that you will not forget them in Heaven. Also do not forget your brothers, the Franciscan Fathers.”

PROFESSION OF FAITH AT THE HOUR OF DEATH

Mother Mariana responded: “I humbly and gratefully give thanks to the Author of all good and to you, Fathers. I die in the bosom of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, confessing and believing all the mysteries, truths, and dogmas that she believes, confesses, and commands. I die most content in the arms of my mother, the Seraphic Order. As a last favor and charity, I ask the priests and sisters to grant me the consolation and incomparable good fortune to die on the floor, in imitation of my Seraphic Father St. Francis.”

The Father Guardian acquiesced, “Mother and my sister, we grant what you request.”

He then ordered the nurse, the Mother Abbess, and the Vicar Abbess to place the holy Founding Mother on the ground as she had requested. While they were doing this, the priests remained next to the altar with the Blessed Sacrament.

After she was settled on the floor, the Father Guardian, assisted by Fr. Anguita, approached her. Praying the customary prayers, they placed the Holy Host, the Bread of the strong, on her tongue. She communicated kneeling, her arms folded, with a most edifying fervor. She remained for a moment like this; then the Mother Abbess drew near, embraced her, and made her sit. She obeyed with the childlike docility that always characterized her, for she had lived meek, humble, abnegated, and obedient. Thus do the saints live and die!

EXTREME UNCTION

After closing the ampulla, the Father Guardian stood in front of the dying sister and said: "Mother and my sister, I command you under holy obedience to remove the veil that covers your face so that we might proceed with the anointing of your senses with Holy Oil, the last of the Sacraments with which our Mother, the Holy Church, comforts her children in the supreme transit of death to give them courage, strength, and grace. Follow the words of the prayers of this ritual."

Mother Mariana uncovered her face. Moments before, she had been quite frail and pallid, but now she appeared rejuvenated. Her cheeks were rosy and her skin clear. Her shining blue eyes expressed peace and tranquility, manifesting that her soul belonged to God and that nothing could perturb or frighten her.

The priest began to anoint her eyes. The holy patient accompanied his prayers with the greatest devotion, making an Act of Contrition on each sense. Before the ceremony started, she had asked the Father Guardian to delay a moment between the anointing of each of the senses so that she could do this. It was a very edifying ceremony. The priests were moved, and the nuns prayed the Penitential Psalms amid their tears and sighs.

When the ceremony ended, the Father Guardian said to Mother Mariana: "Mother, be very grateful to God for this great benefit! There are many who desire the Last Sacraments but cannot receive them because they live in places too far removed from the ministers of the altar. But Your Reverence has had everything. Now I order you, under holy obedience, to tell us the hour of this day that you will die, because it is most fitting that we, your brothers, assist you in this final transit. Right now it is three-quarters of an hour before noon."

DUE TO THE NEGLIGENCE OF SUPERIORS, SOME SISTERS WILL DIE WITHOUT THE SACRAMENTS

The humble and obedient Mother responded: "My Fathers and dear brothers, I thank Our Lord for the benefits that have just been dispensed to me with no merit on my part. I desire these benefits for all my present-day and future daughters. Through the course of the centuries – and this grieves my soul deeply – some will die without the Sacraments due to the fatal negligence of their

Superiors, for whom Divine Justice will reserve a special chastisement. For this will be a difficult trial for my dying daughters.

“I respond with pleasure to your question. My soul will leave my body, finally breaking the chains of mortality to take flight for Heaven, today at exactly three o’clock in the afternoon. I beseech you to do the holy will of God, being present at my death and praying the customary prayers for my soul. With this I will tranquilly fall into the sleep of the just in the arms of my mother, the Seraphic Order, just as I was born for the Order of my Immaculate Mother in this holy Convent.

“Now you can tranquilly return to the Monastery of St. Francis for a time. At 1:30 this afternoon, when you should again be present here, I will proceed to read to my Convent my testament which, through the will of God and the Most Holy Virgin our Mother, I have made as Founding Mother of this Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the Colony. Your Reverences the priests will be the witnesses, representing for all posterity the Franciscan Order, under whose care and dependence my Conceptionist Order was founded by the illustrious Beatrice da Silva, costing her, one could truly say, a veritable martyrdom. At the end of the reading, I will begin my agony, which will not be long. Meanwhile, bless with devotion your dying daughter.”

The priests blessed her and then hastily left for their monastery, saying that they would return at 1:15 that afternoon.

The nuns, who loved their Founding Mother with their whole soul, did not want to leave her so that they might enjoy her company and presence for at least some moments longer.

But the holy patient, remaining entirely lucid, kindly spoke these words to the Mother Abbess, embracing her: “Mother and beloved daughter, take my dear, afflicted daughters to the refectory. I see their affliction and tears because of my departure, but it is not possible for them to remain fasting. They should go to the refectory to carry out the community act and give their bodies the necessary nourishment so that they might be pleasing to God.

“Remember the beautiful words of the Apostle St. Paul to his followers, ‘Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, which has great merit.’ I make these words my own and say them to my beloved daughters from my death bed. Carry out this duty and then all should go together to make the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, as is our custom. I will await you here, beloved daughters, to see you for the last time, bless you with great

tenderness, and finally, speak my temporal farewell, after reading my testament.”

Despite her great grief, the Mother Abbess obeyed and ordered the nuns to go down to the refectory when the bell rang.

When it sounded, all the sisters left, each one more distressed than the other. They were anxious to return immediately to be next to their dying Mother. They ate quickly, the servers eating at the same time as those who were served. On this occasion the Mother Abbess dispensed with the reading during the meal, which is part of the Rule.

THE SISTER NURSE ASKS PERMISSION TO DIE ALSO

Mother Mariana remained alone with only the nurse. We do not know what passed between Mother and daughter, for only God knows this. But it is certain that when the Mother Abbess returned with the nuns, they found the nurse extremely jubilant and overflowing with happiness.

Calling her aside, the Mother Abbess said to her: “My daughter, we have always appreciated your childlike nature and unaffected joy, but in the present affliction it is not proper to manifest such happiness. All our hearts are broken with grief because our Mother, the sustenance of the Convent, the light and guardian of the Convent, is leaving us. Consider that we will soon be cruelly left orphans. The joy that now floods your being will be converted in just a few hours to an unspeakable bitterness of heart. Show more moderation by reflecting upon this and prepare yourself to receive this harsh and inevitable blow with Catholic and religious resignation.”

“Mother,” the young sister immediately responded, “it is certain that I could not endure life without my holy Founding Mother, but I must enlighten Your Reverence that I also am going with her this very day. Here are the keys to the closet in my usage. Everything else is in my cell and desk. As a sister and daughter of the *pobrezito* of Assisi, my Seraphic Father, I have absolutely nothing and no attachment to any created thing.

“I only ask Your Reverence and my beloved Convent pardon for all the bad examples I have given and for not having served as befitting a holy spouse of my Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, I ask for a habit, the poorest and most worn, to shroud my body and a spot for my sepulcher.

“Give me, Mother, your blessing and permission to die and go with my Founding Mother, who must enter Heaven with her Benjamin. From there, we will not forget our sisters.”

The Mother Abbess remained silent for a moment, astonished. She gazed at Mother Zoila Rosa attentively and said to herself: “Poor Rosita, poor Rosita! To alleviate her sorrow, our Mother Mariana has let her believe that she also is going to die today. Since our Mother is a saint, she will obtain from God that her daughter will completely die to everything in this world and be raised to an even higher degree of sanctity. With this she will gain the strength to live without her, which she otherwise does not have.”

Receiving the keys, she said, “Kneel, my daughter. I receive the keys of the closet in your use. I will shortly go to your cell and place of work. I willingly give you permission to die and enjoy God whenever and however His Majesty desires. Have courage and do not refuse any sacrifice to the Lord, your God and absolute Master.”

And she gave her blessing.

THE BELL CALLS THE NUNS TO THEIR LAST MEETING WITH MOTHER MARIANA

The Abbess then went to Mother Mariana, who asked with keen interest, “Mother, what time is it?”

“It is just past one o’clock,” the Abbess answered.

“Mother, let the bell-ringer immediately ring the Convent bell with the spirit of faith and devotion.”

Upon the solemn sounding of the Convent bell, all the nuns quickly gathered around. Moments later, the Franciscan priests arrived and entered. For the last time the saintly Founding Mother spoke with them alone.

The nuns then entered and sat in rows to listen to their dying Mother. After passing her gaze over her sisters, Mother Mariana spoke in a loud voice:

“Beloved Mothers and sisters of my soul! The longed-for moment of ending my long and difficult earthly exile has finally arrived. I say to you what the Divine Savior said to His Apostles when He was going to leave them physically on the occasion of the Ascension: ‘It is necessary that I go away, but I will not leave you orphans. I go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, and I will send down the Divine Consoler to comfort you.’ I, your Founding Mother, adopt also these most beautiful words that issued from the divine lips of our Adorable Redeemer on that

moving occasion, and I say: 'Yet a little while and you will no longer see me with your earthly eyes, but in spirit I will live in you.'

"From Heaven I will send you consolation, asking that the Holy Ghost come over you so that, guided by Him, you might never stray from the pathway of truth in the religious life. Remember my diligence in the observance of the Rule and mutual pardon of your faults. Always think of yourselves as weak creatures, thus conserving fraternal charity, a virtue so beloved by the Divine Redeemer! Do not forget my teachings and admonitions, and you will be happy.

"Now, pay attention for the reading that I will make of my testament and last will, which I ask, order, and command be followed by you and your successors. Let it be transmitted from generation to generation, and let its text always be at hand."

* * *

CHAPTER 22

This is the testament that Mother Mariana read to her beloved daughters of the Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception, intended for them and for the sisters of this Convent in all times:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

I, Mariana de Jesus Torres y Berriochoa Fernandez Taboada y Reig, as a faithful and submissive daughter of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church:

believing and confessing all the dogmas, mysteries, and truths that she believes and professes, and reproving that which she reproves;

in the most sweet and Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ;

in the name of the ever-Virgin Mary, pure and free from original sin from the moment of her Immaculate Conception in the blessed womb of my glorious Saint Ann;

in the name of her glorious Transit and Assumption body and soul into Heaven – a mystery that will one day be declared a dogma of Faith by the Catholic Church when the whole world will be sheathed in the dark shadows of general corruption and which will illuminate it, like a shining star in the Church's firmament, in order to enlighten many minds that have strayed;⁷⁴

in the name of the glorious Patriarch, my lord St. Joseph, adoptive father of the Divine Word and most chaste spouse of the stainless Virgin, Queen of Heaven and earth, secure refuge of poor sinners;

in the name of the human seraphim St. Francis of Assisi, my Seraphic Father, whose blessed body was privileged to bear the impression of the five wounds on his hands, feet, and side, becoming in this way a living image of Christ, Our Lord and Redeemer;

in the name of all the saints of the Seraphic Order;

in the name of the blessed, who, glorious and triumphant, reign with Christ in the celestial Fatherland;

make this testament, as Founding Mother of this Royal Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy of

74. Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin with the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of November 1, 1950.

Quito in the Colony, ordering and manifesting my wishes and last will and in it, that of all the Founding Mothers – in particular that of Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, a relative of our lord the King, as well as the first Foundress and Abbess of this Royal Convent. Before closing their eyes to this earthly light, they ordered that before I died, I should leave a testament, written and signed in my own hand for all of our beloved present-day as well as future religious, daughters, and sisters of this Royal Convent until the last day of time, so that it might be fulfilled with religious scrupulosity, bearing in mind that it will be the restoration of the religious spirit and the conservation of this Convent, so privileged and loved by our Divine Savior and His Blessed Mother.

It is as follows:

**FIRST CLAUSE: THE CONSERVATION OF
THE CONVENT AT ALL COSTS**

These extensive grounds with all its dependencies remain the legacy and perpetual property of those souls called by divine vocation to be professed sisters who live and die in this Convent. I state and clarify this for all the sisters faithful to the grace of their vocation and the seraphic spirit, and not for the unfaithful, illegitimate ones.

When the time comes when they will find themselves obliged to tear down a large part of this place, they may do this, conserving, however, at all costs and without sparing any sacrifice the house where the choirs are situated, because Our Lord worked great marvels in them.⁷⁵ They should also consider the utility of the common good, and not their own conveniences. They should receive funds sufficient to acquire lands capable of providing for the sufficient and necessary maintenance of 100 persons, for the needs of clothing and the restoration of roofs, walls, and rooms as time and case presents itself, as well as to assist the truly poor who come to us begging alms, but not to the lazy and debased who pretend to be poor and spend large sums of money on vanities, gaming, and vices of every kind.

The Abbesses should show a preference in giving alms to the families of our sisters who are in true poverty, as well as to the Convent's benefactors who are later tested by God with need and

75. These renovations were made after the fire of 1889. See footnote 33.

poverty, and also to benefactors in each epoch, for they will never be lacking to this beloved Convent.

**SECOND CLAUSE: LIFE IN THE CLOISTER –
PRAYER, PENANCE, DEATH, AND SALVATION**

I have bequeathed to you the holy common life that should be lived in this dear Convent. Guard with care and extreme vigilance, my daughters, this precious treasure of great value which we, your Mothers, acquired at the cost of sacrifices, labors, and sufferings made for your benefit. If you knew how much we suffered to make this foundation and to establish the common life in a secure, stable, and permanent way! You suffer nothing now, and for this reason, pay little account to this. You are our beloved daughters for whom we, your Mothers, suffered bitter hardships, shed abundant tears, and passed whole nights without sleeping in order to make you happy. Do not squander this treasure of great value.

THE PARTICULAR LIFE IN THE CONVENT

Remember that when the particular life enters the Convent, laxity will enter and with it, death of the religious spirit. For when each is striving to serve only herself and her servants, she will not have sufficient time to carry out the monastic duties and dedicate herself to meditation, which is the life and nourishment of the religious soul. This is true above all for the contemplative daughters of the Immaculate Virgin – daughters of our contemplative and holy Mother Beatrice da Silva who founded our Order with the powerful arms of vocal and mental prayer, and daughters of our Father, the Seraphim of Assisi. They [Mother Beatrice and St. Francis] do not recognize as sons and daughters souls who live in the cloisters but are dissipated as if they were living in the world.

THE NEED FOR PRAYER

When prayer and common life are wanting, everything is lacking. For then religious become like soldiers without arms in intense combat, for daily life is a hard and difficult combat. It is not enough to live in the cloisters to be assured of salvation. It is necessary – absolutely indispensable – to labor in the field of the spirit: to fulfill the holy vows and austerities of the monastic life, to daily pull out the bad weeds that grow in the soul unawares but can be seen clearly by means of prayer.

Beloved daughters and sisters, I bequeath to you self-mastery and holy penance!

PENANCE

Oh! Love penance! It is the antidote against the evil passions and even healthful for the body. A daily flagellation, except for Sundays, should not be lacking to a fervent religious of the Immaculate Conception, to a soul who, detached from everything and especially from herself, realizes that she is in exile in the arid desert of this earthly life and walks hastily toward Heaven. This also applies to my daughters who are sick but not gravely ill, for a sick religious should not stop being a religious and has the strict obligation of carrying out her monastic obligations as much as her strength permits.

THE SICK

Here I direct myself to you, my dear sick sisters, favored daughters of our Divine Savior throughout time. You endure sufferings, acute illnesses, privations, sacrifices, bitterness, shame, the lack of things indispensable for your state of health, in addition to desolation and sorrow of spirit. What should you do in this case? Hear the words that your dying Mother directs to you from her bed of suffering at the very moment I leave this earthly life.

When you find yourself in this condition, raise your troubled eyes to Heaven and contemplate for a moment the blue or cloudy firmament; then say to yourself interiorly: "Beyond the sky is my beloved celestial Homeland. Awaiting me there are my Divine Spouse, my Immaculate Mother, my Founding Mother so suffering and loved by God, my Seraphic Father St. Francis, and my Founding Mothers of this Convent, the antechamber of Heaven. From the Kingdom of Heaven, they are watching me to see how I will act during this time of harsh trial when my body and soul suffer the unspeakable. Jesus Christ, the Holy of Holies, suffered more than I, and He was innocent, while I am guilty."

Then pray: "O God, how many betrayals and infidelities have I been guilty of during the time when I enjoyed health. How good Thou art to manifest Thy love for me, sending me this gift so that with it, I can make reparation and earn merit. For in Purgatory only reparation can be made and no merit earned.

"O my Love, Thou suffered so much more than I and all for love of me. Thus I accept for love of Thee this bitter chalice,

which I desire to drink even to the last drop in order to please Thee, to make myself like unto Thee, to give Thee proof of my love, to make satisfaction for my digressions and ingratitude, and finally, so that I might be with Thee as soon as possible and enjoy Thee forever in Heaven, without passing through Purgatory. It is hard for me to be separated from Thee still longer, for this separation in mortal life is indeed cruel. I long for the moment when my soul can free itself from the bonds of mortality to take flight to joyful eternity and there give Thee an eternal embrace, losing myself in Thy divine immensity like a drop of dew is lost in the ocean.

“But, as a fragile and weak creature lacking all virtue, the weak little boat of my soul is already shipwrecked in the tempestuous ocean of my sorrows. Give me strength, valor, and perseverance so that I can face everything with a virile courage, remembering that the Kingdom of Heaven is only won by violence and that this time will soon pass and all will end. I will take only my good or bad works with me to eternity and, presenting myself before the dread Tribunal, I will receive a favorable or unfavorable sentence based on them.

“O God of my love, do not allow Thy poor, small creature to receive an unfavorable sentence! Oh, no! Here in this life burn me, cut me, and even kill me, but forgive me then. I not only accept this series of sicknesses as a solemn funeral cortege, but I embrace them; I love them as a precious treasure of almost infinite value, and I give Thee thanks for having confided them to me. I implore Thee not to take them away until Thou dost so desire. Yes, my joys are all my sufferings that come from Thy hand, disposed by Thy holy will. Thou dost desire this, my God, and so let it be done according to Thy will.”

In this way, my daughters, you may be sick of body, but not of soul. May God deliver you from being sick of body and soul!

FLAGELLATIONS

To prevent this, I prescribe that you never leave off your meditation, continue interior mortification without interruption, and make exterior mortification whenever you can, for the spouse of Jesus Christ should never live without chastising her body. It is true that during the time when God Our Lord tests you with illness, you can not use the hairshirt because it would impede circulation as well as present other inconveniences, but the discipline can be taken for your physical and moral benefit.

SICKNESS

Doing this, dear daughters, I beseech and implore that, through the Sacred Heart of our Celestial Spouse and the Pure Heart of your Holy and Immaculate Mother, you be humble, peaceful, patient, and tolerant in time of sickness, remembering that illness is the thermometer that truly marks the virtue of a nun and the degree of her love for God.

Even if with trumpets sounding, you proclaim, "My God, I love Thee," it amounts to nothing if you do not give practical proofs of your love. These unequivocal proofs are given preferably during times of illness, when the creature is taken by pain.

Obey with docility, innocence, and childlike simplicity the doctor provided by God, Who is prodigious and loving with all His creatures and especially with His spouses. Keep in mind that in this beloved Convent throughout the course of time, I myself from Heaven will watch over those who offer their solicitous assistance to cure your illnesses.

THE CONDUCT AND WORDS OF A RELIGIOUS

Give good example with your irreprehensible conduct, solid virtues, and heroic patience, manifesting your deep love of God and speaking always of the worthlessness of the things of this earth, where all is transitory. The creatures made by God should love and serve Him in order to enjoy Him in Heaven, their eternal salvation being the only interest for which all Catholics should untiringly labor. Speak of the eternity of happiness and the eternity of misery, and of the value of one single soul. Oh! How valuable are the sweet, insistent words of a sister on such matters to the souls of persons in the world!

I speak to you from my own experience because through the course of my long life, many souls returned to Our Lord after reflecting on words from the lips of His spouses, words to which God, our loving Father, gives unction. Even if they do not produce an immediate effect, they are engraved in indelible letters in the depths of the hearts of those who hear them. Their echoes resound when the person is alone, and they are never without fruit.

If you encounter docile souls who immediately return to God, give thanks for such a great favor. But if they are obdurate souls whose conversion seems impossible, then more than ever

redouble your prayers and sacrifices. Offer your own sufferings and do not cease to present them to Our Lord, hoping against all hope in the merciful love that God has for the souls redeemed by His Blood. Implore and plead for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls, making your intercessor our holy Mother of Good Success, so that she will give them good success, converting them, giving them perseverance, and finally, saving them.

In your dealings with the infirmiry nurses, be docile, affable, tender, loving, and grateful. If at times their assistance is wanting, if they forget to administer medicines (which will happen at times by the permission of Our Lord to test your patient love of Him), if they deceive you or display fatigue and are irritable, then, beloved daughters of my heart, raise your suffering hearts to your God and remain silent for love of Him.

Say to yourself interiorly: "My sister is right to act this way. A long and difficult illness is tiresome; only the heroic charity that exists in the Convent could tolerate me. My God, bless my Superiors and sisters, and give them strength, patience, and a great reward in Heaven. I remind Thee, my God, that Thou was once a Man of Sorrows and Thy holy Humanity was submerged in physical and moral suffering, like a fish in water.

"On the other hand, let me remember how many beggars in the world lack the necessities of life! And I, in the religious life, having made the vow of poverty, why do I think that I should lack nothing and that all should fawn upon me? Oh, no, a thousand times no! What will my Celestial Spouse say to me on the last day of my life if I do not try to be like unto Him, patiently and lovingly bearing my small sufferings, privations, and lacks? For if I am not patient now, I will be ashamed to say, My Love, open to me the doors of Thy Kingdom just as on that memorable day, Thou opened to me the blessed doors of the cloister of my Immaculate Mother, where I sanctified myself by carrying out Thy holy will under Thy gaze alone.

"Behold me here, weary of the harsh exile of mortal life where I suffered in silence and for love of Thee all the hardships that Thou sent me. The road was long, but I have finally reached its end. Open Thy arms and permit me to rest from my labors and lay my weary head in the ardent fires of Thy Divine Heart, where I lived content and tranquil even during the cruelest sufferings, which have now ended. Now I come eagerly to take possession of the blessed eternity that Thou promised me, where I will live under

the mantle of my Immaculate Mother and in the company of my Father, Francis of Assisi.”

TO THE SICK SISTERS

As for the rest, dear daughters, sanctify your time of illness. Do not be pretentious, desiring that all serve you and that you should lack nothing or anyone. Do not be difficult, mortifying the nurses with your complaints, squeamishness, and bad humor. Nor should you exaggerate your pains or resist taking the prescribed medications. Consider that the nurses suffer even more than the patients, because they dedicate themselves completely to curing the sick, their own desires unrealized. This is a secret suffering for them, an arrow that incessantly pierces their hearts.

God is the only witness of the privations, sacrifices, self-denial, and hardships of the nurses, whose only recourse is God, Our Lady, and their patron saints. They sacrifice themselves for you; they suffer and weep alone with their God. Love them as your tender mothers. Show them confidence and affection to repay them for the solicitous care they give you.

Be pleasant and never murmur or complain about them. Know that ingratitude greatly displeases the Sacred Heart of your Divine Spouse, Who desires to see a faithful copy of Himself in His sick spouses. Contemplate His most dolorous Passion, analyze it in your prayers; penetrate that suffering, tormented Heart and see a model of humility, patience, tolerance, silence, and heroic generosity amid the most arduous sufferings, which no mortal creature can ever equal. At the height of His sufferings, He looked down at His executioners and pardoned them. As the moment approached when His beautiful soul would leave His lacerated body, He thought of His beloved daughters and recommended us to His Blessed Mother through the person of His beloved Disciple.

THE APOSTOLATE FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS

In this way, my beloved sick sisters in all times, you should pardon first the faults of our sisters in the Convent, and then poor sinners. You who are contemplative by the great mercy of God Who deigned to snatch you from the perverse world so that you might live here with Him under the same roof, you should learn to love poor sinners who are your brothers. Do not censure or despise them, or take part in the idle chatter of many who speak of piety but take no care to curb their tongues, which, like two-edged swords,

strike their guilty brothers, the sinners, opening in their souls deep wounds difficult to heal in mortal life. This is the cause of secret hatreds and vengeance, which offend and grieve the patient and charitable Heart of our Divine Master, our Redeemer Who said that He had not come for the just but for sinners, and that the wick that still smoldered would not be extinguished.

Remember the beautiful and tender parable of the prodigal son and the conduct of Our Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan, the adulteress, Mary Magdalene, and the Prince of the Apostles St. Peter. Admire and imitate Him, reproving the sin and the small falls of your brothers, but loving their persons. Love their souls, and do not forget them in your life of continuous suffering. Offer your privations, sufferings, and sacrifices for their conversion and return to the paternal home, remembering that if God Our Lord did not hold you in His hand, you would be worse – much more culpable and scandalous – than they are.

Be secret apostles to convert souls by your prayer and heroic sacrifice. Stay far removed from personal scorn, hatreds, grudges, and revenges, for such things are proper only to niggardly souls lacking all interior virtue. Governed by a secret pride, they think themselves better than their strayed brethren.

Frequently call to mind those powerful words of the Apostle St. James who said: “The tongue is a two-edged sword. Use it with fear and trembling so that you do not injure and kill your brothers with it. First cast the beam out of your own eye; and then you shall see clearly to take out the mote from your brother’s eye.”

Together with insistent, humble prayer, a sister of the Immaculate Conception should exercise gentleness, sweetness, and goodness in her treatment of sinners with the aim of conquering them. Learn to be meek and humble of heart like the Divine Master, the Model of the predestined, and especially of religious souls!

In likeness to the Divine Master, Who as He neared His last breath gave us for our Mother His Blessed Mother, recommending Her to us through the person of St. John, His beloved Disciple, you also, in the abyss of sorrows in which you find yourselves forgotten by even yourselves, offer your sufferings in imitation of your Crucified Love for your brethren, poor sinners, placing them in the hands of Our Lady of Good Success, our tender Mother. Remember that before He died, Her Most Holy Son and our Redeemer left her to us as Mother, to be the support and secure refuge of poor, miserable sinners.

The Devil and the flesh are quick to thrust into the abyss sinners who despair of salvation and are shipwrecked in the tempestuous sea of the world. May the maternal love of Our Lady sustain them by means of your sufferings and pains presented before the Divine Throne with the aim of attaining light, repentance, mercy, and pardon for your brethren souls, redeemed by the Blood of God made Man.

In this way, dear sick sisters, my most beloved daughters, you will pass the bitter days of your sickness with meritorious profit giving souls to Jesus Christ, Who, well-pleased, will smile on you from Heaven and grant you those sweet, intimate consolations that only God can bestow on His favored souls. United to Him and nailed with Him to the same cross, you will find Him always ready to hear your petitions and see to your needs and those of the souls confided to you.

Then, having fulfilled your mission on earth, tranquil and jubilant you will close your eyes to this earthly light to open them to eternal light. In eternity, if you have any purgatory it will be very short, since you already passed through it during your life of sacrifice and prolonged suffering.

To achieve this, you should also offer each day and moment of your life of sickness united to the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, offering every breath with the end of making reparation and doing penance for your sins so that you might merit a high throne of glory, as befitting a contemplative soul, daughter of the stainless Virgin. For you are a soul that had the incomparable happiness of passing your life in the solitary recesses of the cloister of your Immaculate Mother as a voluntary victim united to the Eucharistic Victim under the gaze of God alone, hidden and ignored by the world but known, loved, and admired by the Angels and the Blessed.

Also, give good example to your religious sisters for in health as well as sickness, religious have an obligation of conscience to give good example, suffering with patience and inalterable peace amid their greatest pains and hardships. Do not permit yourselves, then, to be overcome by impatience, anger, and despair should your sickness be prolonged. Remember that only eternity has no end and that, however difficult, painful, and long the sicknesses suffered in this earthly life might be, they are nothing, because a long, arduous life of sorrow will seem like but a sigh in eternity.

Dear daughters of all times until the end of time, engrave in your minds these truths that your Founding Mother leaves you in

her testament on her deathbed at the hour of her last breath. For these truths for me are not just theories, but were practiced in my long, uninterrupted experience in both personal as well as common life.

THE PROMISE OF MOTHER MARIANA

I know all of you – the sick as well as the healthy – even to the last daughter that will be professed and live here in my beloved Convent. I love you more than myself. I consider you as most delicate fibers of my heart. I desire that you be holy so that you might sanctify this place that I leave as your inheritance so that it might be your residence while you live exiled from your celestial Fatherland in the arid desert of mortal life.

With your heroic sacrifice, sustain this cherished Convent that we, your Founding Mothers, left you. From Heaven we will watch over you, take care of you, bless you, accompany you in your sicknesses, and be with you at your bed of suffering. At the end of your lives, we will present you before the Divine Tribunal as our daughters and sisters, so that we might conduct you to Heaven to remain for all eternity as members of the Seraphic Family under the blue mantle of the Queen conceived without original sin and our Mother Foundress of the whole Order, Beatrice da Silva, favored daughter of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother and of the Seraphim of Assisi.

THIRD CLAUSE: OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS

When the Divine Master was hanging from the ignominious gibbet of the Cross on which He expired amid His almost infinite sufferings and torments, the fourth last word, or testament, that He gave to redeemed humanity was to leave us His Mother as our own. Addressing His Virgin Mother, He said, “Woman, behold your son,” the beloved Disciple. Then He said to John, “Behold your Mother.” I make that fourth word of my dying Spouse my own. I, your dying Mother who directs my last words to you from my deathbed, tell you, my present-day daughters and those throughout time until the end of the world: Behold your Heavenly Mother, Our Lady of Good Success. She will always give you good successes.

THE MIRACLE IN THE MAKING OF THE STATUE

As you know, she has always favored me with her motherly care and tenderness. She herself commanded me to have her Statue made. It was made by a godly man, Francisco del Castillo, who

already enjoys God in Heaven. On the day that he planned to make the final touches, by the most amiable will of our good God who has a special love for this Convent, disposed that the beautiful Statue, which is here in the upper choir on the Abbatial Chair, should not only be finished by the Angels, but also made by them.

That first layer [wood shavings] of the carving done by Don Francisco was found on the floor. Overcome by awe, he gave his assurance in a sworn, written statement that the Statue's features were not the same as he had left them when he took leave of the cloister the prior evening, and that he would not dare to touch or even kiss the holy Statue because he considered himself unworthy of this angelic work, which was not his own.

A multitude of prodigies has followed, which you can read about in my life, with regard to our holy Statue that I leave you today in this clause of my will. Love it with enthusiasm and ardor, for she desired to be the perpetual Superior of this beloved Convent. She herself ordered the Statue placed in the indicated site, with the keys to the cloisters in her blessed hands, so that throughout time she might protect her dwelling-place from the cupidity of men instigated by the devils and from the jealousy of Satan who will exert every effort and diabolical power to destroy this work of God.

Not succeeding in doing this evil openly, he will insinuate into the minds of good Catholics – priests and even Bishops – that they should abandon this place and change to another. But this is not the will of God Our Lord, Who, according to His high designs, founded this Convent here in the heart of the City and desires that it be preserved here afloat the wild and furious waves of a turbulent sea, like gulls on the ocean waters. Beloved daughters of all time, be spiritual gulls, and with your monastic virtues, conserve your Convent.

Have a great love for the Blessed Virgin. Imitate her virtues, above all, her profound humility and her ardent love for God and poor sinners. Love each other with a childlike simplicity and innocence that permits no falseness or hypocrisy in your souls. Conserve and propagate the devotion to Our Lady under the tender invocation of Good Success, so that she might obtain whatever you ask of Jesus and Mary.

IN THE FUTURE, A SISTER WILL REESTABLISH DEVOTION TO OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS

Dear daughters, know that the time will come when devotion to Our Lady of Good Success will wane, with almost no mention being made of it. Then I will prostrate myself in Heaven before the Throne of Mary, and I will obtain from her maternal Heart that she deign to descend again into my beloved Convent. She will favor one of my future daughters with many manifestations. I myself will prepare this daughter's soul and vocation from her tender years to receive such graces. As Superior she will revive the fallen devotion which will be conserved then completely without decay.

Know also, daughters and sisters of all times, that the holy Statue is consecrated with holy oils and is under the care of the three Archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, so that the treacherous serpent cannot cause it harm. For, seeing himself oppressed and this devotion and invocation snatching many souls from him, the Devil will always try to break it to pieces. But all in vain! God watches over His works. But you should also take supreme care of your great treasure and strive to make her known and loved by the greatest number of souls possible, assuring them that with this devotion they will always attain good successes in time and in eternity.

Have recourse to her in all your spiritual and temporal needs. When your souls suffer temptations and hardships, and the star of the divine vocation by divine permission is hidden from your soul's sight, run to her with confidence and say, 'Star of the tempestuous sea of my mortal life, make thy light shine so that I do not stray from the road that leads me to Heaven.'

THE ASSISTANCE OF THE FRIARS MINOR IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Ask and insist that the consciences of all your sisters throughout time be directed and their vocations formed by the assistance of our Friars Minor. Only they can form true daughters of the Immaculate Conception with the seraphic spirit – until that happy time arrives when they return to their original foundation, which will happen in the 20th century.

I also bequeath to you my love for the stigmatic seraphim Francis of Assisi, my Father and yours, who descending from Heaven girded the statue of Our Lady of Good Success, your

treasure, with his own cord, and then delivered his three Orders to her. As long as you love him and seek to imitate his humility and ardent love for God and souls redeemed by Our Lord's Blood, you will be happy, because God has promised many graces to those who love this Human Seraphim and his Order.

If He promises this to all, how much more will He grant it to His own daughters. Have an ardent love for the Seraphic Family, the only family that can perfectly satisfy your aspirations of heart. My daughters, here you have your Father Francis – he will teach you how to belong to God.

And now, I turn my eyes to Thee, o refulgent Star of the Morning of the life of this beloved Convent. In order to found it in this Colony, you brought us (to be Founding Mothers) and favored all of us with supernatural graces. I thank you, Most Blessed Mother! The others are already in Heaven, and now the last remaining one is ready to leave this earth. I deliver to you, therefore, these present-day daughters and all those in the times to come, saying to you:

Mother, behold your daughters! Watch over them, their religious spirit, observance of the Rule, and mutual charity; give them patience with our sick sisters throughout time who will have much need of divine assistance to sanctify themselves in their sicknesses. Watch over our temporal as well as spiritual benefactors of all times. Guard the observance of the Rule, the common life, and this beloved place, favored with our tears, labors, and fatigues and, above all, with your very presence, because you descended from Heaven with your Most Holy Son in order to sanctify it.

FOURTH CLAUSE: COUNSELS TO THE HEALTHY SISTERS

This clause is for you, dear daughters, to whom God, our Creator and absolute Master, has granted the gift of health. What a precious gift it is! Be very grateful for it and avail yourself of it with fear, trepidation, and love. I direct myself to you, saying, entreating, emphasizing, and finally, commanding with my authority as Mother and Foundress, that you love holy observance, internal and external recollection, and holy silence, which constitute the most beautiful and rich adornments of convents.

Be charitable and compassionate toward your sick sisters, thinking of them as patient members of the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Love the sick with extraordinary tenderness! Ignore their impertinences. Never dare to aggravate or augment their trials by causing them irritation.

Know that the Celestial Spouse loves them with a special love and that the least suffering you cause them, He receives as if it were done to His own Divine Person, reserving your chastisement for your final judgment. Have a holy envy for them considering that these souls, so beloved by God, possess an accumulated virtue superior to yours. For this reason, they are worthy to receive the numerous treasures of the cross in their sufferings, so that in a day not too distant they will receive the crowns and palms of martyrs in Heaven. Venerate them and render them every service that you can. Have pity on them and strive to visit them in order to alleviate their heavy cross, speaking to them of the joys of Heaven that will be proportionate to their sufferings borne for love of Jesus Christ.

Do not forget poor sinners, your brothers. In this regard, take as your aim all that I said about my sick sisters in the clause above. You should fear the Sovereign Judge should you pay no attention to a matter like this which so deeply concerns you, for the Divine Redeemer and His Blessed Mother have revealed this to me in the repeated and frequent apparitions that they deigned to make to me. Do not be egotistical or miserly with your good God. Forget yourself and take an interest in poor sinners.

Practice reciprocal holy charity, dear daughters. You should love one another as you desire to be loved. Be mutually considerate. Render those small daily services that captivate hearts and unite them with the indissoluble bond of holy fraternal love. Take great care to never say crushing, injurious, or disparaging words. Ignore the weaknesses proper to earthly life. Remember that only the Angels and Blessed are impeccable, and that to merit greater degrees of grace and glory, it is necessary to know how to support the bad moods and difficult temperaments of your sisters. Follow the dispositions of Divine Providence, Who attracts to convents and monasteries persons of different countries, languages, and states of life who also have a diversity of spiritual graces and physical and moral gifts.

Why is this? So that you might practice every type of virtue and make them solid, uniting a most pure love of God with a love for your fellowman. How fortunate are the souls whom God Our Lord gratuitously granted the sublime gift of the religious vocation!

THE SUBLIMITY OF THE VOCATION

You will only realize all the grandeur of this vocation when you are in Heaven, because on earth no living person – however

holy and learned he might be – is capable of understanding such sublime and grand things.

The Apostle of love, the Virgin Apostle, the most favored in the affection of Jesus and Mary who drank from the pure fountains of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ the indispensable virtue of charity, spoke of nothing except holy charity when, in his old age, his disciples would carry him about – supported in their arms – so that he could speak to them and instruct them. One day, tired of always hearing the same thing without any variation of theme, they said to him, “Master, we are weary of always hearing the same sermon. Speak and teach us other things.” With the calmness and wisdom of a saint filled with God, he responded, “This precept is from the Lord, and if you keep it, it is enough! My dear sons, love one another.”

In this way, I, your Mother and Foundress, in my old age and at this sublime moment when I leave you in my mortal life, make these words of the holy Apostle John my own, I tell you: My dear daughters of all times, love one another as Christ loves each one of you, both materially and spiritually. Desire and seek for your sisters what you desire for yourself. Love each other as I love you. Sacrifice yourself for your sisters, putting their wants above your own self-convenience.

Never, never complain or make detractions about your earthly superiors, because this is a great lack of charity and the ruin of holy charity and mutual love. It breaks the bonds of fraternity forever and in the depths of the heart replaces them with suspicion, distrust, and lack of fraternal love, making religious sisters strangers to one another. Along with this hidden suffering comes a resentment that destroys hearts.

When a soul lacks strong and solid virtue, rancor enters, and often the loss of the vocation and with it, the soul. This is a type of fratricide practiced by religious souls. For the Celestial Spouse – converted then into a severe Judge – will take just vengeance on those souls preferred by Him when they stand before Him to give an account. He congregated together these souls so that, united, they would live under the same roof with His Divine Majesty, loving each other even to a heroic degree.

Know that when He instituted the monastic life, the Redeemer Himself sustained the fervor, union, and charity of the first Christians so that it is said that they had only one heart and one soul. The world does not understand this sublime and consoling truth. For this reason, insofar as corruption increases, this divine

first charity is lost and grows cold, being replaced by envy and the other capital sins.

The fatal and moral consequences of such complaints invite divine indignation. Not infrequently, convents are closed due only to this, as will happen in the 19th century to one of our own established in the North.⁷⁶ I have wept and still weep over this suppression since I would like that the Franciscan Convents of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady be multiplied. In the same century, an attempt will also be made to close our beloved Convent of Riobamba, which will commit the disastrous error of wanting to affiliate itself with a family outside our own.

IN THE 20TH CENTURY: THE CANONIZATION OF MOTHER BEATRICE DA SILVA

I assure you, dear daughters of the Immaculate Virgin and of holy Beatrice da Silva spread over the face of the earth, that whoever pays no heed to Francis and Beatrice does not belong to the true Conceptionist Order, and, therefore, neither our holy Father Francis nor Blessed Beatrice will recognize them as their daughters. The latter (Beatrice) will be raised to the altars in the 20th century.⁷⁷ Afterward, all the convents of our Franciscan Conceptionist Order will be purified and many saints will appear in them for the glory of this Country and our Mother Beatrice. These holy souls will be characterized by their love for the Franciscan Order.

When the Convent of Riobamba will be at the point of extinction, I will prostrate myself before the Divine Tribunal to prevent such a disaster, for I love it dearly. In the course of time, they will learn of my life and will love me with innocent hearts, and they will love our treasure, the Immaculate Virgin, under the consoling invocation of Good Success, to whom they will dedicate an altar for public worship.

76. The Convent of Ibarra in north Ecuador was closed on July 9, 1874 (cf. footnote 59).

77. The process for the Beatification of Mother Beatrice da Silva Meneses was initiated in Toledo in 1636, but did not go forward. Almost three centuries passed, and the prophecy of Mother Mariana began to be fulfilled. On July 28, 1926, Pope Pius XI solemnly beatified her. The decree of canonization was signed in February of 1976 and the solemn ceremony of canonization took place on October 3 of that year. Her feast day is September 1.

MOTHER MARIANA REVEALS HER FUTURE CANONIZATION

I will begin to work miracles in the City for the cause of my beatification. Know, beloved daughters, that Our Lord desires to glorify your Mother, making her rise to the honor of the altars.⁷⁸ When this happens, then my convents will be all that they should be and what God desires of them.

In this Convent there will be religious who suffer greatly and are dearly loved by God Our Lord and Our Lady of Good Success, as well as by my Seraphic Father Francis and holy Mother Beatrice for whom love and devotion should be nurtured in those small sprouts that will come after the furious tempest that I foresee. Our beloved Convent will also be combated by the livid envy of the cursed and traitorous serpent.

In all times there will be good sisters with the seraphic spirit who will try to return (to the spirit) of the first foundation. But their efforts will fail, because the works of God are never accomplished without intense suffering and always bear the seal of sorrow. These sufferings will be the strong, solid foundation of the Friars Minor. For us suffering as well as the recitation of the early morning Little Office are our foundation. As soon as the Little Office is suppressed, there will be neither health of soul or body nor firmness of spirit in the youths to come.

RELATIONS WITH THE SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS CLERGY

When you have regular Prelates (of religious Orders), submit to them in those matters concerning observance (of the Rule) which, after much prayer, you judge necessary in accordance with God's will. Do not have any resentment, much less rancor, toward your poor (guilty) sisters who in most cases will act in innocence and goodness, while it may be your pride and envious heart that falsely judges them.

The regular Prelates are religious, and by the mere fact of being so, they know from experience the religious life and will

78. After examining extensive data on her life, including this biography of Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira, Archbishop of Quito Antonio J Gonzales issued an Episcopal decree on August 8, 1986 to initiate the Cause of Beatification of the Ven. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres. He named Msgr. Luis Cadena y Almeida as postulator for her cause and established an ecclesiastical tribunal to begin the first phase of the process. See the *Foreword* of vol. 1, pp. 11-13.

have sufficient knowledge of how to deal with the sisters, speaking privately with the accused under the seal of confession, treating them with extreme charity, prudence, and sweetness to obtain their amendment if they are guilty of some fault. Or, if they are not at fault, they will know how to give light to the poor sisters so that they will not follow a wrong pathway.

To the contrary, the secular Prelates demand much from sisters because they consider them already angelic. Thus, when the sisters are accused and have to respond to the Prelate, many lose the reputation that each and every one has a right to possess. They allege then that they were imprudently accused, which aggravates the conscience, and makes the amiable life of religion hard and heavy. All this acts as a detriment to religious perfection in those precise points that should be the means of high perfection.

I speak to you from experience, beloved daughters of all times, my dearest sisters. Your Mother has passed through everything, as you can see in my life that I have written by the order of my Directors and approved by the present Bishop. I do not speak to you based on theoretical principles or fleeting impressions. Know that such imprudent sisters endanger their salvation and, in Purgatory, have a particularly hard chastisement of long duration, as you see in my divine revelations [what happened with the *Captain*]. Take care that you do not do harm to one another. Love each other as Christ loves you. He is your model. Imitate Him.

Now, I direct myself especially to you, my Abbesses and Novice Mistresses. Always counsel your sisters to these practice of mutual charity. Above all, counsel the novices with extreme care. Inculcate this truth in their hearts. They, like little white doves, are the sisters of tomorrow who must sustain and conserve the observance of the Rule, as well as the good name and the Convent itself among the people of this City.

If charity is absent, you will bring our foundation to ruin. Woe to you if you squander the labors and tears of your Founding Mothers!

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION – NEVER HAVE FAVORITES

Novices Mistresses, never show preferences for any of your spiritual daughters. Love them all equally. If at times you find angelic souls with sweet temperaments, humble hearts, and a purity

that naturally draws your affection, guard against showing this or paying more attention to them than the others lest you be cursed by God for suffocating the seed of God in the spirit of your daughters. While the soul is still in the body, they are all mere creatures. The novices may have been famed as saints in the world. But in religious life, this sanctity should be eclipsed and replaced by the solid sanctity of the monastic life. Teach this to them from its very rudiments, with the foundation being a profound humility; for if this is lacking, they can never be virtuous, much less saints. From this humility comes holy charity, without which they will never be blessed by God.

The Mistresses should constantly apply themselves to giving practical instructions with their words and, above all, by their example, which acts powerfully over tender hearts like those of the novices; the novices will normally follow the example of their Mistresses. Frequently read to them the Gospel of St. Matthew that speaks of charity and explain it for their daily practice.

This Gospel says, "The Lord God said, do not kill, do not steal, etc." I say to you more: if anyone should hold a grudge against her sister, it is meet that the Divine Judge condemn her and withdraw her from His intimacy.

Carefully and solicitously study the character and inclinations of each of your daughters and direct each one along the road that God is leading her. Often speak to each one individually in private and point out her faults. Speak as messengers of God, relaying what He desires from each one, the sacrifice or sacrifices that He asks. Teach them to conquer and dominate their temperaments so that they do not become insupportable in the common life and make their souls worse with bad public example. Also give instructions to the group (all of them together) and question them to see if they understood your comments on the Gospel.

But do all this sweetly, delicately, and graciously, following the example of the Divine Master Who said, "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of Heart." The Mistress is the mirror of her novices. She should exercise them in acts of humility and, from time to time, she herself should make them with her novices. This impresses them greatly and raises their hearts to God. It is necessary that the Mistress be loved and respected by all of her daughters in general and that, giving herself entirely to all, she help each one to become holy. This is her sublime and delicate mission of enormous responsibility.

FIFTH CLAUSE: FINAL COUNSELS AND THE LAST BLESSING

This clause is directed to you, Abbesses of all times – not only the present day Abbess but also those to come.

I bequeath to you the maternal heart I have for all our daughters. See in each one a privileged soul most beloved by God. For these souls, hearing the divine call, valiantly bade farewell to their parents, homes, families, and possessions – which were often very great. Lavish on them your maternal care in the temporal as well as spiritual spheres.

As for their temporal needs, watch with great solicitude so that they lack nothing with respect to clothing, food, and other necessities for the manual work they do for the benefit of the Convent. For a contemplative sister must not be lazy, ignorant, or incapable of the delicate and fine labors proper to the sex: sewing, embroidery, working with silk, linen and wool, drawing, etc. I desire that they do everything with perfection. I taught the daughters of my time these things – as you, my present daughters, can testify – so that they would all know how to do everything. Since egotism should never exist among you, you also should teach all that you know from generation to generation

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SINGING

I also emphasize that there should always be singers and musicians for the public and private worship: Teach the scales of the solfeggio to all who enter, so that the whole Convent knows it. Alternate from month to month Put some in charge of directing the chant during the divine worship, alternating persons from month to month. In this way, even should one sister become sick or die, the splendor of the house of the Lord will not be diminished.

Try to avoid at all costs that (outside) choir masters should come here, for persons who are strangers to the divine intimacies will not direct this function with that love, care, and fervor proper to the spouses of the Divine Prisoner. For from within that small prison where He remains for love of His creatures, He finds delight hearing the harmonious singing of His beloved spouses. I have told you many times that He, well pleased, calls attention to this to the angelic spirits, who yield way in their celestial harmonies to the chaste spouses of their King and Lord.

Here I leave you leaflets of religious music, some of them sent from Spain by members of the Royal Family, who were related, as you know, to the Founding Mothers.

Mother Abbesses, if you do not want to gravely burden your consciences, do not permit private maids for your religious under any pretext, for this is a secret plot instigated in cloisters by the traitorous serpent. It provokes quarrels and disputes among the mistresses and maids, breaks the holy silence, and sows the seeds of resentments and discord. It brings about the death of charity and fraternal union. Farewell, then, to prayer, the presence of God, and the spiritual life.

Let all those who serve dedicate themselves to the entire Convent, this being the most grandiose ornament of common life and also the best possible means for these poor people, who are sheltered in the cloisters, to know and love God their Creator. By thus serving the holy spouses of Jesus Christ, they earn great merits for themselves for their glorious eternity.

Show charity toward them. Let your grateful affection be shown by teaching them to be good Catholics. In this way you will give glory to God as well as good example to the Convent and to them. Doing this, you will merit a special blessing from Our Lord, before Whom you both have the same immortal soul. Take care that they should lack nothing materially or spiritually. Treat them with gentleness and kindness. Teach them patiently and exercise great prudence in the reprimands that it is necessary to give to them.

THE CONVIVIAM OF THE SISTERS

As for your daughters, the sisters, in the spiritual sphere take care that none go to their rest at night without having first reconciled herself with her fellow sister should anything have occurred that day to break the harmony of fragile creatures. Each one should present the other with some gift after having embraced. This is a beautiful way to obtain peace of heart and conserve fraternal charity, which should shine with great splendor in the spouses of the God of infinite charity.

COUNSELS TO THE MISTRESSES

Study the temperament of each one and accommodate yourself to her, although not to the least detriment of the holy Rule and Constitution. Never oppress them with an imprudent and poorly

interpreted observance. Make them realize and feel that the yoke of the Lord is gentle and His burden light.

Giving many orders that fall outside the Rule and Constitution greatly weakens even a dedicated spirit and constricts hearts. And with these incessant demands comes the loss of health and incapacity for the true and sweet regular observance. Such a way of proceeding is foreign to the spirit and desire of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who spoke these words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of Heart."

Always bear in mind what the great Apostle of the Gentiles taught Christians regarding their obligations and duties in domestic life in his beautiful Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Directing himself to parents, he told them not to treat their children with excessive rigor or severity so that they would not become weak of spirit or mediocre persons. Apply these teachings and doctrines of the Apostle St. Paul to each one of your sisters, taking into account that none has the same character, virtue, or temperament.

The office of Abbess is arduous and filled with great responsibilities. Woe to you if because of your indiscretion, your daughters stray from the proper course, distancing themselves from God because of your severity or scowls. Woe to you also if you allow a marked laxity in them without giving judicious and gentle corrections at the opportune moment, in this way diverting them from evil.

Be true mothers: Love your daughters and lead all to Heaven along the road of the ordinary life. To do this, make them practice solid virtue by taking extreme care in demanding the perfect execution of their ordinary duties, always with the upright and pure intention of pleasing their Celestial Spouse.

Guard holy silence, which is the ornament of observant convents, along with mutual charity. I would repeat this to you even if I were permitted to live a hundred thousand years with you – I would never tire of counseling this and making sure of its daily practice. You will only realize the excellence and valor of this precious virtue in this life to the degree that you grow in sanctity and unite yourselves with God in Heaven. Or you will know it in Purgatory where you will weep bitterly for having transgressed it, opening incurable wounds in the hearts of your poor, inoffensive sisters.

Care for the sick with ardent affection and solicitude, providing the nurse with everything necessary for the cure of the sick sisters in their infirmities, even if they are quite prolonged. Do

not grow weary of them, for you should realize that they are the treasure of the Convent and shield for cities. Encourage them with your counsels and lavish them with affection like the true mothers that you are. In this way, you will ease their lives filled with indescribable sacrifices that cannot be comprehended unless one has passed through them herself.

If a sister asks you for relief of spirit by means of a spiritual director, do everything possible to provide this, trying at all costs to obtain a Franciscan religious.

So that the sick as well as the healthy might be attached to the Franciscan Order, tell them that the Seraphic Family is theirs and that they can tranquilly place their joys and sorrows in it.

OBLIGATORY PRACTICES

I leave you the following practices that you should solicitously see carried out. Do not neglect them, much less eliminate them, because we founded this beloved Convent upon them and they are the secret sustenance of the religious spirit:

The Early Morning Little Office. When its end draws near, the novices should leave to ring the bell, thus lifting the papal silence established by the bell rung by the Vicar-Abbess the preceding night. This bell should also serve to call together the Convent for the morning meditation.

The Recitation of the Gospel of St. John before the *Prime*. This should be done because, according to the judgment of the Founding Mothers, it averts diabolical schemes and impurity in the cloisters and its environs. It also weakens the strength of the traitorous serpent and his cohorts who never sleep, and it attracts many graces for superiors and subjects, facilitating the latter to humble submission. In all times and circumstances, you will experience its efficacy. Charity will never be lacking with this short and simple prayer, which should always be prayed by the sisters. At the most holy words "*Et Verbum factum sunt*" [And the Word was made flesh], the nuns should kiss the ground while the Angels reverently incline to hear them pronounce these words.

The Prostration of the Novices with the respective ceremony upon beginning the first *Magnificat* of the three said during the recitation of *Vespers*. This practice was established in the Convent on the order of the Blessed Virgin when we, your Founding Mothers, were imprisoned. By means of it, Our Lady in her maternal goodness assured us that she will pour efficacious interior graces into the souls of the Mistress and her novices,

solidifying the latter in their vocations and giving the former a clear understanding of which vocations are true and which are false.

This practice also shows gratitude to the Blessed Virgin for the special love she has for this Convent, sanctifying it with her presence and leaving as sure pledge of her love her blessed Statue finished by the Angels. She ordered that this Statue be placed in the Abbess' chair so that she, the Blessed Virgin, might rule and govern this Convent as Prelate, Head, and Mother of her daughters. Strive to imitate her.

The Hymn to the Holy Ghost before the praying of *Matins* has the end of asking and obtaining for the Convent the special light of the Divine Spirit so that Abbesses will always govern the Convent as God desires. It is also for the Pope and the rest of the Prelates of the Catholic Church.

On the eve of the Communion days prescribed by the Rule, do not consent under any pretext for the sisters to receive visits from either their families or acquaintances. Nor should you allow such visits on the days of Communion. This holy custom was introduced by Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada on the recommendation and order of our Friars Minor when this Convent was founded. You already know that she was the first and principal Foundress and Abbess.

The objective is for each one to make on the eve of Communion days a prolonged examination regarding her duties and to consider what temporal and spiritual needs she might have during the month so that she might request these permissions that night from the Abbess after the nuns of the Convent receive from her a short flagellation. But take care to gather all together at an opportune hour, so that upon baring themselves for the flagellations, they do not become chilled and get sick. This should be done with all the customary ceremony that you already have in writing.

Do not receive visits on the day (of Communion) because all the sisters should be united to their Celestial Spouse. For each one should be determining what she will do for love of Him during the coming month – as if it were to be the last of her life. Also, it will be the day of the monthly retreat, to take place on the 8th of each month, except for the retreat for December 8 as well as the ones for December 25 and the Sunday of the Resurrection.

Finally, **retain proprietorship of this Convent, and entrust** to the solicitous care of the Abbesses and the nuns our valuable treasure, **the Holy Statue of Our Queen and Mother**

of Good Success, completed by the angelic spirits. Strive to make her known and loved by the faithful in all times.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE STATUE OF OUR LADY
OF GOOD SUCCESS AND HER ADORNMENTS**

The holy Statue has a crown, scepter, and crosier of gold and precious stones, gifts of the pious Señora Marquesa, who in Heaven already enjoys the reward for her virtue and great devotion to the Queen of Good Success. In addition to the pectoral cross donated by the Bishop, she also has two other precious gold crosses that serve as pectoral crosses: one with emeralds and the other with amethysts, each with their respective gold chains sprinkled with large and small diamonds. The first cross was donated by the Chapter of the Cathedral; we ordered the second made in Spain with all the donations of precious stones offered by the many devotees who received favors. The names of our benefactors and friends are remembered for all times. Don Cosme de Caso and his spouse, Señora Jeronima de Paredes, also donated stones for this second cross.

The Señora Marquesa donated the beautiful star of small diamonds with a ruby, inscribed with the names of those dear to her. She also gave the stones that adorn the scepter with the exception of two precious emeralds, offered by Señora Maria de Paredes y Acevedo for various graces received by her family and herself.

There are also the silver keys placed in her hands by Bishop Ribera, who, with great emotion, asked that she might open the doors of Heaven to him.

Our holy and miraculous Statue has two Christ Childs, both made by Don Francisco del Castillo, masterpieces in which one sees a supernatural intervention. The two Infants have, as you see, royal crowns with many jewels and ornaments of great value, all given by the Señora Marquesa.

I leave with you also a small statue of our Blessed Mother of Good Success that I commanded to be made by the same Don Francisco. He made it with much good will and dedication and offered it to me as a gift. It was blessed by one of our Franciscan Provincials and dressed by the Marquesa, who donated a beautiful imperial gold crown with precious stones. She also gave a pectoral cross, crosier, and a set of small keys. This statue was placed in the niche with the eagle that has grapes in its beak. This was also offered by the Marquesa, who said in a jovial tone that she wanted

to be an eagle in order to soar to Heaven and carry the grapes of love to the Most Holy and Immaculate Mary. This eagle, then, represents her, because she will always carry in the depth of her heart the Queen of Heaven.

There are two beautiful Infants: the one for the night of Christmas given by the Señora Marquesa, and the other made by Don Francisco along with the aforementioned little statue, which we have destined for the veneration of the many devotees outside the Convent and to take out to make visits to both important and simple people. In this way, this Infant might take the place of the large holy Statue, to which it was touched. Take care that it is not lost. Also make sure that it is taken to the infirmary to free from the snares of the devil each sister who is dying.

The Child of the *Calenda*⁷⁹ is bestowed with precious stones given by the noble matrons of this city. After Christmas, they all dispute to have it for one day in their homes.

The rest of the pieces are for the manger scene, with the respective statues of Our Lady and the glorious St. Joseph.

I also leave the beautiful statue of Our Lady of the Assumption, which Don Francisco made in the upper choir with the permission of the Bishop. Everything is epitomized in our treasure, the Blessed Virgin of Good Success which, as you know, was finished by the angelic spirits and closely resembles her. The Bishop blessed this Statue with incomparable devotion. The holy Statue has a large palm leaf made of silver and plated with three layers of fine gold. The goldsmith was Pedro Manuel Monosalvas, very skilled in his art. His expenses were defrayed by our benefactress and sister, the Señora Marquesa of holy memory in this Convent. Because of her great love for it, she became its distinguished benefactor. Upon her death, she asked to be dressed in our holy habit with the permission of her confessor, one of our brother Franciscans.

The aforementioned artisan did not charge for his work, saying that he did the work in devotion to and in honor of Our Lady of the Assumption, asking her for a good death. It also has a precious halo with similar gold plating, also crafted gratuitously by this artisan.

The Convent gave the silver for the palm leaf and the halo, and ordered several beautiful *mariolas*⁸⁰ and three altar panels,

79. See Chap. 6, footnote 29.

80. This name refers to small images of the Virgin made of either precious metals, lead, or wood; by extension the word also applies to small images of saints.

which were never used because they were too heavy; besides we have others.

Five large, elegant *totumas* were presents that His Majesty the King sent to our Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, the first Foundress and Abbess. Three years after the foundation of the Convent, these gifts were brought by a envoy of His Majesty sent to certify that the institution was stable and had been established as he had ordered, that is, in submission to the Friars Minor, for he was very devoted to the Seraphic Family and to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the shield and glory of my motherland Spain.

The fan-shaped halo has 25 ridges like rays of the sun, with a small bird on each of them. The small beaks are of fine coral and the eyes pitch black, each bird different from the other.

The holy Statue has a pair of bracelets of large precious pearls given by the Señora Marquesa, a pair of bracelets of the finest small pearls donated by Señora Leonor de Salvedra in thanksgiving for a favor received by her household, and three other pairs of bracelets with small pearls given by various devotees. All the bracelets have gold links. She also has bracelets of colorful glass beads and others of corals with finely made gold links. She has seven pairs of pearl earrings. These last gifts were given by various Indian families devoted to the holy Statue.

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY AMONG THE INDIANS

Indians have affirmed that she has personally come to their huts to cure them. Afterward, weeping, they came to visit her, as they reported to us. The beautiful "Nina" Mary of the Assumption gave these Indians the directions, telling them that she lived in the Convent of the Conception and that they would find her there. You know the many foods they have sent as gifts.

The silver Seraphim was presented by the Magistrate, who said he always wanted to be at her blessed feet, asking a holy death and the salvation of his soul. The family of this Magistrate gave five gold rings, each one with a distinctive pearl or precious stone.

The Christ Child of ivory-wood that I always had with me, in sickness or health, was brought from Spain and was a present from my mother when she said her farewell to me. I leave it to my Convent and to all my present daughters and those of all times to

come as a perpetual reminder that they should be faithful to their holy vocation.

I kept him in a cradle made of willow reeds because of our holy and seraphic poverty. But since you know that He is the precious Child of my love, and now yours, let Him be placed in his beautiful cradle of finely engraved silver and adorned with precious stones and fine pearls decorated with charming singing birds, a generous gift from the Señora Marquesa. It is my desire that everything belonging to this Child never be sold, but conserved with religious affection in remembrance of that holy lady who already enjoys in Heaven the reward of her virtue as a Franciscan religious of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. I also leave to you the dear Divine Shepherd Child that is adorned with jewels, although few in number.

In the Convent there are also the precious Agonizing Christ at Calvary, the many [three dimensional] scenes framed in laced wood with mirror background to be hung on the wall, and the linen paintings representing my Seraphic Father in various episodes of his saintly life. My favorite of these should always remain here [in this room], for it charms me from my bed to see him transported by the strains of music played by a Seraphim. This picture was sent from Spain by the family of my Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, and she gave it to me on the day that I was professed, telling me to be humble and to love God and my neighbor in imitation of our Seraphic Father, whom she loved with all her soul and to whose care she entrusted me.

I leave to you many pictures of the Apostles and other saints who have favored us greatly in the foundation; as well as the various other small objects that you know and have in the Convent. Everything belongs to you and my future daughters; for this reason, conserve them with great care.

THE LAST BLESSING

At the end of the reading of the testament, she said, "Now receive the last blessing given to you with great tenderness and love by your Mother, who leaves you for Heaven but keeps you in her heart in order to watch over you and the Convent:

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. May Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Francis engrave in

your hearts this testament as well as the counsels that I leave you. Farewell, daughters of my soul!”

The nuns remained kneeling from the moment that she gave them her blessing.

After she had pronounced these last words, she breathed with great difficulty. Her cheeks were like roses, her features beautiful.

She then directed herself to the priests, speaking to them with a very soft voice because her strength was already waning: “Fathers and my brothers, the hour to part has arrived. Recommend my soul to God with the proper prayers. I thank you for everything. I beseech you to always watch over this Convent and your sisters. I die jubilant and tranquil in the arms of my mother, the Seraphic Order, as joyful as when I came into it.”

DEATH OF MOTHER MARIANA DE JESUS TORRES

After she finished speaking these words, Fr. Anguita took from his chest a small crucifix that he always carried with him as a missionary. He had her kiss it, and then placed it in her hands. She held it tightly against her heart. The priests, their voices broken and muffled by their sobs, prayed the prayers of recommendation for her soul.

At the conclusion of the prayers, two large tears rolled down the rosy cheeks of Mother Mariana and, with a profound sigh, that blessed soul left its body, which was always a temple of the Holy Ghost. She showed no sign of affliction or contortion.

The large bell toning the hours of the Convent rang at that moment: it was three o'clock in the afternoon on that memorable day of January 16 in the year of Our Lord 1635. This precious lamp was extinguished on earth in order to shine with greater splendor in the Celestial Jerusalem.

* * *

CHAPTER 23

Filled with grief to see the loss of their saintly and cherished sister, the priests proceeded to recommend her soul to God. Meanwhile, Friar Pedro, who had asked the priests to let him accompany them, was praying on his knees in a corner of the room in a profound silence, still as a statue. The only movement to be seen was the stream of tears that ran down his cheeks.

When the holy Founding Mother exhaled her last breath, he broke his silence and said in a loud voice: "O lamb without stain, who pastures among the lilies and flowers! O holy virginity, how dearly beloved you are by God! The soul of my dear sister already ascends with a palm and scepter in her hands and a precious crown on her head. Her vestments of white and blue dazzle the human eye. She has no purgatory, since she already passed through it during her earthly life. Her purgatory consisted only in seeing it in passing, and this grieved her greatly. She has already entered into Heaven, where she appears like a queen on her throne. Oh! When will I be able to join her?"

"O friar sinner, do penance so that you can enter the magnificent Heaven, the reward and glory of holy souls! Mother Mariana, do not forget us, who, unhappy, remain in exile on this earth, still capable of offending God and losing Him for all eternity."

The sisters and priests had not spoken or moved, their eyes fixed on the holy cadaver that did not appear to be dead. Her eyes and mouth were closed. Her color was white and rosy and a sweet smile was on her lips, so affable and charming that she seemed to be in a delightful ecstasy. Seeing her induced respect and affection, and elevated the soul to God.

As soon as the priests came out of this kind of stupor, they sang the responsorial for the dead. They then left, their souls oppressed with grief, for the earth had lost an angel in human flesh who had placated the just ire of God.

MOTHER ROSA DOES NOT ABANDON HER MISTRESS

The readers already know that the nurse was the "little sister," Zoila Blanca Rosa (White Rose) de Mariana de Jesus. She remained at the feet of her saintly and beloved Founding Mother, embracing her.

The Abbess at that time, Mother Mariana of St. Dominic, approached the nurse, raised her up, and said:

“*Rosita*, daughter of my heart, courage! Jesus wants you to be a heroine of generous and loving resignation to the dispositions of Divine Providence. The affliction that has entered our hearts today is extremely bitter. We are especially concerned about you, for you are the Benjamin of the Convent; but be comforted and consoled with the certain knowledge that, by practicing everything that our holy Mother taught us by her example and words, we will follow her into Heaven – never to be separated there. For you know that Heaven is the true Kingdom of the faithful spouses of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Yes, my Mother,” she responded, “but I have the firm hope that my Mother will fulfill her word to me.”

With admirable peace and tranquility, she carried out her office as nurse, shrouding the body of her saintly Founding Mother, accompanied by all the other sisters, for each one disputed to adorn her holy and venerable body. In the same way, they all assisted the sacristans in the preparation and arrangement of the lower choir.

TAKING THE BODY TO THE LOWER CHOIR

By six o’clock that evening, they had finished shrouding and adorning her body with flowers. They placed her on the stretcher that the Convent had for this purpose and began the transferal of the body from the infirmary cell where she had died to the lower choir.

Weeping and grieving, the sisters made the funeral procession, carrying lighted candles in their hands. At intervals they would alternate in carrying the stretcher, upon which lay the hearts of all. Those more advanced in age weakened and felt sick, but the lay sisters who lived in the Convent gave them the “anise water” that their Holy Founding Mother had used to effect so many cures both inside and outside the cloisters. Arriving at the lower choir, they placed the venerable cadaver on the coffin that they had adorned with lilies, roses, and daisies, sent by benefactors and friends of the holy Founding Mother and, through her, of the whole Convent.

No one could eat dinner, and the Divine Office was prayed amid sobbing and tears.

THE NURSE KEEPS VIGIL DURING THE NIGHT

The nurse asked the Mother Abbess permission not to be separated from her holy Mother during the night. The Superior

agreed to permit this just request since the nurse had been so tranquil and calm. However, she added:

“*Rosita*, my child, you may keep vigil over your Mother the whole night as we enter and leave. For we need to rest, but what sleep can we have in weeping over being left orphans! Remain here at her feet and watch so that the candles do not overturn and start a fire. But should you feel tired and need to lie down, go without hesitation to your bed.”

Filled with jubilation, she responded, “May God repay you, Mother, for your charity. I will not forget you in Heaven. Now, I ask your blessing.”

The Superior tenderly blessed Mother Blanca Rosa de Mariana de Jesus and placed her near the feet of the venerable cadaver. She patted her head fondly and then retired. The “little sister” knelt down so that she could embrace the feet of that venerable body.

Seeing her in this position, the other sisters noted with compassion, “Poor sister! We all have great consideration for her. Because she is so well-formed, she will give us the example of resignation as she did when she shrouded the holy cadaver with such unexpected self-control.”

Weeping and sighing, the sisters as well as the lay women who served in the Convent kept entering and leaving the lower choir.

THE PROMISE OF MOTHER MARIANA IS FULFILLED

At one o'clock in the morning, the Superior saw the immobile nurse there, and told the religious to bring her a little “anise water” since Mother Blanca Rosa had taken nothing the whole day.

With the tea in her left hand, the Superior gently touched the nurse's head with her right hand, saying, “*Rosita*, my child, rise up and take a little of the tea that our saintly Mother used to administer. Drink this, and continue your vigil.”

But the nurse did not respond even after she had been called several times. The Abbess, who had always known a quick obedience in this youth, put the tea aside and said to the sisters, “It seems as if *Rosita* has fainted. Let us raise her up.”

They lifted her and placed her on the floor. She was cold, her eyes closed, her cheeks rosy, but her mouth was filled with coagulated blood. A quantity of this congealed blood was found also at the feet of the venerable cadaver over which she had been inclining. They cleared the blood from her mouth with their fingers,

moved her about, and called to her, but she did not respond to anything.

Alas! This Blanca Rosa of Mariana de Jesus, this angel of innocence and purity, had left this earth and taken flight for Heaven to accompany her beloved Mother, just as the latter had promised. They both entered into the Choir of the prudent virgins, because they were at all times vigilantly awaiting their Celestial Spouse with lamp in hand, provided with sufficient oil, lit and adorned.

The nuns were very concerned and even alarmed. They carried her to the dormitory and placed her in her bed. They poured hot water over her body to try to warm it. They massaged her and tried every remedy they could think of to revive her. But all their efforts were in vain! Rosita had already been dead for some hours.

The Mother Abbess had immediately sent an urgent message to the doctor. When he arrived, he asked, "What has happened? Perhaps our Founding Mother has returned to life?"

The Superior replied, "This happiness is not ours, señor. Our beloved Mother will not return, but she has taken her Benjamin with her. Enter and look at the nurse, who appears to have died."

The doctor quickly came in, examined her, and applied various remedies. Finally, he pierced her left side with a lancelet and verified that the blood had congealed.

Turning to the sisters, he told them, "Mother Blanca Rosa has been dead for more or less seven hours. My soul grieves doubly for you. In my name and that of my family I offer you my condolences. Now, proceed to shroud the body. For it is certain that Mother Mariana took her White Rose and transplanted her in the gardens of Heaven!"

The sisters replied, "*Señor*, it could be a stroke from having suffered too greatly. We will watch for at least two days to see if she recuperates."

"Mothers, this was no mere attack," replied the doctor, "She died instantaneously with the rupture of the principal artery of the heart. It is impossible for her to breathe the least sigh." And the doctor left the cloisters.

Crushed with grief, the sisters wept inconsolably. Some fainted. The Mother Abbess seemed a walking cadaver. She did not know what to do. She ordered that the Monastery of St. Francis and the Bishop be advised of what had taken place.

It so happened that the Father Guardian and Fr. Anguita, together with the Bishop, arrived at that moment. In the parlor, the Mother Abbess informed them of all that had occurred.

After conferring with the priests, the Bishop ordered that the body of Mother Zoila Blanca Rosa de Mariana de Jesus be taken down to the lower choir and watched, together with that of the Founding Mother, for three days in order to be certain of their deaths. He ordered the priests to make the arrangements for the Masses and the burials. His Excellency announced that on the last day he himself would give the funereal sermon of the holy Mother Foundress, whom he venerated as a saint, for he was convinced of her heroic virtue and life of incessant sacrifice. Everything was done as he commanded.

As soon as the public learned that Mother Mariana had died, large numbers of persons of both sexes and all ages and states of life came to the Convent. Nobles and plebeians mixed their tears, clamoring loudly to have some article from her personal usage to guard as a relic.

The tender cries of the poor people moved the heart. They cried out in grief to find themselves orphaned by their holy Mother, as they called her, for along with their material necessities, she had remedied their spiritual needs with her counsels. How many souls had she snatched from the throat of the infernal dragon! All were anxious for the moment when they could view her in the lower choir.

The sisters, between tears, shrouded the body of their Blanca Rosa. They placed her stiff cadaver on a stretcher that they had improvised for the occasion. But they had no white flowers – nor flowers of any kind.

They said with sorrow, “Alas, angelic sister, there are no more flowers for you. Our tears will have to substitute for them until our friends from outside send some for you!”

ROSES APPEAR

Then the procession began from the dormitory, where they had taken Mother Blanca Rosa, to the lower choir so that the sisters could keep vigil over her together with their saintly Mother.

When they passed through the lower cloisters that opened to the patio, they saw that this patio was covered with flowers, above all with large white roses. The Abbess and sisters marveled over this extraordinary fact, for no flowers of any type had ever grown there, the patio being covered with rocks.

The procession stopped. The hearts of the sisters were filled with tenderness and gratitude toward God Our Lord. After

giving Him their humble thanks, they went to the patio and gathered all the flowers and adorned the lifeless body of their dear sister Zoila Blanca Rosa de Mariana de Jesus. They had all the flowers that they needed for this. The procession then continued.

It was 5:30 in the morning when they entered the lower choir. There they placed this angel next to the bier of her saintly Mother. A choir of tears intoned the responsorial for the deceased.

THE PEOPLE OUTSIDE PLEAD TO ENTER

Outside, the people were beating on the doors of the church. One could hear the din of their prayers and weeping. They called out, "Mothers, open the doors to us! Do not deprive us any longer from seeing for the last time the bodies of our Founding Mother and her angelic daughter!"

Finally, the priests arrived and entered the church, but the doors opened only for them. Approaching the grilles, they saw the two bodies over which the vigil was being kept. They shed copious tears and remained to protect the grilles so that the imprudent piety of the people would not tear them down and the crowd break into the cloisters.

They did open the doors to the main church for the numerous public, who entered like an uncontrollable whirlwind. The cries and lamentations of the people were heart-rending. Some persons shook the grated doors to try to open them and enter. Others stretched out their arms through the grilles trying to grasp some article, despite the vigilance of Friar Pedro and other lay brothers whom the priests had instructed to stand strict guard over the grilles of the lower choir.

Friar Pedro was considered a saint, and in reality, he was. The reader should not confuse him with Friar Pedro of the Conception, who had intimate dealings with Mother Mariana on spiritual matters, as narrated in this life. That man of God, a perfect model of a religious in the Monastery of St. Paul of Quito, had passed away to a better life more than ten years prior to this.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE MASSES

One of the priests celebrated a Mass for the Dead for both sisters. Meanwhile, the priests and lay brothers were coming and going in order to view their two sisters, those angels who had taken rapid flight to the celestial heavens.

After the Mass, the deacons and choir from the Monastery of St. Francis arrived, for the suffering sisters were not able to sing anything. The vigil Mass for the Dead was celebrated by the Father Guardian.

Everything was carried out by the Franciscans in accordance with the order of the Bishop, whom God Our Lord had inspired so that it would be manifest to all that Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, all the Founding Mothers, and the Convent of the Franciscan Conceptionist Nuns of Quito in the Colony were and will be – in life and in death – true daughters of the Seraphic Stigmatic.

On the second day, a High Mass was celebrated. Another was celebrated on the third day, and at it Bishop Oviedo gave the funereal sermon as he had promised. It was a beautiful and moving talk. In it, he made reference to the angelic Mother Zoila Blanca Rosa de Mariana de Jesus who was, for Jesus, always a white rose without thorns to wound His Divine Heart.

A PROPHECY IS FULFILLED IMMEDIATELY

Assisting at this Mass and funeral sermon was Marian de Jesus Paredes y Flores. This was in accordance with what the saintly Founding Mother had foretold in one of her conversation with her sisters – for it was believed she had a prophetic spirit. These conversations are also recorded in the *Cuadernón*. Four years after the death of Mother Mariana, this lady was vested in the penitential habit of our Father St. Francis in the venerable Third Order. After a year of novitiate, she was professed, leaving aside the noble surname of her family, and calling herself only Mariana de Jesus in her profound humility.

Presiding over this ceremony of the taking of the habit and her profession was Father Francisco Anguita, referred to so often here. He was then the Father Guardian of the Monastery and Head of the Third Order Franciscans.

This secular virgin, the glory and honor of the Third Order, led a heroic life of virtue and sanctity. Like a candid and innocent dove, she would pray at the foot of the Tabernacle, incessantly imploring the conversion of sinners.

With heroic generosity, she offered her life in order to save her Country that she loved so dearly, for the ire of God was chastising its crimes with the terrible scourge of pestilence and earthquakes, threatening to annihilate it. In the Church of the

Company of Jesus, God Our Lord accepted from this innocent victim the sacrifice of her life for the sake of her fellow men. She died in the flower of her life, ten years after the death of our holy Founding Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres.⁸¹

A MIRACULOUS CURE

As already noted, there were always people around the grilles of the lower choir in the Church. They wept and implored a thousand favors from their Founding Mother.

One poor woman called Petra Martinez arrived with her five-year-old daughter who was totally blind. Weeping desperately, the mother pushed her daughter forward. She addressed Mother Mariana as if she were alive, communicating all her anguish and maternal love for this daughter of her heart. From time to time, she tried to stretch out her arm through the grilles to touch the casket. She implored Mother Mariana to cure her daughter.

Unexpectedly, she had to leave the church. She left behind her blind daughter who cried out also to Mother Mariana, begging for her eyes to be cured. A short time later, the mother returned and continued to make the same distressed lamentations.

Suddenly she saw the crown of flowers that was on the head of the venerable body move, and a flower detached itself, fell, and covered the left eye (of Mother Mariana).

The sisters rushed forward, seeing that the disconsolate woman was using a rod to try to take this flower for herself. Reprimanded by the sisters, she wept and cried out in a loud voice:

“Mothers, won’t you allow me to have recourse to my holy Founding Mother to obtain from God, through her intercession, sight for my unfortunate daughter? What will become of her now that her Mother is gone? Mother Marianita, Founding Mother, have

81. Mariana de Paredes y Flores (1618-1645) is the first canonized saint of Ecuador. She was named after Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, who foresaw that she would become a great Saint and would assist at her funeral, which she did. At the end of the funeral sermon preached by Bishop Oviedo, the 17-year-old young woman could not contain the emotions of her heart and exclaimed, “A saint has died!” The *Lily of Quito*, as she was known, was renowned for her holiness. Shortly after the death of Mother Mariana, she became a hermit, and was famous throughout Ecuador for her austerities, gifts of prophecy and reading of hearts, and miracles of healing. During the 1645 earthquake in Quito and the epidemic that followed, she publicly offered herself as a victim for the city in the Church of the Company of Jesus, and died shortly afterward at age 27. She was beatified on November 10, 1853 by Pope Pius IX and canonized in 1950 by Pope Pius XII.

pity and hear my pleas. Remember the promise you made to me – that my little girl would recover her sight. And you went to Heaven without fulfilling that promise. Now I will not leave here until you grant me this favor. When Your Reverence was living, we, the poor, always found in you a loving and compassionate mother. Now that you are in Heaven, do not forget your poor people.”

And she implored the sisters to give her the flower that had separated itself from the crown and she had made such great effort to get.

Weary of such persistence over the flower that had been removed from the eye of the venerable body, the sister sacristan gave it to the woman. She snatched it quickly as if she feared that they might change their minds.

Immediately she sat down on the ground and set her daughter on her lap with her face upward, covering the upper part of her head with her shawl. Then she began to apply the flower first to one eye and then to the other, saying, “Mother Marianita, give sight to my unfortunate daughter.” She continued to do and say this without tiring.

Finally, the child fell asleep. So as not to awaken her, the suffering mother rested her own head on the grille and also fell asleep. Seeing this scene, the sisters commiserated with the poor woman and implored God to give her patience and resignation. All who came and went were moved with pity at the sight.

Toward evening there was a large crowd of people. At about five o’clock, the woman wakened from her long, heavy sleep and looked about her, dazed and frightened.

When she realized where she was, she again began to cry out and make loud pleas for sight to be given to her daughter, who was still sleeping, wrapped in the shawl and with the flower on her eye. The child wakened with these loud cries of her mother, who immediately stopped calling out.

Leaning against the grate, the child said, “Mother Marianita, how pretty Your Grace is, but do not sleep any longer. Wake up and arise. Another pretty ‘*Madrecita*’ is also sleeping at your side. How beautiful the ‘little sisters’ are!”

Astonished and jubilant, the woman saw that her daughter could see and gave a cry of joy that resounded throughout the church, “Miracle! Miracle!”

The sisters approached the grating and the persons present in the church gathered round. They all saw the child with her bright black and shining eyes, that poor creature who had never known

the light of day since birth. Various persons approached her, questioning her about what she saw. Enchanted with the things in the lower choir and with the two venerable cadavers, the girl described everything in minute detail.

Overjoyed, the mother gave praise to God Who thus glorified His spouse and proclaimed her a saint. In these first times after her death, there were many cures of eyes and prodigious deliveries of women in childbirth.

THE BURIAL

On the third day, after the Mass and the funeral sermon given by the Bishop, His Excellency ordered the priests to enter the lower choir and proceed with the burial with the customary ceremonies and prayers.

The priests had to enter by the regular door because of the many people who had invaded the church. All wept with profound bitterness, as did the nuns. The priests, moved, were of one heart with their afflicted sisters, leaving behind in the sepulcher a part of their own soul.

The venerable body was buried with a folded piece of green silk with two pouches. In one, four strong disciplines and two full hair shirts were placed. The other contained the following items: a spool of thread, three fine needles, three skeins of Castilian yarn that were not completely full, a small scissors, and a very small Crucifix of yellow metal. All these articles were wrapped in a handkerchief that had belonged to Mother Mariana de Jesus. Over this was a small package made of a new piece of linen that contained a hair shirt of tin – very damaged and worn out from her constant use until the day that she took to bed to rise no more. These hair shirts were carefully washed by the sisters on the days after her death. All these things mentioned above had been used by the saintly Founding Mother.

The Abbess at that time, Mother Mariana of St. Dominic, along with the Assistant Provincial, resolved to place all these objects that had been used by their Venerable Mother in the pockets of the folded piece of silk so that they might thus be preserved for all time. They also consulted with the Franciscans, who approved the initiative, because through the course of the centuries these belongings would serve as relics when God Our Lord desired to raise her to the honor of the altars, an honor she well merits.

The venerable bodies were buried three days after they had died. They did not show the least sign of decomposition, much less of corruption. They were fresh and flexible, as if they were in a sweet, tranquil sleep, with their cheeks rosy and their beautiful physiognomies revealing the exquisite and holy souls that they guarded as a sacred deposit.

* * *

CONCLUSION

This humble work is nothing more than a compendium, written with great joy at the request of my sisters, the Conceptionist nuns of the Royal Convent of the sweet name of Jesus in the Colony of Quito.

They expressed to me their desire to have an easy-reading book, even for the elderly or sick sisters, to offer them consolation, uplift their downcast spirits, and offer them a practical model to imitate in times of illnesses when the Celestial Spouse chooses to send them difficult trials.

The word *saint*, which I employed often in this narration and which was also used by the priests before me who wrote her complete life, does not in any manner or intent anticipate the opinion and judgment of the Holy See, of which I have the glory to be a faithful and submissive son. My great Father and Patriarch, the glorious St. Francis of Assisi, desires and commands this of his sons.

May he, blessing us all, obtain from Our Lord graces for each one to profit from this reading and to imitate Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres – some more and others less, in accordance with our various states of life.

She affords a perfect model for imitation in the practice of all the virtues for fervent and true Catholics as well as for holy and perfect religious.

Let us admire her great humility, upon whose solid foundation was raised the sublime and grandiose edifice of a sanctity and perfection that both astonishes and attracts.

PATIENCE AND CHARITY

With respect to patience – which she practiced in an unsurpassable, heroic way – the great Doctor of the Church St. Augustine says that even if God by His nature could not practice it, He nonetheless desired that this virtue should not be lacking to His glory since it gives luster and splendor to all others. And so, to achieve this, He became Man. Therefore, see well how this heroic creature was patient, sacrificing herself for the good of her fellow man in order to save souls, convert sinners, and remedy so much misery.

Unable to be contained within her breast, the flames of the love of God burst forth as light, warmth, and health for souls, obtaining for them the life of grace.

Since, in fulfillment of the divine mandate, the love of God can be measured by the love of neighbor, let us look to the life of this holy religious, which speaks to us of the flames of charity burning in her truly seraphic soul. It is certain, according to the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that charity is the greatest of the virtues and that whoever says that he loves God but does not love his neighbor is a liar and hypocrite. The pretended virtues of such hypocrites pass for naught in the eyes of the God of infinite charity. For He makes the sun shine daily over both the good and evil, providing in this way an example of charity for His creatures. But He will cast those hypocrites far from Him and will not recognize them as inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE MISSION OF CONTEMPLATIVE SOULS

I call your attention, dear reader, to the Religious Orders of virgins consecrated to the service of the God Our Lord in the silent enclosure of the cloisters so that you might venerate them. They provide examples of heroism and the practice of virtue unknown amid the turbulence of the blind, corrupt world. Yet some would dare to say: What purpose do these cloistered sisters serve, since they are creatures dead and buried to society?

I respond immediately: These creatures, happily dead to all the degrading vices and passions that debase man and remove him from God – these creatures buried under the earth of their voluntary self-oblivion are raised high in the firmament of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church like stars of the first magnitude so that, from on high, they might illuminate the dark and dangerous roads of human life.

Like beneficial shields, they hold back Divine Ire from falling upon the criminal nations with terrible chastisements. It is they who save society. The greatest and most glorious enterprises are confided to their humble, incessant prayers. They are missionaries, indefatigable and secret apostles, angels of peace, innocent white doves who refuse to set their pure feet in the muck of the earth in order to live in the holy eaves of the cloisters.

From the convents comes a verdant hope that consoles nations in their hours of terrible and desperate battle, a hope that

points to Heaven, the eternal and happy abode of all rational creatures.

You are all this and much more, sisters of the Franciscan Conceptionist Order, chosen daughters of my Immaculate Mother. Your immaculate white habit expresses your purity of soul; your blue mantle is symbolic of the humble depths of your intimate and familiar communication with God in your life of incessant prayer and penance, as well as your care for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. This is your sublime and hidden mission.

Do not weaken in this arduous combat. The more the world hates you and persecutes you, as it did to your Divine Master, the more the Angels contemplate you with admiration and the more God Himself showers upon you His affection.

Ah, readers! If you could only penetrate the interior of these beautiful souls and see the truth of what I am now saying, you would be dumbfounded at this summit of beauty and heroism, not earthly but heavenly. But only a few chosen ministers of the altar are given to know these marvels of grace so that they might rejoice and, in admiration, give thanks to God, the Author of all.

Undoubtedly, God Our Lord, Who from Heaven sees the arduous difficulties of the priestly life, desires to console and delight His priests from time to time, permitting them to deal with these good souls. For such nuns animate the often-downtrodden spirit of priests and raise them to Heaven. They give the priests strength to continue with new courage along the harsh and difficult pathways of life.

THE CUADERNÓN – THE COMPLETE LIFE OF MOTHER MARIANA

As I have already said, the life of Reverend Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres that you have just read is only a summary – containing no exaggerations or deviations from the truth – which I have extracted from the life written by the wise and virtuous Friar Bartholomew Ochoa de Alacano y Gamboa. It was this work that I read in the barracks and caused me to leave the world in the year 1776.

In 1725, when he was elected provincial of the Province of Quito for the first time, this learned Franciscan issued a beautiful and important pastoral letter, which can be found in the archives of this Province.

It contained 26 points, each one filled with celestial doctrine. It revealed the spirit that animated that venerable priest and his

desire to see his friars perfect themselves in the religious life and monastic discipline, the greatest ornaments of Religious Orders.

He addressed his subordinates with admonitions inflamed with seraphic fire, frequently calling to mind the words of our Father St. Francis, who said this about fulfillment of the Rule: "To the letter, to the letter, to the letter. Without comment, without comment, without comment." He also stressed the importance of imitating the life of our Seraphic Father and at the same time gave a good example of this. Because of his wisdom, meekness, and prudence, he was loved by his subjects.

He loved with predilection the virgins consecrated to God in the monastic life. He rendered his spiritual services to them with constant charity, but he had a particular affection for this branch in Quito of the verdant Franciscan Tree. In the Convent of the Franciscan Conceptionists, he directed and guided many souls of great virtue and supernatural life. For this reason, these sisters gave him access to their great treasure, the *Cuadernón*.

In it is written the life of all eight Founding Mothers, as follows:

The life of Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada, first Abbess and Foundress, written by the most virtuous Friar Miguel Romero, Franciscan and confessor of the Venerable Mother;

The biographies of Mother Magdalena of St. John, Mother Maria of the Incarnation, and Mother Catherine of the Conception, written by the learned and virtuous Father Provincial Friar Jerónimo Tamayo;

The lives of Mother Lucia of the Cross and Mother Anna of the Conception, written by the eloquent and virtuous Father Friar Luis Catena, who was also Provincial of the Province of Quito in the year 1625, if I am not mistaken.

The lives of Mother Francisca of the Angels and Mother Maria Mariana de Jesus Torres, as well as the angelic Mother Zoila Blanca Rosa de Mariana de Jesus (the latter, as the reader knows, was not a Founding Mother), written by the virtuous and learned Father Friar Martin de Ochoa. This biography of Mother Mariana, as well as the recorded *Conversations* that the holy Foundress was accustomed to have with her daughters for their instruction and holy entertainment, formed the basis for the work of Friar Bartholomew Ochoa de Alacano y Gamboa. These conversations were not imaginary, frivolous musings, but rather were real and true teachings as she understood them in her intimate

dealings with God. The sisters communicated all of these things to the Franciscans, their spiritual directors.

FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READERS

Through the course of time, pens more dexterous and learned inside the Seraphic Family – or outside of it – will write about this exemplary life, with the changes and style proper to each time.

For now, as well as in times to come, Our Lord wants readers to imitate her in so far as it is possible. Thus we might obtain the happiness of saving ourselves and enjoying the complete possession of our good God in Heaven, without fear of losing Him, in the company of all the holy Founding Mothers of the Royal Convent of the Franciscan Conceptionists of Quito and the other religious who, as we firmly hope, will sanctify themselves in these blessed, privileged cloisters bathed in the sweat and tears of the Founding Mothers with its foundation, and with the blood of their penances for the conservation of the religious spirit, which they left as their rich legacy.

Upon concluding my humble work – how many learned writers will find it poorly done! – I repeat that I am not a writer, but I can nonetheless ascertain the truthfulness of all that is written here.

I ask readers of all times to pray a Hail Mary for me, asking that I might be granted final perseverance and the grace to be a saint in my Seraphic Order, as our Father St. Francis desires for each one of his sons.

*

EXHUMATION

The body of Reverend Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres was exhumed from the lower choir where it was buried in 1885, 271 years after her death.⁸²

It was found in this way:

The body was intact. She was dressed in a white habit and a black coif. The face had a natural color, with a rose color on the

82. In the year 1904 her body and those of the other Founding Mothers were removed and in 1906 placed in the new sepulcher that had been made for it. Today the incorrupt body of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres and the incorrupt bodies of the other Founding Mothers are preserved in special glass cases inside the cloisters of the Conceptionist Convent in Quito.

cheeks and lips. Through the half-opened mouth one could see the tongue. The eyes were closed, and the eyelashes still preserved. The ears were flexible, and the hair blond. The whole body exhaled a fragrance of lilies.

In the pouches were found the various instruments of penance and other objects in her use. When she was buried, these objects were placed there with her by the Franciscans, in accordance with the wishes of the Mother Abbess Mariana of St. Dominic and the Congregation of the Convent so that, through the course of time, they would serve as relics. For this purpose, some of these objects were removed and are conserved as a precious treasure in the archives of the Convent.

* * *

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