

**To Don Lorenzo de Cepeda,¹ Quito (Ecuador)
Avila, December 23, 1561**

Teresa is living outside her monastery in the home of Doña Guiomar de Ulloa in Avila. From there she is supervising the renovation of the house bought for her first foundation. She is in dire financial need. Unexpectedly, several Indians who are Lorenzo's friends bring letters and money. A mysterious promise made by St. Joseph is fulfilled. Deeply moved, Teresa writes in haste before Lorenzo's messenger leaves.

1. Jesus. Señor. May the Holy Spirit be always with your honor, amen, and repay you for the care with which you have so diligently come to the help of all. I hope in the majesty of God that you will gain much in his eyes. Certainly all those to whom you sent money received it at such an opportune moment that I was greatly consoled. I believe that it was God who stirred you to send me so much. The amount of money brought by Juan Pedro de Espinosa and Varrona (which I think is the name of the other merchant) would have been enough to keep a poor worthless nun like myself who goes about in patches—which I now consider an honor, glory to God—out of need for some years.

2. I have already written you a long letter about a matter that for many reasons I could not escape doing, since God's inspirations are the source. Because these things are hard to speak of in a letter, I mention only the fact that saintly and learned persons think I am obliged not to be cowardly but do all I can for this project—a monastery of nuns. There will be no more than fifteen nuns in it, who will practice very strict enclosure, never going out or allowing themselves to be seen without veils covering their faces. Their life will be one of prayer and mortification as I have written more at length in a letter to you. I will write another for Antonio Morán to bring when he leaves.

3. That lady, Doña Guiomar,² who is also writing to you, is a help to me. She is the wife of Francisco Dávila, of Salobralajo, if you recall. Her husband died nine years ago. He had an annual income of 1 million maravedis. She, for her part, has an entailed estate in addition to what she has from her husband. Although she was left a widow at the age of twenty-five, she has not

married again but has devoted herself very much to the Lord. She is deeply spiritual. For more than four years we have been devoted friends, closer than if we were sisters. She still helps me very much, for she contributes a good portion of her income. At present she is without funds, so it is up to me to buy and prepare the house. With God's favor I have received two dowries beforehand and have bought the house, although secretly. But I did not have the means to pay for the work that still needed to be done. So by trusting in God alone (for God wants it to be done and will provide), I entered into an agreement with the workers. It seemed a foolish thing to do. But then His Majesty comes along and moves you to provide for it. And what amazes me is that the forty pesos you added was just what I needed. I believe that St. Joseph—after whom the house will be named—wanted us to have the money, and I know that he will repay you. In sum, although the house is small and poor, the property has a field and some beautiful views. And that's sufficient.

4. They have gone to Rome for the papal bulls, for although the house belongs to my own religious order, we are rendering our obedience to the bishop.³ I hope the foundation will give the Lord much glory, if he allows it to come about. I believe without a doubt that it will, for the souls that are planning to enter will give an excellent example of humility, as well as penance and prayer. They are choice souls. Will you all pray to God for this project, for by the time Antonio Morán departs, everything will be completed, with God's favor.⁴

5. Antonio Morán came here and was a great consolation to me. He seemed to be a loyal and highly gifted man. I was especially consoled to learn about all of you, for one of the great favors the Lord has granted me is that he has given you understanding of what the world is, and so you have chosen to live quiet lives. Now I know, too, that you have taken the path of heaven. This is what I wanted most to know, for up until now I was always in dread. Glory to the One who does all. May it please him that you always advance in his service. Since there is no measure to his remunerations, we should never stop trying to serve the Lord. Each day we will advance at least a little further, and with fervor. It seems, and so it is, that we are always at war, and until we are victorious, we must not grow careless.

6. All those with whom you have sent money have been reliable men. But Antonio Morán has surpassed them all. He has sold the gold at a higher price without charge, as you will see, and has brought the money here from Madrid despite his poor health—although today he is better, for it was caused by an accident. I notice that he thinks highly of you. He also brought the money from Varrona and did so with great care. Rodríguez came here too, and has done everything well. I will write to you through him, for perhaps he will be the first to leave. Antonio Morán showed me the letter you had written him. Believe me, I think that all this care is not only the fruit of his virtue, but also the result of God’s inspiration.

7. Yesterday my sister María⁵ sent me the enclosed letter. When they bring her the other money, she will write again. The help came just in time for her. She is a very good Christian and undergoes many trials. If Juan de Ovalle⁶ initiates a lawsuit, it would destroy her children. Certainly he doesn’t have as much a claim as he thinks he does, even though the sale of everything went badly and proved a disaster. But Martín de Guzmán also had good intentions—God rest his soul—and the judge ruled in his favor, even though not well enough. I cannot bear that anyone should now claim what my father—may he enjoy eternal glory—sold. And the rest, as I say, would only kill María, my sister. God deliver me from the self-interest that brings so much harm to one’s relatives. It has reached the point here that it’s a wonder if there’s a father who cares about his son or a brother who cares about his brother. Thus I’m not surprised by Juan de Ovalle; rather, he has done well by setting this litigation aside for now out of love for me. He is by nature good, but in this case it would be unwise to trust in that. When you send him the 1,000 pesos, you should ask him for a written promise to be given to me; and the day that he reintroduces the lawsuit, 500 ducats will go to Doña María.⁷

8. The houses at Gotarrendura are still not sold, but Martín de Guzmán received 300,000 maravedis from them, and it was only right that this amount went to Juan de Ovalle. Along with the 1,000 pesos you sent, he is taken care of and will be able to live here. For this is what he has done, he has come here and now needs to remain. He would be unable to live here other than

badly and for only short periods of time without help from over there.⁸

9. His marriage is a good one. But I must tell you that Doña Juana is so honorable and trustworthy that she makes you want to praise God, and she has the soul of an angel. I've turned out to be the worst sister; the way I am, you ought not even acknowledge me as your sister. I don't know why you're all so fond of me. I say this in all truthfulness. Juana has undergone many trials and borne them well. If you can send the money without placing yourself in need, do so quickly, even if little by little.

10. The money you sent was allocated as you will see from the letters. Toribia⁹ is dead as is also her husband. It was a great help for her children, who are poor. The Masses have been said according to your intentions—some of them before the money arrived—and by the best persons I could find, all of them excellent. I was edified by the intentions for which you had them said.

11. I am staying in the house of Señora Doña Guiomar during these business affairs.¹⁰ It makes me happy to be with persons who speak to me about you; indeed, it is my pleasure. One of this lady's daughters, who is a nun in our monastery, had to come out and stay with her mother, and our provincial ordered me to be her companion. Here, more than at my sister's house, I am at liberty to do the many things I need to do. All the conversation here is about God, and we live in great recollection. I will remain here until given other orders, even though it would be better for me to stay here so as to handle the above business matters.

12. Now to speak of my dear sister, Señora Doña Juana,¹¹ for although I mention her last, she is not so in my heart. That is certain, for I pray to God for her as intensely as I do for you. I kiss both your hands a thousand times for all the kindnesses you have shown me. I don't know how to repay you other than by praying fervently for our little boy.¹² And this is being done, for the saintly friar Peter of Alcántara has promised to do so (he is the discalced friar about whom I wrote you), and the Theatines¹³ and other persons whom God will hear are doing so. May it please His Majesty to make the child better than his parents, for good as you are, I want more for God. Continue writing to me

about your joy and resignation to God's will, for that makes me very happy.

13. I mentioned that when Antonio Morán leaves I will send along for you a copy of the patent letters of nobility,¹⁴ which they say couldn't be better. I'll take great care in doing this. And if this time it gets lost on the way, I'll keep sending others until one arrives. For some foolish reasons it was not sent (it was the responsibility of a third party who did not want to—I'll say no more). I'll also send you some relics, for the reliquary isn't worth much. I kiss my brother's hands a thousand times for what he has sent me. If it had come at a time when I wore gold jewelry, I would have been very envious of the medal, for it is extremely beautiful. May God keep you and your wife for many years. And may he give you a happy new year, for tomorrow is New Year's Eve for 1562.¹⁵

14. Since I spent a long time with Antonio Morán, I began this letter late; otherwise I would say more, but he wants to leave tomorrow. I will write again through Jerónimo de Cepeda,¹⁶ and since I'll be doing so soon, it doesn't matter that I don't say more here. Always read my letters yourself. I went to great lengths to use good ink. This letter was written so quickly; and, as I say, it is so late that I cannot take time to read it over. My health is better than usual. May God give you health in body and soul, as I desire, amen.

15. I'm not writing to Hernando de Ahumada or Pedro de Ahumada¹⁷ for lack of time; I will do so soon. Your honor should know that some very good persons who are aware of our secret—our new undertaking—have considered it a miracle that you sent so much money at such a time. I hope that when there is need for more, God will put it into your heart to help me, even though you may not want to.

*Your devoted servant,
Doña Teresa de Ahumada*

To the Lords of the Town Council, Avila
Avila, December 5, 1563

This letter speaks of the consolation the sisters find in their hermitages, places of solitude in their garden where they can praise God and pray for the city. A lawsuit was initiated against the nuns because one of the hermitages was constructed at a site harmful to the city's water supply.

Most Honorable Lords:

1. Since we received information that the little hermitages constructed on our property would cause no damage to the city's waterways, and the need was very great, we never thought your honors would be disturbed. What we did only serves for God's praise and provides us with a place apart for prayer, for it's in these hermitages that we beg God in a special way to preserve this city in his service.
2. Aware that your honors are displeased—which distresses us all—we beg you to come and see. We are prepared to comply with all the documents, promises, and pledges your lawyers might require so as to be sure that no damage will be done at any time; and we have always resolved to act in this way.
3. If despite this your honors are not satisfied and want the hermitages removed, may you first consider the benefit and not the harm that may come from them. What we want most to avoid is that you be displeased. We would be distressed if we had to go without the consolation we find in them, for it is spiritual.
4. May our Lord keep and preserve you, most honorable gentlemen, in his service, amen.

*Your unworthy servants who respectfully kiss your hands,
The poor sisters of San José*

To Juan de San Cristóbal, Avila
Avila, April 9, 1564

This served as a letter of agreement for the sale of some dovecotes. Since the request in the last letter was rejected, Teresa decided to make this purchase and convert the dovecotes into other hermitages that would not be a threat to the city's water supply.

1. This day, Quasimodo Sunday,¹ 1564, Juan de San Cristóbal and Teresa of Jesus entered into agreement on the sale of a group of dovecotes for 100 ducats free of tithes or duties.
2. The amount will be paid in this manner: 10,000 maravedis now and 10,000 by Pentecost Sunday; the remainder will be paid by St. John's feast of this year.

In confirmation of the above, I place my signature.
Teresa of Jesus

To Padre García de Toledo, Avila(?)

Avila, 1565

This letter accompanied the second draft of Teresa's The Book of Her Life and appears in that work as the epilogue. García de Toledo, one of her directors, had urged Teresa to expand on the first draft and now was in a hurry to read what she had written in her second draft.

1. May the Holy Spirit be always with your honor, amen.

It wouldn't be wrong for me to exaggerate this service¹ I have rendered you in order that you feel obliged to take great care to pray to our Lord for me. For I certainly must have the right to ask this of you from what I have undergone in writing about myself and calling to mind so many of my miseries; although I can truthfully say it was more difficult for me to write about the favors His Majesty granted me than about my offenses against him.

2. I did what you commanded me and enlarged upon the material.² I did this on the condition that you do what you promised by tearing up what appears to you to be bad. I hadn't finished reading it after the writing was done when you sent for it. It could be that some of the things are poorly explained and others put down twice, for I had so little time I couldn't read over what I wrote. I ask you to correct it and have it transcribed if it is to be brought to Padre Maestro Avila, for it could happen that someone might recognize my handwriting.³ I urgently desire that he be asked for his opinion about it, since this was my intention in beginning to write. If it seems to him I am walking on a good path, I shall be very consoled; then nothing else would remain for me than to do what lies within my power. Nevertheless, do what you think best, and remember you are obliged to one who has so entrusted her soul to you.

3. I shall recommend your soul to our Lord for the rest of my life. So do me the favor of hurrying to serve His Majesty; for you will see, from what is written here, how well one is occupied when one gives oneself entirely—as you have begun to do—to him who so immeasurably gives himself to us.

4. May he be blessed forever! I hope in his mercy that you and I will see each other there where we shall behold more clearly the great things he has done for us, and praise him forever and ever, amen.

This book was finished in June 1562.⁴