

MOTHER FRANCISCA'S WAY

Heroic Practice of Virtues



"After becoming a widow, she gave herself truly to the service of God, with much profit to her soul and much perseverance in mental and vocal prayers, so that her house seemed to be an oratory".

-(Chapter X999, p. 106)

Rejoice and Be Glad (Mt. 5:12)

Jesus tells those persecuted or humiliated for his sake. The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence. The call to holiness is present in various ways from the very first pages of the Bible. We see it expressed in the Lord's words to Abraham: "Walk before me, and be blameless" (Gen 17:1).

- Apostolic Exhortation GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE of the HOLY FATHER FRANCIS on the CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD p.1

For favors granted, kindly write the:

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resources/publications/books-pamphlets](https://motherfrancisca.info/index.php/resources/publications/books-pamphlets)*

Furthermore, they were grateful to the Dominican Fathers of the Holy Rosary for being instruments in the realization of their vision – the Beaterio. Their eternal gratitude was also expressed to Don Juan de Escaño, their great benefactor who was instrumental for the economic stability of the community of the Beatas. As an expression of gratitude, his name is inscribed in the history of the Beaterio and until this time, he is prayed for.



Don Juan de Escaño y Córdoba
Source: *Milicia de Jesucristo* by Gaínza, 1859.

An extract from the
POSITIO
SUPER VITA, VIRTUTIBUS
ET FAMA SANCTITATIS

SERVÆ DEI
FRANCISCÆ A SPIRITU SANCTO
(IN SÆCULO: FRANCISCÆ DE FUENTES)
Fundatricis Congregationis
Religiosarum Dominicanarum
a Sancta Catharina Senensi
(1647 – 1711)

INFORMATIO
SUPER DUBIO

*An constet de virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe, Caritate
tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus
Prudentia, Iustitia, Fortitudine, Temperantia, iisque
adnexis in gradu heroico, in casu et ad effectum de quo
agitur.*

**PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD
FRANCISCA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO DE FUENTES**

God, Our Father, You are glorified in Your Saints, for in their lives we see the crowning of Your gifts. We commend to You the life and example of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes. She responded wonderfully to Your grace by a life of holiness. As a woman of the Philippines, she drew herself close to You in her service of the sick, the poor, and the young. We ask by this prayer in her memory Your special help... (*mention favor requested*)”, May her holiness be recognized by the Church as an example of faithfulness for all the people of our land. We ask this through the merits of Jesus our merciful Savior and the prayers of Mary, Queen of the Rosary. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...

**PRAYER FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE
IN THE PROCESS OF BEATIFICATION
& CANONIZATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD**

God, Father Almighty, in Your infinite wisdom You have willed that Your servant Francisca del Espiritu Santo be the foundress of a Filipina religious congregation. She believed in You with her whole being, she hoped for the perfection of Your plan, and she loved You in imitation of Your incarnate Son. In trials and in penance she persevered and was purified. An instrument of Your ineffable holiness, Francisca del Espiritu Santo touched so many lives and continues to edify Your Filipino people. If it is in accord with Your plans, let the present ecclesial inquiry into the causes of her beatification and canonization lead to the triumph of Your grace. Let the recognition of her sanctity be a proof of Your guidance. Let her beatification and canonization be yet another outpouring of Your love to Your chosen people in the far east and an added blessing to the Universal Church. In the power of Your Holy Spirit, who filled the heart of Francisca del Espiritu Santo, let the canonical proceedings be successfully carried out, so that at the end we all can sing: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

knowing not of their return to the Beaterio. Patiently, she bore the restlessness of some of the Beatas who would like to go home with their parents. With pain in her heart, she endured patiently the many Beatas who did not obey her because they claimed they had been dispensed from the vow of obedience and therefore they are not obliged to obey her. It grieved her deeply when a Beata used her as an excuse for leaving.

Jesus saw all these and Mother Francisca profited from them because she bore them for the love of Him to whom she gave her life.

7. Gratitude

Every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for all this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”; “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

Mother Francisca’s whole life was an offering of thanksgiving to Jesus. She never ceased thanking Him in all circumstances of her life until her last breath.

However it is worth to note some of the events when Mother Francisca and the beatas expressed their gratitude by way of prayers.

The Beatas underwent numerous trials during the early years of the Beaterio. But despite all these, they did not lose sight of Jesus, their all. Their perseverance in prayer, their complete trust and confidence in God brought them to the fore, and with deep gratitude and thanksgiving for all their victories, both small and big, their unceasing praise to God was tremendous.

this life of greater perfection to which God is calling us”.

6. Patience

From the gift of communion arises the duty to build fraternity, in other words, to become brothers and sisters in a given community where all are called to live together. From accepting with wonder and gratitude the reality of divine communion shared with mere creatures, there also arises conviction of the need to make it always more visible by building communities “filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit”.

Understanding the composition of a community who are men or women “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues” is born “from God” which is a living sign of the primacy of the love of God who works wonders, and of the love for God and for one’s brothers and sisters as manifested and practiced by Jesus Christ.

Mother Francisca being the Prioress has had the opportunities to practice her love for God and for her sisters by accepting every Beata with patience, as narrated by Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo. He wrote: “There were some Beatas who lived devoutly and persevered for some years. However, there were others who at times they gave in to chatting unnecessarily. These eventually found their activities disgusting in the Beaterio. They wanted to leave the Beaterio to the extent of writing the Archbishop telling him of how rigorous their state of life was. Things were getting out of hand with these Beatas. Fr. Juan wanted to know the names of these Beatas by asking Mother Francisca but he did not. He knew that these were mortifying Mother Francisca and she must have been patient with them while they were in her office.

At another occasion, while they were in Santa Potenciana, she waited patiently again with prayers and tears

FOREWORD

Blessed be God forever.

“Mother Francisca’s Way, heroic practice of virtues” is a publication released by the Mother Francisca Commission, in order to further consciously intensify our... “Knowledge of the life and virtues of Mother Francisca”, and the “...witnessing of the life and virtues of Mother Francisca by the Sisters” and by her followers and friends as well. These are our targets (LRP) as we closely follow the process of her Causes for Beatification and Canonization. The first pamphlet of this kind was disseminated during the early years of the creation of the MF Commission. It was useful and it has merits of its own. This new booklet is lifted from the “**POSITIO - SUPER VITA, VIRTUTIBUS ET FAMA SANCTITATIS SERVÆ DEI FRANCISCÆ A SPIRITU SANCTO**”, the official document of the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cathetine of Siena, on her beloved Foundress, which was submitted to, approved and being studied by Rome.

We now have another treasure of a document for our instruction, guide, reflection and way of life. Furthermore, following the gospel virtues as Mother Francisca did is a concrete way of fulfilling the apostolic exhortation “Gaudete et Exsultate” of the Holy Father, Pope Francis on the call to holiness in today’s world.

“ Rejoice and be Glad “ (Mt. 5:12)

Be blest and be a blessing to others.

In the Triune God,

Sr. Ma, Sofia D. Taguinod, OP
Prioress General

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Holy Mass. Fr. J. Sto. Domingo writes: “She received the Lord with supreme joy” amidst suffering and pain.

5. Sensitiveness

Mother Francisca was a woman who so aware of the poor social conditions of her time responded with compassion.

Francisca grew up in a milieu of the 17th and 18th century Manila (Intramuros) beset with two prominent social disorders: poverty and lack of education for poor young native girls. These two social conditions of the time in particular in Manila were caused by: 1. many poor soldiers married to natives were at the service of the king and when they die they leave their daughters in very miserable state. Furthermore, having been orphaned, they almost lived in the streets or main doors of the houses of other people exposed to many danger of losing themselves; 2. There was no house yet founded with the intention to educate the poor young Indians.

It can already be identified that Mother Francisca even still as a widow was conscious of the needs of the poor so much so that she would deprive herself of what were necessary to be able to give them to the needy.

However, when the opportune time came for her to serve the young, she readily petitioned the Archbishop that in the enclosure of the Beaterio they be allowed to have young native girls to educate them in the faith and Christian perfection. This the Archbishop approved Furthermore, the Beaterio will provide these young native girls protection, greater security and custody.

For Mother Francisca and the Beatas this was the way to which God was calling them. In the letter to the Archbishop, she wrote: “We are firm in our good purpose and want to begin definitely with full commitment this way of our vocation and

to be present to His Church and her mission for the past 315 years.

4. **Mortification / Penance**

Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo in his Breve wrote clearly of how Mother Francisca practiced this virtue from the time a community was formed until her death.

The year 1694, the house of Antonia was no longer big for five Beatas. The Dominican Fathers bought the dilapidated house adjoining it. It was renovated, walls were built around the yard, an altar was framed and a neat and spacious oratory was formed. Seeing the oratory, Mother Francisca ordered that the Rosary be prayed by the community in the morning, at one o'clock during the day followed by mental prayer and the spiritual exercises lasted until three o'clock. The Rosary was also prayed at night and at midnight they rose up for mental prayer.

These spiritual exercises became a regular community horario before their exile at Santa Potenciana in the year 1704.

After the Beatas' exile in Sta. Potenciana, they returned to the Beaterio to start all over again. The sufferings at Sta. Potenciana and the rigors of community life at the Beaterio intensified by her own penance, fasting and mortification resulted in a sickness which kept Mother Francisca in bed for many months.

Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo observed that, "although she was not yet 64 years old, externally she looked more than 70 years". Despite her weakness, she would still force herself to go down to the church to receive Holy Communion until such time when she could no longer rise from bed and therefore, Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo would go to her room and celebrate

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INTRODUCTIO GENERALIS

(General Introduction, *Positio pp. 13-16*)

IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD IN THE CHURCH AND IN SOCIETY OF HER TIME

The Servant of God Francisca del Espíritu Santo de Fuentes lived in the 17th century Manila, so that her story is best understood when taken in the context of the history of Christianity in the Philippines. One of the striking features of Spanish colonial rule was the close union of the Church and the State. The Church-State relationship was intended to work well for the benefit of both societies. Often however, there were differences between the two resulting in serious confrontations and controversies. At times the Philippine colonial government put obstacles to the foundation of institutions for lack of royal approval as happened with the foundation of the Beaterio de Santa Catalina.

Widowed and childless, Francisca dedicated herself to prayer and works of charity. In 1682 she donned the habit of the Dominican Tertiary. Some of the Beatas wished to live in community and so Mother Francisca and Mother Antonia stayed at the house of Maria García. However later, not of their own volition, they had to go back to their homes.

Mother Francisca was persistent and determined to have a community in a Beaterio to which Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo strongly opposed the idea. One day Mother Francisca told him

the chapel which she asked very humbly from the Archbishop. But Archbishop Camacho did not grant it.

When Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta, the new archbishop came to visit them for the first time, Mother Francisca made the request again with so much persistence. However, Fr. J. de Santo Domingo being present gave her signs to abandon the topic. Realizing that she could not succeed in getting it, she thought of having a passage to the church of San Juan de Letran. She told Fr. Juan but he did not agree with the plan for reasons of his own.

Mother Francisca was silent for sometime. When Fr. J. Sto. Domingo finished his term, again she started more urgently to tell him about the passage even to the extent of telling him that she heard sounds near the head-board of her bed, which was in front of the choir of San Juan de Letran. But Fr. J. Sto. Domingo who did not pay attention to revelations he thought that those noises were products of her imagination. However, her desire to have the Blessed Sacrament was not weakened in the least.

Mother Francisca thought of telling the new Provincial about the project, who received it well. She even told him about the noises. She spoke to Licentiate Asturis who was sympathetic to her, and who obtained the license from the Governor very easily. Meanwhile, Fr. Provincial spoke to the Archbishop and the latter agreed. Then Fr. J. Sto. Domingo spoke to the authorities of the City, the councilmen and the alcaldes.

Fr. Juan, who opposed the construction of the passageway from the Beaterio to the Choir of the Church of San Juan de Letran, was the one who carried out the plans until its completion.

For Mother Francisca, the passageway is a symbol of her great love for Jesus in the Eucharist which held a central position in her spirituality. Her ardent desire to have the Beatas lived intimately with Jesus made it possible for the Beaterio

3.a. From idea to reality

Francisca de Fuentes donned the habit of St. Dominic in 1682 and was joined by Antonia Esguerra, Sebastiana Salcedo, and Maria Ana de la Vega. They were known as Beatas. They requested the Dominican Fathers through the Prior, Fr. Juan de Sta. Maria and Fr. Barolome Marron, the ex-Prior of Santo Domingo that they be allowed to live together in a community. Their request was granted in 1686 with the confirmation of the Acts of the Province and Master General of the Order approved it on January 11, 1688.

In 1690, the Beatas pressed the new Prior, Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo about the building of a Beaterio but the latter did not approve of the idea because of the difficulty of sustaining a community. The Beatas, especially Mother Francisca persistently brought up the topic to no avail. This led her to courageously tell the Prior that “P. Prior, el Beaterio se ha de hacer y Vuestra Paternidad lo ha de ver.”

Due to the determination and persistence and tears and prayers of Mother Francisca for many years, the Prior Provincial relented and the Beaterio became a reality on July 26, 1696 thus the first Philippine religious community.

In 1706, the Beaterio became the first institution in the Philippines for the Christian education mainly of young native girls which include the teaching of the three Rs: Religion, Arithmetic, Writing and eventually Music, Arts, Flower-making, etc.

3.b. from desire to completion

In 1706, upon their return to the Beaterio from the two years and 3 months exile in Santa Potenciana, Mother Francisca intensely desired to have the Blessed Sacrament in

with determination that the Beaterio will be established and that he will see it. Truly enough it happened as she said. Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo carried out the plan himself.

Then came a conflict between the Dominican Order and the Archbishop which led to the excommunication of Mother Francisca and the Beatas. They were divested of their habit and dispensed from their vows of obedience and poverty and were brought to Santa Potenciana and remained there for more than two years.

On the 15th of February 1706, the Archbishop of Manila in a decree authorized the foundation of the Beaterio as petitioned by Mother Francisca and the remaining Beatas. Furthermore, Mother Francisca and the Beatas, expressed their desire that as they live in the said house, the Beaterio, to have with them a large group of young native girls to be educated better in the mysteries of the holy faith and perfect Christian life. Moreover, the Beaterio will provide physical, moral and financial protection and security to the daughters of poor soldiers who neither have a place to grow up nor be educated.

Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes persevered amidst sufferings and trials yet remained patient in endurance, persevering in prayerful life and deep love for the Eucharist which overflowed in her compassion for the sick, the poor and the young. So much was her devotion and love for the Church. She prayed, worked, and suffered for the Church.

Reading and reflecting on what people wrote about her, and from her very few letters, it could be said that Mother Francisca courageously pioneered the first Philippine Religious Community of women and initiated the first Institution for young native girls in the Islands with emphasis on the education in the faith and Christian perfection. Many residents of Manila gave their testimonies that the foundation of the Beaterio yielded great spiritual and temporal benefits for the Church and for the whole republic, indeed a God- inspired endeavor for His own purpose.

**THE RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE
EXAMPLE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD
FRANCISCA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO DE FUENTES
AND OF HER MESSAGE FOR THE CHURCH
AND SOCIETY OF TODAY**

Although Mother Francisca del Espíritu Santo de Fuentes lived 300 years ago, her life, virtues and legacy lives on and her message resounds strongly to the Church and society today.

Nowadays, moral issues like divorce, family planning, contraception and abortion, environmental abuse, human rights violation are decidedly based on convenience and personal interests. Issues that were once clearly immoral, land on the gray zone and have become “morally acceptable” based on economic, scientific, political reasons.

These are trying times for the Church, under attack on all sides.

We, as Catholics can get inspiration and guidance from Mother Francisca’s life and legacy. She was able to discern with the Spirit, so that she has shown that no amount of obstacles, distractions, or setbacks can deter her from something she knows is the morally upright thing to do. Our society today must, like Mother Francisca, stand pat on issues that must never be given up. Our stand against divorce, same sex marriage, abortion and contraception, justice and peace and environmental degradation are non-negotiable. Mother Francisca’s famous statement: “God’s will cannot be resisted” should be our guiding principle individually and as a Church on issues that we know are what our Lord would want us to stand up for. Like her, our faith and obedience to God and to the

admission of candidates requesting the habit of the Order.

The Lord permitted that the Beaterio and its Prioress undergo the most terrible trials before they achieved a certain kind of security. The Beaterio was closed and Mother Francisca and the Beatas were confined in Colegio de Sta. Potenciana. Their habits had been removed amidst copious tears capable to moving the most hard-hearted. Nevertheless, she did not weaken in such a difficult situation nor lose tranquility of soul, nor presence of mind, nor did she slacken in the regular observance of her duties. She did not consent to the neglect of the observance of the rules of the community.

According to Fr. Francisco Gaínza, OP, in his Milicia: “It is easy to understand the life which Francisca could lead once she was enclosed in the Beaterio, center of her most ardent vows. In religious observance she was excellent. She was austere with herself, kind to others and charitable to all. She was an indefatigable worker and an inexorable promoter of regular observance.

Observing the Rule of the Third Order to the letter, not only did she subdue her body by fast, prayers, mortifications, and abnegation of her own will, but she also raised her indefatigable soul to the pinnacle of perfection.

Indeed she was not only a lover of regular observance but also its guardian as shown in governance as Prioress of the Beaterio.

3. Determination/Persistence

This virtue of Mother Francisca led to two significant events that brought the Beaterio de Santa Catalina to what it is now, the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, a gift to the Church for the past 315 years.

her confessor and spiritual director, Fr. J. de Santo Domingo. But what offenses could she have committed against her sisters? Was it because she admonished them or scolded them because of their lack of spiritual devotion that caused them repugnance in their activities of the Beaterio or even missed community prayers? Could it be possible that all these could have caused them pain? Or some negligences on her part as Prioress?

For all these pains she caused, she asked for pardon humbly from her daughters and from Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo.

But for Fr. Santo Domingo such gesture of asking pardon was not enough. He told her that she should also pardon those who offended her.

For Mother Francisca she must have forgiven them without them asking pardon from her – those who bore ill-feelings against her, those who complained about her, those who were dissatisfied with her and even disobeyed her especially while in Sta. Potenciana.

Her answer then to Fr. J. de Santo Domingo: “Nobody offended me”. However, Fr. J. Santo Domingo insisted and that she would do it in a loud voice. Humbly she obeyed.

2. Religious Observance

Mother Francisca, even before becoming the Prioress of the Beaterio was already conscious of her first duty that of being a good Christian faithful to God’s law of love. When she made her profession, she accepted the Rule and pledge obedience. She and the Beatas started to observe the Rule from the hour of Compline in their Oratory.

Mother Francisca manifested great zeal in the observance of the rules and for the greater honor and glory of God, so that her opinions were highly regarded even in the

Church will help us face the challenge of the new millennium.

All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” “... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbors. ... this clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.”

Yes, Mother Francisca is an example of a prophetic witnessing, of Christian life in the radical living out of the Gospel values, of life-giving services to the poor, the sick, the women, and the young in the education in the faith and Christian perfection. These were an outflow of her life of intimacy with Jesus in her love for the Eucharist and fidelity to prayer.

This too can be ours today.

INFORMATIO SUPER VIRTUTIBUS
(The Virtues Practiced
by the Servant of God, *Positio pp, 27 - 59*)

A. A BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD.

The life and virtues of the Servant of God Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes are derived most entirely from the Breve Relación written by Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo, O.P., who was her confessor and spiritual director, as well as adviser about the foundation.

In the Acts of April 16, 1712 , it is written of her: “Having been brought to the Beaterio so that she might yield abundant fruits of virtue and serve as an example to others, she realized her hopes abundantly by constant practice of virtues and works of mercy. Indeed, complying with her duties with exactitude and diligence, by dint of constant toil in the practice of virtues, she succeeded in establishing a form of religious life and proved herself a model of good deeds. Observing the Rule of the Third Order to the letter, not only did she subdue her body by fast, prayers, mortifications and abnegation of her own will, but she also raised her indefatigable soul to the pinnacle of perfection...”.

Francisca de Fuentes was born to Don Simon de Fuentes and Doña Ana Maria del Castillo y Tamayo in the City of Manila in 1647. Francisca grew up to be a fine lady and

to live in community in a Beaterio. Although, there was a great resistance from the Fr. Confessor himself about a Beaterio, with her persistence, tears and prayers, her longed Beaterio was materialized. At the designated date, Mother Francisca and seven other Beatas made profession of vows of obedience, poverty and chastity according to the Rule.

However, it came to pass the Beatas not of their own guilt of any misdemeanor incurred the ire of the Archbishop of Manila. They were caught up in the middle of a dispute between high ecclesiastical authorities over canonical matters of jurisdiction. They were separated from their house and went into exile for two years in the college of Santa Potenciana, divested of their habits and dispensed from their vows of obedience and poverty. They were in their lay state.

The exiled Beatas who opted to stay in Santa Potenciana were free to go back to their homes. Some chose to leave and embraced another state of life. However, Mother Francisca was steadfast in her promise of consecration inspite of the many sufferings and trials she experienced.

For those who remained, their patience was rewarded. The Beatas were returned to the Beaterio.

ANNEXED VIRTUES

1. Humility

Mother Francisca was a woman who courageously and simply expressed what inspired her but at the end she humbly submitted to the will of her superiors. The last test of her humility was at her deathbed. Her first act of humility was, when she asked pardon from all her daughters as well as from

3. Chastity

All baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has “put on Christ,” the model for all chastity. All Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. At the moment of his Baptism, the Christian is pledged to lead his affective life in chastity.

There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others. This is what makes for the richness of the discipline of the Church.

In God’s wisdom, Mother Francisca was blessed to have lived the three forms of the virtue of chastity. In each state that she lived, she practiced it faithfully bearing witness to her neighbors of God’s fidelity and loving kindness.

After a brief marriage, Francisca de Fuentes, chose to live a life of consecrated celibacy which enabled her to give herself to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner.

Because of this, she devoted her time in prayer and charity. She was persevering in her mental and vocal prayers and spend much of her time attending to the needy and caring for the sick.

Not long after, God called her to another state of life where she can imitate him more intimately and to manifest more clearly his self-emptying, in order to be more deeply present to one’s contemporaries, in the heart of Christ. Under the Rule of the Third Order of Penance of the Order of Preachers, she and with the other companion-Beatas who were living in their own homes would come together to exercise the acts of piety and works of charity.

God must have inspired her again. This time she longed

was given in marriage to a gentleman who, by the inscrutable design of God, did not live long, leaving her childless young widow.

Francisca then dedicated her time to prayer and charitable services, helping many poor and sick in the city. In a vision in which she saw St. Francis and St. Dominic, she prostrated herself before St. Dominic. Because of this, she chose to be a Dominican, being admitted as a tertiary in 1682. She chose the name “Francisca del Espíritu Santo.”

In 1686, Francisca, Antonia de Jesus Esguerra, Ana de la Vega and Sebastiana Salcedo requested that they be allowed to live together in a life of prayer and the practice of the virtues while continuing their social apostolate. In the same year the request was approved in the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Fathers of the Holy Rosary. The Master of the Order, Fr. Antonino Cloche authorized the establishment of such house in Manila on January 11, 1688 signed at the Convent in Sopra Minerva in Rome.

Meanwhile, the erstwhile Director of the Third Order, Fr. Juan de Sta. María, who favored the request of the ladies, placed Francisca and Antonia in the houses of María Garcia. But this did not last long not of their own volition. They returned to their own homes. Mother Francisca and her companion were deeply dismayed, but Mother Sebastiana prophesied that although she and Mother Antonia would not live to see it, the Beaterio would be a reality.

Later in 1690, Fr. Juan de Sta. María was assigned to Bataan, and Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo succeeded him. The new Director was against the project but Mother Francisca persistently asked him about a Beaterio. The desire for the realization of the Beaterio also grew more intense so that one day after confession, she opened once more the subject to Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo and she got scolded for being “impertinente”. But bravely, she told Fr. Juan with a courageous tone of prophecy: “P. Prior, el Beaterio se ha de hacer y Vuestra Paternidad lo ha de ver.”

Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo was enlightened and became one of the powerful supporters of the Beaterio project. Under his direction, Mother Francisca and her companions lived at first in the house of Mother Antonia Esguerra who had by then died.

On the feast of St. Anne in 1696, the Beaterio was formally established with Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo, the then Provincial, presiding. And on this joyful occasion, Mother Francisca was appointed founding Prioress for life. The first community consisted of Mother Francisca, Mother Lorenza de Santa Maria, Mother Juana de la Sma. Trinidad, Mother Jacinta (a Spanish-Japanese descent), Mother Rosa de Santa Maria, Mother Ana de S. Jerónimo, and 2 other unnamed maidens. The community was placed under the patronage of St. Catherine of Siena, and was accepted in the Provincial Chapter of the Province of the Holy Rosary in 1698.

But their joy would not last very long, for in 1703, Manila Archbishop Don Diego Camacho wanted the Beaterio under his jurisdiction. The conflict grew until Archbishop Camacho excommunicated Mother Francisca and put the other sisters under interdict. To avoid scandal, the Beatas were asked to remove their habits and were dispensed from their vows. With the help of the Governor General and counsel from the Dominican Fathers, they went into “exile” at the Colegio de Santa Potenciana, there to stay for over two years in “Babylonian exile”.

Mother Francisca suffered the most under these grave trials, but with heroic courage, she and most of the Sisters increased their religious life hoping for the day of victory.

Since part of the opposition against the Beaterio was a question of finances, very valuable help came from a lay Dominican Tertiary, Don Juan de Escaño y Cordova, who in 1704 assured the Beatas an annual subsidy through the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary of two thousand pesos – a considerable sum in those days.

Her great love for Jesus, moved her to compassion for the sick poor that she visited them at San Juan de Dios Hospital, caring for them by bringing them something to eat.

The Holy Spirit stirred her heart, so much so that she was inspired to leave the dress of a widow and take the habit of one Religious Institute. Doubtful of which one to take she ardently recommended the matter to God. One night, while in prayer. Sts. Francis and Dominic appeared to her, each one calling her. Following an inner impulse she went towards St. Dominic.

With the habit of the Third Order of Penance of the Order of St. Dominic, Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, the name she took, continued her life of prayer and charity while living at home as a Beata.

However, God inspired her again to exercise her acts of piety and charity this time not alone but in a life of fraternal communion. There was a lot of dying to her ego when Fr. J. de Sto. Domingo would always answer her with a no about a Beaterio even to the extent of angrily calling her “impertinente”.

The community of Beatas started with nothing for their sustenance but the Dominican Fathers through the Provincial provided them with their needs. Beside from the assistance of the Dominican Fathers, the Beatas engaged themselves with needlework which the people of the City ordered from them.

Moreover, Mother Francisca and the Beatas who chose an enclosed space where they lived their lives, shared in Christ’s emptying of himself by means of a radical poverty, and they expressed it in their renunciation of “space”, of “contacts,” and lived on donations

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

death bed when after asking pardon from all her daughters and to Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo, he told her: “Mother, you should also pardon those who offended you.” She answered, “Nobody offended me”. However, Fr. Juan insisted that she should forgive and that she should say it in a loud voice. In obedience “she did”. What humility and obedience!

It was her high sense of obedience and duty that led her to carry her burden of responsibility until death with supreme joy as she received our Lord.

2. Poverty

In all his life, Jesus presents himself as our model. He is “the perfect man” who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, He has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.

Mother Francisca who heeded the call of Jesus to follow him, took every event in her life as an opportunity to imitate Jesus in his poverty.

After she lost her husband, Francisca de Fuentes heard the mysterious call of God inviting her as He invited the young man to “go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me”. She was awakened to the reality that here she was enjoying the comfort of her home. Inspired by that inner calling she thought of dedicating herself totally to the service of God in prayer and charity. She was faithful to her vocal and mental prayers that led to a deeper awareness of the love of Jesus especially to the poor. She became more sensitive to the impoverished condition of the city of Manila (Intramuros) in particular the plight of the young poor native girls. Like Jesus, she emptied herself by giving out her goods, giving to the needy even what was necessary for herself.

The time of triumph came in 1706 when after some negotiations especially through Don Juan de Escaño de Cordova who mediated for the Beatas, Archbishop Camacho changed heart and began to show himself sympathetic to the Beatas. With the help of the Governor General and the Dominican Fathers, Mother Francisca and her Sisters returned to their original home, having donned once more their Dominican habits, there to live under the Rule set for them as Beatas, with a few added features of their religious life as prescribed by the Archbishop. The approval of the Beaterio was declared by the Archbishop on 28 March 1706. With Mother Francisca at the time of their return were fifteen (15) sisters including a novice and a maiden who was later given the habit. It was in the same year that the Beaterio became a Beaterio-Colegio for many young native girls (who lived in the same house) to be “educated in the mysteries of the holy faith and not only in the ordinary but in perfect Christian life”. Later, there were also “mestizas” and Spanish girls admitted where they were instructed in the four (4) Rs – Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic with Music, Embroidery, Flowery-making, etc.

The major trials having passed, Mother Francisca continued with even greater ardor her pursuit of spiritual perfection for herself and for her spiritual daughters. Like the brave and strong woman that she was, she governed the Beaterio with great prudence and fidelity to the Rule, making the Eucharist the sublime center of the community’s spiritual life. To do this, in the absence of a Chapel for the Blessed Sacrament in the Beaterio, she importuned, against many difficulties, the Fathers of the Colegio de San Juan de Letrán, to build a passageway connecting the Beaterio to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of Letran. As always, her prayers eventually prevailed.

Worn out physically by her perpetual acts of mortification, and her continued struggle to secure the solid establishment of the Beaterio, she became ill and was suffering with heroic resignation and humility for several months, edifying everyone with her extraordinary spiritual life. And on the feast of St. Bartholomew on 24 August 1711, she was born

to eternal life, leaving behind her the living witness to her love of God and neighbor – the Beaterio de Santa Catalina de Sena which lives vigorously as ever up this day as the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena.

B. HEROIC PRACTICE OF VIRTUES IN GENERAL

Mother Francisca del Espíritu Santo de Fuentes has a unique place in the heart of our Lord. Jesus called her to follow him. She accepted the invitation to live in conformity with His way of life in a community: “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister, and mother.” God willed that she be a living witness to His love and to the people of her time and of today, in the different states of her life: as single, as married and widowed, and as a religious.

What we know of her in her childhood is based on what Fr. Francisco Gaínza, OP in his *Milicia de Jesucristo* wrote: “from early childhood, it had already been known what could have been expected of her on reaching maturity, for even when she was still very young, she had already displayed a precocious modesty, an edifying composure, a sort of prudence superior to young age, a tender devotion to God and a vivid desire not to offend Him Whom she loved even before she got acquainted with earthly vanities.”

Fr. Domingo Collantes, OP writes of Francisca: “She spent the early years of her youth in the state of matrimony.” Fr. F. Gaínza writes: “However, as she was not meant for the world, the Lord came to her assistance in order to relieve her of the yoke of matrimony and to impose upon her the burden of the cross. Shortly after her marriage her husband died, and seeing herself without heirs, she conceived the idea of consecrating herself to God. She lived in such a way that her

many spiritual activities; thus, she recurred to the Blessed Virgin Mary for help, through her Rosary, and the blessed Mother granted her prayers by taking her out of her state of perplexity in the following manner.

One night at her prayers beseeching the Lord to help her make a decision, she beheld St. Francis and St. Dominic in a vision, each one beckoning to her, as what happened to St. Rose of Santa Maria. Both saints attracted Francisca tenderly; and following her inner impulse she knelt at the feet of St. Dominic giving herself entirely to him and offering to be his daughter, at which the vision disappeared.

In obedience to the clear light of this vision, Francisca requested the habit of a tertiary. She was admitted into the Order between 1682 and 1683. The Lord granted her all her desires, as she was destined to be the bedrock of the “beaterio” in spite of repeated obstacles and contradictions. Francisca then dedicated herself with new zeal to the pious exercises of her religion, observing the Rule and Constitutions to the letter. She increased her acts of mortification, her vocal and mental prayers, and practiced control and obedience to her confessors so as to deny herself completely and depend upon the slightest wishes of her superiors.

Another test of obedience was the occasion when Fr. Provincial admonished the Señoras at Sta. Potenciana which saddened Mother Francisca so much. She relayed her feelings and sentiments to Fr. Santo Domingo. However, after the Father Provincial’s explanations, Mother Francisca was appeased and in obedience resigned to the will of God in everything.

Mother Francisca wanted things to happen for the good of the Beaterio. When she requested for the building of the passage from the Beaterio to the Chapel of San Juan de Letran so that they will have access to the Blessed Sacrament, she would give her side but at the end she was submissive to her superior’s decision.

The final test of her humility and obedience was at her

1. Obedience

By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, “the obedience of faith.”

To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

In the last paragraph of the Breve of Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo, he writes: “... because the Lord had determined that she would be the foundress of this Beaterio, for the things of God are realized little by little without our understanding them.”

Francisca de Fuentes an ordinary woman of the 17th century Manila was specially called by God for a mission. God looked into her heart and saw there was such goodness in her. He called her and she responded without knowing what lies ahead of her. But like Mary she obeyed because she loved. She started to follow that inner voice when she became a widow. She got involved in the works of charity to the poor and devoted enough time for prayer.

Notwithstanding her spiritual activities as a widow, Francisca wished to profess her religion closer to God. She re-doubled her prayers beseeching the Lord to guide her on the path He willed for her to tread. For a long while she lived in perplexity, doubting if she should wear the habit of St. Francis or that of our cherubic patriarch, St. Dominic. Great was her devotion for both saints: the first, St. Francis, because she bore his name; and the second, St. Dominic, because she frequented his church where she often received the Sacraments. Her perplexity deprived her of peace of mind the practice of her

abode did not resemble the dwelling of seculars but the house of the most recollected religious because her seclusion and practice of spiritual exercises of vocal and mental prayers gave it rather the appearance of an oratory, than that of the residence of persons living in the world.”

It was then that she dedicated herself entirely to the service of the poor and the sick, especially those in San Juan de Dios Hospital. She faithfully observed this practice until she enclosed herself in the Beaterio influencing the leading ladies of the city by her good example. As she grew in charity for her neighbor, she also grew in the desire to surrender herself intimately to her celestial Spouse.

“God cannot be resisted,” Mother Francisca told Fr. Sto. Domingo when she was told that a religious order opposed the foundation of the Beaterio. Indeed, Mother Francisca cannot resist God calling her to another state of life, consecrating herself in prayer, penance, and service to people in the fraternal life of a community as a Beaterio when there was religious community available at the time.

As “gold is tested by fire,” so the unwavering faith and perseverance of Mother Francisca and the beatas to bring to reality the first Philippine religious community. God loved them and tried them. They have to undergo the trials of a hundred doubts, of ecclesiastical censures, of separation from their house and of exile for two years at Santa Potenciana. It was in suffering, in patient endurance and in perseverance in prayerful life that Mother Francisca and the Beatas found the source of their growth and their vitality.

It was her great love for God and neighbor that brought the best out of her - her unwavering faith, dauntless courage and trust, joyful hope, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance; her fidelity to the evangelical counsels; determination and persistence, mortification and penance, sensitiveness to the needs of others, patience and ever grateful.

Reflecting on the virtues of Mother Francisca which

she firmly and heroically practiced all her life, everything can be summed up in one statement: “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God. Yes, following the example of her loving Spouse, open to the power of the Holy Spirit, and in her cooperation with God’s grace, Mother Francisca reached the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity she was called to. All are called to holiness: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”.

THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY THE SERVANT OF GOD

A. THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

1. FAITH

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines faith as a theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith “man freely commits his entire self to God”. For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God’s will. “The righteous shall live by faith. Living faith “work[s] through charity”.

Francisca was a woman of faith. After becoming a widow she gave herself truly to the service of God. She was persevering in her mental and vocal prayer, frequented visits to the poor sick in the hospital of San Juan de Dios and practiced other acts of charity. But yet she continued seeking to know and do God’s will. Until at a given time, God inspired her to go beyond the comfort of her home and go to the land He will show her. It was at prayer when she heard God calling from the

of abandoning the life she was called to or remain in the lay state. All these tribulations, trials, and sufferings were worth bearing for the sake of the Beloved.

The visit of the Fr. Provincial was an opportunity for the Beatas to make their options. He stood by the door of the sala and said in a loud voice: “Señoras, the door is open for those who would like to go, do not wait to give us any more troubles, but to those who will persevere, the Order will not fail them.

The words of Fr. Provincial reproving the disgruntled Beatas grieved Mother Francisca very much. She was hurting deep inside but her love for the Beaterio out of charity sustained her. She did not waver in her desire to give herself truly to the service of God all her life.

EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

Christ proposes the evangelical counsels, in their great variety, to every disciple. The perfection of charity, to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience.

The state of consecrated life is thus one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God. In the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more closely, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.

In the New Testament it is called “moderation” or “sobriety”. We ought to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world”

Francisca de Fuentes was married young, however her marriage did not last long. She was left without children. In this new state, she had other opportunities or options on how to devote her time for the rest of her life. Could she have considered a second marriage or remain a widow spending her life in the comfort of her home?

But the Lord looks into the heart. God in his wisdom called Francisca de Fuentes to cling only to him with greater freedom of heart, body, and spirit.

Following the call to a new way of life, she gave herself truly to the service of God with much profit to her soul and much perseverance in mental and vocal prayers, so that her house seemed to be an oratory.

Her intimacy with God directed her desires not to earthly goods to enrich herself rather she chose to give up what she had even what was necessary for her living and gave them to the poor. She was filled with the love of God so that she tried to do everything for the sake of the beloved. She saw God in the sick so that she would go to San Juan de Dios Hospital to bring something to eat for the unfortunate sick to whom she distributed and served food.

The experience of Mother Francisca during the 2 trying years of exile in Santa Potenciana was a test of her inner disposition. Divested of their habit and dispensed from their vows of obedience and poverty, she and the Beatas returned to their lay state. In fact they were already addressed as Doña. Mother Francisca was aware of the attitudes of some of the Beatas who were inwardly restless. Many would like to go home. Some parents would like to take them home from Sta. Potenciana.

Possessed with a balanced temper she was able to weigh the things of God above self-gratuity. It never cross her mind

depth of her heart to embrace a life totally consecrated to him, not alone but with a band of women from every walks of life regardless of age, color and tongue. This call to follow Christ in this inspired new way of living a Christian life was the first of its kind during the period of missionary evangelization in the Islands. She thought that this group of women can become one like Jesus gathering his disciples to become one, so that like him and thanks to him in the Spirit they might, throughout the centuries, be able to respond to the love of the Father, loving him “with all their hearts, with all their soul, with all their might” and loving their neighbors “as themselves.”

After all, union with God is the goal of human existence.

Has Mother Francisca achieved it at a twinkle of an eye? No. Her unwavering faith brought her above the difficulties believing that she is doing God’s will. Although she had constantly urged Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo about a Beaterio, she always got a no for an answer. It was far from his thoughts and was very much opposed to it considering how much was needed to sustain a community however small. Besides she saw that these Beatas were scarce in personal goods of which they had nothing to spare.

However, one day after confession Mother Francisca started to press him again as much as the house of Doña Clemencia could serve the purpose. She was persistent about the foundation of the Beaterio despite the strong opposition of Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo to the idea even to the extent of branding her as “impertinente”. With this she told him with a courageous tone: “Fr. Prior, the Beaterio will be constructed and Your Reverence will see it.” True enough, as Fr. Juan writes: “everything happened as she has said it would, and I saw so much of it that I actually did everything.”

On July 26, 1696, on the Feast of St. Anne, all the Beatas received Holy Communion and professed the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity and started to observe the Rule. All of them were very much pleased and did not cease to

give thanks to God, particularly Mother Francisca for having realized what for many years she had desired and asked from God with persistence and tears.

But that was not the end of their trial and difficulties they experienced to start the new foundation. Mother Francisca and the Beatas underwent the trials of a hundred doubts, of ecclesiastical censures, of separation from their house and of exile for two years in the college of Santa Potenciana. Nevertheless, she remained firm and faithful to the will of God, as she told Fr. J. de Sto. Domingo "God cannot be resisted." God made this Beaterio, and it is only in fidelity that the Beaterio continues to exist.

Yes, how unwavering her faith was to God's will! What if Mother Francisca gave up when they were in exile for two years at Santa Potenciana? After all, they were free to leave and return to their homes. They were not bound by the vow of obedience! However, she endured the trials and difficulties patiently. She must have asked God again for his love and mercy with persistence and tears as she did when the Beaterio was founded, to restore the religious community back to the Beaterio.

Yes, every disciple of Jesus like Mother Francisca must not only keep the faith and live it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it and spread it. "All however, must be prepared to confess Jesus before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions" and sufferings.

As Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo wrote in the last paragraph of the Breve: "... the Lord determined that she would be the foundress of this Beaterio: for the things of God are realized little by little without our understanding them. But this incident deserves only the credit of human faith and no more."

as harsh and over-rigorous. One of them complained to the Archbishop of the extreme sternness of Mother Francisca.

The whole affair would lead to the Beatas' expulsion and to the Beaterio. They packed off to exile in tears, told to divest of their religious habits and dispensed from their vows.

This was a severe blow dealt on the foundress, who saw destroyed in a moment what took years to build. In spite of this affliction, Mother Francisca showed herself courageously patient and tolerant.

Another humbling experience of Mother Francisca was she and the Beatas were caught in the middle of quarreling ecclesiastical authorities. Great was her pain on being denied the Eucharist as a result of the excommunication by the Archbishop of Manila, yet faced trials with courage.

On one occasion Mother Francisca complained to Fr. Juan that many Beatas no longer felt obliged to obey her since they had been dispensed from their vows, yet she stood firm bearing the pain of rejection with firmness.

However, in the end, her patient endurance and courage to trials were rewarded.

4. Temperance

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites."

3. Fortitude /Courage

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. “The Lord is my strength and my song.” “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Mother Francisca was not a stranger to the sufferings of the Cross. Like the Crucified Lord, she experienced humiliation and rejection.

The first experience of suffering was, when the Beatas especially Mother Francisca started to urge Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo about the Beaterio, an idea that was far from his thoughts. And because he was of the contrary opinion he would always say no to the idea yet she stood firm and strong. In spite of the opposition of Fr. Juan, Mother Francisca courageously pressed on Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo about the Beaterio. Out of his anger, he told her she was “impertinente” for she would not give in to his reasons. At the end, everything happened as she has said it would.

Another painful experience for Mother Francisca came from her own sisters. Temptations to abandon their vocation disturbed their relationships. Fidelity to prayer life weakened and some gave in to distractions brought about by long, gossipy chatter with visitors. Mother Francisca did not consent to the neglect of the observance of the rules of the community. Her great care in this practice exasperated some “Beatas” who turned cold to the fulfillment of their duties as religious. The Mother was obliged to reprimand them, because their conduct required it. Our Lord, however, permitted her patience to be tested further, for the discontented Beatas judged Mother Francisca

2. HOPE

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every person; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes, the foundress of the Beaterio de Santa Catalina, was a woman of hope. To be a foundress of a Congregation at a time when there was so much opposition even from the ecclesiastical authorities meant for Mother Francisca to hold on to a vision that set her to say in a courageous tone to Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo: “Father Prior, the Beaterio will be constructed and Your Reverence will see it.”

Hope for Mother Francisca and the Beatas was founded on God alone. Even when their efforts were seemingly futile, and the foundation of the Beaterio, hopeless, they went on hoping against hope, believing firmly in God’s inspiration. The Beatas, especially Mother Francisca set an example of hope – hope in God’s providence; hope that in God’s beautiful time, the Beaterio would be set up; hope geared towards the realization of a vision amidst the darkness of opposition and contradiction.

Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes and the Beatas were women of hope for they were women of vision and courage.

Mother Francisca bore all the pains of resistance, difficulties, trials and challenges during the early formation of the foundation: the construction of a Beaterio, the plan of Archbishop Camacho to place them under his authority, the conflict between the Archbishop and the Dominican Friars, the excommunication and exile to Sta. Potenciana, and many more.

When the Religious Orders in the Philippines were asked by the King of Spain to comment on the establishment of the Beaterio, all were in favor except the Rev. Father Provincial of the Seraphic Order St. Francis. However, Mother Francisca with a heart filled with hope told Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo that God cannot be resisted and the Beaterio will fair very well.

So, despite of these shadows, Mother Francisca and the Beatas remained close to Jesus. Their faith, tested like gold in the furnace made them cling to Christ and Our Lady of the Rosary never giving up hope for they had complete trust in Divine Providence.

Because Mother Francisca was full of hope, she was preserved from discouragement, sustained her during times of abandonment. Her hope afforded her joy even under trial, patient in tribulation.

Moreover, her hope was expressed and nourished in prayer. She hoped in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love Him and do His will. Mother Francisca hoped with the grace of God and she persevered “to the end.”

3. CHARITY

It is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

has an affinity with Fr. Sto. Domingo being his godchild? Will the community of three be able to afford an additional member knowing that they are short of means? Is it just because they needed more members in the community?

Mother Francisca knew this girl Jacinta to be devout and a lover of God. She begged to receive the habit which she has been longing for. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit Mother Francisca strongly considered her as being worthy to receive the habit taking into account of her being an upright person as observed. So, Fr. J. de Sto. Domingo vested her the habit of a Beata.

A few months later, Rosa, a very beautiful lady who was just a little more than 25 years old came to know about the community of Beatas, she came to seek for admission. Her father Capt. Prieto took her away from the College of Sta. Potenciana to be married off to a certain man whom she refused. Her words manifested maturity and she was observed to have a good spirit. Mother Francisca accompanied her to see Fr. J. Sto. Domingo who just returned from his canonical visitation. She talked with him with much prudence and humility as perceived by Fr. J. Sto. Domingo.

On the other hand, Mother Francisca gave her observation that is proper of her. She praised her for being humble and a lover of mental prayer. Not long after she received the habit which disappointed the father. Within a month, Capt. Bartolome Prieto came back very happy to see Rosa with the habit.

At another instance, Mother Francisca exhibited her upright conduct towards her superiors. It was a touching moment when the Archbishop, the Dominican Fathers and the Beatas agreed on their return to the Beaterio. The Archbishop issued a Decree approving the Beaterio. Mother Francisca and the Beatas notwithstanding the travails they went through during their 2 years and 3 months exile in Santa Potenciana submitted themselves, with all due respect to the Archbishop, to enclosure as a fulfillment of the Decrees of Pope Pius V.

for abundant fruits in that new vineyard of which she was the custodian.”

Added Fr. Gáinza: “Re-established at the Beaterio, the Venerable Francisca devoted herself immediately to all the wishes of her fervent heart – the practice of the most sublime virtues – humility, silence, and the most ardent charity, mortifications were practiced jointly with her virtues and prayer, and the presence of God seasoned all the actions of her laborious life.

2. Justice

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the “virtue of religion.” Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships, the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good.

The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. “You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.” “Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

Shortly after the death of Mother Antonia, Mother Francisca and two others who just received the habit came to live in the house of Mother Antonia as in a convent.

There was a young woman of a Spanish-Japanese descent and a spiritual child of Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo who repeatedly requested him that she be introduced to Mother Francisca for she wanted to receive the habit. Fr. J. de Sto. Domingo left the decision to Mother Francisca. What could be Mother Francisca’s basis of her option? Was it just because she

The Catechism of the Catholic Church beautifully quotes St. Paul: “If I.. have not charity, I am nothing” Whatever privilege, service, or even virtue one has, “If I... have not charity, I gain nothing.” Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues. “So faith, hope and charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity”.

We reflect on how Mother Francisca lived this virtue in her time so as to be emulated today.

a. LOVE OF GOD

a.1. piety and love for prayer

In the bloom of her youth, Francisca lost her husband and having been bereft of offspring, she devoted herself totally to the practice of spiritual exercises and to the rigors of self-mortification, as well as mental prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments with admirable perseverance to her soul’s profit. Her home seemed not the habitation of secular people, but the dwelling-place of the most recluse religious, for her retirement and practice of spiritual exercises in vocal and mental prayer, made her home look like a chapel rather than an ordinary house inhabited by laymen.

She took the habit of the Dominican Tertiary, and with this new state she devoted herself anew to the exercise of piety and religion, observing with minute exactitude so blindly rendered, that she seemed to have lost her own will even on the most innocent and simple things. She with the other Beatas frequented the sacraments in the convent of St. Dominic, setting good example of humility and devotion.

She was not contented with her voluntary confinement in her house. She appealed to the Dominican priests and she moved heaven and earth in order to carry out her splendid idea.

The Lord deigned to grant the requests of His servant. The priests, who had opposed her idea, were now encouraging it. The difficulties disappeared in a manner which was miraculous to certain degree. The edifice was made ready with everything that was needed. The Beatas were very much pleased, particularly Mother Francisca for seeing realized what for many years she had desired and asked from God with persistent prayers and tears. On the feast of St. Anne of the year 1696, the Beaterio de Santa Catalina was formally established with Mother Francisca elected as Prioress for life.

a.2. devotion to the Eucharist

The prayer of Jesus is the only effective prayer, and His sacrifice is the only saving sacrifice. The Eucharist in which that sacrifice is renewed is our way of sharing in His prayer and sacrifice. For St. Thomas' devotion to the Eucharist, is the great prayer that includes all prayer. This, the sacrament of sacraments, "contains Christ", re-presents His sacrifice, and feeds believers on His Body and Blood in a communion that establishes the Unity of the Church.

For Mother Francisca, the Eucharist is the Center of her life. It was Jesus in the Eucharist that was her strength in trials and sufferings, who moved her to compassion for the poor, the sick and the young, and her inspiration to do God's will in unifying the Beatas in a Beaterio to carry out God's plan up to the present. This can be seen in her life that was centered in Jesus.

The narration of Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo started how Francisca after becoming a widow, gave herself truly to the service of God. She would frequent the sacraments in the Church of Sto. Domingo.

Wearing now the habit of St. Dominic, Francisca del Espíritu Santo together with her early companions Antonia de Jesus María, Sebastiana de Jesus, María Ana de la Vega, initially

CARDINAL VIRTUES

1. Prudence

Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going," It is not confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

Fr. Domingo Collantes, OP, describes her pleasant affability and great prudence in her rule over the "beaterio" and prudent economy in the management of her family.

Fr. Francisco Gáinza, OP, in his *Milicia*, writes of Mother Francisca: "In the blamelessness of her conduct and in the face of tribulations, she could find a colorful mixture of simplicity and frankness in her pleasing friendliness and great prudence, in the government of her Beaterio, she could discover the merciful discretion mingled with the prudent economy in the management of her family. Mother Francisca was elected prioress and discharged her office for fifteen years, for a lifetime because her exemplary life, her zeal for the regular observance, her mortification, and other virtues shone in her guaranteed prudence of her government and established immense hope

repugnance so much so that they missed mental prayer and Prime under the pretext of a headache or stomachache. Because of these, Mother Francisca admonished them, sometimes scolded them and threatened them with the zeal for the glory of God and the good of their state of life. For Mother Francisca, any affliction that others suffered aggrieved her, especially one that affected her sisters in the community.

b.4. fraternal correction

Due to Mother Francisca's great love and zeal for the glory of God, she did not hesitate to admonish and even scold some Beatas who took advantage of their going to church to meet and chat with lay acquaintances and discussing things that are not spiritual. Mother Francisca took notice that these slowly caused some of the Beatas to abandon their spiritual obligations, lose fervor, feel exhaustion and regret their avowed state of life.

When the Beatas were in exile in Sta. Potenciana, they were beset by many trials. Not having a Beaterio of their own, and not allowed to wear the habit but still following the rigors of common life by regular observance of rules and regulations like prayers and other spiritual exercises, have caused some of the Beatas to be restless and to waver in their vocation. Mother Francisca, out of charity and her love for the Beaterio, tried her best to advise the Beatas to persevere in their vocation.

Mother Francisca corrected the erring Beatas with prayers, love and compassion. With deep faith, she entrusted them to the Lord.

frequented the sacraments in the church of the Convent of Sto. Domingo in Intramuros. In the piety current at the time that means Mass, with Communion every fortnight more or less upon the permission of the confessor or spiritual director, and frequent, even daily confession.

An incident illustrates Mother Francisca del Espíritu Santo's great love for the Eucharist. When they finally had their own Beaterio and after their return from exile in Colegio de Sta. Potenciana, Mother Francisca intensely desired to have the Blessed Sacrament in their chapel. But Archbishop Diego Camacho y Avila refused to grant permission. When the new Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta arrived the following year, Mother Francisca again sought permission with insistence. Not getting it, she then proposed to the Father Provincial of the Dominicans that a direct passageway be built from the Beaterio to the church of the Colegio de San Juan de Letrán. When the idea was turned down, she waited until a new Provincial was elected and who was favorable to it. But it was still the former Provincial, Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo who actually built the passageway that gave access for the community of Mother Francisca to the Blessed Sacrament of the San Juan de Letran Church. The ready access meant that through a balcony the whole choir of the church was reserved for the religious women. A communion rail was placed for them, not to mention two confessional boxes with iron gates at the side of the choir.

Weakened by sickness and consumed by her penances, fastings and mortifications, Mother Francisca was bedridden before she finally passed away at the age of 63. She was blessed by having the Mass celebrated by her bedside, receiving Holy Communion with supreme joy. She was given the Viaticum solemnly in the Dominican way. In the afternoon of the day she died, she was buried in the church of San Juan de Letran (the first to be buried there), her tomb located over the steps of the main altar Gospel-side, as if in one final surge to be with her Eucharistic Lord and Master forever.

If Mother Francisca remained faithful to the will of God it is because her interior life was animated by prayer and

the intense communion of the Eucharist held a central position in her spirituality.

a.3. devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

To contemplate and be with Christ in the Eucharist is the Holy Father's call to all the faithful in the Third Millennium. And this in Mary's school of prayer, contemplating Christ with Mary. The rediscovery of the treasure that is the Rosary of Mary as the sweet chain linking us to God and as the special instrument of our spiritual nourishment is very vividly exemplified in the life of Mother Francisca.

At the instance of their spiritual adviser Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo, early on in the formation of the group of Mother Francisca, the decision was to have fifteen beatas in honor the mysteries of the Rosary. Each Beata would take a mystery of the Holy Rosary for her own particular devotion. This was in imitation of the same practice remembered by Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo to have been introduced in a convent of Dominican Sisters in the Canary Islands sometime in 1685 by Fr. Pedro de Santa María Ulloa, OP. Only later would the priest find out that such was already the idea of Mother Sebastiana, a mytic from Pasig and one of the original companions of Mother Francisca, long before.

When the Beaterio de Sta. Catalina was finally built out of the generosity of benefactors and of the Dominican Fathers, at last they have their own oratory. Mother Francisca right away ordered that the Rosary be prayed by the community three times a day: in the morning, early afternoon and at night. Mental prayer followed the Rosary at one o'clock in the afternoon, and again at midnight. It was the conviction of Fr. Sto. Domingo, that with the help of the Virgin of the Rosary, the lack of funds by the beatas did not prevent their acquisition of the needed resources.

as a widow but divine inspiration moved her to exercise these pious works inviting other women known to her. That is why her house gave it rather the appearance of an oratory. She was inspired to leave the dress of a widow and join a religious institute.

In 1682, after a prayerful decision, Francisca took the habit of the Third Order of Penance living in her own home. She continued to carry out the apostolic work of caring for the sick and the poor with the other Beatas. Her act of gathering people to pray together and practice works of charity reflected the apostolic community gathered in the praise of God and in a concrete experience of communion and collaboration.

With the other Beatas they frequented the sacraments in the convent of St. Dominic giving good example to others. Some of them particularly Francisca wished to live together in a community and Fr. Juan de Sta. Maria placed two of them: Mother Francisca and Mother Antonia in the houses of María García in front of the belfry of the convent of Sto. Domingo. But this did not last long because the houses were bought with the funds of the chaplaincies and they had to return to their own houses. But she did not give up her desire to live in community.

The Beatas especially Mother Francisca started to urge the new Prior, Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo about the Beaterio. In spite of opposition and resistance the Beaterio was established. The community was growing, so much so, that the house needed expansion. On July 26, 1696, the Beaterio de Sta. Catalina was formally inaugurated with the Beatas, making their profession and accepting the Rule of the Community. All of the them were very much pleased and did not cease to give thanks to God, particularly Mother Francisca for seeing realized what for many years she had desired and asked from God with persistence and tears.

When some Beatas started to indulge in unnecessary conversations, slowly they lost fervor. As they lacked spiritual devotion, all their activities in the Beaterio caused them

other beatas experienced impelled them to extend that same love and mercy to others. As a community who became “of one heart and soul” through the love poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they experienced an interior call to share everything in common including apostolic ideals and charitable service. Mother Francisca did not waste time in expressing such love and mercy of God to others.

Before returning to the Beaterio they felt a new way to greater perfection. In a letter to the Archbishop they stated their submission to the law of enclosure and their desire to have with them a large group of young native girls to educate them in the mysteries of the faith and Christian perfection. From then on, the Beaterio which was realized through the persistent prayers and tears of Mother Francisca and her love for the poor and the young carried on its mission as a school of sanctification and as an institution of learning primarily for the young poor native girls who from it acquired adequate preparation and disposition to the state of life where God was calling them. For Mother Francisca and the Beatas this was a better way of showing compassion to the young.

b.3. love of community

Francisca could have built a community in a family as an exemplary wife and mother. Or she could have accepted another marriage proposal after having been widowed young. Or she could have remained a childless widow the rest of her life.

But God has other design for her. She was called not just to build a community of 4 or 5 in a family but destined her to be a faithful bride of Christ and a mother of many.

Francisca felt the need for a community where a complete sharing with Christ could be experienced. She did not content herself praying or serving the poor and sick alone

b. LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” And again: “This is my commandments, that you love one another as I have loved you”.

The effectivity of one’s apostolate depends on the intensity of one’s prayerlife. Truly a Dominican, Mother Francisca’s love of neighbor is an outflow of her intimacy with Jesus in prayer.

b.1. as a widow

Francisca de Fuentes, widowed and childless after a brief marriage, could have remarried, considering that she was still young, and have lived a life in comfort. But the impulse of the Holy Spirit and her love for God prevailed over the temporary comforts of this world so that she decided to be free from earthly concerns in order to dedicate herself totally to the service of God and his people. This she did by remaining close to the Lord in her faithful observance of mental and vocal prayers. Because of her experience of an authentic relationship with God, Francisca felt free to do whatever God wanted of her, reading the signs of the time.

Francisca lived in the seventeenth century when missionary evangelization of the Philippine Islands was in progress. It was also an era when as a result of several calamities, Manila was a city of many impoverished widows and orphans, and other hapless dependents who lost their breadwinners in revolts, sea tragedies, fires and earthquakes.

Furthermore, Intramuros (Manila) at that period to be specific, was a place where many young and poor indian girls, natives of the land do not have a place to grow up nor to be

educated and in consequence many are lost as it is commonly known and evidently observed. Most of these girls are daughters of poor soldiers who were married to poor native women and Creole. In extreme poverty they usually die in the Royal Hospital leaving behind their daughters exposed to the danger of losing themselves. Many of these young girls were left abandoned sometimes they were found frequenting the streets and even lived there or at the entrance floors of the houses of other miserable men, so that they were exposed to many dangers.

It was in this context that Francisca responded to the conditions of her milieu. She was a widow herself, yet she did not wait to be served, but instead opened herself to God by serving others through her charitable response to the needs of people around her. Her love for God impelled her to give to the poor what she had, even what was necessary for herself. Seeing Christ in the infirm she would frequent the hospital of San Juan de Dios, bringing consolation and food for the unfortunate sick.

Francisca felt the need for a community where a complete sharing with Christ could be experienced. She sometimes invited some pious women known to her to share such experience of praising God together in their prayers and sharing the fruits of their contemplation by serving the needs of the poor. The works of charity which she was able to get others to exercise with her, revealed her missionary spirit of collaboration. Her works of charity were the heart of her mission. For it is love that is and remains the driving force of mission. Her mission principally was in her witnessing to people not to “have more” for she had given out even what was necessary for herself, but to “be more” loving and caring.

b.2. as a Beata

Having donned the habit of the Tertiary of Penitents of the Order of St. Dominic, Mother Francisca while living in

her home continued her charitable services with some pious women known to her until the Beaterio was founded.

Already in community in the Beaterio, Mother Francisca’s objects of charity were the Beatas who lived with her before, during and after the 2 years exile in Sta. Potenciana. As in any religious community, every sister is unique carrying with her the values taught and caught at home, society and environment.

One instance, an unhappy Beata wanted to leave the Beaterio under the pretext that the life in the Beaterio was rigorous. She left the Beaterio and eventually she needed help. Such situation, Mother Francisca’s compassion prevailed over the past incident that this Beata committed against her. Mother Francisca did not fail to assist her by requesting the Governor's Lady to protect her and then placed her in Sta. Isabel as a daughter of the Santa Mesa de la Misericordia.

Furthermore, her love and compassion to the poor and needy was shown when there was a scarcity of drinking water and she offered and allowed the poor people in the vicinity to fetch from the two big wells of the Beaterio.

Even amidst of difficulties coming from both out and within the community and already in the weakness of her old age, Mother Francisca was still concern for the welfare of the poor. She signed a receipt confirming that she received the amount of fifty pesos left by Don Juan de Escaño destined for alms for the poor.

Inspite of the trials she and the Beatas underwent: excommunication, dispensed from their vows, divested of their Dominican habits and then exiled for more than two years, Mother Francisca stood fast and faithful to her vocation.

Upon making the resolution and decision of their return to the Beaterio, Mother Francisca and the other Beatas could have just thought of the privileges they would enjoy in the enclosure. However, the love and mercy of God that she and