

## CONCLUSION

"Lord desired that no foundation be made without great trial on my part".

"Lord, I am a daughter of the Church. . . a daughter of the Church". . . My bridegroom and Saviour, this is the long-awaited moment for me to see you. Let us go. It is time... time to go home." She had loved much and was loved much in turn. . . "Amor con amor se paga". On October 4, 1582, at Alba de Tormes, in the arms of her beloved daughter, Sr. Ana de San Bartolome, Sr. Teresa of Jesus went home to her Spouse. She was 67.

At the age of 48, we twins went on a Marian 2002 Pilgrimage to Europe through an inspiration received by Luz, a namesake of Sr. Lucia, one of the visionaries of Our Lady of Fatima. It was our first time to visit Fatima where the Holy Mother of God appeared in May to October 1917 to 3 shepherd children. There, we had attended a Eucharistic celebration at the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrowful Mother, went to Carmel of Coimbra where Sr. Lucia lived and saw the house where the visionaries lived, prayed at the Cova de Iria – the Fatima Shrine, the site of the apparitions - where the remains of the visionaries are entombed; and attended a procession.

St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross were two great saints in Avila. He collaborated with Teresa in extending into the male communities the reform of the Spanish Carmelite Order she had begun among its female members, which led to the creation of the Discalced (Barefoot, Teresian) Carmelites as a separate Order. Despite frail health and great difficulties, Teresa established and nurtured 16 more convents throughout Spain. St. John of the Cross, the travelling companion of St. Teresa said: "Travelers cannot reach new territory if they do not take new and unknown roads and abandon the familiar ones." And from Philippians 4:19 \_ "And my God will fulfill all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Following St. Teresa's determined determination, we Secular Carmelite twins \_ Maria Luz O. Bolong, ocds and Maria Nila O. Argel, better known as "Ortega twins" have vowed to do God's Will. Pilgrimages, making statues, producing films, writing books, look unseemly to us being married women, but we live in the belief that we are created to know, love and serve God. We also take consolation with the fact that the first disciples of Jesus whom he "called" were married men.

We twins attended Carmel Hue, Vietnam's Centennial Celebration, on July 2009. Carmel Hue was established by nuns from the very monastery where St. Therese of the Child Jesus came from - Lisieux, France. There, we were shown a film on the Foundations of St. Teresa by Mother Prioress Marie Ange. She acceded to our request for a copy. After viewing the movie for the nth time, we were inspired to produce a stage play entitled: "Born For You—the Life of St. Teresa of Avila".



You could go in now if you want, and have your first look at *la niña*, Teresita.



Teresa: Juana, It is a cure I do not want, Juana, but one that I shall make in obedience. We could visit uncle Pedro at Hortigosa. It has been 7 years since I saw him last. It is perhaps God's plan that I see him again since I so badly need to be helped with my struggles with prayer. . .and he is just the right person to help me.



All her life she was a pilgrim on a journey . . . *Eya es nacida por Dios!* One long painful but glorious journey back to that dawn in March 1515 when through the the love between Don Alonzo and Dona Beatriz, she was born for God. As a tribute to this great woman let us remember that we too are born for God and God alone.

Fifteen years after, the year 2017, Luz again was inspired to return to Fatima, and thus, we went again to attend the 100th year anniversary of the apparitions and the “Miracle of the Sun”. It was exactly 707 days before the October 13, 2017 celebration. Upon setting foot at the colonnade to attend the culmination mass, Luz received a revelation from God. “People were moving towards me. Somebody pointing and with a joyous greeting said, “I knew that lady is special. I took a portrait of her.”

Noteworthy in ‘The 13th Day’, the first major motion picture on the Miracle of Fatima is the remark of Lucia’s mother \_ “what makes you so special Lucia dos Santos”? Coincidentally, a man at the Greece airport sketched Luz’s face and gave it to her before embarking to Turkey.

In this pilgrimage, we were not able to see the tomb of Sr. Lucia. A Notice was posted on the walls say that the Basilica was closed in preparation for the anniversary activities. During our Marian 2002 Pilgrimage, we had prayed at the sepulchers of Sr. Lucia’s cousins, Jacinta and Francisco. Beside the tombs of these two saints is the prepared resting place for Sr. Lucia.

Saint Teresa is personally associated with devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague, a statue she may have owned. The novena prayer to the Infant Jesus of Prague: O Jesus, Who has said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened," through the intercession of Mary, Your Most Holy Mother, I knock, I seek, I ask that my prayer be granted. O Jesus, Who has said, "All that you ask of the Father in My Name, He will grant you," through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask your Father in your name that my prayer will be granted. O Jesus, Who has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away," through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I feel confident that my prayer will be granted.

Pope Francis had one final piece of advice for those striving for goodness and happiness. When making daily choices, we must ask ourselves not, “What do I feel like doing,” but rather, “What is best for me?” This, the Pope said, is the question the Holy Spirit places in hearts. “This interior discernment can result either in frivolous choices, or in decisions that shape our lives.” In conclusion, he said, “Let us look to Jesus and ask Him for the courage to choose what is best for us, to enable us to follow Him in the way of love. And in this way, we discover joy.”

May our experiences shared in our book, “In the Footsteps of La Madre: Sta. Teresa de Avila” inspire those who read in a way that "sets hearts on fire."



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## AUTHOR



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In 1954, the late Judge Evaristo Ortega and Rosa Ubaldo, our parents, contributed their own twins to the Philippine population. And we \_ my twin sister and I \_ became incontrovertible statistics. Maria Luz, was named after then First Lady Luz Magsaysay. Being a 5 minutes younger, I was named Maria Nila after Leonila Garcia, wife of Vice President Carlos Garcia.

When we were kids, mama and papa made sure people would not mistake us as ordinary sisters. They dressed us like twins \_ and our joy and our parents' were limitless. We were practically inseparable \_ we shared the same room and bed, went to the same school and took the same course, had the same friends and interests.

After College, we went to Canada where we studied, worked and travelled. There's no place like home? Was it worth coming back home in the Philippines in 1977 after two and a half years of stay in Canada, with an immigrant status and earning dollars? Did God give me the same favor the Bible speaks of a 'wisdom' which King Solomon asked from God? Although there were some trade-offs, counting my blessings prove that it was the best decision.

The year 1999 was the start of our persevering discipleship. Now, some 20 years after, even as senior citizens we sometimes still dress in identical clothes during important occasions because we want to create an impact, doing God's Will as evangelists.

Retiring from the Philippine Information Agency as manager of the Vigan Information Center in 2015 with 37 years of service was not the end of a productive life. In fact, it was a transition point for beginning a new phase in my life.

My life with twin sister Luz is a merry and challenging mixture of family, apostolate, work (as part-time instructor of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication at Sea and Sky College), travelling, and relaxing.