AUGUST 5, 1912

Monday: **Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major and Our Lady of Snows**

Monday, August 5, was like any other hot day of August in Salamanca in 1912. Everything seemed to be in order in the big, old house of the Mostenses. At five thirty in the morning, the sister in charge of ringing the bell made her rounds throughout the novitiate dormitories, saying in a loud monotone, *"Benedicamus Domino"* and was matched by the communitarian response from the beds, *"Deo gratias."*

Mother Candida was already awake, and as always, and started preparing herself. Sr. Machiñena helped adjust Mother's shoes with difficulty, trying to make the knots of the cords before they would break! There was no way to convince Mother to change any part of her clothing which was already past its use, nor the cords of her shoes. For her, they could still be put to good use.

Nothing could foretell singularly sad events. Mother took her place as usual, in the chapel to start the daily prayer followed by the Eucharistic celebration with Fr. Juan Jose Hernandez, recently named chaplain of the community. During the Mass the organ was played as ordered by Mother Candida, as it was the feast day of the superior of the school, Maria Igarategui, who was also present. She was to incorporate herself that very day in the school community in Zamora Street, and now found herself well after staying for a long period of convalescence in the Novitiate. Mother Candida, together with the Mothers of the Council wanted to accompany her in the festive lunch which the school prepared with love.

While everything seemed to be in order, Mother Candida had started working on the backlog: slowly, but without pause, she started with the latest transactions so as to leave everything arranged before she returned from [the celebration in] the school of Zamora Street. No one noticed in her anything particular that would call attention.

After the Mass, she greeted M. Maria with an effusive embrace. After breakfast she went to her office [*despacho*] for an interview with Mother Perpetua Quiros who functioned as general procurator after Mother Josefa Gonzalez officially gave it up before embarking for Brazil. It was a brief but tender interview [with Mother Perpetua]: "After indicating for me to sit, she gave me the blessing, placing her hands on my head with love, and with that I left very contented, because with her blessing we practically knew that the difficulties disappear."

It was M. Perpetua who was physical witness to those last moments with Mother Candida in her simple office. She tells us how Mother Candida knelt before the crucifix [which is at the center of her writing table, a gift from the marquis of Castellanos] and entered into a few minutes of intense prayer. Before rising, still with eyes closed, she inclined her head as if to receive the blessing from above, "and with that, she left, no more to return."

It was a little past ten in the morning when they were told that the car sent by the school was waiting. Mother Candida, always accommodating and amiable, did not want to be delayed more and went down through the inner stairs. On the way to the parlor, she met some sisters. "She said

goodbye to all, some with a look, a few words, a *goodbye, my daughter* or a simple gesture, putting her hand on the head."

Accustomed to bidding goodbye to the sick although she was just a few hours absent from the house (or did she know it would be a definitive absence?). but they were urging her to go already, and this time she just sent a message to one sick sister that the car was waiting for her and she could not stay longer to see how she was, but that Mother had already blessed her. "I was in bed that day on this Novitiate (says Petra Calzada); in saying goodbye to all in the house she sent me a message that they were waiting for her and she could not go up [the stairs] to bid me goodbye."

"And with that she left, to return no more," wrote M. Perpetua. But she wrote it years after that August 5, 1912. When Mother Candida left the Novitiate that day, did she really know that death was near? Many data exist which affirm it. At least during the last year of her life she must have intuited something about it. Consolacion Irigoyen, among other witnesses, was consistent that in various occasions, in community recreations, in the "chapter of faults", Mother made them understand. In a conversation the bishops of Vitoria, Don Jose Cadena y Eleta asked her about the sisters who were taking courses in the Magisterio [Teaching], she said, *"Before these sisters finish their studies, I will die";* in a "chapter", *"I will soon die";* and during supper one day, *"This time I am leaving Tolosa with great pain,"* while bidding goodbye to this community. That was her last visit; it was May 9, 1912.

More surprising was the response she made in Salamanca to a question raised by Fr. Angel Garcia, a Jesuit retreatant after the Spiritual Exercises, when they were outside the church: "Who among us will die first?" Mother Candida was following behind him, and her firm, tranquil reply was a surprise: *"I will be the first one to die."* A few days later, specifically on July 31, also in Salamanca, the Foundress was mentioning to a priest the names of persons she knew who in a short time passed away. In a relaxed voice the priest said, "Madre Candida, our turn will come any day," to which Mother, putting her hand on her chest, replied, *"Yes, that will not take much longer for me, soon I will die."*

And yet, there were many other concrete and known things… After her death, [her sister] M. Angela found under the purple cover of the table in which Mother placed all her daily writings, a used envelope on which was written in pencil a clear and imperative phrase: *"I gather all the papers."*

Also found on the table was a letter addressed to the *Balneario* [health resort] of Azola wherein they reserved a room in the inn. The letter stayed there for a week. Mother did not want to send it by mail despite the insistence of a sister. "Why isn't the letter sent by mail? Let us see if the same thing will happen as last year, when we could not find a room!" to which Mother quietly answered, "*We will see, do not be impatient."*

But let us go back to Monday, august 5…

Accompanied by the Mothers of her council, Mother Candida got into the car and they left. Much later, on their feet, they joined with M. Gabriela, Dorotea, Josefa, Eugenia and Sister Petronila at lunch in the school to celebrate the feast day of M. Maria. In front of them was a small gift of the Novitiate to the community… "because the Rev. Mother was pleased that we send it."

Mother Candida was on the way to the school. This was the last trip of Mother Candida to the school, and as was her custom, she remains silent, a silence which was to be a prayer. Going up San Pablo Street, with the comings and goings of the carriages, memories flow. Everything was pushing into her memory, trying to find a place in it. Since they were many and deeply lived memories, each one clamored for attention. It was as if a focus of light suddenly but deeply enclosed, in a perfect arch, her own life story tied to the history of the life of the Congregation then and for always.

Passing by the house of the Concordia, how could she not remember the four long years spent there: the happy days lived in fraternity, the first students, few but avid learners; the welcome in the two better rooms of the house, with the basically necessary tables and chairs… the first vows as Hijas de Jesus; the first foundation in Peñaranda… Also the displeasures: the order of the City Hall to put back the façade, the barricades of barbed wire during the first Republic; Petra Piernavieja and her aggressive character; the expulsion of the Jesuit Fathers, the first defection (Cipriana Vihuela); the first death of an Hija de Jesus, the young Higinia Gil; the different sicknesses… together with these came the bittersweet memories such as the first interview with Fr. Herranz in Vigo where she went to "be immersed in the waters" as prescribed, accompanied by Cecilia Hernandez and Emilia Torrecilla (who were also sick).

The remembrances kept coming one after another, urgently asking to be relived.

This time the car passed in front of the church of San Esteban. She could not remember how many times she came here to listen to the sermons of the Dominicans. She also remembered the last conversation she had with the Dominican priest Joaquin Perez Pando in the receiving room of the convent; he was "her spiritual son" whom she helped overcome the acute crisis in his Dominican vocation.

Halfway along the street of San Pablo, on the left towards the direction of the plaza, her gaze rested on the palace of the marquises of Castellanos, her good and loyal friends! Always, they were the great benefactors of the Congregation. Don Agustin Maldonado y Carvajal died three years ago, but she maintained the same degree of love and trust with the widowed Marques Doña Rosario. How long have they not seen each other? Not so long, and the construction of the family pantheon was almost done. Little did Mother Candida imagine that one day her mortal remains would share the space with those of the direct family of the nobles of Salamanca by the express desire of Doña Rosario. That was how deep the bonds of friendship were of both of them.

Finally, already very near the plaza, exactly on the corner where the street of San Pablo merged with San Justo, she passed by the store of Don Jose Campo. This man helped her in the sale of the house in the street of the Placentinos. She had acquired it shortly before while looking for a more adequate house for her own but gave up living there for the neighborhood in which it was situated. She well knew that such decision would earn the fame of the foundress as poorly equipped for economic matters, but she also knew that, as she always did, she had consulted deliberately with this gentleman. "To do in everything the will of God, no matter what it costs."

The carriage was already moving straight along the Plaza Mayor so that after crossing, it will go through the archway of Calle Zamora. In front of the Ayuntamiento [Municipal Hall] she remembers her arrival in Salamanca accompanied by Fr. Herranz and her three companions. They

were waiting for Doña Jacoba and Emilia Torecilla; then they were joined by Gertrudis Garcia, Petra Piernavieja and Cipriana Vihuela. A few hours after came Juana Gomez. Poor girl, thought Mother Candida. She came to the house in Calle Zamora already very sick, and she died there a few days after the transfer, on October 10, 1877.

With a firm and sure movement the driver stopped the car at the same gate of the ancient palace of the Montellano, since 1877 the seat of the first official school of the Hijas de Jesus, "Colegio de la Purisima". The outer grilles of the entrance were open wide, like all other days. Perhaps, more wide open today, and much earlier.

They helped Mother Candida get out of the car – her leg had not been cured. Nothing else indicated her nearing death. "When she arrived in school, she seemed to be of full health, joyful and communicative with us," said Rosa Garcia, as told to her by "Sr. Rosita", the nurse.

Around ten thirty, together with her Consultors, "Mother General entered the parlor, full of health and sweet satisfaction". The whole community was waiting, and Mother and sisters embraced tenderly. After, with "greetings" and "welcome" heartily said, everyone embraced the superior, M. Maria. For some months she was out of the house although almost every day some sister would bring news from the Novitiate. That day – says the diary of the Mostenses – the harmonium was played for the feast day of the superior, and the community offered the Mass and the Holy communion for her. There was *Deo gratias* during breakfast.

With great affection Mother Candida looked at M. Maria Igarategui. Since before these two born from Andoain knew each other. For three years M. Maria accompanied the Foundress as her secretary in her numerous trips, and with her Mother shared her feelings, displeasures and confidences. They were strong emotions and displeasures in Medina and Tolosa. The Foundress liked M. Maria very much although she suffered with her difficult temperament, those mood swings without any justifiable reasons! There were several sisters who observed her manner which could be incontrollable. Among others, it was Joaquina Gomez who, referring to the foundation of Tolosa, affirmed that Mother "suffered continually for her character." But it was M. Maria herself who attested to this in the diary of Segovia, making a clear reference to herself: "Mother was displeased with a sister because it would have been better for this sisters to be serious and not to speak." Mother Candida as we know well, felt an incomprehensible but real inclination for those persons who made her suffer more. She was always attentive to them. From rome for example, she would address herself to M. Maria in these terms:

"Today I write you, telling you how much I have prayed for you in the basilica of St. Mary Major. Yes, my daughter, yes; there, to the Most Holy Virgin of the Snows I prayed much, very much for you, that you may be a true Hija de Jesus and faithful imitator of her virtues and that after this life you will have a beautiful crown in heaven" (November 5, 1902).

Let us go back to the entrance parlor of the school. After the greeting, and according to custom, Mother went up the main stairs to the choir accompanied by her daughters. We see her in the middle of the pew, kneeling, entering into a deep colloquy with her two great loves: Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and his Most Pure Mother. For thirty years the image of this Virgin was in the center of the altarpiece of the Church, in the side-chapel in her honor. Never – Mother said – could she repay Bishop Martinez Izquierdo fuch such a gift. The sculptor from Catalunia captured fully what

the Foundress wanted: *"I want a Virgin that inspires love and devotion to my daughters and the students of the school."*

Mother Candida stood up; her prayer lasted some ten minutes.

Everyone left the Church and entered the *despacho* which is part of the library of Colegio Mayor Montellano today) through the upper stairs. They had an hour-long animated conversation, and during this time the Mothers of other houses who were in the Novitiate joined the group including the Superior. The questions asked centered mainly on Congregational matters. Mother spoke of a topic very near to her heart: the presence of the Hijas de Jesus in Brazil. Days before, on May 31, she received a letter petitioning a new foundation in the country: Caconde (in the state of San Pablo). We are told that when she read this letter to the community of the ovitiate, "she cried with joy in seeing how much God our Lord protects our Institute." Tears of contentment and thankfulness kept coming from her eyes that Monday, August 5.

The clock struck twelve and the community bell was rung for prayer before the meal: examen and vespers. Mother Candida occupied the central chair in the choir. She would not return anymore to this church, and nobody, after her death, would go back to sit in "the seat of Mother", the central chair at the back part of the choir – a tribute rendered to the Foundress, done out of love, respect and veneration.

Everything seemed to be in order. The atmosphere was joyful, the sisters have prepared the toasts and the songs of greeting. Mother Candida moved fast and arrived first in the refectory, it was not her style to let people wait or to call attention. Aware of this, M. Maria "hastily left and told the sisters to move fast so as not to let her wait."

The usual blessing was said, and seated, Mother said the *Tu autem*. She simply and pleasantly commented on the gifts made in the Novitiate for the superior of the school for M. Maria to which the latter replied with humor: that she already knew the desire with which she was expecting them, and "above all, the one of the reverend Mother, the vicar general and the superior of the house, and that how well aware they were that the gifts had to be good since she was not contented with only a few".

In this familial and joyful atmosphere lunch began with a special soup as of a "first class day", and it was toward the end of the meal when the sisters noticed how Mother Candida started looking at the sisters intensely, one by one."What does this look mean?" was the comment of the chronicler of the diary of the school, and then as other comments were gathered over this gesture of Mother, the question arose: "Is she choosing some for the next expedition…?" Always Brazil was in their hearts and minds, until…

Another gesture of Mother called attention. They were serving her boiled eggs and trying to get one, they heard her say in a low voice, "What is happening to my hand that is trembling?" "Some spasm." "No, it's something else." Now they noticed that she seemed to move her left arm with difficulty. And as usual, being more concerned of others then herself, she tried to calm them: *"Do not be worried, daughters, whatever God wants".*

The sister at her side thought that it was too crowded and started to move her chair away a little; another stood up and started to massage her arm. And in the bustle, everyone was moving

towards the main table. “In getting closer to Mother, they noticed that her face was contorted with marked symptoms of paralysis; the consternation was general.”

The superior of the house took charge of the situation and gave first aid measures; a doctor nearest to the school was called. Meantime, Sister Rosa, the infirmarian, applied mustard-plaster to warm Mother.

Dr. Pedro Garrido came immediately, and seeing the infirmarian very concerned, he ordered Mother brought to her room for better observation. Due to her heaviness, her immobility and to go up the two narrow flights of stairs to reach the dormitory, it was decided to have a bed placed at the receiving room of the entrance hall. “The attack was so strong that her clothing could not be taken off normally; scissors had to be used. But we saw Mother surprisingly tranquil, and with meekness and naturalness she allowed things to be done to her.”

Dr. Garrido made a “desperate prognosis: in similar cases of nine thousand, only one survived”. After giving the prescription and instructions to the infirmarian, he left. The doctor of the house arrived around two o’clock and confirmed the gravity of Mother’s situation.

Almost at the same time that the doctor was leaving, the confessor and the novitiate were notified. They were just finishing lunch and the recreation had not yet started. Sr. Micheñena provides us with the next notice: “We were doing our chores and then we received the message: M. Joaquina Gomez and myself had to go immediately to the school.” Shortly they arrived at Calle Zamora, and they encountered the confessor of the two communities, Don Jose Montalvo: “Sisters, you have to consider that Mother Candida is very sick.” He said he found Mother very peaceful, with much peace.

And Micheñena continues with her report: “I entered the receiving room where she was and helped take care of her. She immediately recognized me and spoke to me with the same affection as always. From that time until her death, I was away from her for only two hours.”

“She knew and spoke to me,” this somehow perplexed the doctors: that in an episode of extreme gravity, she lost neither her consciousness nor her speech.

Nevertheless, on seeing her so prostrate, one sister dared to say to her: “Reverend mother, you are not well.” *“Yes, I see it; I will die.”* And she affirmed it with tranquility, as if the matter was not concerned with her or as if death was a minor matter.

Since they saw that the situation was irreversible, they thought that other persons should know about it, first of all, her blood sisters. Before calling them by telephone to give them the news, and thinking that their logical desire was to come and visit her, they wanted to respectfully talk about it to Mother Candida: *“They should not come; they cannot enter here; you already know that only persons by virtue of their office [doctors, priests…] can enter in the cloister.”* Her sister Angela intervened: :”But Reverend, you are in the receiving room and here it is not a cloister.” With effort Mother resolved the conversation: *“Since I am in bed, I want that this is considered my room as long as I am in it.”*

Communications of the grave sickness of the Foundress were also sent to the Bishop and to the Seminary. Fr. Munárriz, SJ came in haste. In seeing him, the face of the sick lightened up.

"Father, what providence of God! Your reverence helped Fr. Herranz die, and now you come to do the same with me."

"That is true, Mother Candida, but you will not die now." With kindness, Mother welcomed this affirmation but the two knew that time was moving fast.

"Can I offer you something?"

"Nothing, Father, nothing; may God reward you."

The priest insisted: "Is your conscience at peace?"

"Totally at peace, but give me the absolution because the more we receive it, the better."

With a final smile of goodbye, she also wanted to thank Fr. Munárriz for his dedication to a work which she held close to her heart since the beginning and long after the foundations years: the Sunday School.

The diaries of the school of Salamanca proves that since 1898, Fr. Munárriz took charge of this School with great pleasure: "July 31, 1898. Today, Sunday, the sisters went down to the Sunday School and Fr. Munárriz came to give a talk to the girls. Afterwards, the Reverend Mother, M. Antonia and M. Ma. Dolores came to greet him." He left the work for some years when he was appointed Vice-Rector. We find his name once more on May 15, 1905: "Fr. Segura and Fr. Munárriz came; he came back to take over once more the School." This continued up to August, 1911.

Knowing this, nobody was surprised at the wide, meaningful smile of Mother Candida to this venerable Jesuit. With his presence, he brought memories of beloved Fr. Herranz, or better said, not just memories that remind but relived, since they were never lost in her heart and mind. The absence of Fr. Herrranz cost Mother Candida a lot.

"The greatest sacrifice/the Lord can ask me
My beloved spiritual father/is to live far from you."

In her intimate poems she calls him "*the delight of my eyes" "Handkerchief for my tears", "Saving arch where the secrets of this poor Foundress are kept."*

With Ignatian sincerity she calls things by their names without pretension or ambiguity but also, with fidelity to the charism of St. Ignatius, she bends her will to the Divine Will:

"*If it is not possible to have this grace of having you near*
Oh Jesus, from now on I accede (to your will).
I want to be a great saint and afterwards see you in heaven."

Mother Foundress was about to enter into the joy of her Lord, and in Him and with Him to enjoy the company of Fr. Herranz eternally, without human limitations.

After Fr. Munárriz, Fr. Arguelles, SJ arrived. He just happened to be in Salamanca. Mother Candida also recognized him and addressed him in grateful words: "*Father, did you also come to visit me? How grateful am I for you have done so much for us."*

Although she seemed to relive the reality with these visits, she showed obstinacy so much so that he "decided to give her Holy Unction." It was nine thirty in the evening. They hastily informed the parish of del Carmen and immediately the coadjutor, Fr. Manuel Cuesta Jimenez came. The community was also given notice but was advised that it was better not to accompany the sick in these moments since they were afraid of burdening her so that she might be out of breath. "The clarity and calmness with which she was repeating in Latin the formula of each one of the unctions was something notable." Mothers and sisters went to the choir to pray the litanies of the Virgin and of the saints, fervently praying for the health of Mother.

All offered to pass the night by her side but it seemed more important that the following remain watching Mother: the Vicar (Angela Cipitria), the Superior of the Novitiate (Josefa Uranga), the Mistress of Novices (Joaquina Gomez), the Superior of Pitillas (Dorotea Urteaga), and Sister Machiñena. The rest went up to their rooms sad but with a certainty that they would be called if something happened.

Josefa Uranga could not take her eyes off Mother Foundress. She recalled that on that day, she dared to tell her in a filial tone full of trust: "I would like to see the death of the Very Reverend Mother". The reply of Mother was fast: "*I know why you want to see me die. You will see me dying," a*nd with an intense deep gaze as she could read the hearts, discovering the true intentions: "*What you want to see you will not see in me. I will die like the rest. You will not see anything extraordinary."* Such was what M. Josefa thought. Mother said "like the rest…" Will she die this evening? Her agony was disproportionate to the peacefulness shown in the face of the Foundress.

What were the other companions thinking during the long hours of watching from night to dawn, from August 5 to 6?

Her blood sister, M. Angela who was then the Vicar General, saw how in the measure that time passed her trust in God was growing. It is true that her habitual migraine was there during that night but, of what does she have to complain when she sees how much Mother suffers? She remembered…there were many memories and all of them wanted to be present. One stood out "that afternoon of long ago in Segovia, in 1889 she was in the church praying when she heard behind her the unmistakable voice of her sister: *It is the will of God that you remain in front of the house."* She cried, she pleaded but in vain. In the face of the will of God Mother Candida would never give way. Now she finds herself almost an orphan occupying the No. 2 position in the Congregation but the fear before this great responsibility gave way to an enormous peace. It was as if Mother Foundress laid her hand over her head, transmitting to her security and fortitude. This strange virtual perception would become a reality within a few hours.

Also seated in front of the sick was M. Dorotea Urteaga. She could not understand why God was giving her the grace to be an exceptional witness to these historical moments. Was it for discharging the service of superior in the school of Pitillas, the last school founded by Mo. Candida?

At her side equally expectant was M. Joaquina Gomez who from 1903 exercised being Mistress of Novices in the Novitiate of Mostenses. Companion and secretary of Mo. Foundress during the first years she enjoyed her trust and friendship. She could never sufficiently thank the affection that Mother showed her regarding "the sight", that serious operation in which one of her eyes had to be removed in May 1903. The Mother wanted to accompany her to Madrid and did not return to Segovia until she found her better. She dealt with her like a real sister. Now M. Joaquina repeatedly prayed the Our Father putting special emphasis on "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This was one of the "indirect" lessons that Mother gave her. Her attention was always

called to this strength with which the Foundress put in pronouncing these words showing the full conformity which she had with the Divine Will.

The fifth watcher was Sr. Machiñena who could not stay put in her seat more than ten minutes. She crossed countless times during the night the small pathway that separated her from sick Mother. She felt being the last responsible in attending to her as infirmarian since she had been her "assistant" then up to now.

The night passed relatively well as if the reception of the "Sacrament of the Sick" alleviated her. Several sisters placed big and small things during that night and the succeeding days. Mother did not complain nor ask for anything. If they gave her something she received it complacently. If they asked her "would you like this or that?" "*as you like"* she answered. She maintained her habitual conduct: "not to ask, not to refuse." She did not take anything that she did not offer to God first. While she was given teaspoonful by teaspoonful of water she was saying, "this is for Jesus; the next for Mary; then for St. Joseph; Holy Trinity; for evangelists; five wounds; the sorrows; choirs of angels, etc…" She carried on well the counting.

From the first moment of the accident Mo. Foundress had been conscious of the seriousness of the case. "*Like Fr. Primitivo,"* they would hear her say in a perfectly audible but calm tone. It was only two months ago (June 9) that Fr. Primitivo Vicente, Director of the Siervas de San Jose unexpectedly died. The happening caused great commotion in Salamanca. "At four o'clock in the afternoon he left his house and at four thirty he was a cadaver, in the Cathedral itself. While he was waiting together with the other priests for the time to enter the choir, he had cerebral hemorrhage. There was only time to give him general absolution."

The Foundress remembered in these moments how in her first years in Salamanca and by order of two Jesuit Fathers, Bombardó and Butiñá, she received in her own house one lady (Ascención Pacheco) who tried founding a new congregation. (Mother Foundress, when this was proposed to her, showed resistance.) "In the beginning the said lady would go everyday to the house of our sisters where she would spend some time with our Mother Foundress, receiving instructions regarding the work that she proposed to establish. The religion founded by this lady was Siervas de San Jose and Mother Bonifacia who substituted this lady in government as well as M. Anita continued receiving counsel from our Foundress." This happened many years before up to 1874. Afterwards there are no data in the archives of either congregation to verify if there were other new encounters. But she continued being united with them in their faithful commitment to the will of God in the spread of the Kingdom.