

When Dominican Friars came to Peru in the 16th century, they learned the native languages as they tried to spread the Gospel throughout Peru. Hoping to win the love and confidence of the native Peruvians, they also built churches, hospitals, and schools.

April 20, 1586, Maria d'Olivia gave birth to Isabel, a fragile child who was extremely weak. In time, she grew in strength and in faith and took the name of Rose by the time of her confirmation. Rose modeled her spirituality on St. Catherine of Siena, a Third Order Dominican. "As she grew to maturity, her parents were anxious to have Rose marry, and indeed there were several worthy aspirants for her hand. Rose did not wish marriage, and, to end the arguments and offers, she joined the Third Order of St. Dominic, donned the habit, and took a vow of perpetual virginity."ⁱ

She lived a quiet life of prayer and penance often fasting from food and sleep. "Naturally her health was affected, but the physical disorders which resulted from this regime-stomach ailments, asthma, rheumatism, and fevers-were suffered uncomplainingly."ⁱⁱ Her family was very concerned for her and tried to persuade her to be more attentive to her health and to social norms. "For fifteen years Rose bore the disapproval and persecution of those close to her, as well as the more severe trial of desolation of soul."ⁱⁱⁱ The Lord took note of her devotion and her genuine piety. Rose experienced mystic visions as her spiritual fortitude strengthened.

Very aware of the poverty around her, Rose took up the cause of those oppressed by Spanish overlords. Peruvian natives were often exploited as cheap labor to mine gold and silver for the Spanish Empire. Rose spoke out against vice, exploitation, and corruption as the overlords oppressed the impoverished. Sometimes, Rose took the sick and hungry into her own home to better care for them. The elderly and the homeless saw her radiate the love of Christ and could not help but turn to her as a model Christian witness.

Rose continued to combat evil and exploitation through her own austere practices. "During an illness towards the end of her life, she was able to pray, 'Lord, increase my sufferings, and with them increase Thy love in my heart.' This remarkable woman died on August 25, 1617, at the age of thirty-one."^{iv}

Rose had a remarkable influence on those she so fervently prayed for and tried to defend. When her lifeless body was carried in procession to the cathedral, crowds surrounded her and mourned her death. "For several days it was impossible to perform the ritual of burial on account of the great press of sorrowing citizens... She was finally laid to rest in the Dominican convent at Lima. The ties that bind us do not end with death and Rose interceded for many seeking miracles and cures. "Remain in my love, says the Lord; whoever lives in me and I in him will bear much fruit" (Jn 15b,9b).

"Rose of Lima was declared patroness of South America and the Philippines; she was canonized by Pope Clement in 1671, August 23 being appointed her feast-day. This holy woman is highly honored in all Spanish-American countries."^v

The Gospel of Matthew pits Jesus against the Pharisees. "The evangelist discerns in his church many of the same faults that he finds in its opponents and warns his fellow Christians to look to their own conduct and attitudes"^{vi} As we see the faults of the Spanish overlords in the lifetime of Rose of Lima, we must also look critically at our own day and age.

In the words of Pope Francis from *Laudato Si*, Mother Earth "cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will" (#2).

“O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light...Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.”^{vii}

ⁱ <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/saints/rose-of-lima-753>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Note to Matthew 23:1-39

^{vii} vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si #246