

the mystical experience of  
**St. Rose of Lima**  
according to the source documents

Fr. Julián de Cos, O.P.

# THE PRAYER OF *Love*

THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF  
**ST. ROSE OF LIMA**

ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE DOCUMENTS

*Fr. Julián de Cos, O.P.*

*Translated from the Spanish by the Dominican Sisters of Mary,  
Mother of the Eucharist*



*Cover Image: Devotional Drawing made by St. Rose of Lima.*

*Back Cover: Rose of Lima by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1670.*

*To the Novices of  
the Dominican Sisters and Nuns*

*“Whoever is without love, does not know God,  
because God is love.”*

*-1 John 4:8*

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## **Translator's Preface to the English Edition**

Even in Dominican convents, we have very few books in English about Saint Rose of Lima, one of the preeminent examples of feminine holiness within the Order of Preachers.

In this volume, we see how her mystical espousal to Our Lord on Easter Sunday of 1617 was the culmination of a lifetime of her “prayer of love,” which has been so beautifully presented to us by Fray Julián de Cos through source texts and Saint Rose's original works.

*The Prayer of Love* was originally published as *Oración del Amor* and offered as an e-book in the Virtual Library of the Order of Preachers in Spain. We are immensely grateful to Fray Julián de Cos for allowing us to publish his work in English. All efforts have been made to be faithful to the original works, particularly those from the Process of Canonization. In order to maintain consistency throughout the document, all pronouns referring to the Lord have been capitalized.

After Saint Rose of Lima was proclaimed “the Principal Patron of the New World,” art was produced throughout Latin America to encourage devotion to this saint of the Americas; however, the vast majority of this rich cultural patrimony has not yet reached Catholics in the United States. Therefore, we have selected a collection of images, principally from colonial Peru, to accentuate this prayerful text. In the final pages of this volume, a series of paintings by Laureano Dávila illuminates key moments in Rose's relationship with Christ. All images, except for the sixteen hearts, and the accompanying captions are proper to the English edition.

Unless otherwise noted, footnotes are from the original Spanish text. Additional “Translator's Notes” have been included to provide context

into phrases reflecting Spanish language and heritage that cannot be adequately rendered into English as well as colonial-period history or customs.

It is our prayer that this work will allow English readers to know and love our Dominican sister, Saint Rose of Lima. However, more than anything, we pray that by knowing and loving Saint Rose of Lima, the reader may come to know and love her Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ.

Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist  
Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection 2021

## Introduction

Saint Rose of Lima continues to be a great spiritual reference point for Latin America and the whole world. However, we must place this figure within the context of the current times. In our post-modern society, Saint Rose speaks to us of the importance of disinterested and generous love—a love that grows out of our relationship with God, a love which we should share and preach.

With this in mind, in this little book we will try to become familiar with the mystical experience of Saint Rose by situating it within the context of the history of spirituality and basing our work on the testimonials of those who knew her best, gathered in the “First Ordinary Process of Canonization” (which we will refer to simply as the Process of Canonization).<sup>1</sup>

We do not pretend to offer an exhaustive scientific study; for that, there are other works with much greater documentation.<sup>2</sup> Nor is this a biography; many of these already exist.<sup>3</sup> It would be better classified as a book on the spirituality of Saint Rose, based on the source documents.

We wish to follow a fairly simple structure. Through a few introductory chapters, we will familiarize ourselves with the spiritual context in which Saint Rose lived and by which she was supported. After this, we will acquaint ourselves fully with the testimonials gathered for the Process of Canonization, focusing on her mystical experience. Finally, we will contemplate the works Rose herself left us: some of her poems, three letters, the prayer called the “Angelic Exercise,” the sixteen hearts that she painted in the “Mercies of the Soul” (or “Wounds of the Soul”), and the “Spiritual Ladder” that expressed symbolically what she felt for her Beloved.

1 Hernán Jiménez Salas, *Primer proceso ordinario para la canonización de Santa Rosa de Lima*. 1617. Published: Monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria, Lima, 2001.

2 The writings of two Peruvian researchers stand out: Pinilla, “*Rosa limensis. Mística, política e iconografía en torno a la patrona de América*” Lima 2001, and Busto Duthurburu “*Santa Rosa de Lima*.” Lima, 2006.

3 We wish to highlight the biography written by a Dominican nun of the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, de Alcalá de Henares (España): Sor María del Mar Castro Malo: *Ofrenda a Santa Rosa de Lima*, 2012. In this work, the mystical sense of the asceticism of Saint Rose is shown very well.

We are also going to attempt to fulfill another objective with this little book: We need to explain the context for the harsh, ascetic images that most people have of this saint. These do not correspond to reality, as we will demonstrate with the facts of her life and testimonies about her. Saint Rose was first and foremost a mystic. By looking at it from this angle, we will see how her hard ascetic life can only be understood from her loving contemplative life.

For centuries, Saint Rose has been presented to us as a very charitable woman who was above all very penitential. At times she has been used as the example of how “someone who suffers much will become very holy.” This is the fruit of a particular historical context, one which deserves all respect. However, it is necessary to recognize that now, in the midst of the twenty-first century, more than fifty years since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), this image of Saint Rose is difficult for the modern believer to digest.

We have titled this book *The Prayer of Love*, because if we analyze the historical data that we have from this saint, we can see that what stood out the most in her was her love of God, of neighbor, and of the created world. The fundamental nucleus of Saint Rose’s prayer was not ascetic sacrifice, but mystical love.

Indeed, in reading her Process of Canonization, we discover that what stands out most is her love. For this reason, the stories of her mystical experience could well be worth a simple, small spiritual treatise about “the prayer of love.”

If asceticism refers to how we should put forth effort in our relationship with God, mysticism consists in letting God draw us to Himself. Asceticism is self-control. Mysticism is passivity before God. Both are necessary: asceticism without mysticism remains mere human effort; mysticism without asceticism is impossible because if we do not control ourselves, we will not be capable of letting ourselves be led by God.

This helps us to see that Saint Rose was someone who put forth intense effort—ascetically—in order to have the most intimate relationship—mystically—with God. What does this tell us? It tells us that we should

make every effort on our part so that we can live in union with God in love. Saint Rose did this in her way, within the framework of her time, and we should do the same according to the framework of our own. For some, this ascetic self-giving will consist, for example, in renouncing selfish whims; for others, it will be to work for the common good even at the cost of their own well-being. Others will have to overcome habits, mental health problems, and harmful addictions. Each one will know what he has to do in order to walk spiritually toward God.

But if we have Saint Rose as a model, we will know that it is possible to give everything to God. Above all, we will know that it is worth all pain to do so; despite everything she suffered, Saint Rose felt fully compensated by the love she shared with God, with people, and with nature.

We wish to acknowledge Fray Hernán Jiménez Salas<sup>4</sup> who transcribed the Process of Canonization, and the monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria (Lima) for publishing it. As we have already said, we have taken many excerpts from this document. Since they were written in seventeenth-century Castilian Spanish, we have adapted them linguistically to make them more understandable, pleasant, and easy to read. We have done the same with the letters and other texts of Saint Rose, with the exception of her poems.

The theological study *Santa Rosa de Lima, la patrona de América*, carried out by Fray Luis Alonso Getino (1877-1946) has also been a great help to us.<sup>5</sup> This friar, in addition to basing his work on the Process of Canonization, discovered the saint's manuscripts which we have already mentioned in the monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria in Lima: "The Mercies of the Soul," (also called "The Wounds of the Soul"), the "Spiritual Ladder,"<sup>6</sup> and some of her poems.

Finally, we are very grateful to the Peruvian Dominican friars and sisters who have advised us in this study, and to the theologians of the convent of Saint

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4 Translator's note: "Fray" is the Spanish title for friar, and will be used throughout this book. Although it comes from the Latin word for "brother," in the Dominican Order it usually refers to a priest.

5 Getino, *Santa Rosa de Lima, Patrona de América*, Madrid, Publications of the Consejo Superior de Misión, 1943.

6 See Getino, pp. 55-130. Also, Bibiano Cano, "Un aspecto del magistro espiritual de Santa Rosa de Lima," *Vida Supernatural*, 99, (2019).

Stephen in Salamanca, who have helped us transcribe the ancient scholastic language used by some of the canonization witnesses into understandable language. Gratitude also goes to the Dominican brothers and sisters who have reviewed this book.



Saint Rose of Lima with the Holy Family. Peru. 18th Century.

# 1

## Brief Chronology

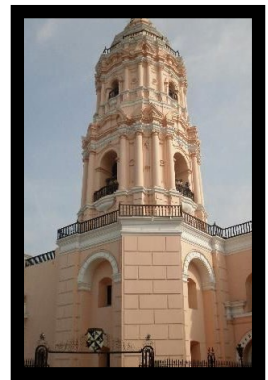
To get to know a spiritual figure, it is essential to start with the general trajectory of his or her life. Through all of life's ups and downs, God continuously offers us a path that will lead us to Himself. He does so without forcing us; in each moment we are free to act interiorly as we wish, and we are responsible for our decisions.

We now will look at the key events that marked the life of Saint Rose.

### *Childhood and beginning to pray*

## 1586

Our saint was born in the city of Lima, which was the capital of the Vice-royalty of Peru at that time. Her name was Isabel Flores de Olivia. Her father, Gaspar, was an infantryman in the Spanish army and the owner of a small business. Her mother, Maria, was a dressmaker. Isabel was the fourth daughter of fourteen children. She lived three blocks from the convent of the Most Holy Rosary, which belonged to the friars



Present-day Convento de Santo Domingo, Peru

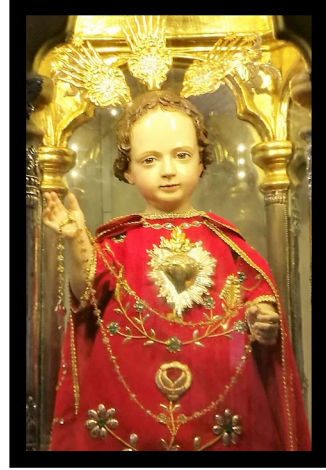
of the Order of Preachers. Today it is the convent of Santo Domingo (Saint Dominic).<sup>1</sup>

When she was three months old, she began to be called “Rose” because she was so pretty. This name bothered her, as it seemed pretentious.

Her parents tried to give her a good human and Christian education.

## 1591

When she was five years old, Saint Rose became very devoted to the image of the Child Jesus of the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus at the convent of the Rosary. This image would later be called “the little Doctor;” when Saint Rose dedicated herself to caring for the sick, He would often come with her, inspiring her with the knowledge of how to cure their illnesses. This is the Child Jesus represented in her iconography.



St. Rose's *Doctarcito*, can still be found in Santo Domingo Image del sagrat cor de Jesús a l'església de Santo Domingo, al Cercado de Lima | Pitiquin | Wikimedia Commons | CC-BY-SA 4.0

At this time, Saint Rose began to practice mental prayer, meditatively reciting prayers and aspirations.

### *Moving houses and coming of age*

## 1596

When she was ten years old, she moved with her family to Quives (a town located sixty kilometers from Lima) where her father managed a silver mine.

## 1598

When she was eleven or twelve years old, she received the sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of Archbishop Toribio de Mogrovejo, who named her “Rose.”

<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note:* Although in English, a convent typically refers exclusively to homes for Sisters or nuns, in Spanish-speaking countries, convents (conventos) are houses for either male or female religious.

At the age of twelve, at the beginning of adolescence, she read *The Life of Saint Catherine of Siena* (or the *Great Legend*), by Blessed Raymond of Capua. Reading this book left an impression on her soul that would last her whole life; from that day forward, she imitated Saint Catherine by taking a vow of virginity, cutting her hair and putting on a veil, praying frequently and intensely, practicing charity, and performing rigorous penances that alarmed her family members.

Furthermore, contemplating an image of the *Ecce Homo*, she felt called to put a hidden crown of thorns on her head so she could share the pains of Christ. Due to her modesty, she concealed it by covering it with her veil. In the years that followed, she made two other variations of the crown of thorns.

### 1599

When she was thirteen years old, she reached the prayer of union. It was then that she began to feel as if God was embracing her soul with His love and was guiding her toward Himself. Likewise, she had ecstasies—experiencing God drawing her into Himself—as well as visions of Christ, the Child Jesus, and the Virgin.

### 1601

When Saint Rose was fifteen years old, the mine where her father worked collapsed, and the whole family returned to their house in Lima.

### 1602

The next year, Saint Rose began to suffer difficult spiritual crises, which reappeared intermittently until she reached the mystical espousal, shortly before her death. These crises did not keep her from persevering in her life of prayer, to which she dedicated twelve hours each day. Furthermore, she became very devoted to the Eucharist.

Due to her family's economic problems, Saint Rose had to work in the garden and embroider cloth.

Also during this time, she was courted by various suitors, but she rejected them all, despite the opinion of her friends and family members.

### *Consecration to God*

## 1603

At seventeen years old, seeking to increase her penance and dress with humility, Saint Rose made herself a tunic of rough serge, of the same style worn by the Franciscan tertiaries. She wore this for the rest of her life.

She increasingly felt the force of the call of God in her heart. The missionary life attracted her very much, and she wished to die as a martyr. On the other hand, however, she wished to consecrate herself to the contemplative life. She encountered the obstacle that there was still no Dominican monastery in Lima.

## 1604

At eighteen years old, Saint Rose rejected a proposal to enter the monastery of the Poor Clares. She did not enter there, because she desired to be a Dominican like Saint Catherine.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, her mother was categorically opposed to her entrance into that monastery, but for a very different motive: she wanted Rose to marry. It seems that in the following years, Saint Rose had other offers to enter other monasteries, but she did not do so.

Her contemplative vocation led her toward imitating the Desert Fathers. To do this, Saint Rose began to seclude herself in a hut she built on one end of the garden at her house.



Rose receives the habit. Laureano Dávila. 18th Century.

## 1606

When she was twenty years old, Saint Rose followed the footsteps of Saint Catherine by obtaining permission to enter the Third Order of Saint Dominic as a Lay

<sup>2</sup> Process of Canonization 14v (p. 36 in the Spanish edition by Hernán Jiménez)

Dominican and consecrated virgin. From that day forward, she wore the white Dominican habit, although she never took off the rough Franciscan-style penitential tunic that she wore underneath as a camisole.

That year, Saint Rose transformed the hut in the garden into a small adobe hermitage; she spent many hours shut away in it. In addition, she continued working in the garden, making dresses, giving classes to children, and tending the sick.

## 1611

At twenty-five years old, after speaking with a Dominican friar and praying about it, she took “Rosa de Santa Maria” as her name.

## 1612

When she was twenty-six years old, Saint Rose judged that the time was right to carry out her desire to be a Dominican nun. Thus, she began to promote the construction of a Dominican monastery, which would bear the name “Saint Catherine of Siena.” Her idea was that this monastery would gather contemplative women of American, European, and African origin. She would be the infirmarian of the community. Unfortunately, she never saw this dream come to fruition, as twelve years passed before the monastery’s foundation.

### *Tuberculosis and mystical marriage*

## 1614

At twenty-eight years old, Saint Rose contracted tuberculosis, which made her health continue to decline little by little until her death. In order to help her, Fray Juan de Lorenzana became her spiritual director and proposed to Rose’s mother that she send her to live in the family home of the accountant Don Gonzalo de la Maza. He and his wife, Doña Maria de Uzátegui, took such good care of her that she called them “father” and “mother.” Their house was two blocks from the church of the Jesuits, who were their good friends.

Don Gonzalo put Saint Rose in contact with various Jesuits who could accompany her spiritually and with the learned doctor Juan del Castillo, so

that he could do a thorough “examination of conscience” and help her to clarify her mystical experiences. Rose accepted all of this gladly; in fact, she was the one who asked for their assistance in spiritual matters.

## 1616

When she was thirty years old, she adopted a little boy. If God willed it, she wanted him to be a missionary.

## 1617

When she was thirty-one, she reached at last the mystical espousal with her Beloved. It occurred on Palm Sunday in the convent of the Rosary. It seems that because she was already very weak from her tuberculosis and so they did not give her a palm to participate in the procession. However, she thought God was punishing her for some offense she had committed. Frightened, she walked toward the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary. While praying before the image of the Virgin with the Child, she sensed Him saying to her: “Rose of my heart, be my spouse.” To this she replied, “I do desire it, Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

A week later, on Resurrection (Easter) Sunday, the marriage took place in the church of the Dominicans, with a friar placing on her hand a ring that had been ordered to be made for her for this purpose.



Funeral of Rose of Lima. Argentina. 17th Century

### *Death and canonization*

On August 24, four months after her mystical marriage, Saint Rose died in the home of Don Gonzalo de la Maza. The Viceroy and many other authorities came to the funeral. Her body was interred in the convent of the Rosary in Lima.

A week later, on September 1, the process for her canonization began.

## 1619

The people’s devotion to Saint Rose reached such high levels that two years after her death, they had to move her relics to the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, in the convent of the Rosary.

<sup>3</sup> Translator’s note: In answering “Sí, quiero,” Rose is answering with the words of a bride saying her vows.

## 1622

The autobiography written by Saint Rose, together with “Mercies of the Soul” and “The Spiritual Ladder” was sent to Madrid by the Inquisition in Lima. Nothing further is known of the autobiography, although it has been searched for in various historical archives.

## 1624

Seven years after the death of Saint Rose, the Monastery of Saint Catherine was founded in Lima, fulfilling her great dream. This monastery was established four blocks from Don Gonzalo’s house.

## 1628

Four years later, the mother of Saint Rose, Doña Maria de Olivia entered this monastery as a novice. A beautiful tradition in the monastery tells how, when she fell sick and was going to die, her daughter Rose came down from heaven to care for her.

## 1668

Saint Rose was beatified by Clement IX.

## 1671

Saint Rose was canonized by Clement X, who declared her the “Principal Patron of the New World.” She is the first American saint.

## 1678

Six years after her canonization, a Dominican religious house was founded in what was the old house of Don Gonzalo de la Maza.

## 1708

Thirty years later, this religious house became the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria. The room where our saint died is preserved to the present day.

1747

In Arequipa (a city in southern Peru), the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria was founded.

1816

Saint Rose was declared the “Patroness of American Independence” in the Congress held at Tucuman, Argentina.

Eucharistic Allegory Saint Teresa, Saint Rose of Lima and Saint Catherine of Siena next to the Fountain of Life. Peru. 18th Century.





## Historical Context

To understand better the mystical experience of Saint Rose and the importance that love had in her relationship with God, people, and nature, we must study the historical context in which she lived, and in which she was later known as an example of holiness.

- Why have we received such an ascetic, suffering image of Saint Rose?
- What meaning did the Cross of Christ have for her?
- What spiritual examples did she have throughout her life?
- How did she interiorly live her illnesses?
- What relationship did she have with plants and animals?
- Why did she spend long hours by herself shut up in a hermitage?
- What image did she have of God?
- And what image did she have of herself?

We will now try to answer these and other questions.

### *Tridentine anti-mysticism*

Sixteenth-century Spain is the most complex period in the history of Christian spirituality. In this time period, spiritual schools brought from earlier centuries, such as *devotio moderna*,<sup>4</sup> the movement to reform religious life, and Renaissance humanism, joined forces with

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4 *Translator's note:* Devotio moderna was a movement epitomized by the work of Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) which emphasized the role of personal prayer and meditation on the life of Jesus Christ. It reduced the focus on study that had been prominent in the preceding centuries. See Julián de Cos, *Historia de la espiritualidad cristiana* (2020), from <https://www.dominicos.org>

others arising in the sixteenth century itself, such as Erasmism,<sup>5</sup> the Franciscan Recollects,<sup>6</sup> the Society of Jesus with its novel Ignatian spirituality, and the Carmelite reform of Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross.

This all provoked a great mystical movement in Spain, which encouraged the faithful to practice mental prayer as a means to an intimate encounter with God. Unfortunately, there were some who—although they had good intentions—ended up going too far, claiming that neither the sacraments nor the Church itself was necessary for a person to have a good relationship with God. And so separating themselves from the Christian community and ceasing to celebrate the faith with the Church, in many cases, they ended up distorting the image of God—even to the point where God became a secondary element in the spiritual journey as they prioritized their own inner well-being.

This was pejoratively called “illumism” or the “movement of the enlightened,” because it seemed that their followers pretended to be illuminated by a superior wisdom. To complicate matters even further, the Protestant Reformation also arose, which in Spain had a particular influence precisely on these groups of the enlightened, since the Protestant spirituality promoted—among other things—the rejection of the Church’s mediation.

With this being the case, in the midst of the sixteenth century, confessors became increasingly alarmed at hearing in their penitents—many of whom were nuns—ideas cut from the Illuminist or Protestant cloth. Because of this, the Church’s reaction was immediate: In 1559, it published the forceful “Index of Banned Books” in which the Spanish Inquisition acted against thirteen books by ten foreign authors, and twenty-five works by ten Spanish authors. Notable authors on this list included Juan de Avila (1499-1569), Saint Francis de Borja (1510-1572),

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5 *Translator’s note:* A humanist movement based on the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536) that favored the role of the laity, reading of the Bible, and mental prayer. It tended to downplay vocal prayer, the liturgy, and asceticism. Cf. de Cos, *Historia de la espiritualidad cristiana*.

6 *Translator’s note:* A reform movement within the Franciscan Order based on the Gospel teaching that “when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret” (Matthew 6:6). It emphasized personal solitude and an affective mysticism. Cf. de Cos, *Historia de la espiritualidad cristiana*.

Fray Luis de Granada (1504-1588), Franciscan Friar Francisco de Osuna (1497-1541), and Fray Bartolomé de Carranza (1503- 1576). Fray Luis de Granada reacted first, docilely correcting the expressions that had caused confusion for the Inquisition. Because of this, he was able to reprint his books and write many others. Other spiritual authors did the same.

Shortly afterward, with the conclusion of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Saint Teresa of Jesus (1515-1582) and Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) were writing their books. Out of fear of the Inquisition, they took great care not to include any confusing expressions. With them, Spanish mysticism reached its peak.

Even the faithfulness of these writers did not prevent a great fear of mystical deviations from emerging in the Church. Because of this, after the Council of Trent, an “anti-mysticism” arose that would remain in force for the next four centuries until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This anti-mysticism was further reinforced when Italian “quietism” and French “semi-quietism” arose in the seventeenth century; the Church found in these movements elements similar to the Spanish “Illuminism.”

It was within this anti-mystical context that Saint Rose lived, and her spirituality was later transmitted.

### *Is there an ascetic way and a mystical way?*

As a fruit of the Tridentine anti-mysticism, the Church promoted the separation of the ascetic path and the mystical path. Asceticism was offered to the faithful, instilling in them the importance of saying vocal prayers, doing harsh penances, and performing works of charity, in addition to assisting at the sacraments and participating in pious popular devotions. It was affirmed that one could reach what was called “acquired contemplation” in this way. It was called “acquired” because it was thought to be acquired through one’s personal effort.

The mystical way was reserved for a small group of select people to whom God had given a special grace. This was called “infused contemplation”

because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Following this path, one could arrive at the perfection of spiritual experience.

Therefore, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, complex treatises on asceticism and mysticism were published, through which confessors and spiritual directors could form themselves. But the faithful were taught the path of asceticism through simple catechisms and entertaining lives of the saints. These stressed—and embellished—the vocal prayers, devotion, works of charity, and penances performed by the Saints. However, to avoid confusion or deviations, these books rarely talked about the Saints' mystical experiences.

We have a good example of all of this in the works that were written about Saint Rose. We see how in 1663, Fray Leonardo Hanson describes her hard penitential life:

“At the beginning, when she was vested in the habit of Saint Catherine of Siena, she was not content with the whip of cords that typically make up the discipline; she made one of iron chain. In imitation of her father Saint Dominic, she hit her back and shoulders with so much severity that her underclothes, the walls, and the floor were bloody, as many people noticed. The innocent virgin believed that she should take such rigorous vengeance for her sins, and moved with sympathy by the public calamities that the world suffered, she tried by this means, with the example of the Seraphic Teacher (Saint Teresa), to placate the just wrath of God, and mitigate His justice. She sacrificed herself as a bloody victim, without taking pity on herself—at times on behalf of the work of Holy Mother Church, at others for the misfortunes of the country—to beseech mercy and to stay the scourge of God, at the cost of her own wounds.”<sup>7</sup>

In this anti-mystical context, it becomes understandable that Fray Luis Alonso Getino—one of the friars who had done the most to bring to light the mystical life of our saint—does not talk about her as a “mystic” but rather as an “intellectual,” in his book, which we have previously mentioned, *Santa Rosa, Patrona de América* (1943). Also, when he comparing Saint Rose with Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa of Jesus, he also describes them as “intellectuals.”

7 Leonard Hansen, *Vida admirable de Rosa de Lima* (1929), pp. 71-72.

We see this here:

“Saint Rose comes to be for America what Saint Catherine of Siena was for Italy and Saint Teresa of Jesus was for Spain. But there is one characteristic, which today is valued much more than in previous times, in which the young Peruvian appears to be from inferior stock compared to these other saints, and that is in the intellect, the cultivation of intelligence for things such as producing works of science and art, as well as taking on functions of management and government...

She was not believed to be capable of this, or what she did was not thought to be enough. For this reason, those that know her to be so devoted to and such an imitator of Saint Catherine of Siena have had to search for similarities between these two heroines. In the way of “the intellectual,” it has not turned out to be possible for them to equate her with [Saint Catherine].”<sup>8</sup>

As we have already discussed, anti-mysticism in the Church disappeared after the Second Vatican Council. This occurred because some years earlier, in the first half of the twentieth century, a group of authors emerged who rejected it, headed by the priest Auguste Saudreau (1859-1946), and the Dominican friars Juan Gonzalez Arintero (1860-1928) and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964). They demonstrated that the spiritual path all believers have to take toward God is at the same time ascetic and mystical. As such, they refuted the separation between the ascetic way and the mystical way, as well as the so-called “acquired contemplation,” because contemplation is a gift that only the Holy Spirit can give us.

### *The Shadow of Illuminism*

Truly, in the time of Saint Rose, there was a certain anti-illuminist psychosis in the Spanish territories. We should remember that, furthermore, Illuminism was seen as wedded to Protestantism. This made the Inquisition very alert to all that seemed like mysticism.

Although in the Process of Canonization, it says that the doctor Castillo made an “examination of conscience” with Saint Rose based on her

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8 Getino, pp. 55-56

own petition,<sup>9</sup> the historian José Antonio del Busto suspects that the Inquisition investigated her through this doctor, as he was a consultant of that ecclesiastical institution.<sup>10</sup> In addition to this, Fray Juan de Lorenzana—another adviser to the Inquisition—had previously taken charge of her as her spiritual director,<sup>11</sup> and likewise, Don Gonzalo de la Maza put Rose in contact with various Jesuit confessors, one of whom was the judge and commissioner of the Inquisition: the priest Antonio de Vega Loayza.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to know that the doctor Juan del Castillo, in addition to being a consultant to the Inquisition, was an important physician who treated Saint Rose for her tuberculosis and other infirmities. He was also an expert in spirituality who was very familiar with Carmelite mysticism, and he was a professor at the University of San Marcos.<sup>13</sup> But, above all, he was a good person.<sup>14</sup> The “examination of conscience” that he gave to Saint Rose consisted of asking her about issues concerning her relationship with God. He helped her to say everything and keep nothing shut in, so she could verbalize and so clarify her interior experiences.

The witnesses for the canonization tell us that Saint Rose greatly enjoyed talking with him.<sup>15</sup> This examination was carried out over two years, beginning in 1615 and concluding a little before her death. The result was very positive: Doctor Castillo would define Saint Rose as a person “blessed,” very close to God and detached from the world.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, thanks to his testimony in the Process of Canonization, we know many facts about the mystical experience of Saint Rose.

Although in very different historical circumstances, something similar happened to Saint Catherine of Siena: due to her fame as a great spiritual

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9 Process for Canonization, 14 (p. 34)

10 Busto, p. 240

11 *Ibid.*, 228

12 Process, 165, (p. 224)

13 *Translator's note:* The University of San Marcos was founded in Lima in 1551, making it the oldest officially recognized university in the Americas.

14 Mujica, p. 142; Busto, p. 239

15 Process, 80. (p. 112)

16 Busto, p. 243

woman, detractors arose who spread harsh criticisms and calumnies against her. Because of this, given that she was a member of the Order of Preachers, she was interrogated during the General Chapter that the Dominicans held in Florence in 1374. There, it was established that she was a holy woman, they also asked Blessed Raymond of Capua (1330-1399) to take charge of her spiritual direction, and he was sent to Siena.<sup>17</sup> We know that soon they became “spiritual friends” and collaborated in various popular missions and complex diplomatic works. When Saint Catherine died, Blessed Raymond was elected Master of the Order, and—inspired by her—began the reform of the Order. He also wrote her biography, *The Great Legend*.

### *The Biographies of Saint Rose*

God makes Himself known to us by means of the world around us, and above all, through the history and lives of people. That is precisely what the Bible is: a collection of sacred books—inspired by the Holy Spirit—in which God tells us of Himself, as He has made Himself present in history and has spoken to us through it.

Conscious of this, the Church has put in writing the lives of the saints, and asked that they be read publicly for the Christian edification of the faithful people. These narrations, technically called “hagiographies,” are biographies that highlight those aspects of a saint’s life that can teach a lesson to the readers. Because of this, it is common that these narratives exaggerate or embellish those virtues that—in a specific historical context—the Church wants to foster, hiding or minimizing others that it is not interested in displaying at that moment. For this reason, these narrations lose some of their significance when they are read in a historical context different from the one in which they were originally written.

The biographies of Saint Rose of Lima are a good example of this. They were subject to the Tridentine spirituality that extolled asceticism and

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17 See Candido Aniz, “Santa Catalina de Siena, prototipo de mujer dominicana (1347-1380),” in *Nuevos personajes históricos*, (Caleruega, 1983)

minimized mysticism. Father Getino complains about this slanted image that the biographies have given to Saint Rose:

“At her death, when they pulled back, somewhat, the curtain that covered such wonders, it all excited sympathy and enthusiasm. However, since the saint had been known by few and had not written, so that she was out of reach of many, the religious women<sup>18</sup>—who were abundant in Lima at that time and had some contact with the daughter of Maria Oliva—recoined her image with a pious stamp of visions and miracles, and penances. Those fit better with the mentality of the time, and so those were circulated without exception—drowning out the more delicate subtleties of her intellectual lineage. The apparitions of the Child Jesus giving her caresses, taking her flowers, tangling up her sewing; the frightening penances of the discipline, spiked belt, crown of thorns: These absorbed the imagination of the masses and left out the examinations of the doctor Castillo, the priests Lorenzana and Bilbao, and other wise individuals who paid tribute to her eminent intelligence.

It is desirable that the penitent Rose and the Rose gifted with alluring visions not obscure the Rose who had the intelligence of an eagle.”<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, we cannot deny that Saint Rose was a woman who did much penance and made many sacrifices; however, we must give them more accurate meaning within her life; they were a way to mystical love. Influenced by the historical context in which she lived, her ascetic efforts were directed toward sharing in the sufferings of her Spouse on the Cross; thus, her life was so marked by penance. But the ultimate meaning of her life is love; feeling that she shared in the sufferings of Christ, Saint Rose felt profoundly united with Him and experienced the love of that One who was everything in her life.

### *Eremitical asceticism*

In the history of the Church ascetic movements have arisen in different historical contexts. The two most significant have been, on one hand, the period featuring the monks in the desert in Egypt and the near East in the fourth and fifth centuries, and ten centuries later, the ascent of

<sup>18</sup> *Translator's note:* The holy women are literally “las beatas” or “the blesseds.” These were women who, like Rose of Lima, walked the “middle path between conventual life and the secular state.” (See Pinilla, Rosa limensis, Chapter 1.)

<sup>19</sup> Getino, pp. 57-58

Gothic spirituality in western Europe, which we will consider in the next section.

The lives and teachings of the nuns and monks of the desert were gathered in written form in works spread throughout Christendom.<sup>20</sup> In all likelihood, Saint Rose knew some of these works, as Don Gonzalo de la Maza assures us that she liked to read or listen to the lives of the monks of the desert. He expresses it in this way in the Process of Canonization:

“In the blessed Rosa de Santa Maria, the desire for silence lived out in solitude was very great, as this witness knew. And so, she lamented that she did not live in those times in which souls left to search for it in the deserts. Her desire was ignited and she gave of herself even more when she heard reading or talking about the lives of these solitary souls. She asked to speak about them with this witness on many occasions. And this witness saw that the blessed Rose took all possible care with the goal to enjoy solitude and silence.”<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, we know that Saint Rose was also very devoted to the venerable Gregorio Lopez (1542-1596), a layman from Madrid who emigrated to Mexico, where he became a hermit and died with great fame for his holiness when Saint Rose was ten years old.<sup>22</sup> As such, moved by the example of these men and women, Saint Rose wanted so much to experience solitude, that she found it not only in the hermitage in the garden but also wherever she could. Fray Juan de Lorenzana tells us this anecdote:

“Also, sometimes she went into the confessional in the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary and asked this witness to lock the confessional from inside the cloister. And she stayed there all morning or all day in that silence and solitude.”<sup>23</sup>

The nuns and monks of the desert exercised asceticism in order to vanquish temptation, which they called “demons,” and so be free to be able to love God. The ascetic practices of those monks were fasting,

20 Highlighted: The Life of Anthony, by the Church Father Athanasius of Alexandria, the *Historia Lausiaca* by the Bishop Paladio of Galacia, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* of the monk John of Cassian, and the *Golden Legend* or “*Flos Sanctorum*” written by a Dominican Friar, the blessed James of Voragine.

21 *Process*, 45 (p. 71)

22 *Ibid.*, 215v, (p. 287)

23 *Ibid.*, 253v (p. 332)

nocturnal vigils, silence, and manual work.<sup>24</sup> They felt like combatants who fought against evil to expel it from their own heart and the entire world. And we find out that they did this in the desert, an inhospitable place, barren and terrible.

Indeed, they imitated Jesus, leaving their city and going to uninhabited places in order to make the world a holier place. Those monks were essentially “fighters.” By means of their hard ascetic exercises, and having put their confidence in the indispensable divine help, they strove to overcome temptations and throw them out of their life.<sup>25</sup> And when they achieved this, they became wise spiritual masters who helped other people to be happy living the Gospel. They were called “ammas” and “abbas”, that is, spiritual mothers and fathers.

Therefore, those holy people did not understand asceticism as a pure exercise of the will, but rather as a means to express their love of God, and by this means, to live mystically united with Him. So the key was love. Only through love was it possible to live that tough eremitical life.<sup>26</sup>

In the first chapter of the *Conferences*, John Cassian (360-435) affirms that the objective of the life of a monk is to have a pure heart, full of God. He says:

“This then should be our main effort: and this steadfast purpose of heart we should constantly aspire after; that the soul may ever cleave to God and to heavenly things.”<sup>27</sup>

And so the author sums up the eremitical spirituality:

“For everything depends on the inward frame of mind, and when the devil has been expelled from this, and sins no longer reign in it, it follows that the kingdom of God is founded in us. (cf. Luke 17:20-21)”<sup>28</sup>

Saint Rose knew this and lived it.

### ***Gothic and Baroque Asceticism***

24 Tomas Spidlik, Michelina Tenace, Richard Cemus “The Monastery of the Eastern Christian.”, Burgos, 2004.

25 Anselm Grun, “The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers” Salamanca, 2001

26 Tomas Spidlik, “The Spirituality of the Eastern Christian” Burgos, 2004

27 Cassian, *Conferences*, v. 1, I, VIII, <http://archive.osb.org/lectio/cassian/conf/book1/conf1.html>

28 *Ibid*, v. 1, I, XIII

Another moment in the history of the Church in which asceticism became very common among Christians was Europe's Gothic period between the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. The Gothic coexisted with the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was replaced by the Baroque in the seventeenth century, when the Church implemented the Council of Trent. As such, the Baroque inherited from the Gothic—among other things—the importance of ascetic suffering that was essential in Saint Rose, as Sister Maria del Mar Castro explains well:

“The ascetic aspect of her spirituality is fundamental to her Christian life and her mystical experience; it is also one of the more enigmatic parts when interpreting the story of her life.

The penances and fasts of Saint Rose have almost always been painted in the chiaroscuro tone that furnishes the mysterious; also, and not infrequently, they have been coated in an idyllic and troubadour manner. Today, perhaps, her mortifications seem to us exaggerated, but we have to make the effort to respectfully spy on the profound motivations that brought Rose to these demands of total love and martyr-like offering, in order to reproduce in her body the image of the Servant of Yahweh, in order to configure herself to her Spouse. That was the religious sense of the Baroque and her path of spiritual perfection.”<sup>29</sup>

The Gothic arose as a response to the Romanesque, which developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and lived together with the Gothic in the thirteenth century. If the Romanesque culture gave worship to Jesus the Almighty—the *Pantocrator*—who governed the universe from the heights of His celestial throne, the Gothic worshiped Christ Crucified who suffered and died for each one of us.

The Gothic spirituality promoted the imitation of the suffering Christ as a way to unite oneself with Him. It was the mystics who knew best how to express this in their writings. With the holy Benedictine nun and doctor of the Church Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) as a great example, the Cistercian nuns of the Monastery of Helfta highlighted this in the second half of the thirteenth century. They were accompanied

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29 Castro, pp. 71-72

spiritually and theologically by the Dominicans from the nearby convent of Halle.<sup>30</sup>

Sometime later, in the first half of the fourteenth century, mystical German nuns come to the foreground.<sup>31</sup> These Sisters tell us in their writings how much the pains that they suffered in their infirmities helped them spiritually. Sometimes, they lived their illnesses as a just punishment given to them by God because of their sins. But, above all, those sufferings helped them to share to a certain extent in the sufferings of their Beloved on the Cross. With these, they experienced great interior consolation.

Blessed Margaret Ebner, from the flourishing monastery of the Annunciation of Medingen, in southern Germany, is a good example. This Dominican had an intimate spiritual relationship with the Child Jesus. The intense pains that she suffered due to her precarious health helped her very much [in this relationship]. This was so much the case that she asked her sisters not to cure her, as by suffering, she felt that she was united to the Passion of her Spouse, and in this way, she felt flooded by His love.<sup>32</sup>

Saint Rose, like those German mystics, also felt united with Christ in His sufferings. We will see more about this moving forward.

### *Saint Catherine of Siena*

Saint Rose probably didn't know anything about her German Dominican Sisters, but she was very devoted to Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) who also lived out the Gothic spirituality. Doctor Castillo testifies to this:

“And he asked the blessed Rose about how she was consecrated and whether she formed part of some religious order or followed the common life that all the seculars should follow in serving God.

30 In this monastery, Sr. Gertrude of Hackborn (1291), Saint Mechthild of Magdeburg (1212-1282), Saint Mechthild of Kackeborn (1241-1299), and Saint Gertrude the Great (1256-1302) stand out.

31 It is fitting to cite, among others Sr. Catherine of Gebweiler (1260-1340), Sr. Christina Ebner (1277-1356), Sr. Elizabeth of Oye (1280-1350), Blessed Margaret Ebner (1291-1351), Blessed Elizabeth of Hungary (1292-1338), Sr. Elizabeth Stigel (1300-1364), and Sr. Adelaide Langmann (1312-1375).

32 See Sr. Irene Benavente Eyriey, *Santas y Beatas de la Orden de Predicadores*, (Orihuela, 2008).

She responded that since she was a little girl—five years old—she had followed the Rule and spirituality of the order of her mother Saint Catherine of Siena, and her Holy Father Saint Dominic. And in this, she had persevered all her life, and she had to persevere until her death.”<sup>33</sup>

In fact, it was her devotion to Saint Catherine of Siena that moved her not to enter any other monastery, as there was still not a Dominican one:



Saint Rose of Lima and Catherine of Siena in the Garden of Paradise. Peru. 18th Century

“And this witness asked her why she had not entered a monastery of nuns, as there were good ones in the city. She replied that it would have been very good to have been a nun if there had been any monastery of her holy mother Catherine of Siena, but this was not the case. Although when the monastery of Saint Clare was founded, they insistently asked her to enter with the help of one of the foundresses, she didn’t want to do this, in order to keep on the habit of her mother Saint Catherine of Siena, and to not change the Rule with which she had been raised.”<sup>34</sup>

Like Saint Catherine, Saint Rose chose prayer, the ascetic life, and charitable giving as a way of union with her Spouse. The spiritual objective of the Italian saint was to love Christ so much, that she could feel completely united with Him. And in fact, she did. Blessed Raymond of Capua tells us:

“From this point on, then, our Lord appeared to her very often, and His visits lasted longer than before. Sometimes he brought with Him His glorious Mother, sometimes Saint Dominic, and sometimes both together. At other times He brought Mary Magdalene, or John the Evangelist, or Paul the Apostle and others, singly or in groups, just

<sup>33</sup> Process, 15v.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 15v (p. 36)

as he pleased. But for the most part He came alone and held long conversations with her like one intimate friend with another. Further, as she reluctantly admitted to me more than once herself, our Lord would even recite the Psalms with her as they walked to and fro in her room, like two religious or two clerics reciting their office together.”<sup>35</sup>

In her mystical life, Saint Catherine centered her gaze above all on Jesus Christ crucified, for whom she felt a great love. This was the fundamental element in her interior life. Consequently, in letter forty-four, she says of Jesus:

“This He has shown us with the blood he shed with such arduous love, running like a lover to His ignominious death on the Most Holy Cross. How could the soul not love, seeing so great a love? It wouldn’t be possible.”<sup>36</sup>

And in letter thirty-eight, she says:

“For the nails were not enough to hold God-and-man nailed and fastened on the cross had love not held Him there. I say this, which the soul experiences. It is the reason that it can take no joy except in Christ Crucified.”<sup>37</sup>

Truly, this is the deepest and most authentic meaning of the asceticism of Saint Catherine and Saint Rose: the love which grows from the heart of Christ giving His life for us.

### *The Spiritual Language of Visions*

To communicate with us, God adapts Himself to the spiritual language that human beings speak. In times when man hoped for God to communicate Himself through natural elements, God did so. A good example is what happened when the body of Saint Dominic was translated in 1233, twelve years after his death. That translation became the beginning of the process of canonization and the Dominicans hoped that God would show the sanctity of their founder by means of a good odor surrounding his remains. And so it happened: God adapted Himself to the circumstances and made a marvelous odor emanate from the tomb of Saint Dominic.

35 Raymond of Capua, *Life of Catherine of Siena*. I, XI, 112. pp. 103-104. Dominican Publications (1994).

36 Conde, *Epistolario de Santa Catalina de Siena, Espiritu y Doctrina*. Volume 1: p. 342. (San Esteban, 1982)

37 *Ibid.*, p. 327

Well then, in times when it was considered normal for God to communicate Himself through visions, God did so. In fact, it was very common among the mystics of the Middle Ages to have supernatural visions of an imaginative character, provoked by the intervention of God in their souls, and this made them have very intense mystical experiences. For example, in the spiritual chronicles of the monasteries of the German Dominican nuns in the fourteenth century, visions abound of passages about the infancy of Jesus, of His sufferings on the cross, of dialogues with Him or with the Holy Spirit, or spousal experiences in which they perceived with the senses that they were spiritually wedded with Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

We think also about the many visions of Saint Catherine of Siena. One example of this suffices, which Blessed Raymond of Capua (ca. 1330-1399) relates to us:

“She often recounted for her confessors, including my unworthy self, what took place when our Lord Jesus Christ first began to appear to her. He appeared to her one day while she was at prayer, and said: ‘Do you know, daughter, who you are and who I am? If you know these two things, you have beatitude in your grasp. You are she who is not, and I AM HE WHO IS. Let your soul but become penetrated with this truth, and the enemy can never lead you astray; you will never be caught in any snare of his, nor ever transgress any commandment of mine; you will have set your feet on the royal road which leads to the fullness of grace, and truth, and light.’”<sup>39</sup>

The blessed Raymond also tells us that, on one occasion, Saint Catherine was begging God to give her a new heart. She had a vision in which Jesus took the heart out of her body and substituted it with His own. Through this, she reached spiritual perfection, as from that moment on, Saint Catherine felt capable of loving God and neighbor with the very heart of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

This will help us understand the intense supernatural visions that Saint Rose had, especially the so-called “vision of the bow” that we will see later on.

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38 Alois Maria Haas, “Schools of late medieval mysticism”, Lumen: Buenos Aires-Mexico, 2002.

39 Capua. I, X, 92. p. 85

40 Ibid, II, VI, 179.

### *Spousal Spirituality*

One day, Saint Rose said to Don Gonzalo de la Maza:

“Good heavens! My mother, who is so easily frightened, comes to the garden at this hour of night because she has her husband at her side and doesn’t seem to be afraid at all because he is a man. If I who have—not only at my side, but also in my soul and heart—Jesus Christ my Spouse, God and true man, what do I have to fear? Of what do I have to be afraid?”<sup>41</sup>

At the foundation of the spirituality that Saint Rose and Saint Catherine lived is the covenant they made with Christ. In a certain way, we could say that, in the intimacy of their hearts, they often told Jesus something similar to what the bride says to the bridegroom in the marriage ceremony.

“I, *Rose*, take you, Jesus, to be my Husband. I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.”<sup>42</sup>

Truly, Saint Rose was faithful to her Spouse, and she shared both His joys and His sufferings. Because of this, the sacrifices that she made to share in Christ’s saving passion reinforced her mystical marriage with Him. But something very important must be underlined: Saint Rose not only shared with her husband the suffering of the Cross; above all, she shared in the love that moved Him to give His life on our behalf.

Saint Rose’s relationship with her Beloved reached its climax on Palm Sunday 1617, four months before her death, when she felt that Jesus Himself told her that He wanted to be her husband, confirming fully her spousal relationship with Him. We will return to this theme later.

As we see, this is a fundamentally feminine spirituality, that of “spouses of Christ”; although it is not exclusive to women. We have, for example, the case of the Blessed Henry Suso, who, in order to unite himself with God, imagined a feminine image of God, as the “Eternal Wisdom.” This Dominican speaks thus in his *Spiritual Autobiography*:

<sup>41</sup> Process, 46v-47 (pp. 72-73)

<sup>42</sup> First formula for matrimonial consent. Excerpt from the English translation of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL), 2013

*Translator’s note:* The Rite of Matrimony in the United States has been substituted here in place of the Spanish Episcopal Conference formula. The original includes the clause: “as my Husband, and I give myself to you, and I promise...” (emphasis added).

“Often I thought of [God] like a child, clinging to the breasts of his mother. She takes him in her arms; he takes refuge in her lap. Like a baby uses his head and all the movement of his body to move toward the breast of his mother, who shows her joy with tender and delicate gestures, so is the soul captivated by a sensible overflowing before the loving presence of the Eternal Wisdom. And I thought, ‘Lord Jesus, if a powerful queen had married me, my joy could not be contained. But now, You, Eternal Wisdom, you are the empress of my heart and the mother of all grace. In you, I possess sufficient riches, honor, and power. I desire nothing in this world.’”<sup>43</sup>

In general, men usually move their “masculine love” toward God by means of His mother, the Virgin Mary. Hence we have the centuries-old devotion of the Dominicans to the Holy Rosary. Praying this prayer together with Mary, the heart is filled with the love of God.

### *The Dominicans*

Like Saint Catherine, Saint Rose was accompanied spiritually by the Dominican Friars, as her house was very close to the convent of the Rosary. She went there frequently to hear Mass, go to confession, and pray.

The spirituality of the Dominicans was deeply marked by the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1224-1274), who although he had an intense experience of God, did not write about his mystical experiences in his theological treatises. However, this author gave great importance to charity—that is to say, to disinterested love—and to devotion, or the loving giving of oneself to God. Saint Thomas says in the *Summa Theologica*:

“...Charity both causes devotion (inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one’s friend) and feeds on devotion. Even so all friendship is safeguarded and increased by the practice and consideration of friendly deeds.”<sup>44</sup>

And so, the Dominicans affirmed that the good spiritual path does not necessarily have to lead us to have great mystical experiences, but rather to be charitable to others and devoted to God. They did not reject mysticism (as it by definition, a gift of God), but they encouraged the faithful to put their efforts into being good people, letting mystical experiences come as a divine gift, rather than as something that one absolutely must achieve.

43 Silvia Bara, Julian de Cos: God in you: Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso through their texts. Salamanca, 2017.

44 ST II-II 82, 2, ad. 2 (NewAdvent.org).

Translator’s note: The Spanish text ends with “by the interchange of signs of affection and by meditation.”

One has to keep in mind, furthermore, that in the time of Saint Rose, the life of the Dominicans was very difficult, as they went out to preach as itinerants; going on foot from town to town on roads traveled by bandits or hungry wolves, in the rain, wind, and the scorching sun of summer; eating what the people gave them; and sleeping in the homes of the poor or in dirty haylofts. And we can say the same of those friars who dedicated themselves to research for hours and hours in their humble conventual cells, studying complex books, even if they turned out to be grating or boring. Because of this, beginning in the novitiate, the Dominicans were formed in the asceticism necessary to be able to endure all of these hardships.

Moreover, in the time of Saint Rose, there were Dominicans who followed the strict spiritual asceticism that had been spread throughout Spain by the friar Juan Hurtado de Mendoza (ca. 1460-1525),<sup>45</sup> who was the student master, prior, and reformer of the convent of Saint Stephen in Salamanca. There, he spiritually formed many disciples, such as the missionary friars Pedro de Cordoba (1482-1521) and Anton de Montesinos (ca. 1479-1540).<sup>46</sup> We think about Fray Juan de Lorenzana (ca. 1555-ca.1618), who came from the convent of Saint Stephen and stood out for being a friar, who promoted the religious observance of the Dominicans in Peru when he was the Prior Provincial.<sup>47</sup>

Because of all of this, although the Dominicans did not reject mysticism, they preferred to preach about asceticism and the virtuous life, relying on good theological fundamentals. It is was precisely this last part—their theological knowledge—that made them good confessors. We know that Saint Teresa of Jesus (1515--1582) had been advised by many different spiritual masters throughout her life, among them learned Carmelites, Franciscans, and Jesuits. But she herself acknowledged that she often made her confession to the Dominicans who, although they did not know much about the interior life, gave her good theological guidelines. She was grateful to the Dominicans friars that they did not “direct” her via any

45 See Sanchez Prieto, Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, Real Academia de la Historia. <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/22260/juan-hurtado-de-mendoza>

46 Urdanoz; Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid, 1960.

47 Rodriguez Cruz “Juan de Lorenzana...” in Acts of the Second International Congress about the Dominicans in the New World. Salamanca, 1989; also ROSE, Diego de Hojeda and Carvajal, Real Academia de la Historia: <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/39948/diego-de-hojeday-carvajal>

concrete spiritual path, but limited themselves to resolving her doubts, so that the Holy Spirit could guide her.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, Saint Rose received good theological advice and a strict ascetic spirituality from the Dominicans of the convent of the Rosary. But they did not know how to help her clarify her interior spiritual experience; for this, she had to turn to the Jesuits and the doctor Juan del Castillo, as we will see moving forward.<sup>49</sup>

### *Fray Luis de Granada*

Fray Luis de Granada studied with the intellectual elite of the Dominican Order in Spain in the College of San Gregorio de Valladolid. There, he was not only formed as a theologian, he was also able to deepen his human and natural knowledge of the classical Greco-Roman authors. In his lifetime, he stood out as one of the most eminent preachers and men of letters of the sixteenth century.

His spiritual treatises had great importance following the Council of Trent. In these works, he synthesized Thomistic theology, the Spanish spirituality of the sixteenth century, and Tridentine doctrine. They went through many editions and were translated into a variety of languages. In addition to being incorporated into the libraries of the universities and the programs of general studies of the time, they were often read both in monasteries and by the lay faithful. Let us think, for example, how Saint Teresa of Jesus asks in her *Constitutions* that each monastery of Discalced Carmelites do everything possible to have them.<sup>50</sup>

We also know that the Dominicans recommended that Saint Rose study the treatises of Fray Luis de Granada. Her brother, Hernando Flores, says:

“From her most tender years, the blessed Rose was continuous in prayer and loved books that were about prayer. In particular, she read Fray Luis de Granada, of whose works she read some section every day of the week—even for hours each day. And this witness knows this because he saw her

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48 There is a good study on this subject: Martin, “Santa Teresa de Jesus y la Orden de Predicadores,” *Historical Studies*, (Avila, 1909).

49 *Translator’s note*: In 1636, not long before his death, this secular doctor took the Dominican habit.

50 Teresa of Jesus. *Constitutions*, II, 7.

meditating with the book. She had it marked with many little threads of different colors that recorded and signaled what she needed to do and read.”<sup>51</sup>

Fray Luis de Granada speaks in his treatises about asceticism, putting forth Christ Crucified as the principal example. He says thus:

“Even more so, he who walks by the narrow way of virtue, and not content with the ordinary life, works so as to walk to perfection, hardly takes a step on this path without fixing his eyes on Jesus Christ Crucified. If he is to fast, if he is to maltreat his flesh, if he is to mortify his appetites and evil desires, if he is to deny his own will, if he is to forgive injuries easily, if he is to have patience in work, if he is to resist manfully and promptly the flattery and indulgent suggestions of the enemy, if he is to cast off the approval of others and the weakness of the flesh, and embrace the cross of penance and virtue, what other remedy and effort does he have for all of this, except to lift his eyes to Christ Crucified, and to acquire strength from what he sees his Creator suffer for him?”<sup>52</sup>

Fray Luis also affirms that asceticism is the necessary complement to mysticism. As we well know, it is not possible to let ourselves be guided mystically by God, if we are not capable of controlling ourselves ascetically. Because of this, the good Christian should practice the ascetic life. So, ascetic exercises prepare us to be able to have a mystical life, and in turn, the mystical life makes it possible that our asceticism can lift us up toward God. We see how Fray Luis explains this, speaking about devotion and readiness for asceticism, and mystical consolation, as if they were mother and daughter:

“Moreover, it is noted here that from this devotion and readiness for the good, many times is born that spiritual consolation... and on the contrary, this same consolation increases true devotion, which is that promptness and strength for good work, serving as a good daughter to her mother, and making the man much more ready for the things of God. He carries within himself greater joy and consolation. These two virtues help each other in the same way as a mother to a daughter and a daughter to a mother.”<sup>53</sup>

Concretely, what is Fray Luis de Granada saying about mysticism? Well, actually very little, since he thinks that the believer, as soon he knows the rudiments of the interior life, has to let himself be guided mystically by his

<sup>51</sup> Busto, 181.

<sup>52</sup> Luis de Granada. XI, 279. Introducción del símbolo de la fe III, in Complete Works, Madrid.

<sup>53</sup> Granada, Libro de oración and meditación, I, 293, also VII, 59.

own experience, and above all, by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Fray Luis limits himself to instructing beginners correctly in the spiritual life. Or said in another way, he writes for the public, not only for a select group of those initiated into the mystical life. He himself explains it to us in the *Book of Prayer and Meditation*:

“Furthermore, because all of this is a work of grace and the business of the Holy Spirit, we do not pretend here to make general rules, nor tie up hands so that they cannot take another path that God wishes. Nor do we presume either to comprehend all that is required for this business, rather, only to give some advice to those who are new and beginning, and to put them on the path. After having started upon it, the experience of the workings and the assistance of the Holy Spirit will make them better masters of this doctrine.”<sup>54</sup>

### ***Contemplation of God in Nature***

Saint Rose had a very close relationship with the animals and the plants of the garden. She felt that they also loved and praised God. She probably discussed this with the Dominican friars, and they cited to her what Saint Thomas says about it in the *Summa Theologica*. Commenting on Psalm 147:9, “Who gives animals their food and young ravens what they cry for,” Saint Thomas says:

“The young ravens are said to call upon God, on account of the natural desire whereby all things, each in its own way, desire to attain the Divine goodness. Thus too dumb animals are said to obey God, on account of the natural instinct whereby they are moved by God.”<sup>55</sup>

But the theologian who talked most about creation is Fray Luis de Granada. On a variety of occasions, he tells us that the contemplation of nature moves us to love our Creator. That is precisely why he wrote the first volume of the *Introduction to the Symbol of the Faith*, in which, commenting on the first chapter of Genesis, he teaches us to contemplate God in the beings He has created.

“It is this, then, with God’s help, that we try to do in this book. Moreover, to what effect? So that knowing in the created works those four divine perfections that we discussed,<sup>56</sup> our spirit is moved to love of that great

54 Ibid., I, 293.

55 ST II-II, 83, a. 10, ad. 3

56 Fray Luis previously referred to goodness, omnipotence, providence, and wisdom. Cf. Simbolo, IX, 66.

goodness, and to fear and obedience of such great majesty, and to the hope of such paternal care and providence, and to the admiration of such great power and wisdom as in all of these works shines forth, and so 'to become worthy of the company of God.'<sup>57</sup>

One of the Dominican friars probably lent this book to Saint Rose so that she would know the different animals, plants, and other elements of creation, and so be encouraged to contemplate God by means of them, thinking that this would bring her joy, as Fray Luis says:

"This spiritual joy is received when man, looking at the beauty of creatures, does not stop with them, but rather rises in them to the knowledge of the beauty, of the goodness, and of the charity of God who created such things not only for the use, but also for the recreation of man."<sup>58</sup>

We can imagine Saint Rose when she sat at the door of her hermitage, in the intimacy of a clear and cloudless night. Then, she lifted her head to contemplate the firmament, and opened her heart to God, who filled it with love. We see how Fray Luis narrates this experience:

"The day seems irritating when it dawns with all its cares, and the soul desires the quiet night to spend with God. Nothing is too long, rather, the longer the better. And if the night is calm, he lifts his eyes to see the beauty of the heavens and the brilliance of the moon and the stars, and he sees all these things with different eyes, and with very different joys than those of others.

He sees them as signs of the beauty of his Creator, as mirrors of his glory, as interpreters and messengers that bring news of Him, as living models of his perfections and graces, and as presents and gifts that the husband sends to his wife to win her love and entertain her until the day in which they join hands and celebrate that eternal marriage in heaven.

The whole world is a book to him; it seems always to speak to him of God. It is a message that the beloved sends to him, and a long process and testimony of love. These are, my brother, the nights of the lovers of God, and this is the dream that sleeps. As with the sweet and soft sounds of the soothing night, with the sweet music and harmony of the creatures, the soul cries out within him, and he begins to sleep that watchful sleep, of whom they say 'I sleep, and my heart watches.'*(Song of Songs 5:2)*.<sup>59</sup>

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57 Granada, IX, 67.

58 Ibid, IX, 36.

59 Granada, Guía de pecadores. VI, 169.



## **Testimonies about the Interior Life of Saint Rose**

Having completed the first part, in which we have put the spirituality of our saint in context, we are going to see now what those who knew Rose best tell us about her.

As we have discussed, due to the lack of autobiographical writings in which she tells us herself about her own mystical experience, the primary documentary sources are the numerous and detailed testimonies from the Process of Canonization. These were supplied by a great variety of people who knew her in some capacity. Since the testimonies were recorded only weeks after her death, they must be quite truthful. And given the way they are narrated, reading them turns out to be very pleasant.

We have selected those that can best inform us about the relationship that Saint Rose had with God, and we have arranged them, so that little by little and following a logical sequence, they reveal to us the most intimate aspects of her mystical experience.

### ***Rosa de Santa Maria***

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us). -Matthew 1:23*

Before penetrating into profound spiritual matters, we are going to begin with something that is quite simple, although it is also very illustrative: the importance of the name that she took for herself, “Rosa de Santa Maria,”

and how this choice occurred, since, as we well know, she was baptized with the name “Isabel.” This is told to us by her mother, Doña Maria de Oliva:

“She said that the blessed Rosa de Santa Maria, her daughter, was born in the second half of the month of April 1586. And she was baptized in the parish Church of Saint Sebastian in this city, of which the witness and her husband have always been, and continue to be, parishioners.

And to the blessed child, her daughter, on the day of her baptism—which was celebrated on the feast of Pentecost, May 20th of that year—the name “Isabel” was given. This was done out of respect for Isabel de Herrera, mother of this witness and grandmother of the blessed child.

The blessed child was raised with this name of Isabel until she was three months old, more or less. She was being rocked in the cradle by a native woman, a servant of the house. The blessed child’s face was covered, and the native woman uncovered it, in order to see if she had fallen asleep. She was so lovely that the woman called some children who were working in the garden, so they could come and look at her. And all were amazed.

Then, this witness, from the room where she was, saw them making gestures, and without saying anything to anyone, went right to where the child was. And she saw her, so pretty and beautiful that it seemed to her that [the infant’s] whole face was a lovely rose. In the middle of it she saw the features of her eyes, lips, nose, and ears. And the witness stayed, amazed to see that marvelous event. Then she took her in her hands and began to give her a thousand caresses, showing off her face and how happy she was. And then she said to her, “I promise you, my daughter and my soul, that while I live, from my mouth, you will not hear another name, other than “Rose.” And so this witness carried it out, as from then on she always called her “Rose” and not “Isabel.”

Certainly, Isabel de Herrera, mother of this witness, wanted the blessed child to keep the name “Isabel,” which was the one she was baptized with, but this witness, as has just been said, preferred to keep calling her “Rose.” And so the holy virgin was raised [with this new name].

But from the time that she had use of her reason, she displayed an interior dislike at being called “Rose.” Since she had scruples about this dislike, she went to confession at the convent of the Rosary. The confessor, having realized who was confessing and accusing herself of the dislike, had always heard her called “Rose.” He told her that she wasn’t right in getting upset about this, and to consider that her soul was a rose of Jesus.

At this, she was persuaded by what the priest said, so much that when she went to communion, she placed her soul in the lap of the Mother of God under her title “of the Rosary,” and begged her to receive it and to return it

with her own name and title. And she said that, truly, it was returned by Our Lady, who gave Rose her name.

And afterward when her blessed daughter was at home, she said to this witness: 'You shall only call me "Rosa de Santa Maria" from now on, because the more I hear myself called by this name, the more I will be reminded that my soul is a rose of the Mother of God. And so I will have to be careful to keep it always clean and fresh, for that day when the Mother of God asks me to give an account of it.'

And the Blessed Rose said this with great feeling, and she showed the greatest pleasure when they called her by her full name: "Rosa de Santa Maria." But she showed her sorrow when they only called her "Rosa" and she asked why they cut off her name. And so she kept this "Rosa de Santa Maria" until she died."<sup>60</sup>

### ***The Suffering of Illness***

*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)*

As we have discussed previously, Saint Rose suffered a variety of illnesses throughout her life. And as also occurred with other mystics, this marked her relationship with God. Once again, the one that can best tell us about these grave illnesses that she suffered is her mother, Doña Maria de Oliva:

"Her holy daughter, in the course of her life, had very grave and acute illnesses that began when she was a girl of five or six years old. And later, at the age of twelve or thirteen, she was totally crippled and immobilized in her hands and her feet. At fifteen years old, she began to have stomach pains, which at first came once a month and later two or three times each month. This pain was very cruel, causing her to have high fevers. And with this, she had many other illnesses, such as pain in her side, asthma, and others that were very severe. The first was from ringworm, which caused many rashes and a large sore. This witness cured her of it by putting very strong products on her head."<sup>61</sup>

Doña Maria de Uzátegui tells us about the difficulties that Saint Rose had in feeding herself in her final years:

"This witness took charge of the blessed Rose with intimate love, as if she were her daughter, to help her in all that was necessary. And she said so to

<sup>60</sup> Process, 296-297. (pp. 377-378).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 303v (p. 386)

her and her mother. And in this way, they agreed that if the witness did not send it, [Rose] did not eat anything at the home of her mother. In this way, while [Rose] was in the house of her parents, the witness would send bread to eat and some other things that were needed. The blessed Rose told this witness that she should take care to send her the bread on time, because if it was missing, she would not ask her for it.

In regards to the bread, several curious things happened. For example, several times midday passed without the bread having been sent to her. Surprised, the blessed Rose decided to look in the garden for some leaves instead of going to ask for it. And just in that moment, a servant knocked on the door, carrying it.

And another time, when she was very tired and experiencing stomach pains, her mother found her passed out. [When her mother offered], the blessed Rose told her that she didn't want her to send for anyone to buy a *real* (a coin's worth) of chocolate.<sup>62</sup> This was happening at midnight. Her mother asked why she shouldn't send for anyone, since help was needed; Rose replied by saying that the witness was going to send it.

When her mother asked her if she had sent some to ask this witness [for the chocolate], she said simply that her guardian angel had let the witness's guardian angel know about it, so that she would have it sent. So it was. It happened that, as she was saying this, a servant of this witness brought it. When she received it, the blessed Rose gave thanks to God and drank it.

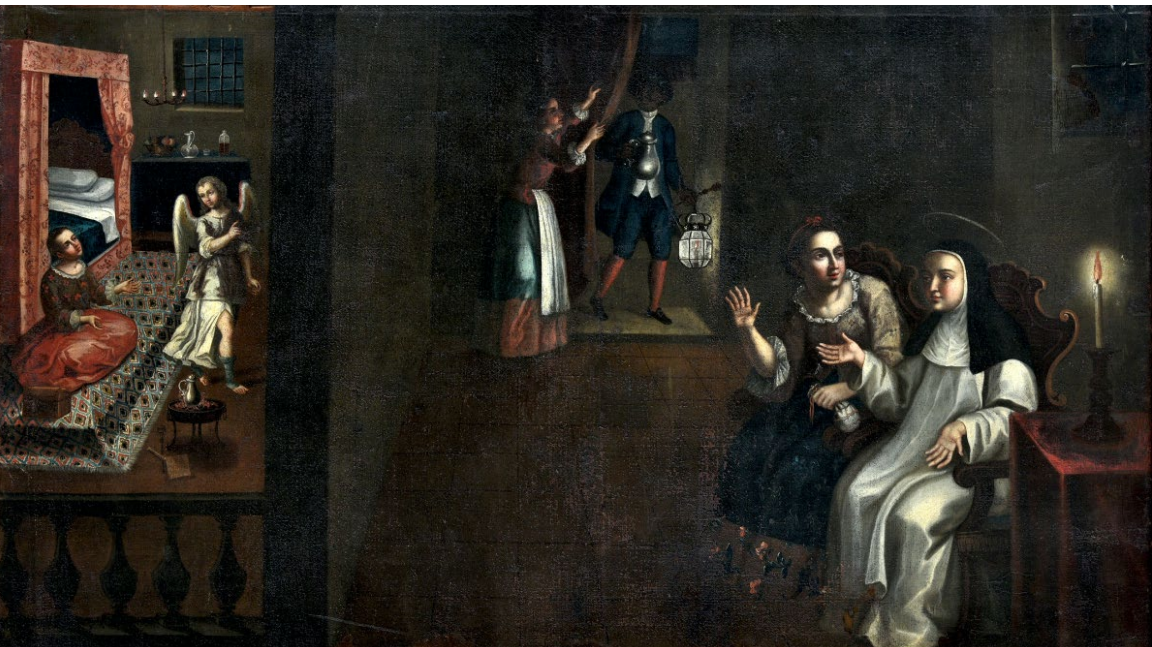
And later, coming to the house of this witness, the blessed Rose told the story to her and her husband, the accountant. It seemed to this witness that this was a work of Divine Providence, so that, from then on, the witness never neglected to place herself in His hands."<sup>63</sup>

Later on, we will see the letter of Saint Rose in which she thanks Doña Maria for the chocolate that she sent her. Truly, the husband of the Doña Maria, Don Gonzalo de la Maza, tells us that our saint felt more united to God when her health was deteriorating.

"And when this witness asked her how she felt and what [infirmities] she had, the blessed Rose replied to him that her stomach hurt a little, but that it was nothing. And she did the same with the pains in her side and her arthritis. On these occasions, she spoke praises and blessings of the Lord, and she begged Him for pains and patience, saying 'Let pains and more pains come, Lord, and patience with them.'

62 *Translator's note:* During the Spanish colonial period, chocolate was consumed as a medicinal beverage. See Helen Thompson, "Healers once prescribed chocolate like aspirin," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2015.

63 *Process.*, 77-28 (pp. 109-110)



The Chocolate Pot by Laureano Dávila, 18th century: Rose begged her guardian angel to go and inspire her friend, Doña María de Uzátegui to send her some chocolate because she has been able to stomach little food. Her mother guessed what Rose, coming out of her room, wanted, and sent a servant to buy some. Rose begged her to wait, but her mother argued with her. As the saint prayed, Doña María's servant showed up at the door with the chocolate.

And she confessed that she was a great sinner, and that someone who deserved hell as much as she did should not complain of bodily suffering. And the more pain she had, and the more the blessed Rose suffered, it seemed that she found more consolation and conformity to the Divine Will, according to the tenderness of her words and her patience, which this witness never failed to see in her.”<sup>64</sup>

### ***Long hours dedicated to prayer***

*Rejoice always, pray constantly. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)*

We can say that, if asceticism was important for Saint Rose, much more so was prayer, that is to say, her interior relationship with God. That's why, from the time she was sixteen years old, she dedicated about half of her time to prayer. So it was told to the doctor Castillo:

“And this witness asked her about the time she spent in prayer. She responded that, since she was fifteen, she had been meditating twelve hours a day, spread throughout the day and night.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 48v-49 (pp. 74-75)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 15v (p. 36)

Don Gonzalo de la Maza also knew how much Saint Rose was dedicated to prayer, but he tells us that this did not impede her in tending the needy with charity.

“From Blessed Rose herself and from other people, this witness heard that she did not sleep more than two hours between day and night. She was occupied the rest of the night in prayer and meditation. However, while she had the health for this, she did not know how to be idle in exterior works. Especially if there were sick people to attend to, she occupied herself with an indescribable charity.”<sup>66</sup>

### **Vocal Prayer**

*And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.’” (Luke 11:2)*

Vocal prayer is well known, and consists of saying prayers devotedly. From what we can read in the Process of Canonization, Saint Rose recited thousands of aspirations and prayers. We see the testimony of the Jesuit priest Father Diego Martinez about the fervent prayer of Saint Rose:

“This witness said that, from three years old to the point at which he began to talk to her, she was a woman of great and fervent prayer, and that she spent many hours day and night doing so. Among her other practices, one was that of gratitude and acknowledgment of Our Lord God. And each day she said three thousand times these words: ‘Thanks be to God’ — a thousand times at dawn, a thousand a little after noon, and a thousand during the night. And every ten times she said a *Gloria Patri*, making a total of three hundred Glorias. And she did this, remembering God’s infinite being, and His infinite perfections, and the infinite blessings that she had received from His hand. She spent many hours on this exercise, morning, noon, and night.

And in order to do it better, she spoke with this witness and asked that he give her [a list] of some of the perfections of the divinity of our Lord. He gave her thirty-three of them in writing.

And later, she came back to ask for more. So this witness, taking them from Sacred Scripture, gave her around 150 perfections.

And this witness understands that the Divine Majesty had given singular grace to the blessed Rose through these perfections, principally through the thanks she gave to God during the day in her spiritual exercises: to feel the

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 34v-35 (p. 60)

continual presence of Our Lord. And to continue it, she used these words: 'May Jesus Christ be glorified, and may he be with my soul.' At other times she said, 'May God be glorified, and may he be with my soul.' And she said this continually in her heart, so that no exterior work—not even talking—impeded her and made her stop repeating the blessed words. And by this means she reached great perfection and singular favors from Our Lord God."<sup>67</sup>

A good example of the quantity of our saint's vocal prayers is the "spiritual dress" that she sewed for the Virgin Mary with her prayers. Saint Rose gave Father Diego Martinez a piece of paper on which she herself explained it:

"Memorandum about a dress, that I, Rose of Santa Maria, unworthy slave of the Queen of Angels, Virgin and Mother of God, began to make with the favor and help of our Lord.

The interior tunic must be made of six hundred *Avemarias*, six hundred *Salves*, and fifteen days of fasting: in reverence of the most holy joy that she received when the Angel announced to her that the Eternal Word would be made incarnate in her divine womb and heart.

The cloth from which this dress is made, must be sewn from six hundred *Avemarias*, six hundred *Salves*, fifteen Rosaries, and fifteen days of fasting: in reverence of the most holy joy that she received when she went to visit her cousin Saint Elizabeth.

The trimming and embroidery of this dress must be made of six hundred *Avemarias*, six hundred *Salves*, and fifteen days of fasting: in reverence of the most holy joy that she received when she gave birth to her Most Holy Son, my Lord Jesus Christ.

The jewels that must be sprinkled across this dress will be six hundred *Avemarias*, six hundred *Salves*, and fifteen days of fasting: in reverence of the most holy joy that she felt when she presented her most blessed Son in the temple.

The necklace that is to be worn will be made of six hundred *Avemarias*, six hundred *Salves*, and fifteen days of fasting: in reverence of the most holy joy that she felt when she found her most blessed Son debating with the doctors in the temple.

The bouquet that she is to hold in her most holy hands, must be made of thirty-three *Paternosters*, many *Avemarias* with their *Gloria Patris*, so many *Salves*, many other Rosaries of thanksgiving to God, as well as other Rosaries of praises to the Virgin: in reverence of the most holy age of my Lord Jesus Christ.

67 Ibid., 139-139v. (pp. 185-186)

And this dress is finished, blessed be God.

May His Most Holy Mother, through her great piety, make up for my faults and pardon my boldness; *'laus tibi Christe'*<sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup>

This making of “spiritual dresses” was something that Saint Rose liked to do, as Fray Pedro de Loayza testifies:

“The Blessed Rose was accustomed to making dresses for the Child Jesus and Our Lady; their embroidery was prayers, fasts, or disciplines. About these dresses, this witness knows that they are included and expressed in this cause of canonization, and so he tells us it. And this witness knows that a great many others have been made or are being made in this city, in imitation of the dresses made by the blessed Rose.”<sup>70</sup>

Fray Luis Bilbao tells us a charming anecdote about the prayer of the Rosary:

“Blessed Rose offered special prayers for her confessors, with whom she was very generous in giving her good works. And this witness tells us that one day saint Rose said to him, ‘Father of my soul, I am making a very pretty present for you.’

After several days had passed, this witness said to her, ‘Have you forgotten the gift that you promised me?’ He said this because he believed in his heart that it was something spiritual and of great importance.

And the saint, laughing, replied, ‘I have not forgotten; it cannot be finished so quickly. Have patience, Your Reverence.’<sup>71</sup>

Several days later, she came to the confessional. After her confession, she said, ‘Father, come out [of the confessional] into the church; I have brought your gift.’

The witness came out and the saint gave him a little rosary made of rose roots, of 150 beads, telling him: ‘Because I love you so much, Father, I want to give you this rosary for you will carry with you until you die. Value it, Father, even if only because it is made from a rose and your daughter, Rosa de Santa Maria gives it to you. On each of these 150 beads, I have prayed a Rosary for you, Father, I have fasted one day, I have had an hour of mental prayer, and I have given myself the discipline. This rosary, with all of these acts—if they be of some merit before the eyes of my God—I give to you, Father. Make sure to guard it, and don’t give it to anyone.’

68 Translation from Latin: “Praise to you, Christ” or “Praised be Christ.”

69 Ibid., 139v-140v (pp. 186-187)

70 Ibid., 216 (p. 287)

71 Translator’s note: Here and elsewhere, Rose refers to a priest as “vuestra paternidad.” To reflect Rose’s respect for and filial devotion to priests, here it has been generally rendered “Your Reverence” for the first address and the less formal “Father” for all subsequent uses.

And this witness tells us that since that day, he has worn it around his neck and has carried it with him always, valuing it as a most precious relic, as much in the lifetime of the saint as after in death.<sup>72</sup>

Later we will see the Angelic Exercise of Saint Rose, provided by Fray Pedro de Loayza in the Process of Canonization.

### **Canticles**

*...addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. (Ephesians 5:19-20)*

The well-known phrase “He who sings, prays twice” is attributed to Saint Augustine. Since ancient times, the monks knew well that singing helped them to pray as it ignited their hearts with love of God. Furthermore, when we sing, the beauty of the chant elevates us toward the fount of all beauty that is God. And we can add something more: songs enliven prayer and make it more pleasant. For this reason, in the monastery it is never superfluous to rehearse and practice the songs well.

As we see, the witnesses of canonization tell us that Saint Rose liked singing very much, because it helped her to communicate to God everything that she felt toward Him. Doña Maria de Uzátegui tells us the following:

“Many times she burst into song—sometimes in praise, others in supplication, and still others in lamentation—calling upon her sweet Spouse and her guardian angel. So much did she put her whole self into it and let herself go that sometimes she spent two or three hours with the guitar in her hand. One time, the blessed Rose told this witness that she spent more than three hours singing when she got up in the morning.

And what she sang was the following:

*Ah, Jesus of my soul,  
How good you seem  
Among the flowers and the roses  
And the olives green.*

She repeated this several times. On other occasions, she said:

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72 Process, 292v-293 (p. 373)

*It is now past twelve,  
My Jesus does not come.  
Who could be the lucky one  
Who delays Him?*

And other times, she said:

*My guardian angel,  
Fly and ask my God  
Why is He taking so long?*

Other times, she prayed with music on behalf of the people she knew, naming them and asking her spouse to do something for and be with them. And she sang many other things and words of great love and delight, with such a sweet and consonant voice that it made us leave behind what we were doing so we could hear and listen to her."<sup>73</sup>

Fray Juan de Lorenzana comments on this:

"Other times, while she was working on her sewing, she sang divine praises with great spiritual delight. She recited very devout poems set to music that she had composed herself, and with these, her spirit rose up to the Lord.

When she was speaking about her singing, blessed Rose said to this witness, "Father, for me to stop singing is to stop eating."<sup>74</sup>

Doña Maria Antonia was a witness to this story that occurred in the house of Don Gonzalo de la Maza:

"This witness said that one Sunday of Advent last year, the blessed Rose had come from Church after hearing the sermon. She entered a small room, took out a vihuela with two or three strings,<sup>75</sup> and so, alone and shut away, she praised God with the most fervent love, singing canticles and hymns in praise of the Lord.

Along with others, this witness was listening to her from outside the room. The witness, seeing the great love and affection with which she sang, entered and saw her, as has already been said, singing. And so, through this, like other things that she saw in her, this witness is very certain that the blessed Rose was a soul most generous in her love of God."<sup>76</sup>

### ***Mental Prayer***

*But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)*

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 95v-96 (p. 130)

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 253v (p. 332)

<sup>75</sup> Translator's note: A type of lute or guitar.

<sup>76</sup> Process, 162v (p. 216)

Mental prayer (or meditation) consists in reflecting in our soul about God or one of His attributes, and entering into dialogue with Him. That's why St. Thomas defines it as such: "Meditation would seem to be the process of reason from certain principles that lead to the contemplation of some truth."<sup>77</sup>

The heart plays an important role in mental prayer. Indeed, it is not a cold and purely rational meditation, but rather an exercise involving the emotions in which we think of Him whom we love. Fray Luis de Granada explains it thus:

"One does it only in the heart; that's why it is called mental, and we think attentively on the things of God. We present our needs to the Lord to whom the language of the heart is no less clear than that of the tongue."<sup>78</sup>

In the Process of Canonization, it was said that Saint Rose began to practice mental prayer at five years old.<sup>79</sup> This could well be an exaggeration. But if we are attentive to the explanation, it seems very credible. It turns out that she was initiated into mental prayer by repeating meditatively short ejaculatory prayers or aspirations; it's that simple. She told this to the family with whom she lived in her final years of life. We see how Don Gonzalo de la Maza narrates it:

"This witness said that Rose of Lima told him—at times in the presence of Doña Maria de Uzátegui and their daughters—that from her childhood and the beginning of her vocation, she had begun to practice mental prayer thanks to repeating this prayer: 'Blessed be Jesus, and may He be with my soul, Amen.' And this happened in a very short time. After only a week, she found herself so brought into mental prayer that she regularly said it in her heart, although she was occupied in work and outward speech. It seemed to her that this included while she was sleeping, because when she woke up, she recalled finding herself in the act of [mental prayer].

And although in this time of her childhood she had tried to practice other prayers, she had not been able to enter into them until she was older. Even then, she turned around and found herself praying her first prayer.

As soon as she woke from sleep and remembered that she had been reciting this prayer, she then said immediately 'Glory be to the Father and to the

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77 ST II-II- 180, a. 3, ad. 1

78 Granada, *Memorial de la vida cristiana II*, V, 63.

79 Process, 12 (p. 31)

Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen, Jesus.”<sup>80</sup>

The monks in the desert already practiced this way of prayer in the fourth century, although they repeated this other aspiration: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a poor sinner,” inspired by the prayer of the publican in the parable of the two men who went to pray in the temple (Luke 18:9-14). This is what is called “the prayer of the heart”; it is called this because the monks prayed it interiorly.<sup>81</sup>

But let us return to Saint Rose. The wife of Don Gonzalo, Doña Maria de Uzátegui, tells us how her form of prayer continued to mature:

“This witness knows, because the blessed Rose told her, that from the time she was five years old, when her brother got her hair dirty<sup>82</sup>, she began to practice mental prayer, thanks to the words ‘Blessed be Jesus, and may He be with my soul, Amen.’ And as this prayer stayed deeply engraved in her heart, she continued repeating it always, in the form discussed.

And in regards to this, she said that each time that she woke up and found herself reciting this prayer, she said, ‘Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, Amen.’

Growing older and speaking with her confessors about her beginnings in and way of prayer, she then understood prayer in such a manner that in very little time, she found herself very much improved. And she said, with great humility, that it seemed to her that her prayer was very good then, but that she felt truly that it was not good now.

So this witness, who heard the blessed Rose speak about spiritual things, knows that from a very tender age, after mental prayer, [Rose] reached unitive prayer, which would have been when she was twelve or thirteen years old. And this continued until she died, because her life was a continual prayer, as she herself told this witness.

And she said that nothing hindered the prayer of union, so that even if she was occupied in exterior things, like when she was working or doing other

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 33 (p. 58)

<sup>81</sup> In the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*, written in Russia by an anonymous author in the middle of 19th century, this method of prayer is explained very well to us, framing it within the Hesychast spirituality, proper to eastern monasticism.

<sup>82</sup> *Translator’s note:* While playing, Rose’s brother got her hair dirty, and she began to cry. He told her she shouldn’t cry and said souls had been condemned because of how much they loved their hair. Shortly afterwards, she cut her hair and made a private vow of virginity.

things, or being with groups of people, or curing the sick, or [performing] other works of charity, she never was away from her prayer."<sup>83</sup>

### ***Prayer of Union***

*But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)*

The prayer of union is fundamentally affective. It consists in withdrawing to one's interior and being lovingly connected with God in the depths of the heart. Fray Luis de Granada does not speak much about this, because it is proper to the advanced and perfect in the spiritual life, and as we have already said, he prefers to write for the beginner. Because of this, Saint Rose felt a little lost when this mode of prayer came unexpectedly and spontaneously to her at thirteen years old. The doctor Castillo tells us how the process occurred:

"From the age of five (more or less), she had been practicing mental prayer. And in this, she persevered night and day, whenever she could be free, and she did so with much pleasure, much fervor, and love of God. Although it meant great effort, she continued persevering in this prayer until she was twelve or thirteen years old.

From then on, Our Lord God began to give her very marked supernatural graces, so that Our Lord God brought her into the prayer of union. And this was so, thanks to God having given her this prayer from the age of twelve or thirteen years old until this witness began to speak with her, and until she died, which was in total seventeen or eighteen years, give or take a little.

And likewise, God communicated many revelations to her. So, what she needed was some learned person to explain them to her, because she found herself lacking the terms with which to understand their meaning.

So, the blessed Rose began to say that from the age of twelve or thirteen, each time that she began to pray, God gathered up the powers of her soul—that is, her understanding, memory, and free will—uniting them with Him in such a way that all her understanding was occupied in the embrace of her God. And her entire will was taken up in loving her Creator.

Therefore, understanding and loving God seemed to her to be the same thing. And in understanding and in loving, she didn't say anything; rather, with a penetrating look she recognized that she was united to her God, without any understanding other than that given to her by God.

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83 Process, 78-79 (pp. 110-111)

The blessed Rose recognized also that God gives this knowledge without the operation of the senses of the body and without a mental conversion into images. Rather, [it came] through an interior sign created by God working intimately in her and communicating His divine illumination to her soul with rays of light and illustrations of glory.

And so, her soul was so inserted into the embrace of God in this union, that she did not know any created thing. God united Himself with this saint with such gentleness that she never noticed Him missing, because she had this union in a very ordinary way, so that even if she was talking with many people and caught up in conversation, she was quiet and had this the blissful union with His Divine Majesty continuously. And if they spoke to her, she could respond without anyone noticing anything, with great mildness and composure in her speech.

Our Lord proceeded in this way with her for more than fifteen years after this, and He bestowed many other favors over the course of time.”<sup>84</sup>

We will now see how Don Gonzalo de la Maza describes the prayer of union of Saint Rose.

“And as she was growing older and speaking with confessors about her beginnings and her way of life, she entered deeper into prayer. She recalled that when she was twelve or thirteen years old, she gave herself totally to our Lord in prayer and found herself so much improved, that now she mourned over her present state with so much tenderness and feeling, as if she was very lost.

And in the time that this witness has said that he spoke with her in his house as well as when she was in the house of her parents, he saw firsthand that the entire life of the blessed Rose was a continual prayer.

And from the spiritual people who spoke with her, this witness heard that from the age of twelve or thirteen, the Lord had raised her up to the supremely joyful state of unitive prayer, and so it seemed and became apparent. He was able to deduce this by her serenity and peace of soul, which this witness always saw and judged as something truly admirable.

And it was truly something to see her, as this witness saw her, shut away in prayer for whole days and nights without moving her body in any way. She was very taken up with prayer—although not to the point of being out of her senses, so that when she seemed to be suspended and entranced, she used to answer and return when called.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 12-12v (pp. 31-32)

And there was a time in which she closed herself in on Fridays, starting the night before, and she asked this witness to not allow anyone to call on her until she opened the door, even if her father or mother came.”<sup>85</sup>

### ***Spiritual Crises***

*After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, “Will you also go away?” (John 6:66-67)*

The life of prayer did not give Saint Rose only joy. With Doctor Castillo, she spoke at length about the terrible spiritual crises that she began to have when she was sixteen years old. Saint Rose passed intermittently through moments in which she didn’t feel the presence of God in her heart or anywhere else. Nor did she perceive those signals that He sent directly to her heart. Because of this, it seemed to her that God had departed from her life and the only thing that she could do was to remember Him. Doctor Castillo describes it as such:

“First of all, when her heart became more deeply brought into union with Him, His Divine Majesty distanced Himself from her, not only in the supernatural, but also in the natural, in such a way that she didn’t know or love her God through supernatural or natural acts. And her soul was put into the desert without feeling any sign.

And she remembered, as through a crack in the wall, and through a very fragile idea, that she had known God and His signs. And for even greater torment, Rosa de Santa Maria was conscious that she no longer knew or felt God or His signs, and so great was her affliction and anguish, and sadness about seeing in the dark and such loneliness, that there was no way she could explain it. And as she remembered that she had known God and His signs, and since she did not find God in order to know and love Him, her affliction greatly increased.

If she knew that this would have an end, that would have been some consolation. But as she was ignorant as to when the end would come—and, on the contrary, it seemed that she would suffer this “*in eternum*” (until eternity); she felt that she was alone and forsaken by God, and her affliction increased. And as she desired in a great way to know her God in order to love Him, but she did not find Him, it was even greater, and led to even more anguish. Seeing that there was no cure for this, she wished to die and be done with it.

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85 Ibid., 33-33v (p. 58)

Moreover, in a very remarkable way, God told her that it was impossible to die and be done with it. Through this same news, she recognized that He is immortal and incorruptible. So looking at it from all sides and seeing no way out, she grew even more afflicted.

This blessed said that she felt like yelling and screaming—if by doing so, she could find any consolation. But as she did not feel God or His works, she did not find anyone to whom she could complain. Although she wanted to shout and howl, she did not have the strength, and neither did she find someone to help her with this. And so it continued.

Because of her great desolation, this blessed said that it seemed to her that there was no doctor in the world who could cure her, even if she knew how to make herself understood and express the very serious pains that she suffered in those shadows and darkness. And neither were there created things in the world with which she could compare a similar sadness and affliction, because natural fire that burns a person is very little suffering in comparison to this. One didn't have anything to do with the other."

Saint Rose, as is normal, also had vocational crises. She doubted if God had called her to be a lay Dominican. Another lay Dominican and consecrated virgin, the sister Catalina de Santa Maria, tells us a very significant story:

"This witness said that she saw the blessed Rose frequently visit the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary. And she showed herself very devoted to Our Lady, looking at her with great affection. And this witness is certain that Our Lady gave her singular favors and graces.

And significantly, this witness knows that in the past year, in 1616, on the day of Saint Sebastian, Saint Rose had a great temptation to leave off the habit of the Order of Saint Dominic that she had put on. And, this witness, from where she was in the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, praying to that most holy image tucked inside the confessional that is in this chapel, saw [Rose] entranced and lifted up.

And in order to be more certain, she sat down next to the blessed saint. She saw that the blessed Rose didn't have her senses, that her body was immobile, and that her face changed colors. Because at first, it became deathly pale, and later, after a long time passed, it turned to an inflamed color. And later, her face became resplendent like the rays of the sun. And this witness was amazed by this and gave thanks to Our Lord for having seen her in such a way.

And returning to herself from the ecstasy, when the blessed saint saw the witness next to her, she looked at her and said, 'Blessed be Our Lord, who brought you and me together, sister of my heart.'

And after this, the witness found out from the priests of the convent of the Rosary, that on that day the temptation left her."<sup>86</sup>

### ***Spiritual accompaniment***

*The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

Certainly, Saint Rose did not understand why she experienced such interior crises, and the Dominicans who were her spiritual fathers did not know how to answer her. Because of this, the accountant Don Gonzalo de la Maza introduced her to the doctor Juan de Castillo and to various Jesuits, so they would help her. Doña Maria de Uzátegui tell us:

"In the presence of her husband the accountant, the witness asked the blessed Rose how she walked her whole life by such a laborious and dark path, without having had any guide and without speaking about it to her spiritual fathers.

She replied that several times, when she talked to them about it, they answered her—not understanding that she couldn't cure herself of these things, nor speak about them—that they were dizzy spells; since she ate so little and was thus weakened, she craved those things.

Even so, she said that she walked on that path with great security, and that it was clear from the beginning that Our Lord bestowed great mercies upon her. Thus, in this way, she was certain that His Divine Majesty was pleased that it would be so, and that these were gifts from Him.

After Our Lord brought her to the house of the witness, she began to talk about all of this with the priests of the Society of Jesus, where she found those who understood her.

And this was in such a way that, early on in the discussions she had with them, she came back with the greatest joy for having come across a Jesuit father who, when she began to tell him things, spoke with her about her whole life from the beginning as if he had known her since the first days of her vocation. And the great clarity and simplicity with which that priest spoke filled the blessed Rose with amazement. And so, this witness received great consolation, because she deeply desired the blessed Rose's good and the consolation of her soul."<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 271 (p. 350)

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 90v-91 (pp. 124-125)

Doña Maria de Uzátegui tells us now how it went for Saint Rose with the doctor Juan del Castillo:

“...This witness and her husband—knowing the great desire that the blessed Rose had for spiritual conversation—knew Doctor Castillo, and how much, by the goodness of God, that this doctor knew about these things. They tried to put them in contact with each other, and so they did; the conversations with him left the blessed Rose very consoled and happy. And it seemed to this witness that their first conversation had been a little more than two years ago. They spoke in the house of the witness and of [Rose’s] mother.

And, getting to know the spirit of the blessed Rose, the doctor showed that he was very impressed. And this witness received singular consolation on her part, for having found a person who would so understand Rose, and with whom she could rest, and with whom Rose talked about the many mercies and favors that Our Lord God had done for her.”<sup>88</sup>

Well, Doctor Castillo told Saint Rose that her spiritual crises were a figure—or image—of what purgatory or hell are like, where God is absent. And God was making her pass through these experiences—or mercies—in order to purify her and perfect her interiorly. Let us see what Doctor Castillo himself tells us:

“And this witness told the blessed Rose he knew for certain that God had given similar favors—such as the aforementioned images of hell and purgatory—to very great beatified and canonized saints. And although they were saints, [some of them] they told His Divine Majesty that with their weak strength, they could not bear such tribulations, and that they preferred He take them by the ordinary path, like all the other people who served God. They did this because they feared such images; although they were just figures, these made them shudder.

However, this saintly Rose, although such things happened to her every day, such was her spirit and strength that she never asked God for anything except more and more, telling Him that whether [these images] were hell or purgatory, temporary or eternal, she put herself in His hands and trusted in Him, that He could do with her whatever He pleased. And she had conformed and united her will with the will of God in everything, and through everything, totally, without exception and without any conditions.

For her consolation in the light of these figures, this witness told her that the holy king and prophet David had passed through these trials with these same circumstances and figures, as the holy prophet David himself expressed in

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88 Ibid., 80 (p. 112)

Psalm 72: 'How good is the God of Israel...Since my heart was embittered and my soul deeply wounded, I was stupid and could not understand; I was like a brute beast in your presence.' (Psalm 73:1, 21-22).<sup>89</sup> And it is very clear what David meant by these words, as each one can surmise and accept all that he has said to this end. Seeing his soul in the desert, David also said, 'Where is your God?' (Psalm 42:4) and in another part he said, 'My soul was like a lonely bird on a roof.' (cf. Psalm 102:8).

And this witness said all this and told it to Rosa de Santa Maria for her consolation.<sup>90</sup>

### **Consolations**

*And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. (Luke 9:33)*

The spiritual crises of Saint Rose were intermittent. And so, when God wanted, He made Himself present again in her heart, and then everything changed for her. Let us continue with the narration from Doctor Castillo:

"And after this, this witness examined her and asked what her soul felt each time she came out of these "images." At this question, she stopped herself like a mute person, as if she didn't want to hear or respond to the question.

And the witness came back to ask her about it a second time. And he asked her to tell and respond clearly and openly, completely answering the question.

And again, she stopped and didn't respond to a single thing.

And this witness told her to look here, as this was an examination to know the characteristics of the favors given to her by God. And that above all, it was for her advantage and security, in order to have the fullest understanding of what these images meant. And that was so Rose would understand them, and likewise for the witness who was examining her to know. It was not the time nor the place to conceal anything in these examinations, as it was she herself who had asked so fervently for the test and the meaning of these images.

<sup>89</sup> *Translator's note:* Following the traditional enumeration of the Psalms, the Process of Canonization references this as Psalm 72. Also, the text of verse twenty-two would be more literally rendered: "I was reduced to nothing and did not understand."

<sup>90</sup> Process, 13-13v.

And the blessed responded with deep shame and humility—her face blushing a deep red<sup>91</sup>—that each time she left these shadows, the prayer of union (which she had talked about previously) would come upon her unexpectedly. Her soul remained in a such a way, that—if she could say it, and she asked for leave to say it without committing a sin—it seemed to her that there was no way her soul could sin. She had never dared to say it. By the questions that this witness put to her, as has been said, he forced the necessity of saying it. And she asked for correction and amendment if what she had said was erroneous, either for not having explained well how she felt or having done it, forced by the questions.

And this witness replied that it was very good not to tell anyone what her soul felt, and that this was also a good act of humility. However, as she herself had wanted to be put to the test, it was very licit to do so, and the fact is, that is what she should do. Furthermore, she had the obligation to confess it entirely and not to hold back any of the things that had happened to her (and were still happening to her), in order to understand these images and what her soul experienced. And this witness advised her that these images of hell and purgatory are some of the greatest favors that God gave her, because through them her soul was refined and purified like gold in the furnace, without leaving any blemish, in order to be more united with God in this way and to increase in grace and merit.

And then she gave many thanks to God, and was greatly consoled.

After this, the witness asked her what happened between her and God after He took away these images of hell and purgatory.

She answered: In that moment, a very soft supernatural warmth came to her soul, with a fragrance of beams of glory, which lifted up her soul and her senses. She found herself united with her God each time this happened. And it seemed that this continually increased.”<sup>92</sup>

## Visions

*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts of the Apostles 16:9-10)*

We know that it was very normal for the medieval mystics to have imaginative visions due to the intervention of God in their souls. To Saint Rose, disciple

91 Translator’s note: Literally, “blushing like a cochineal.” A cochineal is an insect that was is dried and crushed to make a crimson red dye. It was an important export from central and south America in the colonial period.

92 Process, 13v-14v. (p. 34)

of Saint Catherine, God also bestowed this gift. Let us continue with the interesting examination by Doctor Castillo, in order to see what he tells us about the matter:

“And this witness asked her if God had done anything more, other than what had been said.

The blessed Rose stopped and did not respond.

Again, this witness told her that the examination was not the time to stop talking, nor was God pleased when she shut her mouth in such circumstances.

Then she replied, telling the aforementioned witness that when she was immersed in union with God, after the images of hell and purgatory, sometimes she saw Christ Our Lord.

And this witness asked her in what manner she saw Him, if she saw Him with her bodily eyes or with the soul.

She responded that she didn't see Him with bodily eyes, but rather there inside, with the soul in union with God.

And this witness asked her if she saw Him clearly.

She responded 'very clearly' although not His whole body, only His face and chest.

And this witness questioned her if she spent some time looking at Him face to face.

She replied that he passed through, like in a straight line—like a shooting star.

This witness told her that this was an imaginative vision, as she was conscious that she was united with God. Then, the witness asked her to tell him what the image of God looked like.

She said that He was like an infinite sea or an infinite cloud, and that she didn't know what else to say.

And this witness told her: The image unites the humanity of Christ with God. From the way she had described it, it signified in an imaginative way, the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ.

And with this, she was very consoled.

And this witness asked her again if she had seen other images other than the ones mentioned.

She replied that sometimes she saw the Mother of God in an imaginative vision, and that she saw her for a longer time than the image of Christ.

And continuing with his insistent questions, this witness asked her to tell him everything, without leaving out anything she had seen.

Then she replied that for the past several years—although she didn't remember how many exactly—she often saw the Child Jesus in front of her while in unitive prayer and meditation.

The witness questioned her whether she saw Him clearly and without any barrier or hindrance.

She responded that she always saw Him with much certainty and without any doubt, although not with her bodily eyes but with the soul. And that there had always been something like a fog before her, between the Child Jesus and her. And that from the Child Jesus, a very intense joy came to her soul and body. And she said that this flowed from the Child to her soul and to her body, like a blaze of fire. But it was not fire; rather, it was something she did not know how to express, except that she felt the highest joy in her soul and in her body, and that this was very common."

After this, Saint Rose told Doctor Castillo about her mystical espousal with Jesus, which we will see later on, when we get to that subject.

Among the visions that Saint Rose experienced, some witnesses of the Process of Canonization highlighted a special one, the so-called "vision of the bow." Doctor Castillo speaks to us about this in his testimony:

"Rosa de Santa Maria told him: 'For several days now, I have had on my heart a very strong desire to tell you something. But because I have had so many pains and torments—as you know—and because there are so many people here every time you come to see me, I have not had the chance to say it. So, now that God is pleased that I am a little rested, I will tell you of a great favor that Our Lord Jesus Christ has done for me.'

And before she began to speak, she looked all around to see if anyone else was there. When the witness assured her that no one was around, she said this to him:

'You already know that in the past, I was very confused about the favors God had given me, because of my clumsy understanding; therefore, I was not capable of making known what God communicated to me. But one day, a little before this illness came upon me, God was pleased that I had a great rapture, in which I saw an intense light that seemed to be something infinite. And in the middle of the light, I saw a lovely rainbow, very large and of various colors. And above that first bow, I saw another bow, as lovely

and beautiful as the first. And upon this second bow, I saw the Cross where Christ was crucified.

And then, under the first bow, I saw Our Lord Jesus Christ with such greatness and majesty and beauty that I cannot explain it. It cannot be done. And I saw Him in a very different way from the other times that I have seen Him, because the other times, I saw Him passing through like a shooting star. Instead I now saw Him face to face and for a longer period of time. And His Divine Majesty was pleased to give me the strength to be there, looking at Him face to face for a long time—at His whole body from head to toe. And from His face and from His body such beams and sudden blazes of glory came to my soul and my body that I thought God had already taken me from this world and that I was in the very glory of Heaven.

And after this, I saw that Christ took a weight and some balances, and a great number of very beautiful and lovely angels who knelt down and did Him homage. After this, a great number of souls came and revered Christ. And then the angels began to weigh and measure in the balance sufferings and more sufferings, and later I saw that Christ did not judge by the measurements of the angels. And Christ took the weight and the balances in His own hands and distributed sufferings and more sufferings to the souls who were there. I also saw that He gave me a very great and heavy suffering.

At this, I saw Christ take the weight and the balance in His hands, and the angels began to weigh grace and more grace. And I saw that Christ did not judge by the measurements of the angels and He took the weight in His hands and distributed grace and more grace to these souls. I saw that He gave me much grace and even more grace. And I saw that the souls were so full of grace that it spilled out through their mouths and ears. And I saw that I was so filled to the brim with grace that it did not fit inside me.

Jesus Christ turned to me and said, “Let all know this: that grace comes after suffering and that without suffering, there is no grace. When one has grace, it is necessary to have many sufferings so that grace increases all the more. And let all men know this truth: This is the ladder to heaven, and there is no other.”

Having seen this, the witness tells us the saint said:

‘So, an impulse came to me—so great that I don’t know how to describe it—to go out into the plaza and cry out, to yell, to preach to all the people and tell them like Jesus told me, that there is no grace without suffering. All must know that sufferings and more sufferings are required to reach heavenly glory!

I also had a yearning, a breathlessness so great that my soul was bursting and seemed like it wanted to leave my body, to scream and shout in the plaza, and tell everyone that if only they know how lovely grace was, and what wonders grace has in itself, and what delights and joys grace gives, everyone would be willing to suffer in order to obtain grace.'

When she had said this, the witness asked the saint if Jesus had revealed her predestination in this vision.

She responded "no," but that He had revealed to her such great confidence and hope that His Divine Majesty was going to give her so much mercy and was going to take her to His heavenly kingdom, that she indeed had almost as much certainty as if it came through revelation.

Then this witness asked her about what the image looked like and the color of that bow.

She responded that she didn't know of any color of this world with which she could compare it, but that it was so lovely and so full of diverse colors, that she didn't know how to express it. Although it seemed to her that it absorbed in itself all the world's colors.

And then this witness asked her about the way Christ spoke to her there and how He made her understand that what He was measuring and weighing in the balances was one time suffering and the other grace. [The witness asked] if Christ's speech was in her intellect or whether it was vocal.

She replied that she did not understand those terms of intellectual or vocal speech, but that she saw from the mouth of Christ go forth a very lovely thing that afterward entered into her own mouth, and although she didn't know how to tell what it was, in this way, she and Christ understood each other.

And this witness asked her what was the shape and color of grace.

She said that grace was not understood with colors, so she didn't know what color it was.

And then this witness replied brusquely, asking her how she could understand or know grace if it didn't have color or shape, in order for us to know something, it must have a form.

She replied that grace was a thing very much like God, but that she saw clearly that it was not God Himself.

And with this, she ended the story...<sup>93</sup>

After this, the witness said how good it was—through this final figure and vision that His Majesty was pleased to reveal to the saint (which had been

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93 The omitted text is the death of Saint Rose, which we have opted to include later.



Rose in the Hermitage. Anonymous, Early XVIII Century, Peru. Polychromous Huamanga stone carving. PESSCA 340.

told to many witnesses) that all of the other images and revelations that she has told before this, such as seeing Christ pass through during unitive prayer, and the images that she had of purgatory and hell, and ultimately the espousal with the Child Jesus, were all in proportion to and ordered toward this last one (the vision of the bow).

So God was readying the soul of this holy virgin from her childhood, beginning with the prayers already referred to, until she arrived at the final end, which was to arrive at this last figure that was the vision of the bow and everything contained in it.<sup>94</sup>

### **Ecstasies**

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that*

94 Process, 16v-19 (pp. 37-39)

*this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)*

An ecstasy is a spiritual experience in which the person feels that she leaves the earthly dimension and is inserted by God into the divine dimension. This comes unexpectedly and without prior warning—all of a sudden. The person feels confused, as she loses the notion of space and time. But it is not a hallucination, as her intelligence functions perfectly, although she does not comprehend what is happening to her.

In the Process of Canonization, we find various testimonies regarding the ecstasies of Saint Rose. We recall what Sister Catalina de Santa Maria told us about the ecstasies Saint Rose had praying in the confessional of the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary when she was suffering a vocational crisis. Fray Pedro de Loayza tells us of another; this time, Saint Rose was cooking when it came upon her:

“On Sundays when she did not receive Communion upon going to Mass, her habitual sustenance was stew, made with a lightweight squash of very little sustenance that she cultivated in her garden and which are called “cayhuas.”<sup>95</sup> She ate these stews with so much temperance that it was more a ceremony than a food. She did it with more focus on God than on the food, since—as this witness will tell later—the blessed Rose was always in prayer.

And in fact, this could be seen one Sunday, upon returning to her house after having heard Mass in the church. This happened at eight or nine in the morning. Going to season the stew, the blessed Rose heard the song of a bird. Just hearing it, she became ashamed of the fact that right then, the birds praised the Lord while she was occupied with food. She began to praise the Lord and remained suspended in ecstasy until the afternoon.

Returning to herself, she saw that the flame on the half-charred stick she had brought to light the candles had gone out, due to the length of her ecstasy. And seeming to her that she had only been suspended with the song of the bird a little while, she tried blowing on the light again, but she saw that it was completely extinguished. And that seemed strange to her, because she was still not conscious of how much time she had been in ecstasy.

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<sup>95</sup> *Translator's note:* Cayhua, or caigua, is a traditional Andean vegetable with fruits up to 6" long. They are often eaten stuffed with rice or meat.

The blessed Rose told this to this witness. And he knows that she always gave good example, and she gave it all the time throughout her life. He had never seen or heard anything to the contrary.”<sup>96</sup>

***The mosquitoes and the plants praise God***

*All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. (Dan. 3:81)*

The witnesses of the Process of Canonization affirm that Saint Rose loved animals and plants very much. Not only did she love them, they helped her to contemplate God. We will see what the Jesuit priest Diego Martinez tells us about Saint Rose’s relationship with mosquitoes.<sup>97</sup>

“The blessed Rose told this witness that in hot weather, she had in her little cell a great throng of mosquitoes. Upon entering her cell, she said to them, ‘Brother mosquitoes, let us all praise God.’”<sup>98</sup>

It was normal that many mosquitoes were there, as the garden adjoined the Rimac River. Sister Catalina de Santa Maria tells us this anecdote about the mosquitoes:

“The blessed Rose was ordinarily shut up in the little hut all day, until the late hours of the night. And there she had her prayer and contemplation, and she received from Our Lord singular favors.

And she knows that blessed Rose had reached an agreement with the mosquitoes, of which there were many in the garden.

When this witness entered into the little cell where the blessed virgin was, a mosquito came to bite this witness. And seeing that it was full of blood, this witness killed it.

And the blessed Rose said, ‘My Sister, why are you killing my mosquitoes?’

The witness replied to her that she did so because it was full of blood.

And the saint said to her, ‘It is good that we can sustain a mosquito with a little bit of our blood; may our Our Lord thus sustain us with His mercy. In the future, do not kill them, my sister; I have made an agreement with them, and so they do not bite me.’

<sup>96</sup> Process, 211 (p. 281)

<sup>97</sup> The dictionary of Covarrubias (1611) defines “mosquito” in this way: “Small fly, *latine culex* that being a very small thing, makes men uneasy with its sound and its prick.” That is to say, what are called “mosquitoes” in the Process of Canonization are today called “zancudos” in Latin America.

<sup>98</sup> Process, 140v (p. 187)



And from then on, they did not bite this witness either; nor did she kill them or harm them.”<sup>99</sup>

To Don Gonzalo de la Maza, whom Saint Rose called “father” as he had taken her into his home, she said this:

“My father, I have made friends with the mosquitoes since I came to this little cell, and because of this, they not only do not bite me, but even better, they motivate me greatly to praise Our Lord, because during the night, they gather here inside, and a great multitude of them stick to these walls. And when I come and open the door in the morning, they rise up, and I encourage them to praise Our Lord.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 272-272v (p. 351)

And truly, my father, I seem to sense that the mosquitoes are putting on a concert with their buzzing and humming, not only at that time, but all day long.

In addition, my father, when I open the door in the morning to the garden so that it may praise Our Lord, I tell the trees and the plants and the flowers to praise Him and give Him thanks.

And it is true, my father, that I seem to sense that they really do so. They bow down with their branches, and they shake with a very gentle and harmonious sound.

See my father, how it stands to reason that we all love and praise this great God and Lord who does so many favors and mercies for us.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Compassion for the most needy***

*Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:18)*

Question nineteen of the Process of Canonization was the following:

“If you know that she was a woman of great charity toward her neighbor, showing compassion in their spiritual and corporal needs, and serving the sick with great love and diligence, always in special prayer for the condition of the Church, for the souls in purgatory, for the conversion of the unfaithful and the sinners, and in particular for this city of Lima, for her spiritual and corporal parents, for the people that entrusted themselves to her prayers, for those toward whom she had any particular obligation: say what you know about this matter.”<sup>101</sup>

In one way or another, all of the witnesses confirm what the question asks. The answer given by Fray Pedro Loazya stands out, as he did it in a very detailed way:

“He says that he knew question nineteen to be true, as he always found very great charity in the blessed Rosa de Santa Maria. She served the poor with supreme care. And so, she was accustomed to bring people to her house. She not only served, accompanied, and helped them, but when necessary she also picked them up and carried them in her arms—even though this proved harmful to her because she was so debilitated and weak from her penances. It brought the saint to the point of bleeding from the mouth (due to her tuberculosis).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 41v-42v (pp. 66-68)

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 7v (pp. 24-25)

And in particular, this witness noted that she not only exercised this charity with white people or those held in high esteem, but also with poor black people who had nothing with which to pay her back for her help. She truly did all this, so much that it was necessary for her mother to send her away, to the home of the accountant Gonzalo de la Maza, so that the glorious saint would not get sick with another malady. Well, her mother considered it impossible that she could restrain herself and quit serving the poor. Very much to the contrary, she went to them, bringing everything she could, and that her great poverty would permit. And her mother could not see that this was not what was causing anguish or distress.

This witness also knows that the blessed Rosa de Santa Maria had a great and fervent charity in respect to spiritual needs, as, to keep people from offending God, she would have given a thousand lives, if she had them.

And so she very openly gave away the spiritual fruit of her penances and fasts. So it happened with a certain religious of her Order who was dying. She sent this witness to tell him that because she was so confident in the mercy of God, she would offer to Our Lord on his behalf all her many works that she had done throughout her life—if indeed she had done anything that had been agreeable to His Majesty. After his death, if Our Lord gave him permission, he would come to see her.

This agreement was also made between the priest and this witness. And the priest died a holy death and with great signs of salvation. And as far as one can understand, this was thanks to the blessed Rose's offering on his behalf.

And as this witness was somewhat scared of that agreement he had made with the deceased priest, he went to visit the blessed Rose. Laughing, she said to him, 'Father, I see that you are afraid. Do not be, as the departed does not have any further need of coming here.' From this the witness deduced that God had received the works of the glorious saint in satisfaction for the sins of the departed. This was why he didn't need new works applied on behalf of his soul, which had been the purpose of the agreement that the deceased had made with this witness.

This witness also knows that the charity of this saint was of a heroic degree and truly advantageous for the health of soul: for their conversion, and the increase of faith. Thus, she often used to say, 'Oh to be a man, if only so I could work for the conversion of souls!'

When this witness offered himself to preach to the idolatrous natives of this land, the blessed Rose advised him many times to go and preach and convert them. If she had been able to do it, truly she would have, even though she was afraid of being killed.

So she exhorted all the preachers whom she dealt with to attempt to convert many souls and conduct them to God, and to make this alone the objective of their sermons and studies.

She made an agreement with this witness. He would give her half of the souls he converted through his sermons or were entrusted to him. As far as he understands, she did this to encourage him to occupy himself only with [winnings souls] and with no other exercise. And so, in exchange, she offered him half of the many good works she did.

And as she was not content with this, the witness knows that the blessed Rose adopted a little boy. He was not even one year old and the son of poor parents who were virtuous and good Christians. She took this boy as her own son, thinking that when he grew up, he could win for heaven many souls through preaching. She had planned to teach him the Holy Mass, and to read and write when he was old enough. She said that the first words of that preacher of hers had to be “Jesus,” “Maria” and “thanks be to God.” The glorious saint could not bring this to completion, on account of her death. But the burning charity and the fervor of her spirit can well be seen.

The witness discovered this [burning charity] when in the convent there was some lack of care in giving Holy Communion to the faithful, or when there were not enough priests hearing confessions. Then the blessed Rose felt deeply about it and complained to the priests or other people who could remedy the situation.

In the same way, she felt the offenses committed against God before someone died. And she grieved for these and performed the greatest penances. And she begged everyone she knew to be virtuous to commend them to Our Lord.

This witness also knew that her charity and fervor made her ever more eager to establish a monastery. The blessed Rose said that in this city, there were so many flowers—religious people and holy young ladies—if they were to gather them all in a monastery, what a sweet odor would reach heaven. And so, he heard her say that she had experienced a revelation through which Our Lord had shown her what was just discussed. When the blessed Rose threw some flowers or roses into the air, they stayed suspended in the shape of a cross. And when her brother threw his up in the air, this did not happen. Although she did not tell this witness quite as clearly as it is said here, she told him the significance of this vision. It referred to the foundation of this monastery, where the nuns—like flowers—could adorn the Cross of Christ. And this is what he knows and responds to the question.”

It is very enriching for us to see the broad understanding of charity that was had at that time. Today, when we talk about this virtue, we usually refer

above all to doing good works like feeding the needy or educating children. But in Saint Rose's time, actions that are more proper to the contemplative life, such as praying for a person's salvation, for the souls in purgatory, or on behalf of the preachers were also considered to be acts of charity.

In order to help others, in the modern day, we would think to establish something "useful" and "practical," like a hospital or orphanage. However, while it's true that Saint Rose dedicated much time and effort to curing the sick and educating children, she dreamed of founding a monastery, so that nuns could praise God and pray for the world's good. Our current pragmatism makes us underestimate prayer and the contemplative life. We think that the good is something one does through action. And sometimes we forget the great good that we can also do through contemplation.

If we do not pray, what we do will not be anything more than purely human works, and therefore, very limited. But on the contrary, if we put ourselves in the hands of God by means of prayer, He will work with all His power through us, and we will be able to do things that will seem miraculous to us, because they will go beyond many of our limitations. That was what Saint Rose was looking for in founding a monastery: to create a contemplative community that prays to God so that He might do great things for the good of the world.

One day, when Fray Luis de Bilbao expressed his doubts to Saint Rose about founding a monastery of Dominican women in Lima, she said to him:

"It has to be done, Father. The "how" and the "when," God knows. But that it must be done, do not doubt it, Your Reverence."

### ***Mystical Espousal***

*So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17:21)*

In years past, when a woman reached puberty, she was considered ready to contract matrimony. In fact, it was not unusual that parents made betrothals for marriage when their daughters were eleven or twelve years old. As such, when Saint Rose was this age, in place of letting herself be charmed by one

of her many suitors, she consecrated her virginity to Jesus, who she began to see as her Spouse.

From that point on, her love for Jesus continued to grow, and she felt herself ever more united to Him. When she was twenty-one years old, the virginal promise she had made in the intimacy of her heart was made official at her profession as a consecrated virgin of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. And her relationship with her Spouse continued maturing. And so, when she was already a woman of thirty-one, Jesus gave her an exceptional gift. He asked her to marry Him. Doña Maria de Uzátegui tells us the story with quite a bit of detail:

“Afterward, on another occasion during Lent of this past year, on Good Friday night, when Rose was at home in this witness’s house, after having returned from fixing up and dressing a statue of Our Lady of Loreto that was in the Jesuit Church, she told the witness and her husband (the accountant), that she was going to be married on the morning of Easter Sunday of the Lord’s Resurrection. This witness asked her what wedding this would be; Rose told both of them what had happened and what she had been told to do.

She recounted that on Palm Sunday morning, while she was at the convent of the Rosary after the blessing of the palms, the procession was beginning, and she had not been given a palm or a branch like they had always done in years past.

And naturally, she felt it deeply and experienced an interior movement of the soul. As it seemed to her that she had done something wrong, she returned to Our Lady, and offered herself to [the Virgin Mary] as she usually did on such occasions. She told her with great tenderness, ‘No, my Lady, I do not want a palm from men.’ With great emotion, she begged [the Virgin] to obtain pardon for what she had done and to help her win a palm from her Son; the one she wanted was from His most holy hand. And so she spent a little time there speaking words of praise to Our Lady, moved by that interior movement that she had felt.

And looking at her with such emotion, the blessed Rose saw the Queen of Angels, all aglow and joyful, turn her most holy face to her precious Son. Then the Child Jesus, also with a joyful countenance, turned to look at the blessed Rose and said to her, ‘Rose of my heart, be my spouse.’ In the face of such great mercy, she humbled herself before her Lord and said to Him, ‘I do desire it, Lord.’

Feeling such great care and joy in her heart, the blessed Rose put that drive and determination toward executing the task; she had a ring made. Wishing that she could put a heart with an image of Jesus on it, she called upon her brother and asked him, 'What letters could we put on the ring that express what my Spouse said to me?'

And making a little circle the right size for a ring, her brother took a quill and inscribed on it the same words that the most holy Child said to the blessed Rose, although she had not spoken or communicated them to him beforehand. And she was amazed and afraid to see that her brother had guessed what was her will and that of the most sweet Child. So, he made the ring with which the espousal would happen on Easter morning. After it was made, it was placed in the tabernacle where the Most Blessed Sacrament was reserved on Holy Thursday.

And the blessed Rose told them that a Mass was going to be said over the ring on Easter Sunday; after the Mass, the ring would be put on her finger. Upon hearing her say this, the witness told her that she wanted to attend the wedding. Since [Rose] found a "mother" (referring to herself) in that place, it would not be right for the daughter to get married without her being there.

And so it was agreed upon. They would go to the early Mass on Easter Sunday. And this witness did so. In this way, this witness and the blessed Rose went to communion at the Mass said by the superior, Fray Alonso Velazquez, who had put the ring underneath the corporals. After he had said Mass, this priest (Fray Alonso) returned to the altar and put the ring on the finger of the blessed Rose.

This was done with so much modesty, in a hidden and secret way, that if the witness had not been warned, she would not have seen it at all, even though she was at Rose's side. In fact, neither Rose's own mother nor other people saw it. And from that day until just a few days before her death, she wore this ring on her middle finger.

Then, when she was sick with the illness that led to her death, the blessed Rose ordered that it be given to Doña Michaela de la Maza, daughter of this witness. She had told the witness beforehand about it. And so, when the blessed Rose asked that they take it off her finger, she told them to give it to the witness, because she would be frightened to take it off of the finger after death. And it was done, leaving the ring in the possession of this witness in order to give to her daughter at a later time."<sup>102</sup>

When Saint Rose was talking about her vision to the doctor Castillo, she told him the story about this experience of espousal. But she did it in a very simple way:

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 86 (pp. 119-120)

“This witness asked her if something more had happened in her relationship with God.

She responded that, not long before, she was meditating on this relationship of union and looked at the Child Jesus. The Child said to her ‘Rose, my friend, espouse yourself to me.’ She was deeply changed because of this, and a great increase of the most sweet joy and delight came to her.

And this witness asked her about how the Child Jesus spoke to her, if He spoke to her intellect as a locution or vocally. She replied that He had not spoken to her either vocally or through the intellect.

Then the witness questioned her how she was capable of understanding Him.

She replied that while she was looking face to face at the Child Jesus, what the Child Jesus said to her came to her understanding. In this way, she understood Him very clearly.

This witness asked her what she felt in her soul with this espousal.

She said it was a joy that surpassed anything else that had ever happened to her.

This witness asked again if, after this espousal, she found herself better than before.

She replied that these advantages and joys were so great that she could not stop telling about it.”<sup>103</sup>

Well then, with this mystical experience, did Saint Rose reach spiritual perfection? Based on how she herself described it, we can say yes. Furthermore, with only four months left to live, it is reasonable to think that God wanted to give her this gift. Thanks to it, she would not have to suffer another spiritual crisis.

### ***Preacher of the love of God***

*...For from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness, but an evil person brings forth evil out of a store of evil. (Matthew 12: 34-35)*

As we have been continually saying, the fundamental element of the spirituality of Saint Rose is love: a love that she receives from God and in turn transmits to people, to nature, and—above all—back to God

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 15 (pp. 35-36)

Himself. What is more, by loving people and nature, Saint Rose loved God, her Creator. This love of Him was so good that she tried to get all others to practice it exteriorly and enjoy it interiorly. For this reason, she preached the love of God with great passion.

The testimony of Doctor Castillo is conclusive:

“In his examination, it became very clear to him that she was very fervent in her love for God. She told him so. She also confessed that she was dying for God’s love, and she wanted to die and be done with everything out of love for God.”<sup>104</sup>

Saint Rose could not keep that divine gift for herself. Sister Luisa de Santa Maria, who was also a consecrated virgin of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, speaks to us of how Saint Rose became excited when preaching about love for God:

“This witness frequently saw her [preaching] the love of God with the greatest fervor and energy . And on some occasions she begged everyone to love God with such great fervor that it seemed like she was beside herself.

And it was in this great manner that the blessed Rose ordinarily spoke of the love of God and of His divine praises; she was not seen occupied in other conversations.”<sup>105</sup>

And from the testimony of the father of Saint Rose, Don Gaspar Flores, we know the following:

“..He said that he knew—because he saw it—that his daughter, the blessed Rose, was very fond of talking frequently about the love of God. Whenever possible, she fled all conversations that did not speak of this love.”<sup>106</sup>

Doña Jusepa de Guzmán, a neighbor to Don Gonzalo and Doña Maria, tells us the well-known miracle of the *Ecce Homo*, to which Saint Rose had a great devotion:

“On many occasions, she heard the blessed Rose say with great fervor and spirit, ‘Oh Lord, if only they loved you! Oh my God, if only they loved you!’

As confirmation of this, the witness knows something that occurred while the blessed Rose was in the oratory of the accountant Gonzalo de la Maza on a Saturday, the fifteenth of April this year, about seven fifteen at night, with

104 Ibid. , 20 (p. 41)

105 Ibid., 147v (p. 198)

106 Ibid.,

Doña Michaela and Doña Andrea de la Maza [present]. The blessed Rose, upon discovering a holy face of the Savior that was on the altar, was amazed to see the holy image and the splendor that shone from His holy face. She began to say out loud, 'May all creatures love you, Lord!'

She repeated this and asked Our Lord for as sign of how they should love Him, who was the Divine Majesty. Our Lord was pleased that the holy image should begin to sweat from the face and from the roots of hairs on the head and the beard.

And this witness came to see it, many other persons came to see it as well. The artist who painted it also saw it, as well as the Jesuit priest Diego de Peñalosa, who arrived to wipe it off.

And this lasted a long time, as will be told through the information that was given about the case to which it refers.<sup>107</sup>

One of the clearest testimonies of the love of God that Saint Rose experienced and preached is this that Fray Luis Bilbao contributes:

"This witness said that he spoken with her for several years in the confessional, as he has previously testified. And to him, she always seemed like a burning volcano of love for God that at times sent out flames through her mouth. And all of her thoughts and her words were of the love of God.

She came into the confessional, saying, 'May God be in your soul, Your Reverence, father of my soul. Let us love God very much. Oh, who loves Him? They do not love him because they do not know how much He deserves to be loved!'

When she wanted to enliven the spirit in some devoted person, she said to them, 'Love God very much; speak much about the love of God.'

And she also said, 'Father, I wanted to do something to show my love for God, because I am an ingrate who does not know how to love.'

She often prayed this "Prayer of love". It burned so brightly and was of such great benefit for others. It seemed to this witness that she this is what she said:

**Prayer:**

'My Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, my Creator and Redeemer, I regret having offended thee, You who are "I am who am", because I love you above all things.

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107 Ibid. 314v (p. 400)

My God and true spouse of my soul, joy of my heart, I want to love you, Oh most gentle Jesus, with that most perfect love, most efficacious love, most true love, most ineffable love, most intense love. With the incomparable love, incomprehensible love, incontestable love, invincible love with which the heavenly courtiers love you.

I would like to love you even more, God of my heart and of my life. I want to love you, my gift, as much as your Most Blessed Mother and my Lady, the Most Pure virgin loves you.

I would like to love you even more, the health and joy of my body and my soul. I want to love you as much, my God, as you love me.

As I love you, let me be burned, discarded, consumed in the fire of your divine Love, most gentle Jesus. Amen.”

And this witness said that although the saint did not tell him she had composed this prayer, he is certain that she did so, because he knows the style. The tenderness of the words, and the mildness of speech is hers.”<sup>108</sup>

How important love is in our life, and even more when it is a clean, pure, and disinterested love: a love that springs from the Spirit of God who dwells in our hearts and inundates our whole person; a love that we channel toward God with our devoted prayer and toward others in our charitable works. With Him in our soul, we sense that our life is full of meaning, and we are profoundly happy.

And by preaching it, we can bring others happiness.

### *Farewell*

In order to conclude the testimonies about Saint Rose, we are going to imagine ourselves in an endearing scene described in the Process of Canonization. She is in her room, in the house of Don Gonzalo and Doña Maria. She is very sick. Lying down on the bed, in a corner of the room, she is found alone with the doctor Juan del Castillo, who is seated at her side. Saint Rose had been talking about the visions she had received. When she is finished, seeing that only a little time remains before she is going to die, she decides to say farewell:

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 291v-292 (p. 372).

“The blessed Rose said to this witness:

‘Everything is done and the journey is short. Give me your hand.’

And this witness gave it to her. She squeezed it and said to him:

‘Well do you know that we have become very good friends. For the love of God, I beg you that in the little time that remains, you do not forget to help me. Now is the time to commend me to God with your prayers. I promise you: whenever God is pleased to bring me to His glory, I will ask Him to confirm His grace in you. You can be sure of it; I carry it deep in my soul. As I have told you, I have the greatest confidence that His Divine Majesty will have mercy on me; so also do I have confidence that I will obtain from His Divine Majesty what I ask of Him for you. And if we do not see each other anymore, for the love of God, I ask you to help me.’”<sup>109</sup>

A few days later, the doctor Castillo went again to visit Saint Rose. She was so weak that she could hardly speak. Seated beside her bed, he told her:

“Lady Rose, you know well that for these past two years we have been very good friends. You have revealed all the supernatural mercies that His Divine Majesty has been pleased to communicate to you, which I have fresh in my memory. Know that His Divine Majesty now wants to bring you to enjoy His holy Glory, and do not doubt this.

And another thing I want to tell you: that since you fell sick in this bed, understanding has been given to me, I don’t know from where it is from (or where it is not from), but I cannot get away from it day or night. I sleep with it and I remember it, and I’m thinking about it every hour while I’m awake. It is only possible now at your departure from this world; God has given you a great supernatural grace that corresponds proportionally to the many others that His Majesty has given you throughout your life.

And since in themselves, all the things that you testified about were very murky and obscure, and you have confessed that no one understood them, I have been convinced that His Divine Majesty has been pleased to tell you very lofty things. With this, everything that you told me is now clear and no one can doubt it.”

Five days later, Saint Rose died.

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109 Ibid. 18 (p. 39)



## Works of Saint Rose

By way of an appendix, we are going to put forth now several of the works that Saint Rose has left us. They include poems, letters, a prayer called the Angelic Exercise, and the hearts that she painted on two panels. Thanks to what we already know about the mystical experience of Saint Rose, now we can better understand what she wanted to communicate through these works.

### Poems

We have seen that our saint liked to sing poems in order to show God her love. We have already gotten to know some of these when we talked about her canticles. Let us see these others that Fray Luis Alonso Getino found in the monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria (Lima).

Following the spiritual experience of the author of the Book of Daniel and of some of the Psalms that praise God together with nature, in this poem, Saint Rose has a dialogue with a bird that sings praises to God with her.

“Yearning voice, compose  
 a hymn with united cadence  
 that consecrates to the Redeemer  
 our humble praise.

You exalt your Creator,  
 I, my Redeemer,

and may God be revered  
in our two-part acclamation.

Open your beak, and together  
let us give a sweet song  
with tender voices, soft cadences,  
interwoven harmonies.

O my God, if I loved you!  
Oh, if I loved you, My God,  
and loving you, I remained,  
burning in flames of love.

How can I love you, Lord,  
since I am only a creature  
and you are my Lord?

The little bird leaves me,  
the swift singer flees,  
but my sweet Redeemer  
is always with me.

Little nightingale,  
let us praise the Lord,  
you praise your Creator,  
I sing to my Savior.

It is past twelve,  
my lover does not come.  
Who could be the lucky one  
who delays Him?

Oh my! Who holds up  
My lover?

Noon has already come  
And He does not appear.

And on the other hand,  
He goes on without me.  
Heart, soul, and life  
Faint within me.

I suffer sweet violence  
because I love you.  
Law itself forces me  
to love you, my king.

Not only a law,  
But all the laws together,  
Since you are my Creator,  
And I am your creature.”<sup>110</sup>

Regarding the sufferings of her life, Saint Rose so declares her love for God:

“Do not give me, Lord,  
your punishment and ire.  
Do not let your fury enter in,  
as justice upon me.  
As you, Lord, are pleased  
that I wash the stains  
of my sins  
with this blood.”<sup>111</sup>

Now we will see how Saint Rose asks her guardian angel to speak with her beloved God so that He might take her to heaven soon:

“Young one from heaven,  
fly to the Creator,  
tell Him that I am already living  
here without life.

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<sup>110</sup> Getino, p. 164-165.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

Tell Him of my worries:  
how hard it is for the one  
who lives only in hope,

And I am dying for Him.  
Pray Him come  
to me quickly,  
show me His face,  
for I am dying of love.”<sup>112</sup>

And in this poem, she puts her mother in the hands of Saint Dominic:

“My father Dominic,  
when I die,  
I commend to you my mother  
who is left alone.”<sup>113</sup>

Image: Rose of Lima by Gregorio Vasquez de Arce and Ceballos, New Granada: Bogota, Seventeenth Century.



<sup>112</sup> Getino, p. 162.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 163.

## Letters

Only three letters of our Saint have been preserved: to Fray Geronimo Bautista (1613), asking him for help with the foundation of the monastery of Saint Catherine; to Fray Bartolomé de Ayala (1613), speaking to him of the spiritual friendship that unites them both; and to Doña Maria de Uzátegui (1614), thanking her for the chocolate that she sent.

### *Letter 1: To Fray Geronimo Bautista*

“To my father, Fray Geronimo Bautista, may Our Lord keep you in Spain, or wherever you are.

May the Most Holy Name of Jesus Christ Crucified be glorified and may the same, highest good, be in your soul, Your Reverence.

If only I had the tongue of an angel to tell of the singular favors that my Lord has been pleased to give me—although I am undeserving—regarding my deep desire for the monastery of my mother, Catherine of Siena, and of the favors that I will have when God is pleased to fulfill it for me. And since I don’t have the tongue of an angel, I want to keep my mouth shut, so I am only going to ask you, Father, to hurry your steps. Because, my father, this is not the time to sift the flour; rather, it is already time to knead the dough with great haste so that souls hungry for Christ do not perish.

I have written you two other letters, Father, giving account of the site and the revenues for this monastery. But adversities abound—and these are only those from our prelates! I say this so that we can take precautions, and with luck, no impediment will be put before us.

In order to help with the costs, Father, I am sending you one hundred ducats worth eleven *reales* each.<sup>114</sup> Father Obando, of the Society of Jesus, whom I have already introduced to you, is bringing them. My father, Fray Gonzalo Garcia sent a memorandum to you, Father. Since we are doing this on behalf of Our Lord, I beg you, my father, to try to accomplish it.

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<sup>114</sup> *Translator’s note:* The Spanish ducat was worth just over eleven silver reales. In modern American dollars, Saint Rose’s one hundred ducats could be worth around \$20,000. (cf. Velde, *Fiat Money in 17th Century Castile*, 1997)

A warning to you, Father, that the nuns must be subject to the Ordinary for two reasons: first, because I understand that our Lord will be served better in this way; and second, because our Father Provincial says when we have the decree, we will be united to the Order, and all the rest will be under that jurisdiction.

See, Father, what is most agreeable. In everything, I refer to the memorandum of my father, Fray Gonzalo Garcia, as I have already told you.

I pray you, let the letters and the monetary donations be directed to the accountant of this "crusade," Don Gonzalo de la Maza, who with much goodwill wishes to favor this cause and by whose orders these one hundred ducats are sent.

Your Reverence, since I know that my father has written a long letter already, this letter will be short. I only ask through the blood of Our Redeemer Jesus Christ, that you commend me to His Divine Majesty, and my sisters ask the same. They and I do so with particular care. Through the mercy of God, there are already four of us who wear the habit of my mother Saint Catherine of Siena, whose image I ask you to bring from Sevilla. It was entrusted to a merchant who is now going that way, whose name is Juan Fernandez Pereira. He has what is needed to pay for the work, and is bringing the order for the master who painted the glorious image of Saint Mary Magdalene that is in our house.

I ask you, Father, to beg the Divine Majesty to bring the glorious saint safely here. Please also ask Him to be favorable to our request.

My lady, Doña Isabel Mejia, kisses your hand, Father, and my parents do the same.

Blessed be my God.

May you be of good health, and may I have it as well.

May the Divine Majesty be praised, and may His Divine Majesty keep you, Father, in His holy service.

In the city of Lima, the fifth of May, 1613.

The humble slave of Jesus, my Spouse, and your servant, Father, Rosa de Santa Maria."<sup>115</sup>

***Letter II: To Fray Bartolomé de Ayala***

“Father of my soul:

May the Holy Spirit fill Your Reverence with His grace, and may He give me encouragement so I may ardently desire and carry out all the things that are pleasing to His Divine Majesty, so that they may be done for the honor and glory of God and the benefit of our souls.

I tell you, also, father of my soul, that I have been moved to invoke the glorious and blessed Saint Bartholomew—since he is the saint you are named after—as the protector and guide of your soul, Father.

I tell you, then, father of my soul: for the love of God; and because of the desire I have to suffer for Jesus Christ, spouse of my soul; and due to the charity you have shown me, Father (and with hope that from today onward, you will show me even more), I thus bind to myself and take up the burden of all your faults, Father. I ask God to give me any punishments that you would acquire due to your faults. As for me, like I have said, I want to suffer them for love of Jesus Christ Himself, even if His Divine Majesty wishes to send me countless martyrdoms. I trust that His Divine majesty will give me the strength to pay these debts.

Trusting in divine mercy, I oblige myself to fulfill what I have said, for which I give the Virgin Mother of God, Queen of the Angels and Our Lady, as the guarantor. This lady is the guarantor of my soul.

In the same way, I oblige myself to pray a Rosary to the Mother of God each week, so that she holds you in her blessed lap.

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115 Transcribed into modern Spanish in “Las Cartas de Santa Rosa,” *Mercurio Peruano*, 217 and Getino (pp. 153-155)

Furthermore, Father, I want for you to have an equal part in all of my penances, my fasts, and whatever good works I have done in this life for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ. For this, I name Saint Bartholomew to the task of gathering and keeping [all the graces] that belong to you, Father.

May Saint Bartholomew offer the Rosaries I have committed to praying to the Mother of God, so that a garment may be made for you of these prayers. When you leave this life for the life of heaven, Father, may this glorious saint dress your soul with this garment.

To everything I have said above, I oblige myself, because I plan to carry it out, and I sign it with my name.

In honor of the Most Holy Trinity, I give as witness three glorious saints: Saint Augustine, Saint Dominic, and Saint Francis. May they sanctify your spirit, Father, and give me their grace.

The very humble daughter of Your Reverence,

Rosa de Santa Maria

May Our Lord guard my father, Fray Bartolomé de Ayala.<sup>116</sup>

***Letter III: To Doña Maria de Uzátegui***

“May Jesus be glorified.

To Doña Maria de Uzátegui, upon receiving from her the chocolate that I needed.

Mother of my soul, my lady:

The Divine Majesty and the Divine Spouse, has been pleased to speak to me so that I am correct in doing what He commands. For my part, I will do whatever is in my power.

Ask the Lord, Mother,<sup>117</sup> to hear my poor prayers and yours. I commend myself to the prayers of my lord father [Don Gonzalo], whose hands—along with those of the little angels—my mother and I kiss a thousand times.

<sup>116</sup> Translated into modern Spanish in Getino, p. 159

<sup>117</sup> *Translator's note:* In this letter, Rose refers to the recipient as Mother before adding “vuestra merced,” or “your

Jesu cristo sea  
glorificado

“

Thanks for the  
chocolate!”

madre de mi alma y Señora  
mia la duena magistad en serbida  
de comunicar me su dueno espiri  
tu para que io a cierto a cer lo que  
Vmd manda que io de mi parte ar  
todo lo que en mi fuere pida Vmd  
madre mia a dios diga mis po  
bres oraciones y en las de Vmd y en  
las de mi Señor padre me tra a mi  
endo cuas manos todas juntas con  
las de esos anjelitos mi madre y yo  
millares de becer beceramos y todas las  
personas desta casa pedimos a nuestro  
Sr pague a Vmd con premio de gloria  
la limosna de noche con las de mas q  
cierto llego a tiempo de mi apretada re  
cordad nuestro Sr me qu a Vmd i  
deno = esclava de la virgen maria  
Rosa de mar

Everyone in this house prays the Lord to repay you with a glorious reward for the alms you gave last night, which truly arrived at the time of my very pressing need.

May our Lord guard you as I desire.

The slave of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus, and your servant,

Rosa de Santa Maria<sup>118</sup>

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grace." She also uses similar phrases in her letters to the priests. This term, which will be later shortened to "usted," is an expression of courtesy, as opposed to the formal honorific today reserved for prelates and royalty.

118 Translated into modern Spanish by Getino, p. 159

## **Angelic Exercise**

In the so-called “Angelic Exercise,” Saint Rose shows us how she understood God. In the profound intimacy of her soul, she continually grew ever closer to her Beloved and became more familiar with Him. This prayer embodies that love; Fray Pedro de Loayza speaks about it in the Process of Canonization:

“This witness has never heard the blessed Rose sigh or do any action that was for the relief of her own body, in imitation of a certain saint called Gregorio Lopez who died in New Spain. The saint had read his biography and praised him highly. Proceeding from this, the saint requested that a litany of 150 divine attributes be made for her. She put them in groups of ten, with a Gloria at the end of each group of ten, in the manner of the Psalter or the Rosary. The blessed Rose said that the demons trembled and fled before this litany.

And so one can understand this Litany prayed by the blessed Rose, this witness was asked to translate it to the letter, all of it as he has it written in a book, at the end of this question. He showed me (the present notary) the result. Taken word for word, it says this:

Psalter of 150 divine names and epithets, taken from the Holy Scripture and the doctrine of the Holy Fathers, composed in the manner of a litany in order to invoke and praise the Most Holy Trinity.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, hear us.

Jesus Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Heavenly Father, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Oh God, you who are:

God, [pure] spirit.

Simple God.

Immortal God.

Perfect God.

Infinite God.

God, dependent on nothing.  
God, with infinite understanding.  
God, without deficiency.  
Most high God.  
Most loving God.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son....  
One God.  
True God.  
God of Truth.  
Faithful God.  
Good God.  
Beautiful God.  
Great Lord God.  
Living God.  
God of Light.  
God who enlightens.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son...  
Peaceful God.  
Long-suffering God.  
Merciful God.  
Approachable God.  
Generous God.  
Patient God.  
Clement God.  
Gentle God.  
God of mildness.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son...  
Immense God.  
Unchangeable God.  
Eternal God.  
Invisible God.  
Incomprehensible God.  
Ineffable God.  
All-powerful God.  
Wise God.  
Glorious God.  
Holy God.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son...  
God who reveals profound things.  
Jealous God.

God of justice.

God who speaks justice.

Righteous God.

Avenging God.

Terrible God.

God the Strong.

Magnificent God.

God of Hosts.

Glory to the Father and to the Son...

Unerring God.

Sweet God.

Incomparable God.

Pure God,

Great God.

Highest God.

Sublime God.

God who possesses all.

Savior God.

God of meekness.

Glory to the Father and to the Son...

God, Creator of all.

God who holds all things in being.

Provident God.

God who rules all things.

God, my guard and defense.

God, the Lawgiver.

God who justifies.

God who glorifies.

God, King of all ages.

God who dwells in light inaccessible.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son...

Father God.

Unbegotten God.

God, principle of deity.

God from whom everything receives being.

God, life for those who know Him.

God, beyond all praising.

Most merciful God.

God who punishes the sins of fathers in the children.

God who knows the secrets of the heart.

God, seated upon the Cherubim.

Glory to the Father and to the Son....

True God and True Man.

Jesus, God.

God, son of the Virgin.

God, spotless Lamb.

God, Good Shepherd.

God, true life.

God, seed of the Lord.

God, gate of heaven.

God, life of heaven.

God, our Life.

Glory to the Father and to the Son....

God our Redeemer.

God, worthy of admiration.

God, the Counselor.

God, Father of the Age to Come.

God who rules in Israel.

God who sits at the right hand of the Father.

God, living bread.

God, bread of angels.

God, true bread from heaven.

God, viaticum for pilgrims.

Glory to the Father and to the Son....

God, Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,

God, Spirit of Truth,

God, the artist of souls,

God, lover of holy thoughts.

God who inspires the prophets.

God, doctor of the apostles.

God, comforter of martyrs,

God, who purifies virgins,

God, teacher of all the saints.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son....

God of eternal majesty.

God, the blessed.

God, blessing to all.

God, father of orphans.

God who hears our cries.

God, comforter of the faint-hearted.

God, our protector.

God, in whom we live.

God who dwells in the heavens.

God who sees the humble.

Glory to the Father and to the Son...

God the Son,

God, only begotten of the Father,

God, wisdom of the Father,

God, divine Word,

God, image of the Father,

God, splendor of glory.

God, innocence of eternal light.

God through whom all things exist.

God, King of kings.

God, beginning and end of all.

Glory to the Father and to the Son...

God, long-expected.

God, prince of peace.

God, the cornerstone.

God, judge of the living and the dead.

God, Adonai.

God, root of Jesse.

God, key of David.

God, the dayspring,

God, architect of all.

Glory to the Father and to the Son....

God, the Holy Spirit,

God who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

God, gift of God Most High.

God, in whom everything is sanctified.

God, fire and charity.

God, spiritual unction.

God, sweet guest of the soul.

God, sweet refreshment.

God, consolation to those who weep.

God, temperance of the fiery.

Glory to the Father and to the Son.

Be merciful and forgive us, Lord.

Be merciful and hear us, Lord.

From all evil, deliver us, Lord.

From every sin, deliver us Lord.

From the illusions and temptations of the devil, deliver us, Lord.

Through the immense goodness through which you wanted us to know you,

through the infinite charity with which you gave us your Only Begotten Son,

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and your Saints,  
We sinners beg you to hear us.

May you deign to grant us true contrition and pardon of our sins.

May you infuse in our souls perfect and solid virtues.

May you help our Supreme Pontiff, the ecclesiastical princes, and all the Christian people.

May you destroy all heresy and superstition.

May you deign to grant eternal rest to all the faithful departed.

God, Trinity and One, pardon us, Lord.

God, Trinity and One, hear us, Lord.

God, Trinity and One, have mercy on us.

Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let us praise and exalt Him for all ages.

Let us pray:

All powerful and ever-living God, who deigned to reveal the glory of your eternal Trinity to your servants in the confession of the true Faith, and who wished that the unity of your august Majesty be adored, we beg you Lord, that through the firmness of this same faith, we may be always freed from every kind of adversity and danger. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Process, 215-218. (pp. 286-291). The original text is in Latin. We have been helped in the translation to Spanish by Getino, pp. 132-138.

## The Sixteen Hearts of Saint Rose

In 1923, while visiting the room where Saint Rose had died, Fray Luis Gentino had the good fortune to discover two sheets that she had created for a confessor. Formed into something like a collage, they were made from cut pieces of paper. The name of the confessor is unknown; however, it was possibly Fray Juan de Lorenzana. This room was in the old house of Don Gonzalo de la Maza and Doña Maria de Uzátegui, and today forms part of the monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria.

As Saint Rose herself left in writing, these two sheets describe her spiritual experience between 1611 (when she was twenty-five years old) and 1616. The first sheet bears the name “Mercies of the Soul” or “Wounds of the Soul” and the second, “Spiritual Ladder.”

Along with these two sheets, there were others in which Saint Rose explained their content in an autobiographical way, but unfortunately, these have been lost.<sup>120</sup> Here, we preserve the words Saint Rose wrote on the first of the two sheets, on which she painted the first three hearts. Dated August 23, 1616, just one year before she died:

“Vespers of my King, the Apostle Saint Bartholomew. I made the two works that I am sending you on two half-sheets of paper. I’m sending these to Your Reverence, as my only spiritual father, so you may correct my errors and entrust to God whatever is lacking in this work due to my ignorance. You will find many errors and faults as it has been put forth by my own hand. And if you find that it is good, it will only be thanks to the mercies of God. I say that in all truthfulness.

I confess with all truth, in the presence of God, that I have not seen or read about in any book all of the mercies I have recorded (both in the notebooks as well as in the art and paintings on these two sheets). They have only been the works of this sinner through the powerful hand of God, in whose book I read about Him who is Eternal Wisdom, who ‘confounds the proud and exalts the humble.’ (James 4:6), fulfilling that what he hides from the wise and the learned, he reveals to the childlike (cf. Mt. 11:25).

I received these three favors from the divine mercy before the great tribulation that I suffered in the general confession that I made by order of that confessor who gave me so very much what I deserved. After having made the general confession, I suffered close to two years from great pains,

<sup>120</sup> As we said in the “Brief Chronology” section, those manuscripts were sent to Madrid in 1622 by Lima’s Inquisition. (cf. Busto, p. 187)

tribulations, desolations, helplessness, temptations, battles with demons, calumnies from confessors and children, illnesses, pains, fevers—to sum it all up, the worst pains of hell that can be imagined. About five years have passed since I received the mercies from the Lord that I have put on this half-sheet of paper through His inspiration. I have felt them in my own heart, although I am not worthy.

All of those “mercies” were given to me on a variety of occasions that I cannot number; because I have received them repeatedly, alternating between great suffering and an exquisite crucible, as I have written about various times, for the glory of God and the confusion of hell, and for the consolation of many souls, as the Lord has commanded.

If it seems to you, Father, that the images are taking away from God, you can burn the hearts.

I love the glorious apostle Saint Bartholomew with all of my heart (and have for many years), just because I heard a sermon about how much he desired in this life to see God. His Majesty gave him the highest degree of glory. I love any saint who had such a strong desire to see God.

Even apart from their great virtues, they took great care to love; these are the ones who steal my heart.<sup>121</sup>

In the lower margin, it is written:

“Favors that our mother and patron saint Rosa de Santa Maria received, as the writings signify, written in her own hand.”<sup>122</sup>

On the second page, in the bottom right corner, Saint Rose noted this:

“With a particular light from heaven, the mercies printed here have all been given to a heart tenderly in love with God, a slave of Christ, unworthy to be counted among the children of God.

The author asks for the correction of the errors that she has committed in the painting of this sheet.”<sup>123</sup>

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121 Transcribed into modern Spanish by Julian Cos from the reverse side of the original sheets. Portions also translated in Castro, pp. 248-353.

122 Castro, p. 248

123 *Ibid.*, p. 253

Someone added on the lower margin:

“These are the degrees of the love of God that burned in our holy mother Saint Rose, and the great mercies that she received from our Lord. By His inspiration, she depicted them in the hearts on these half-sheets; they are written in her own hand for the glory of God.”<sup>124</sup>

José Antonio de Busto so describes the second sheet:

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124 Ibid., 252

First Sheet, or "Mercies of the Soul":



"Mercies, or wounds of the soul." 1616, Manuscript in ink and embroidery on paper, embossed silver and glass, 54 x 42.5 cm (with frame), 42 x 30.5 cm (without frame). Monastery of Santa Rosa de Lima. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 US <<http://repositorio.pucp.edu.pe/index/handle/123456789/137437>>

“It has three vertical spaces, and in each column there are five hearts running from top to bottom. In the center, a ladder with fifteen rungs that should be counted as one ascends upwards to reach the highest goal. At the base of this ladder, one can read, ‘Lord, untie the knot that keeps me here.’ The ladder focuses on the phrase that runs alongside it: ‘degrees of perfect divine love.’”<sup>125</sup>

After everything that we have learned about the spirituality of Saint Rose, we are now going to end by contemplating her drawings, carefully considering what she has put on each one.<sup>126</sup>

### Second sheet, or “Spiritual Ladder”

“Graces on the mystical scale of God’s love.” Manuscript in ink and embroidery on paper, embossed silver and glass, 54 x 42.5 cm (with frame), 42 x 30.5 cm (without frame). Monastery of Santa Rosa de Lima, Cercado. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 US < <http://repositorio.pucp.edu.pe/index/handle/123456789/137436> >

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<sup>125</sup> Busto, p. 190

<sup>126</sup> We can find suggested explanations for these sheets in Mujica (pp. 148-174), Getino (pp. 79-111), Castro (pp. 242-263) and Cano (pp. 247-261)





*First Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“First mercy of the wound I received from God  
with a lance of iron. He wounded me and hid  
himself.”**

**The lance has made a wound  
in the heart.**



*Second Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“Here Jesus rested, burning my heart.”**

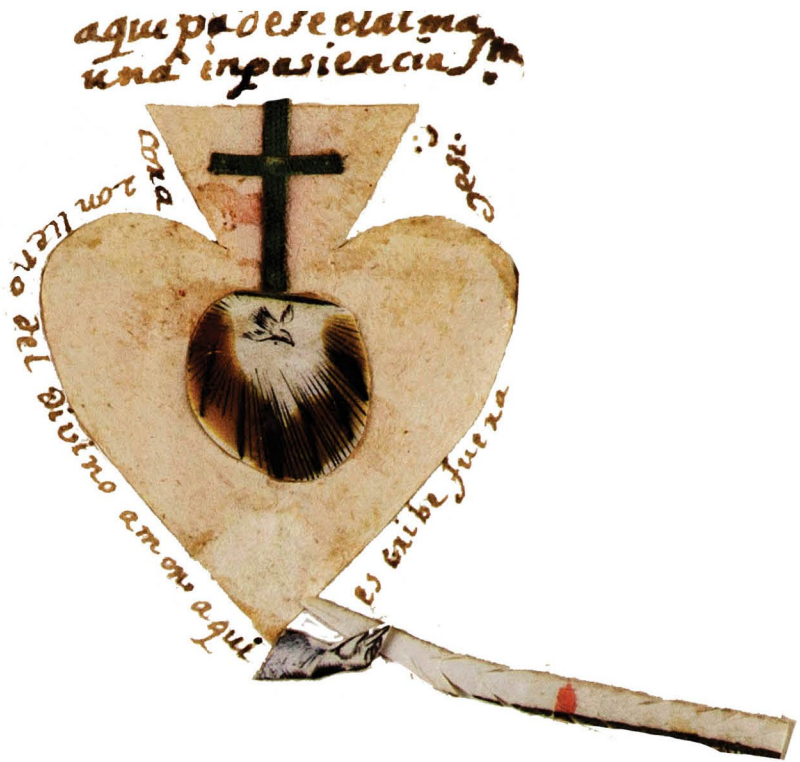
**The child Jesus appears  
in the center of the heart.**



*Third Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“God filled the field of my heart with His love,  
and He made a dwelling of it.”**

**The heart has four wings.  
In each one, she put: “Fly to God.”**



*Fourth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

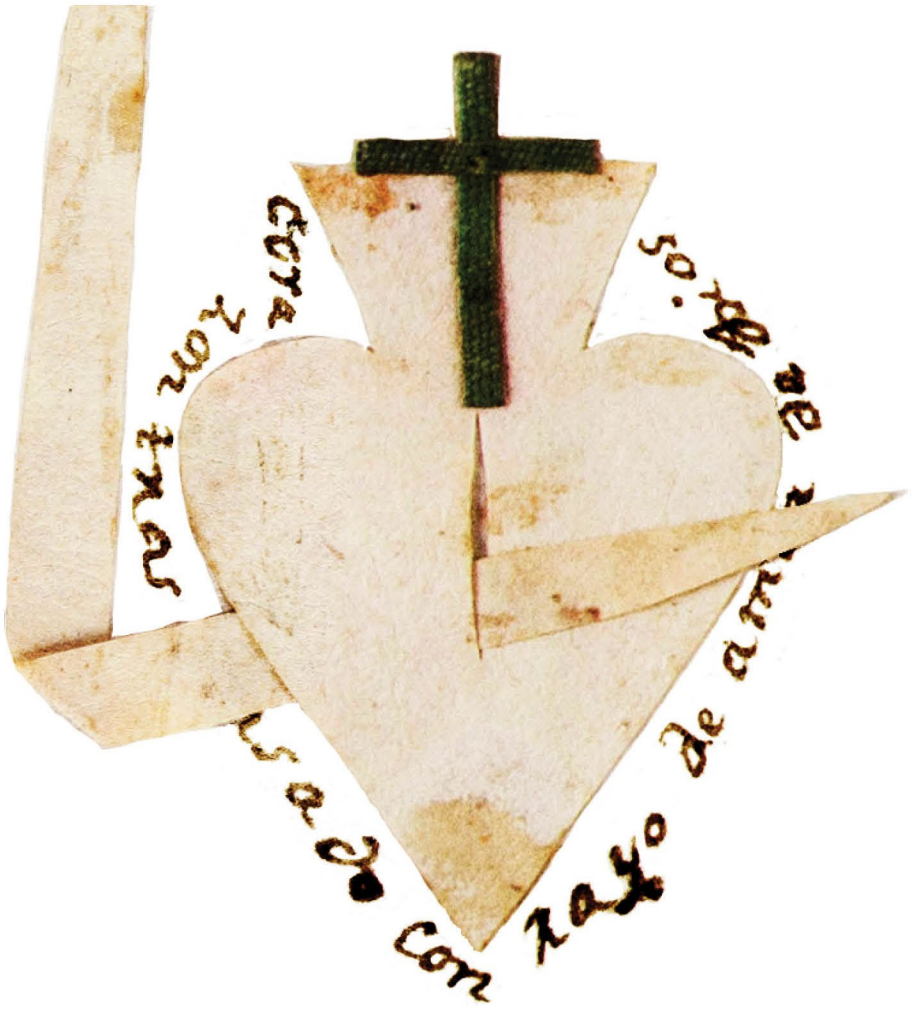
**“Here the soul suffers a holy impatience.”**

**“The heart filled with Divine Love. Here she  
writes from outside herself.”**

She puts the first phrase above the heart. The second follows the outline of the heart.

In the center of the heart a cloud emerges with a dove representing the Holy Spirit.

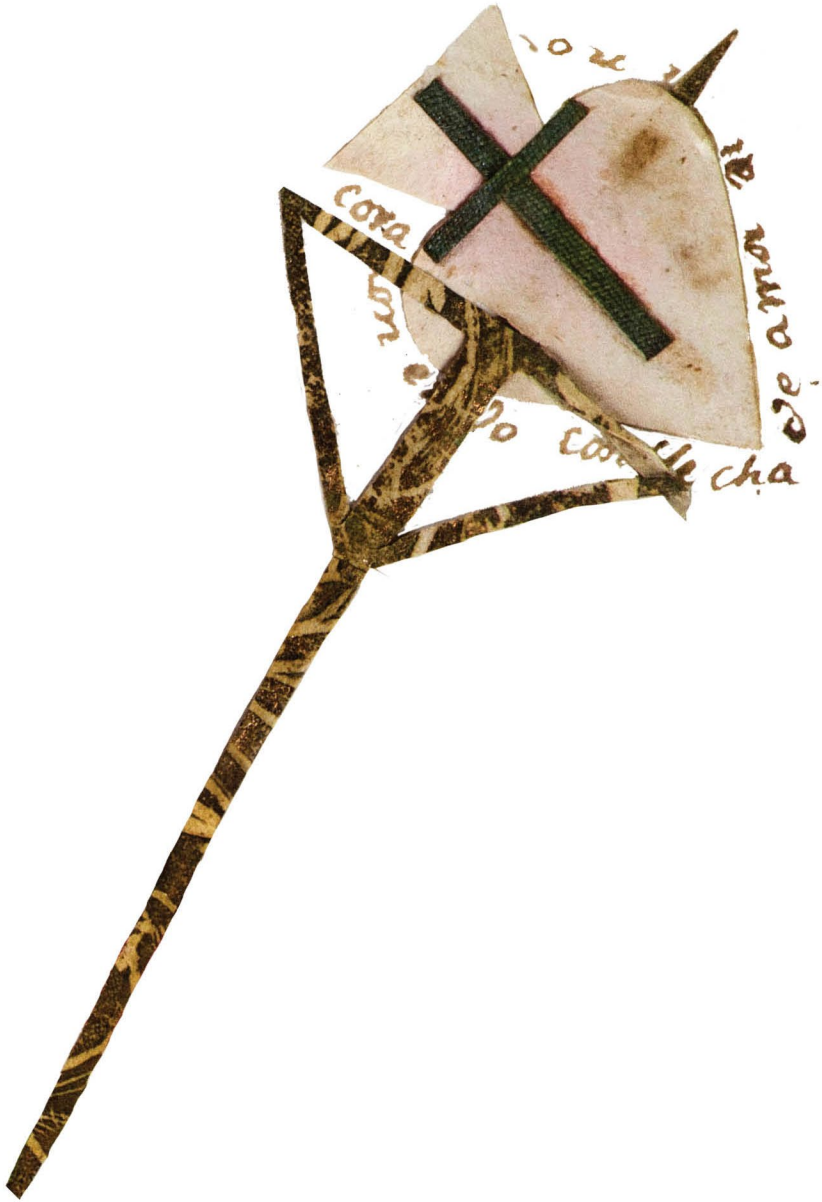
Below, Saint Rose has painted her hand with the pen she has used to write this text.



*Fifth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“The heart is pierced with a beam of God’s  
love.”**

**The ray passes through  
the center of the heart.**



*Sixth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“The heart is wounded  
with an arrow of divine love.”**

**There is an arrow with a very deep point that  
crosses through the heart.**

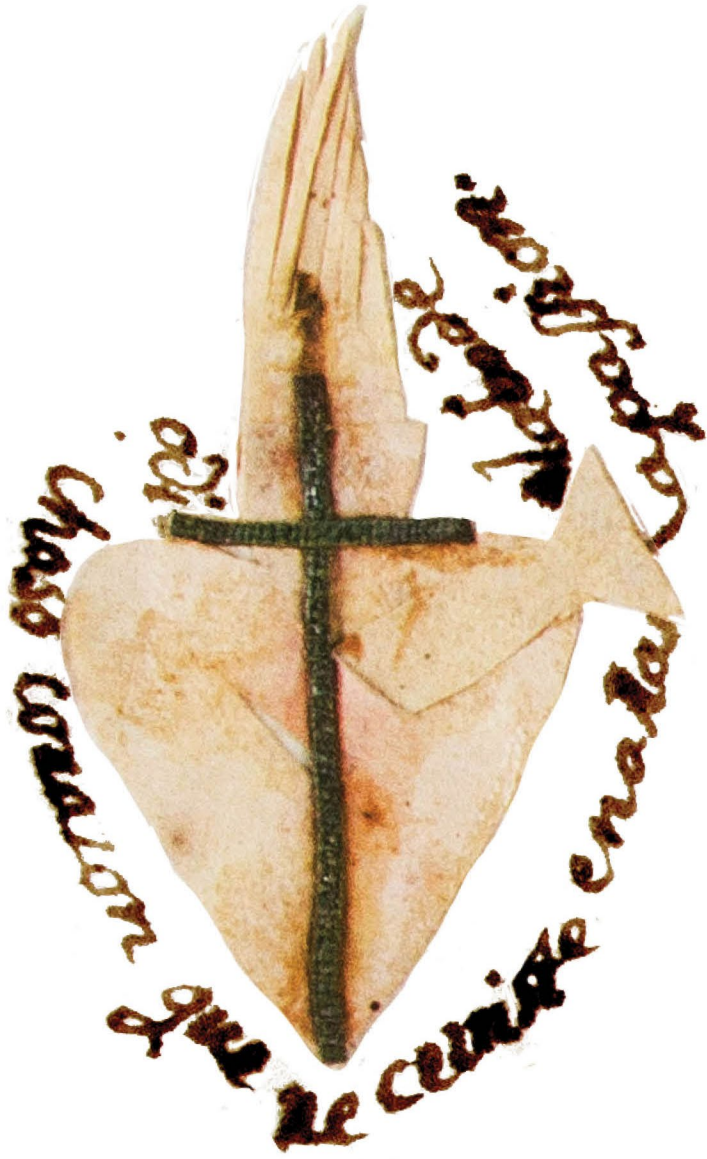


*Seventh Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“I have found Him whom my heart loves;  
I held him and would not let him go.”**

**(Song of Songs 3:4-5)**

**The hand of Saint Rose is seen placing Christ  
Crucified within her heart.**



*Eighth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“O Blessed Heart! You have received  
the nail of the Passion as a guarantee of love.”<sup>1</sup>**

**There is a large nail (lightly colored),  
that comes from above and bends  
toward the right, being nailed  
in the center of the heart.**

**Flames of fire come from the upper part  
of the heart.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note:* “as a guarantee” is literally “en arras.” The arras are coins given to the bride by the bridegroom on their wedding day as a guarantee of his faithfulness to the marriage contract.



*Ninth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“He only heals the one whom He has already  
fashioned with love.”**

**“The wounded heart, with the fire of God,  
in whose forge it is fashioned.”**

The heart has a large circular wound where  
Saint Rose has written the first sentence.

She has written the second sentence  
around the heart.

enferma esto de amor  
o si es que quemero de ella



*Tenth Heart*  
 OF SAINT ROSE

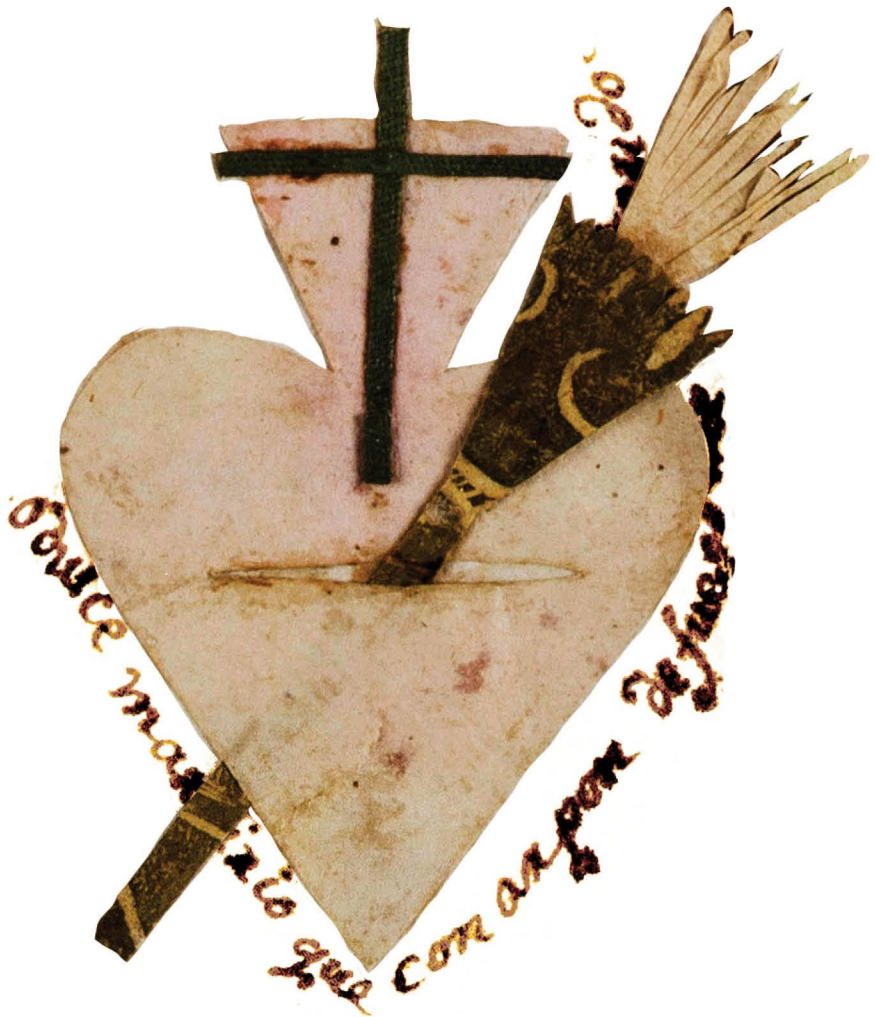
**“I am sick with love. Oh fever!  
 I am dying of it!”**

**“Strengthen me with flowers, encircle me with  
 apple trees, for I am sick with love.”  
 (cf. Song of Songs 2:5).**

She puts the first sentence above, on top of the heart.

The second sentence is written in Latin: *“Fulcite me floribus,  
 stipate me malis, quia amore languo.”* This quote from the  
 Song of Songs curves around the heart.

The heart appears pierced through from top to bottom  
 with a long and narrow wound.



*Eleventh Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“Sweet martyrdom that has wounded me  
with a harpoon of fire.”**

A large harpoon passes through the heart,  
creating a large horizontal wound in the  
center.



*Twelfth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“Heart wounded with a dart of divine love,  
cry out for Him who wounded it.”**

**Here the heart is pierced by a dart (or arrow).**



*Thirteenth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“Purify yourself, O heart. Receive a spark of  
love in order to love your Creator.”**

Saint Rose has painted a large cross that  
extends from one side of the heart to the other.



*Fourteenth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

Upon the heart, Saint Rose has drawn a large cross. Below the cross, she writes:

**“Life is the Cross”**

A line descends from the cross like a rope, all the way to the border at the bottom of the sheet. Here she writes:

**“Untie, Lord, the knot that binds me.”**

The heart has two wings. In one she puts: “holy fear,” and in the other, “pure love.”

Another line goes out from the top and unites this heart with the fifteenth



Allobo... f... ag...  
... v... odichasa  
... a braso estaeiko  
...

*Fifteenth Heart*  
OF SAINT ROSE

**“Rapture. Intoxication of the wine cellar.  
Secrets of the Divine Love. Oh blessed union,  
strong embrace with God!”**

**Saint Rose puts this above the heart.**

**The heart is situated upon a cross.**

**The heart has six wings (three on each side.)**

# *Sixteenth Heart*

OF SAINT ROSE



It is situated in the upper part of the second sheet, inside the miniature that framed it.

Saint Rose has not written or painted anything in the heart. It is placed in the midst of the Most Holy Trinity.



## Conclusion

After centuries in which the image of Saint Rose has been marked by the Tridentine asceticism, it has become necessary to bring to light her profound interior experience marked by her love of God, people, and nature. With a heart full of love, Saint Rose offered herself disinterestedly for the good of all. And so, she was a happy woman: joyful and loving.

In this post-modern era we live in, the media instills egoism and frivolity in us, saying that these can supposedly bring us happiness. Saint Rose shows us just the opposite; we are only truly happy when we offer ourselves completely to God and to others. True sacrifice is done out of love and has Divine Love as its fount and origin.

When we live in a fully loving way, we live in harmony with God and are filled with authentic happiness. We experience this in the depth of our being, despite any difficulties, problems, and troubles we must overcome.

Saint Rose achieved this through asceticism. Today, asceticism looks very different from what she practiced, but it continues to be necessary. If we want God to guide us toward happiness, we must be capable of mastering ourselves. Self-mastery gives us freedom: the freedom of the Kingdom of Love.

# Scenes from the Life of *St. Rose of Lima*

**Oil paintings of the life of Saint Rose of Lima by Laureano Dávila, 18th century.**



***Rose's miraculous halo***

Seeing the miraculous halo, Rose's mother covered her with kisses, saying, "From now on, you will be our Rose!"



***The child Rose cuts her hair***

While playing, Rose's brother threw mud at her and got it in her beautiful hair. She was very angry at him, complained, and tried to quit playing. He preached to her about God's intention, and filled with compunction, she cut off her hair in secret. Her mother, on seeing this, was angry and beat her.

## *Jesus helps Rose with her sackcloth*



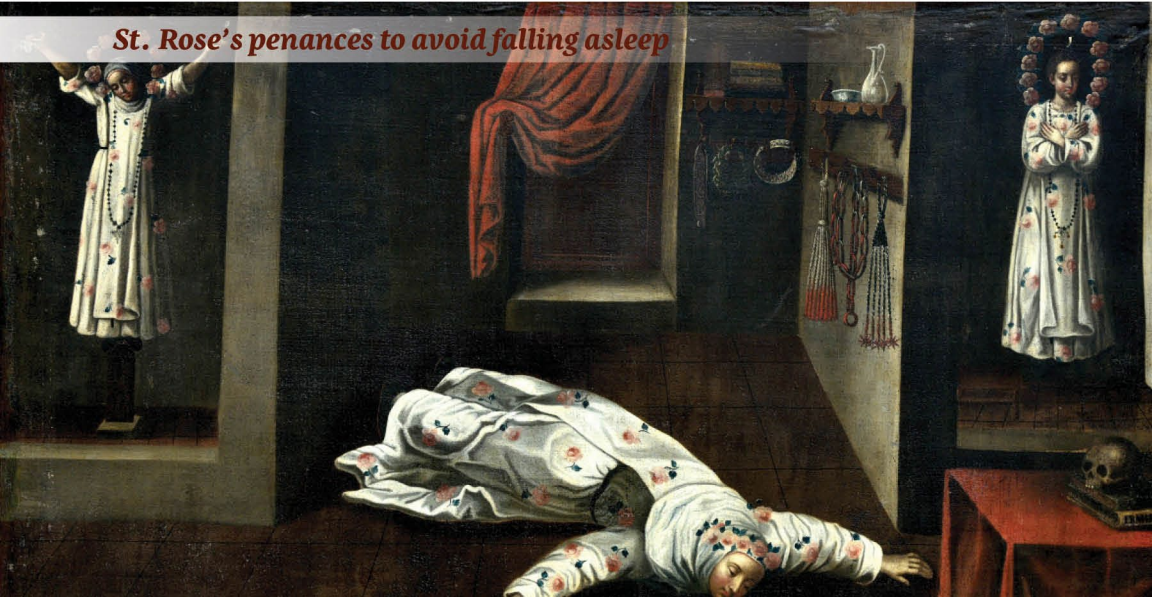
A young Jesus is helping to loosen the chain and sackcloth around Rose's torso that she could not undo herself.

## *Jesus appears to encourage Rose in her penances*

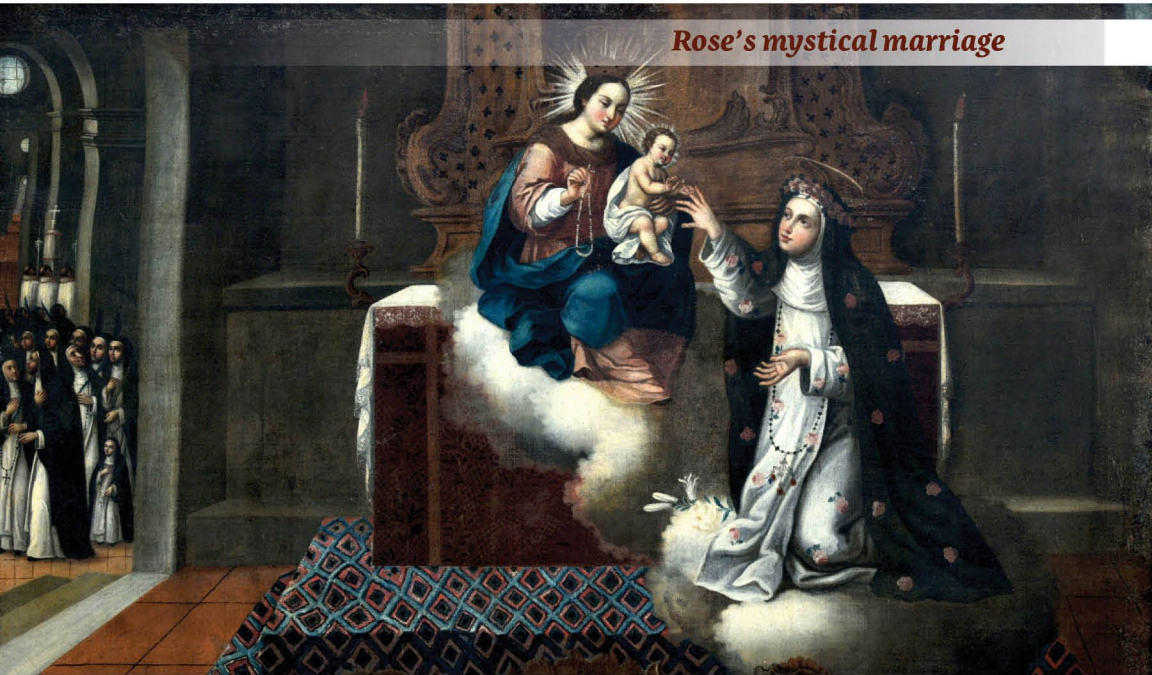


Rose, considering how horrible was the bed in which she was going to lie down, shuddered. Her Divine Spouse appeared to her and said: "Remember, my daughter, it was harder, narrower and more horrible the bed of my Cross in which, for you, I slept the sleep of death."

## *St. Rose's penances to avoid falling asleep*

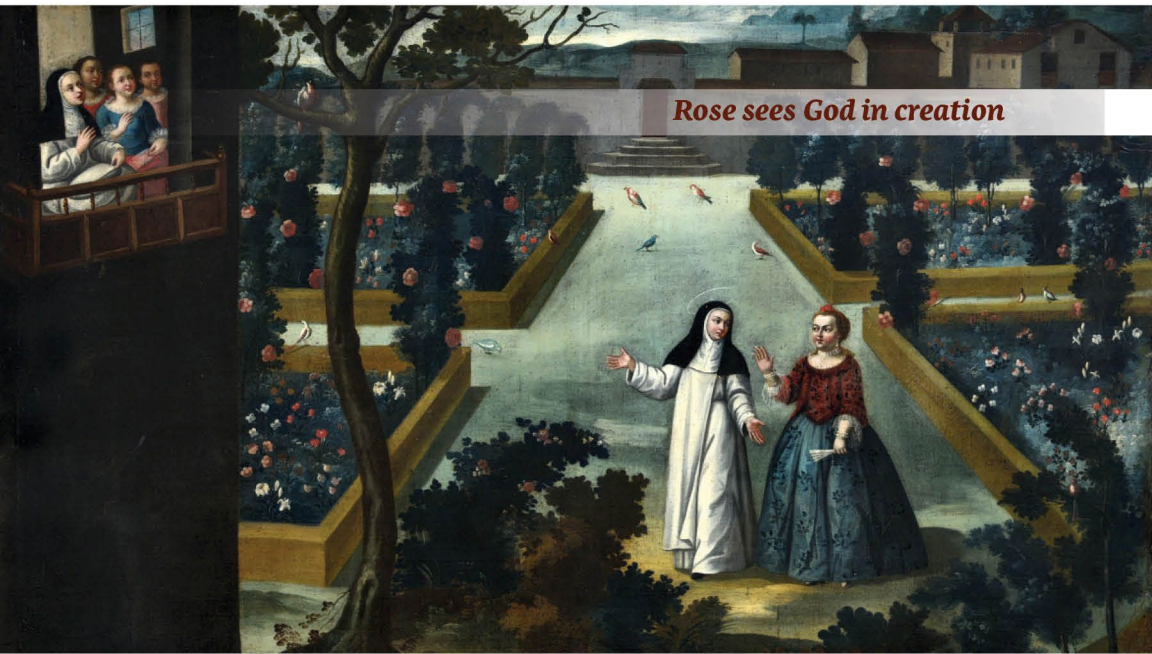


## Rose's mystical marriage



On Palm Sunday, waiting with the other Tertiaries, Rose did not receive a palm. She was distressed and, crying in the Rosary chapel, attributed it to a fault of her own. She raised her eyes to see Jesus and Mary, looking on her and smiling, and the Child pronounced these words "Rose of My Heart, be My spouse." These voices penetrated the Heart of Rose, and she replied in imitation of those words: Ecce Ancilla Dimini said: "Lord, here you have your Servant. King of Eternal Majesty, I confess that I am entirely yours." And they were married.

## Rose sees God in creation



A curious woman, who knew that Rose would tell creation to praise God, asked her to come for a walk in the garden. To her amazement, the trees and shrubs bowed to Rose.

## *Rose before Inquisitors*



Questioning Rose, the theologians leave satisfied that her piety and mysticism is from God.

## *Jesus and Rose play dice*



Rosa became ill with a sore throat and the Lord wanted to amuse her. He invited her to play dice: if she won, he would take away the pain, but if he won, he would increase it. They rolled, and luck favored St. Rose. But the Divine player, implying that he was stung, repeated and rolled with a happier hand, so that Rose lost. Rosa's mother, noticing that the pains were growing stronger, became frightened and wanted to give her remedies, but Rose told her not to be scared; everything was just her Spouse's games.

### *Jesus offers Rose his side-wound*



Becoming faint while fasting before Communion, Rose called on Christ, the Divine Physician, to strengthen her. He gave her to drink of his side, reviving her.

### *Jesus withers Rose's garden*



Jealous that Rose put all her heart and care in the cultivation of her basil, the Divine Spouse tore it up and withered it. On finding it in the morning, Rose wept. Christ appeared to her and said affably, "What is this you feel? Does pain penetrate your heart? Perhaps, I, the flower of the way, am not better in your appreciation than the basil."

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## About the Author

Fray Julián de Cos de Camino was born in Madrid, Spain in 1968. After graduating from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid in 1998, he entered the Order of Preachers and subsequently earned degrees in Philosophy, Theology, and Spiritual Theology. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2004. In 2008, he received his doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical Faculty of San Esteban in Salamanca for his study on the the contemplation of nature in the sixteenth-century Dominican friar Luis de Granada's *Introduction to the Symbol of the Faith*.

His research currently focuses on the history of spirituality, mystical experience, and Dominican spirituality. He is assigned to the convent of San Esteban in Salamanca and serves on the faculty at the Pontifical Faculty of San Esteban, the Universidad Dominicana Internacional, and the Facultad de Teología del Norte de España in Burgos.

Fray Julián de Cos has published numerous books and articles. In addition to numerous articles in *Vida Supernatural* and *CR* (Cultura Religiosa), he has also written and edited more than fifteen books, including *The Spirituality of Saint Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers* (San Esteban, 2012), *History of Christian Spirituality* (on dominicos.org), and *Rezar, orar, contemplar: Different ways of relating to God* (Edibesa, 2020). Most recently, he has edited two books by Luis de Granada: *Fundamentals of Prayer* and *Contemplating God in Nature*, both available on dominicos.org.



The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, from Ann Arbor, Michigan, were founded in 1997, in response to Pope St. John Paul II's call to the New Evangelization. The community upholds the Dominican motto of "Veritas" and the heritage of the Order of Preachers through its involvement in various works of teaching and catechesis.

# *The image of* SAINT ROSE

that has come down to us focuses on her asceticism and her suffering. We have been told that this charitable young woman from Lima imitated the passion of Christ doing great penances, and so reached the heights of sanctity. In this book, we are going to show the Saint Rose was, above all, a mystic, moved by love. Everything she did was for love of God, of neighbor, and of the created world. To demonstrate this, this book is supported by historical data and source documents, principally the testimonies in the First Process for Canonization that began days after the death of our saint.



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*Translated from the Spanish by the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist*

