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## Validity of the Worship to the dedication of Our Lady of the Forsaken, in the church of Santa Rosa, Guatemala City

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*My Mother, sweet Virgin of  
the Forsaken, remember  
me. When I pray at the  
feet of your miraculous image and  
in all the moments of my  
life, my Mother, sweet  
Virgin, remember me.  
(Prayer in front of the picture of Our  
Lady of the Forsaken, temple of Santa  
Rosa, Guatemala City).*

### Introduction

In the Catholic temples of the Historic Center of Guatemala City it is common to find images or paintings of Jesus Christ,

the Virgin Mary and other saints who enjoy great veneration by a considerable group of people, in many cases these devotions have relegated the patron of the church to the background, as happens in the case of the temple of Our Virgin of Mercy, where the cult of Jude Thaddeus has surpassed the patron saint of the temple in devotion. Another similar case occurs in the church of *San Sebastián*, with the image of the Eternal Father.

These devotions have a special day on which they are venerated, apart from the date that the Catholic saints assign to them. In the two previous examples the assigned day is Wednesday, in the case of the temple of *San Sebastián* that day is similar to a holiday, since in the atrium and park that surrounds the church sales of traditional foods, in the same way you can purchase objects for divine worship, such as candles, votive candles, crosses, rosaries, etc.

Other temples in the Historic Center preserve images on their walls and altars that, despite the fact that they do not have such a deep-rooted cult and the dimensions that they acquire in the churches already mentioned, always have devotees who visit and bring offerings and thanks to their respective altars. In the temple of Santa Rosa, located on *10a. avenida and 8a. calle* of the *zona 1*, there is a painting of the Virgin Mary dedicated to Our Lady of the Forsaken, whose cult is lost in time, and which, despite the weather, he still receives visits from faithful and devotees who come under his patronage in search of spiritual help.

This research focused on the religious and cultural expressions that develop around the veneration of Our Lady of the Forsaken in the temple of Santa Rosa in the Historic Center of Guatemala City, and the role that it has among its devotees.

It is important to indicate some difficulties that were encountered in the development of this article, the main one being the lack of documentation that attests to the arrival at the temple of Santa Rosa of the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken. In the temple, no one knew how to inform about it, indicating that there once existed parish archives and other documents that were delivered to various temples and that currently their final destination is unknown. Therefore, this research is subject to modifications in the future, in order to provide the reader with a complete work where all contributions are taken into account.

### Who is Our Lady of the Forsaken? <sup>1</sup>

Among the many Marian devotions that are venerated in Spain is that of Our Lady of the Forsaken, patron saint of the city of Valencia, which is celebrated on the second Sunday of the month of May.

Popular piety maintains that the cult of this devotion to the Virgin Mary began in Lent 1409, when the religious of the order of Our Lady of Mercy, Brother Juan Gilabert Jofré, a friend of Saint Vincent Ferrer was on his way to celebrate mass in the cathedral of Valencia. During his journey

he observed how a group of young people cruelly attacked a mentally ill person, he promptly intervened in defense of the attacked person, but not before reprimanding the aggressors. This event made him reflect on the condition in which many people found themselves, deprived of all help and comfort. He was so impressed that during his homily he called for action on behalf of the needy on the streets, avoiding any attack against the defenseless.

The religious man's words did not go unnoticed and he soon had the support and sympathy of other people, resulting in the construction of a hospital to care for all those helpless. The founding document was signed by King Martin V. the Human, on March 15, 1410. The hospital institution was placed under the patronage of the Holy Innocent Martyrs. In the hospital<sup>2</sup>, in addition to humanitarian assistance, they would be provided with medical attention, which is why several scholars on the subject consider that this foundation is the predecessor of psychiatric hospitals.

Due to the Marian devotion that has always been latent among the Spanish, the hospital was soon known with the title of "*Nostra Dona Sancta Maria dels Innocens*", "Our Lady of the Innocents",

<sup>1</sup> Information constructed with contributions from various Internet pages that will be cited in the bibliography consulted section.

<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to clarify that during much of the Middle Ages the term hospital was equivalent to all those charitable institutions that provided care for orphans and gave shelter to the poor and beggars.

giving rise to a brotherhood of the same name and a new dedication to the Virgin Mary.

The works carried out in the hospital were expanded, the members of the brotherhood had to attend the funerals of the insane and brothers, in addition to paying for the expenses of the hospital and religious services. Then help was given to those condemned to death (they were given spiritual consolation and Christian burial); The brothers were helped when they were sick, widowed or died. Over time, they began to care for shipwrecked people, homeless people and people lacking resources; as well as prostitutes. In short, all the homeless were cared for.

Tradition maintains that the brotherhood did not have an image of the Virgin Mary, so they asked Brother Jofré to provide one. It is said that one day three young pilgrims appeared before the religious who, knowing the wishes of the brotherhood, stated that they were sculptors and painters, so they offered to carry out the work. They only requested that they be left alone in a place currently called the Capitulet Chapel and that they were not bothered, except to serve them their food and any materials they needed. Brother Jofré personally carried out this work for three days. However, on the fourth day, eager to know how the work was going, he entered the hermitage. His surprise was great when he discovered that the image was already finished and that the young people had disappeared, so, according to tradition, he realized that they

were angels. Jofré gave the image to the brotherhood.



*Image of Our Lady of the Forsaken, patron saint of Valencia Spain, affectionately known as "La Geperudeta". Picture taken from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jota ele/496354063/sizes/z/in/photo-stream/>*

Social care grew over time and soon its leaders saw the need to have a new dedication to the Virgin Mary that represented the ideals of the hospital and the brotherhood. King Fernando the Catholic signed in Barcelona, on June 3, 1493, a decree in which the new dedication received the title of "Our Lady of the Innocents and the Forsaken."

The image of Our Lady of the Forsaken is molded in papier-mâché, that is, a mixture of cardboard and plaster, with gilding and incarnations that have been intervened in several occasions. The original carving was made in relief and only the front part

was worked on, which had folds in the clothing. The reason for this shape was to be able to accommodate the image on the coffins of the brothers, as well as those sentenced to death. The current image wears a tight tunic and a type of wide chasuble in gold tones. In her right hand she carries a lily and in her left the Child Jesus who carries a cross, which the Virgin originally had. The sculptural ensemble is completed by two children kneeling at the feet of the Lady and angels, who recall the miraculous origin of the image. On her head he wears a tall crown.

In 1631 the Valencian Synod decided that the image of the Virgin should no longer be recumbent but should be placed standing. The Valencian people affectionately call the image of Our Lady of the Forsaken "*La Geperudeta*" (The Little Hunchback), due to the position of her head looking down at her devotees who come to implore her protection and favors.

With the arrival of the Spanish to America in the 16th century, devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken expanded throughout the new world, proof of this is the temple erected in 1672 in Lima, Peru, by Viceroy Pedro Fernández de Castro, Count of Lemos<sup>3</sup>, in honor of "The Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the Helpless." There are also sculptures, paintings and temples dedicated to this devotion in the Philippines. Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Cuba, Costa

Rica and in the Salvadoran population of Ilobasco to mention a few examples.



*Peruvian painting that represents Our Lady of the Forsaken surrounded by Saint Joseph and Saint Teresa of Jesus. The painting belongs to the Cuzco School of the late 17th century and is in the Pedro de Osma Museum. Picture taken from: <http://picasaweb.google.com/clarinatrula/ImaginarioVirreynal#5225575349978754002>*

Agustín García Gasco, who was archbishop of Valencia, explained broadly how this devotion has been growing and expanding in recent centuries, indicating that: "this devotion was spread by Valencian missionaries and religious congregations, among which the 'Little Sisters of the Helpless Elderly', founded in Valencia by Saint Teresa Jornet Ivars in 1872, as well as the 'Mothers of the Helpless and of Saint Joseph of the Mountain' and the 'Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament and Charity', founded respectively by Blessed Petra of San José and Santa Maria Micaela of the Blessed

Sacrament, in the same century. In this way, the invocation of this title of the Virgin has been widely spread with numerous sanctuaries even in India. It can be thought, as has been said many times, that the spread of this devotion does not come only from the activity of the missionaries or the piety of the Valencians, but from the suggestion exerted by this beautiful title, together with the works of charity that has not ceased to inspire" (García Gasco, 2004: 16),

### **The temple of Santa Rosa in the New Guatemala of La Asunción**

The origins of the Santa Rosa temple date back to the city of Antigua Guatemala, and in particular to the Santa Rosa *beaterio*<sup>3</sup> dedicated to the first American saint to be canonized Santa Rosa de Lima. It was first called Santa Catalina de Siena and belonged to the Dominican order. With the ruin suffered by the city of Santiago de Guatemala, following the earthquake of July 29, 1773, the temple suffered

<sup>3</sup> Both the viceroy Conde de Lemos and his wife were the main promoters of the beatification and canonization process of Santa Rosa de Lima, which concluded in 1671, making Isabel Flores de Oliva (1586-1617) the first person born in America in reaching the honor of the altars within the Catholic Church.

<sup>4</sup> A *beatario* was a congregation of pious women who lived communally, without reaching the rigor and spirituality of a religious order. During the Hispanic era, the *beatarios* of Santa Clara existed in Guatemala, which was later transformed into the convent of the same name: Belén (of the Bethlehemite order); of Santa Rosa and Betas Indias, the latter two assigned to the order of Preachers or Dominicans.

considerable damage. Its ruins are currently private property.

Once the city was moved to the Valley of the Virgin, plots of land were assigned for the construction of the different civil and religious buildings, including the temple of Santa Rosa. Its construction began around 1780 and it was the second to be completed. Archbishop Cayetano Francos y Monroy paid great interest to the education of his flock, which is why he had the betas moved from Santa Rosa, and also assigned financial resources for the construction of the temple. José Bernardo Ramírez was in charge of the design of the temple, which was framed in a neoclassical style. Its inauguration took place on June 7, 1786 (Chajón, 2006: 5).

The temple of Santa Rosa functioned for several years as a provisional cathedral, and it was not until 1815 when Archbishop Ramón Casaus y Torres inaugurated the metropolitan cathedral, which was still missing its towers. In the current church of



*Temple of Santa Rosa in the Historic Center of Guatemala City.*

Santa Rosa, several altarpieces and images are preserved that, experts on the subject refer to, were the ones that formed part of

the destroyed cathedral at its location in the *Panchoy* Valley.

The church of Santa Rosa has a single nave and belfry, it has pilasters and columns of the Ionic order. On the ceiling there are several medallions with coats of arms that remember its past when it functioned as a metropolitan cathedral.

At the end of the 19th century, Jesús Fernández described the architecture of the Santa Rosa temple in the following way: "Santa Rosa offers us in its exterior architecture the change of currents of taste in Guatemala; it is known that the work was carried out carried out with interest and with all the aspirations of pursuing good models: the columns with their capitals appear, the straight lines everywhere, and the churrigueresque labyrinth of which Antigua was so lavish in its temples for The period in which they were built, in the manner of that gongorism that was displayed by orators and writers of the same time, it is known from the example of Santa Rosa, which is from 1786, which would soon be abandoned and better times would follow for art among us, adopting Greek architecture modified by the Romans and forgetting that exaggerated plateresque decadence of the Renaissance, in which ornaments were superfluous and beauty was lacking" (Fernández, 1898:23).

During the earthquakes of 1917 and 1918 it suffered serious damage. On April 26, 1959, the then archbishop of Guatemala, Mariano Rossell y Arellano, proceeded to bless the improvement works in the Santa Rosa temple.

The works inaugurated were the sacristy, balustrade of the communion rail; place for the choir; two confessionals; pallium, temple floor, door screens and a set of 5 colors of priestly ornaments <sup>5</sup>.

A situation similar to that of 1917-18 occurred on February 4, 1976, so it had to be restored, work that began shortly after the earthquake, with Monsignor Mario Martínez de Lejarza as chaplain, assistant to Bishop Mario Casariego. The church was reopened for public worship on August 14, 1983 <sup>6</sup>.

### Our Lady of the Forsaken in the temple of Santa Rosa

It is not known with certainty when the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken arrived at the temple of Santa Rosa. None of the informants, except one person, could answer this question. In 1965, Juan Francisco Madriz Escobar had a pamphlet printed that, in 1948, his wife Alicia Barrios had written. A copy of this pamphlet was given to the author of this article by Mrs. María Teresa García, a faithful devotee of Our Lady of the Forsaken since her childhood and who is closely linked to the temple of Santa Rosa. Every Monday visits the image, as well as for the patron saint's day and important festivals. The pamphlet made by the Madriz Barrios couple provides data on the origin of the painting and how it

<sup>5</sup> *El Imparcial*. April 25, 1959, pp. 1 and 15.

<sup>6</sup> *El Imparcial*, August 14, 1984, pp. 1 and 2. *Prensa Libre*. August 12, 1984, p. 7.



arrived at the temple of Santa Rosa, which is summarized below.

It all began in the second decade of the 19th century with the marriage of two young people in Quetzaltenango, Rosenda Aguirre and Manuel Cleofás Pardo, who received as a wedding gift, from the bride's mother, a stamp of Our Lady of the Forsaken, venerated in Spain and which had been given to her in 1815.

The Pardo Aguirre couple had been married for a few years when their eldest son, Rafael, died. Rosenda did not accept the hard blow, submerged in her pain, she remembered the stamp that had been given to her by her mother. Lost in thought and in a nervous breakdown, she took the child's corpse and presented it in front of the image: "My mother! Give life back to my son, Holy Virgin, because my existence will be stormy without my child, who I love him intensely, the joy of my life goes with him, if my son does not come back to life!" (Barrios de Madriz, 1965: 15).

After this prayer, the boy suddenly came to life, bringing great joy to the grieving family. The years passed and devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken grew in the Pardo Aguirre family.

Rafael, already a teenager, became seriously ill again. His mother, victim of an act of selfishness: she observed a small, orphaned boy playing with her children and exclaimed: "Oh! Virgin of the

Forsaken Innocents, why don't you take that little boy who has no protection in this world of pain? And later he will bitterly mourn his orphanhood; and you leave me my firstborn, my dear Rafael" (Ibíd.: 16).

At night they discovered the little orphan sick with a mysterious illness that the doctors could not diagnose or find a cure. The next morning the child died and the dying Rafael's health soon improved considerably. His mother attributed this miracle to the intercession of Our Lady of the Forsaken.

This miracle made the devotion of the Pardo Aguirre family grow even more, to the point that Faustina, the sixth daughter of the couple, made the decision that, once



*Faustina Pardo Aguirre, a person who according to some sources donated the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken to the temple of Santa Rosa. Picture taken from the pamphlet of the Madriz Barrios spouses.*

in position of its inheritance, the Guatemalan people would know and worship the Virgin Mary in her dedication to Our Lady of the Forsaken.

In 1902, Faustina, inherited by her late parents, called the painter Federico Orellana Soria and commissioned him to make a large copy of the much loved and venerated image of Our Lady of the Forsaken that was kept in the family home. Orellana, knowing that Faustina wanted a worthy homage to the Virgin Mary, asked for divine help: "Inspire me, Lord!" he said, give power to my hands and capacity to my eyes, so that I can capture and transfer to canvas the image of the Virgin" (Ibid.: 20). It is said that inspiration came and the artist managed to finish the commission, delivering it to Faustina one morning in July, although the year is not specified.

Time passed and, one afternoon, the chaplain of the church of Santa Rosa, José María Ramírez Colom <sup>7</sup>, was sad as he saw the lack of religiosity of his parishioners, which prevented him from carrying out his pastoral activities to the fullest. When he was praying, a woman entered the temple, it was Faustina Pardo Aguirre, who asked him the reason for his sadness to which the religious replied that he did not see as many faithful as he wanted in his church. Faustina told him that in her house she had a painting of the Virgin Mary that enjoyed great veneration and that she could take it to church.

Father Ramírez considered Faustina's offer an answer to his prayers. He immediately accepted and they called the artist Valeriano Torres to make an altarpiece to place the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken in it.

Tradition says that it was on the morning of January 1, 1912, when in a solemn procession the painting of Our Lady of the



*Altar of Our Lady of the Forsaken in the temple of Santa Rosa.*

<sup>7</sup> José María Ramírez Colom held several ecclesiastical positions always linked to the temple of Santa Rosa. Among these is having been director of the work of Holy Childhood, instituted in Guatemala in 1881. It was an association dedicated to the baptism and rescue of children in countries that had not been Christianized, or in which Christians were a minority. The particularity of this association is that it was made up of children. The festivities for the work of the Holy Childhood had the church of Santa Rosa as their epicenter. For several years, the magazine *La Semana Católica* reviewed the sumptuous festivities that took place in the month of January and where the influx of children was the characteristic hallmark. However, after the patron saint's day, this festival was the most important that took place in the church of Santa Rosa. Data obtained from several copies of the magazine *La Semana Católica* from the years 1895 to 1906.



Forsaken from the house of the Pardo Aguirre family to the temple of Santa Rosa. The processional cortege paraded through the seventh and eighth streets and ninth avenue. It is said that it was accompanied by musical notes directed by the master Germán Alcántara. The procession entered the temple amidst chants, hallelujahs and ringing of bells. There was an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament all day. Until now this has been the only document found about the cult of Our Lady of the Forsaken. Despite several errors, it provides data that can provide a possible answer to how this devotion originated in the temple of Santa Rosa.

It is necessary to note an important historical error in the Madriz spouses' pamphlet. It is indicated that when the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken went to the temple of Santa Rosa it was accompanied by music, directed by the composer Germán Alcántara, author of unforgettable works such as "*La Flor del Café*" and "*Bella Guatemala*". However, this could not have been, since maestro Alcántara died on March 26, 1910. Surely Mrs. de Madriz wanted to imply that the music that accompanied the painting was inspired by Alcántara conducted by another master.

Regarding the transfer of the painting to the temple, it cannot be confirmed exactly if it is the correct date. Unfortunately, in the *Hemeroteca Nacional* (National Newspaper Archive) the copy of the *Diario de Centro América* that contains the issues for the month of January 1912 was under restoration at the time to carry out

the investigation <sup>8</sup>. The newspaper *La República*, one of the few that existed at that time, was consulted, however, no information was obtained to confirm the event. In the same way, the Catholic magazine "*El Ideal*", which was in force for many years, does not record anything about it, which is strange, since an act of magnitude like the one described in the Madriz spouse's pamphlet would not have gone unnoticed in a city in Guatemala where religious events were widely commented.

However, the veneration of the Virgin Mary in her dedication of Our Lady of the Forsaken was not new in Guatemala. In the temple of Santa Teresa there is a painting that greatly resembles the image venerated in Valencia, and which in the past enjoyed popular devotion. Within the inventory of small images of the temple of *La Merced* in Guatemala City, there is a sculpture of Our Lady of the Forsaken.

On January 1, 1897, at the request of the magazine "*La Semana Católica*", a devotion was established in Guatemala City that in several cities in Spain and Latin America was known as "*La Corte de María*". This consisted of the daily visit to a Marian image in the different churches in the cities. The routes were announced in advance in the newspaper. In the case of Guatemala, the entity in charge was the

<sup>8</sup> This is a common problem in the *Hemeroteca Nacional* (National Newspaper Archive). The specimens that are sent for restoration take months, and even years, to be restored, surely due to the low budget with which that institution operates.

Magazine that promoted it. A list was prepared with all those devotions to the Virgin Mary that enjoyed the greatest veneration among the faithful, at the same

time that they were assigned a day of the month to visit them, the same procedure would be used monthly.

The list was composed as follows:

Day of the month	Dedication	Temple where it was venerated
1	Our Lady of the Rosary	Santo Domingo
2	Our Lady of Candelaria	Candelaria
3	Our Lady of Pilar	Capuchinas
4	Our Lady of Victories	Catedral
5	Our Lady of Carmen	El Carmen
6	Our Lady of Sorrows	La Merced
7	Our Lady of the Poor	San Francisco
8	The Immaculate Conception	Catedral
9	Our Lady of Mercy	El Calvario
10	Our Lady of Loreto	San Francisco
11	Our Lady of Lourdes	El Sagrario (Cathedral)
12	Our Lady of Guadalupe	Guadalupe
13	Our Lady of Transit	El Carmen
14	Our Lady of Help	Catedral
15	Our Lady of the Assumption	Santa Teresa
16	Our Lady of Carmen	Cerrito del Carmen
17	The Immaculate Conception	La Merced
18	Our Lady of the O	El Calvario
19	Our Lady of Bethlehem	Beatas de Belén
20	Our Lady of the Forsaken	Santa Teresa
21	Our Lady of Manchén	San Sebastián
22	Our Lady of Sorrows of the Hill	Candelaria
23	Our Lady of Patronage	San José
24	Our Lady of Mercedes	La Merced
25	Our Lady of Light	El Carmen
26	The Immaculate Conception	Concepción
27	Our Lady of the Arch	San Francisco
28	Our Lady of Solitude	Santo Domingo
29	Our Lady of Sorrows	Catedral
30	Our Lady of Chiquinquirá	La Merced
31	The Immaculate Conception	San Francisco

As can be noted, Santa Rosa does not appear among the list of churches, which may indicate that in the opinion of the editors of the list they did not find any Marian dedication that enjoyed veneration by the faithful of the aforementioned temple. It could also show that the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken had not yet been donated; or that it was an incipient devotion in the event that he had already been in the church.

An important fact is that it is mentioned within the invocations to Our Lady of the Forsaken in the temple of Santa Teresa, which shows that at one time this representation of the Virgin Mary enjoyed a particular devotion, something that does not happen in the present, since the painting practically goes unnoticed by the people who visit the church. In relation to the painting in question, the iconography bears a strong resemblance to the image of



*Painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken, church of Santa Teresa, Historic Center.*

Our Lady of the Forsaken that is venerated in Valencia and other regions of the world.

The numbers consulted for Catholic Week did not indicate a particular day assigned to the feast of Our Lady of the Forsaken of the church of Santa Teresa. Nor was there any review of its festivities as was done with other devotions, among them Our Lady of the Poor or Our Lady of the Rosary; Therefore, it could be a devotion that did not transcend beyond the walls of the temple but, nevertheless, had a strong veneration.

It is probable that by 1898 the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken was not yet found on the walls of the temple, since Jesús Fernández does not mention anything about it, although it must be clarified that when Fernández described the interior of the church, he did it in a derogatory way, it is enough to quote the following: "Santa Rosa does not offer us anything notable among the objects of worship, and we will only cite a collection of small paintings painted in copper, representing passages of the life of the Saint, of which the most notable are the ancient frames inlaid with shell" (Fernández, 1898: 71). Surely a painting with the dimensions of that of Our Lady of the Forsaken would not have gone unnoticed by Fernández, or would not have caught his attention because it was recently manufactured, everything fits into the field of possibilities.

The plaques that devout people have placed around the altar of Our Lady of the

Forsaken provide data to indicate a possible probability of the time in which the cult was consolidated. Among the oldest that can be seen are some that date back to 1926, so it can be thought that the devotion developed after the earthquakes of 1917 and 1918, and after the successive repair of the temple in the following years.



*Plaques of gratitude that devotees have offered to Our Lady of the Forsaken, Santa Rosa church.*

### **The painting and altar of Our Lady of the Forsaken**

The image of the Virgin is placed under a canopy which is moved by two small angels. The Virgin Mary wears a red tunic and blue mantle with gold brocades, her head is bare, revealing long hair, on her temples she wears a royal crown, she holds the Baby Jesus in one arm, dressed in white and carrying a cross, with the other hand she carries a bouquet of lilies. At her

feet, and sheltered under her mantle, two little children appear in an attitude of receiving the bouquet of lilies hanging from the Virgin's hand.

Our Lady of the Forsaken appears escorted by two characters, according to tradition they are San Vicente Ferrer, famous preacher of the 15th century, born in Valencia, Spain, and religious of the order of Saint Dominic: and the other character has been identified as Saint Vincent, a martyr of the city of Zaragoza in Spain, died at the beginning of the 4th century. It is important to note that the character who is popularly identified as Saint Vincent the Martyr does not wear a dalmatic; the only attributes associated with him are the book in his hands and the palm of martyrdom. But, without a doubt, this mistake was due to the painter, who did not take these iconographic details into account.

Under the set of the image of Our Lady of the Forsaken, there is a golden medallion with the following Inscription: OUR LADY OF THE FORSAKEN.



*The lamb, detail of the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken, church of Santa Rosa.*

Finally, on the back of the painting The Lamb appears, in white and below it, the following text: A DEVOTION OF ROSENDA AGUIRRE PARDO YEAR 1854.

An informant stated that in the 1960s and 1970s, in front of the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken, there was a sign that said: "Before asking the Blessed Virgin, pray to her Son<sup>9</sup>." Currently it has disappeared.

Possibly Mrs. Madriz has mistaken several historical facts. From what is clear, the painting was made in 1854 and not in 1902 as the pamphlet states. Anibal Chajón also states that the painting was retouched in 1907 and that the retouching artist left his signature: "Fed. Orellana", without a doubt it is Federico Orellana Soria. Which means that the person whom Mrs. Madriz identifies as the author of the painting was not, but rather the retouching artist.

If the data from the pamphlet and the date that appears on the painting are combined, Faustina Pardo Aguirre, Rosenda's daughter, ordered the painting to be made as a reminder of her mother's devotion. Possibly Faustina was a young woman of approximately 30 years old in 1854 and, in 1912, if she was still alive, she was already an elderly woman. If Mrs. de Madriz's story is true, it could be that Faustina Pardo wanted to donate the painting to the

temple of Santa Rosa when she already sensed her death.

The historian Anibal Chajón describes the altar of Our Lady of the Forsaken in the following way: "It is a neoclassical altar, painted in cream with gold details. The altar table is supported by four small columns with geometric decoration, which seems ultra baroque, those that replace the front. They are probably pieces from another altarpiece. The only body of the altar is decorated with double columns on the sides of the stained-glass window that protects the painting. The entablature is classicist and a beam was placed on it to give greater solidity to the structure. The top is decorated with merlons and phytomorphic decoration, which also seem ultra-baroque in inspiration. Numerous faithful have placed plaques, made of marble, wood and metal, in gratitude for favors received. Due to the year the painting was made and the style of the altarpiece, this altar was made for the church of Santa Rosa. It is likely that it constitutes the old main altar and, when the current one was placed, it was placed on the current site. This would explain why the altarpiece covers the interior part of the painting" (Chajón, 2006: 13).



*Detail of the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken, church of Santa Rosa.*

<sup>9</sup> Informant 2, middle-aged woman, has been visiting the temple since her childhood, interview conducted on August 8, 2011.

### Our Lady of the Forsaken and her devotion in recent years

Devotion to the Marian image of the Santa Rosa temple grew throughout the 20th century, which is evident in the plaques of gratitude, as well as in many of the people who currently maintain the devotion and are older adults, saying that it was instilled in them by their parents.

When, on August 14, 1984, the church of Santa Rosa was reopened, in one of the newspapers of the time the following text was read: "It has been requested to especially invite the numerous devotees to the Eucharist tonight of Our Lady of the Forsaken and Eternal Father who are venerated in that church <sup>10</sup>".

José Barnoya dedicated a couple of lines to Our Lady of the Forsaken, after visiting the temple of Santa Rosa after its restoration in 1984: "Further in, the Virgin of the Forsaken with her good-natured smile, surrounded by marble plaques as a sign of gratitude<sup>11</sup>".

Some of those interviewed said that, in ancient times, the devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken had many devotees, her festival on the Monday following Pentecost was very popular, there were solemn masses and the temple was elegantly decorated. The faithful brought floral offerings, as well as candles and votive candles. On the outskirts of the church, a man who always wore a cap or hat offered images and novenas, not only

to Our Lady of the Forsaken but to other saints and Marian dedications. There was a sale of sweets, among which chilacayotes stood out.



*Devotees praying in front of the altar of Our Lady of the Forsaken.*

When investigating why the cult has decreased, there were several responses, among them:

- a) Some devotees no longer instilled in their children the veneration of the Virgin Mary or, if they did, the new generations no longer like that type of manifestations.
- b) Changes in religion also influence, since some informants stated that several devotees have converted to Protestantism and other spiritualities.
- c) Many of the devotees have died.
- d) The little interest on the part of the priests who in recent years have taken charge of the temple of Santa Rosa <sup>12</sup>, and who do not pay attention to this type of expressions as was done in past times.

<sup>10</sup> *El Imparcial*, August 14, 1984, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *La Hora*, August 18, 1984, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> The rectory of Santa Rosa depends on the Metropolitan Cathedral, the priest who currently officiates masses in the temple is the parish priest of the Cathedral.



To this we must add other factors: the majority of devotees who currently come to visit Our Lady of the Forsaken are older people, some of them elderly and generally women. Another important factor is that the Santa Rosa temple is rarely open, apparently it is only open on Monday mornings, sometimes on Tuesdays and Sundays. These situations undoubtedly influence the gradual descent into devotion.

However, these events do not only occur with the veneration of Our Lady of the Forsaken, they even reach the tutelary saint of the church, Santa Rosa de Lima. On August 30, 2011, the day in which the Peruvian saint is celebrated in Guatemala, the church was visited, a simple Eucharist was celebrated with a considerable influx of faithful, the main altar was modestly decorated. An informant stated that in the past she donated curtains and cash for decorations and making a carpet in front of the entrance door to the temple, but that, due to her age and state of health, it was already impossible for her to incur those costs expenses <sup>13</sup>.

It is still common to find at sales of religious objects, some of them installed outside the temple of *El Calvario*, as well as in Catholic bookstores, old prints and paintings with the image of Our Lady of the Forsaken. They generally belong to the Mexican series "*Cromos y Novedades*", which became popular in Guatemala for much of the 20th century, many of them became part of family altars in various homes throughout the country. Also, you

can find novenas and prayers dedicated to Our Lady of the Forsaken.



*Print of Our Lady of the Forsaken, belongs to the Mexican series "Cromos y Novedades".*

As for the objects of worship that the devotees offer to the painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken, first of all the candles and votive candles, which in recent years, and in order to protect the altarpiece, have been placed on one side of the altar, in a metal furniture arranged for that purpose. Floral arrangements were rarely seen; the few occasions on which they were seen were modest, in contrast to earlier times. It seems that the offering of platelets has stopped, probably because there is no

<sup>13</sup> Informant 6, elderly woman, devoted to Our Lady of the Forsaken since her childhood, interview conducted on August 30, 2011.

more space available to do so.



*Floral offering in front of the altar of Our Lady of the Forsaken.*

Other objects associated with the devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken are the novenas, which are offered in small pamphlets with several pages outlining the prayers, intentions and steps to follow when requesting a favor from the Virgin Mary. In some there are small historical capsules about the origin and spread of the veneration of Our Lady of the Forsaken, many of these paragraphs are taken from popular piety and Spanish novenas.

At the beginning of the novenas, it is always warned that what is going to be asked must be grace so as not to offend God the Son. The favor requested must be encouragement to continue in virtue, protection to deserve a holy death, divine protection and power to achieve salvation and remedy; as well as relief for needs. Confession and communion are recommended at least once during the nine days in which they pray. It is also important to dedicate yourself to carrying out some work of piety, devotion and charity, to give it to the Virgin, as proof

that the plaintiff during those days is dedicated to the worship and veneration of Our Lady of the Forsaken. Finally, throughout the novena, the faithful must invoke the help of the Virgin Mary, as well as her protection and protection <sup>14</sup>.

Copies of the novenas were acquired by the author at one of the sales of religious objects in front of the temple of El Calvario; as well as in the Catholic bookstore of the Metropolitan Cathedral, in a candle shop near the church of La Merced and in a sale of devotional objects that occasionally sets up in front of the temple.

In one of these novenas, you can read this final prayer: "Our Lady of the Forsaken, I call you with my prayer, because I am a beggar of your love, hail Mother of God. I give you my heart, Mother of the Redeemer. Let us revive the Faith, to reach you. I trust in your intercession, more than in my prayer. That from your son you will achieve our Salvation. Hail Mary, who cares with fervor. To the one who trusts and implores your forgiveness. Because of so much nonsense the world is lost, intercede with your son, for those who rule the world. Do not abandon them, in these dark moments. Protect us, good Mother, those who are in trouble, without a job, without shelter, in misery and abused children. Welcome them under your mantle! Lady, of the Forsaken<sup>15</sup>!

<sup>14</sup> Information compiled from several novenas of popular devotion.

<sup>15</sup> Text extracted from the novena to Our Lady of the Forsaken, purchased at the Catholic bookstore *El Sagrario*



*Cover of one of the novenas to Our Lady of the Forsaken, which are sold in various religious article stalls.*

The day on which the church of Santa Rosa celebrates Our Lady of the Forsaken is the Monday following the festival of Pentecost, so it is a variable date, it can be in the month of May or June. Furthermore, every Monday is dedicated to her, with mass at ten in the morning, which is officiated by the parish priest of the Metropolitan Cathedral.

### **Why do devotees come to Our Lady of the Forsaken?**

When asking the devotees what motivated them to visit Our Lady of the Forsaken, the answers were diverse, some very emotional, since the people (all women), with tears in their eyes, they expressed why what visit, veneration and gratitude to the Virgin Mary in her dedication of Our Lady of the Forsaken. Some of these testimonies are transcribed below, which

prove that, despite the changes and phenomena of the 21st century, devotion, even to a lesser degree, is still valid in several people.

"The Most Holy Virgin of the Forsaken is our mother, mother of the whole world and we must ask her for her protection" <sup>16</sup>.

"I visit her because I feel like doing so, it gives me hope by trusting in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. She is the Blessed Mother, our mother and, as long as I am not sick, I try to come every Monday to see her. Now I have times to come see her. I don't do her novena, since I don't know how to read, I just go through faith and hope" <sup>17</sup>.

"I have been coming for years, I have a lot, a lot of faith. Something happened to me that I can't explain. When I was single, I worked here and came with my colleagues to visit the Lady, but, when I got married in 1969, I went from this sector to Villa Nueva. I only came to visit my parents on Saturdays or Sundays, but, two years ago I became a widow and I returned to my parents. One day I told my mother: Mom, look: What could it be that I dreamed of the Virgin with two characters at the same time? I don't remember that she has anything!" I hadn't gone to see her for years and I didn't remember those details. That left me very impressed, so I started coming again, either on Mondays or Tuesdays. I felt the need to approach her again, I put my children and grandchildren under her protection. For example, now

my son is going on a trip and I have come to ask him to return it to me safely" <sup>18</sup>.

"She is the only one who can help all of us who are helpless. Just as in the situation we are living in now, one holds the hand of Our Lady of the Forsaken who is the only one who can help us" <sup>19</sup>.

"She always helps me with my sales, that's why I come every Monday and for her party, I've been coming for years, years of years, since I was a little girl, I came with my parents to visit her, they were the ones who instilled in me to come to visit her" <sup>20</sup>.

"One of my nephews suffered from terminal cancer, I no longer had hope. In the company of my sisters and some nieces, we prayed the novena to Our Lady of the Forsaken and, shortly after, he was cured of his illness" <sup>21</sup>.

From the previous stories it is clear that the people who seek the protection of Our Lady of the Forsaken do so seeking protection for themselves and their loved ones. They also ask for protection in their businesses, on trips and other important events. Others turn to her when they feel alone, helpless, and she is the one who gives the and it is she who gives comfort

<sup>16</sup> Interview with María Salazar, October 10, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Josefina Hernández, September 26, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Yolanda de Echeverría, October 3, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Informant 9, elderly woman, has frequently visited Our Lady of the Forsaken for years, October 4, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Rosa Ramírez, September 26, 2011.

to their afflicted hearts. Others do it as a sign of gratitude for the favors received through their intercession. The gratitude they feel is so great that they try to always be in the temple on Mondays and important dates to fulfill their promise and not fail the Virgin. Some people stated that only dead people will stop going to visit Our Lady of the Forsaken.

An important aspect to emphasize is the fact that some people who visited the Virgin in their youth stopped doing so when they got married and moved away from home, work, however, they maintain that bond that unites them to the temple of Santa Rosa and Our Lady of the Forsaken, a reason that drives them to return and venerate the painting, even when it is far from their workplaces and homes.



*Painting of Our Lady of the Forsaken.*

<sup>21</sup> Informant 6, August 30, 2011.

Another fact that falls into the human sense and is largely associated with women is the maternal sense. Without a doubt, the devotees who are mothers are widely identified with Our Lady of the Forsaken, since they consider that she, being the mother of Christ, understands them perfectly, they know the pain and suffering that a mother goes through when raising children. children and even when they have left home, they will always be mothers and will suffer the pain of their children. That is why they do not hesitate to place themselves under its protection and also place their children and grandchildren in it.

### Conclusion

More than investigating the origins and evolution of the cult of Our Lady of the Forsaken, venerated in the temple of Santa Rosa, we are interested in the validity that it has among its devotees, mainly especially in this time of change and technological advances where the religious groups move to another level.

The devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken had for a long time had a high number of devotees, which was immortalized in the numerous plaques that, as a way of gratitude, surround its altarpiece. But, as part of a changing world, in recent years it has experienced a decline, to such a degree that its devotees are practically elderly and mostly women.

However, despite all these points against, its few devotees fight for its cult to continue, for it not to disappear and as one of the people who participate in the mass of the Monday, when asked about data

regarding the devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken, pointing to the faithful who were praying in front of the painting, he said: "What better devotion than the one you see there! They are the devotion; they are the information"<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Informante 1, mujer joven, organista en la misa de los lunes en honor a Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados, entrevista realizada el 1 de agosto de 2011.*

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