Sr. Dulce Angle of the Poor

Sister Dulce (1914-1992) was a member of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God (SMIC). She was born in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil in 1941, the second child/first daughter of Augusto Lopes Pontes, dentist and professor at the Federal University of Bahia and of Dulce Maria de Souza Brito Lopes Pontes. Her baptismal name was Maria Rita de Souza Brito Lopes Pontes.

When Maria Rita (Sr. Dulce) was thirteen years old, her aunt took her on a trip to the poor area of the city. The sight of misery and poverty made a deep impression on the young girl. She began to care for the homeless and beggars in her neighborhood, giving them free haircuts and treating wounds

From childhood Sister Dulce wanted to follow Jesus Christ by being a consecrated Religious. In 1933, she entered the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God in São Cristóvão, Sergipe, Brazil. In the following year, she professed her religious vows becoming a Sister and receiving the name of Sister Dulce, in honor of her mother. Returning to Salvador as a Sister, her first mission was to teach in a school of her religious congregation.

An Angel to the Poor

Determined to house sick people who came to her for help, Sister Dulce started to shelter them in abandoned houses, in Salvador’s ‘Ilha dos Ratos’ (rats’ island) district. Then, she would go in search of food, medicine and medical care. Later, when she and her patients were evicted from the neighborhood, she started housing them in an old fish market, but City Hall denied her the use of the space and told her to leave.

Facing a big problem and already taking care of over 70 people, she turned to the Mother Superior of her convent and asked her permission to use the its chicken yard as an improvised housing. She reluctantly agreed, if Sister Dulce could take care of the chicken, which she did by feeding them to her patients.

In 1959, Sr. Dulce got suitable housing and helpers for her work of caring for the poorest of the poor. She would gather the sick she met on the streets and tend to their wounds. She was known for carrying street children and beggars to the hospital herself when she found them on the streets. She had a great passion for Jesus Christ and because of this she saw an image of Him in those needy people. Her great merit was to listen and respond to the calls of God. She is considered by many as an illumined soul whom God sent to the earth to show his love for his creatures.

Sr. Dulce had such fragile health that her medical doctor diagnosed that she would not live long. Her lungs were highly impaired, and she had only 30% breathing capacity. However, her vibrant soul and dedication to the needy sustained her for over 50 years of her life serving the poorest of the poor.

After being hospitalized for 16 months due to a worsening of her respiratory problems, Sister Dulce died at the age of 77, in Santo Antonio’s Convent, and she was buried at the Basilica of Our Lady of Conception. On May 26, 2000, her body was transferred to the Chapel of Santo Antônio Convent.

At the time of her death in 1992, Sister Dulce had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; she had received two personal audiences with Pope John Paul II, and she had, almost single-handedly, created one of the largest and most respected philanthropic organizations in Brazil.

Honorary Award

**Award from Brazil's National Catholic Bishop's Conference**

Sister Dulce founded the Obras Sociais Irmã Dulce (OSID), or the Social Works of Sr. Dulce as it is known in English. OSID (Social Works of Sr. Dulce) received "Honorary Award” given by the Brazilian Bishops National Conference (CNBB). The voting link of Blessed Dulce of the Poor was chosen as favorite through internet popular voting. The results were announced on July 25th during the Communication Awards in São Paulo.

The OSID group thanks the participation of internet users who voted for her and hope that this will reach many friends in the entire world who are devoted to now-Saint Dulce so that her legacy of love and service can remain living.

This was not the first time that the Social Works of Sr. Dulce won an award. In 2016 the radio program of "Sr. Dulce Today" was winner of the Silver Microphone Award in the Religious Programming Category produced by the same OSID group.

Today, more than 3,000 people arrive every day at this same site (where the Santo Antônio Hospital now stands) to receive free medical treatment. Sister Dulce also established CESA, a school for the poor in Simões Filho, one of the most impoverished cities in the Metropolitan Region of Salvador and in the State of Bahia.

**Beatification and Canonization**

Sr. Dulce’s work with the poor population in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, made her a candidate for sainthood in the Catholic Church. In 2003, she was named Servant of God by Pope John Paul II. She is considered the most influential religious person in Brazil during the 20th century. In May 2011 she was beatified in Brazil after a miracle was approved in a woman who suffered from hemorrhage after the delivery of her child. A priest prayed with her for Sr. Dulce’s intercession which brought immediate and permanent healing to this woman.

On May 14th, 2019, the Holy See informed us that the Holy Father, Pope Francis recognized one more miracle attributed to the intercession of Sr. Dulce of the poor. The miracle took place in a blind person who asked the help of Sr. Dulce and was given sight. For the above two miracles, Sr. Dulce was canonized a saint in the Catholic Church on October 13, 2019 by Pope Francis at the Vatican.

Sister Dulce is the first saint born in Brazil, the country with the greatest number of Catholics in the world.

We are GRATEFUL to God for the legacy of love to the poor which Sr. Dulce, faithful to the call of God, lived day by day. Our SMIC Religious family is grateful to God for all that He has realized for humanity through the Social Works of Sr. Dulce!

In praise to Christ, we rejoice always in the Lord that we have a Saint in our SMIC family!



# There are videos available in Portuguese and with English subtitle about the life of Saint Dulce sold on Amazon.com title **Irma Dulce (Vicente Amorim) (2014) filme.**

 Also available is the Portuguese video on YouTube.

[**http://youtu.be/wi-mg\_m5P24**](http://youtu.be/wi-mg_m5P24).