

# St. Teresa of the Andes

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1900–1920 • Chile

St. Teresa of the Andes was baptized Juana Enriqueta Josefina de los Sagrados Corazones Fernández Solar, but she was called Juanita for short. Juanita came from a large family and was an energetic, happy child. She loved tennis, horseback riding, climbing the beautiful Chilean mountains, and swimming the ocean. She had many brothers and sisters whom she would play with, laugh with, and argue with. In fact, Juanita could be vain and stubborn and would get into many silly arguments with her younger sister, Rebecca. But she also showed a deep love for Jesus and Mary. When she was little, her older brother showed her how to pray the Rosary, and from then on she prayed the Rosary every day.

When Juanita was fourteen, she read the autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*. The story of the young saint's life touched her heart, and she knew she wanted to live just like Thérèse and become a Carmelite nun. Juanita promised God that she would dedicate her life to Him.

At nineteen years old, Juanita entered a Carmelite convent. Saying goodbye to her family was hard for her, but she knew that she was entering a life of even greater happiness. She took the name Teresa after St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Teresa started her new life joyfully. The mother superior allowed her to write many letters to her family and friends, recognizing that the new novice's letters would help others walk the path of holiness. But soon her life as a nun would come to an end. She told her confessor that Jesus had revealed to her the day of her death and that she only had a month to live. The priest was astonished; he did not understand how she could know when she would die.

On Good Friday, Teresa had a burning fever. The doctor diagnosed her with typhus, a deadly disease. All the sisters at the convent were saddened to know that their joyful young novice was soon to die. Teresa's superiors allowed her to make her final vows to become a nun early, since she was in danger of death. After great suffering, Teresa died a holy death a week after Easter, only three months before her twentieth birthday. That year, Teresa's little sister Rebecca entered the same convent, believing that God had called her to take her sister's place. St. Teresa of the Andes, help me live my life with joy in the love of God!