

## Why You are Not the Patron Saint of Rape Victims

Because you were raped  
and you survived,  
because you were not Agnes<sup>1</sup>.  
You did not have a lily in your hand,  
you did not hold a lamb<sup>2</sup>.

There were a few things you had to remember  
and you failed. When night came,  
you allowed yourself to sleep<sup>3</sup>.  
You were not holy.  
You did not grow a beard to protect you<sup>4</sup>.

Your hair was not very long  
and it did not cover you<sup>5</sup>.  
You let yourself be carried away.  
God did not want it - you should have burned.  
The force of ten horses should not have moved you<sup>6</sup>,

you should have stood your ground,  
Oh, you were not Maria<sup>7</sup> -  
You were a house they entered,  
because you did not lock the door.  
You were too afraid, you kept on breathing,

you forgot how lucky you were.  
*Why couldn't you just keep your knees together?*<sup>8</sup>  
Why couldn't you heal lepers  
with your touch, why couldn't you  
fly? Why couldn't you bleed from your eyes?

If you ran away, you ran too slow.  
When your body was on the ground

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes was beheaded, aged thirteen, after fighting off her rapists. Although she was not raped, she is a Patron Saint of Rape Victims.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Goretti, another Patron Saint of Rape Victims, was stabbed to death whilst trying to resist a rapist. She is depicted with lilies in her hand; Agnes with a lamb.

<sup>3</sup> The ascetical Rosa of Lima deprived herself of sleep by suspending herself to a cross and tying her hair to a nail; she stated that this allowed more time for prayer

<sup>4</sup> Wilgefortis grew a beard overnight to save her from forced marriage; she was subsequently crucified by her father.

<sup>5</sup> As virgins could not be executed in Rome, Agnes was dragged naked through the streets towards a brothel – during this ordeal, her hair rapidly grew long enough to hide her naked body.

<sup>6</sup> A team of 10 horses was set the task of dragging Agnes towards the brothel, but they could not move her.

<sup>7</sup> Mari Goretti was 12 years old when she was stabbed fourteen times by the man who tried to rape her.

<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Canadian judge Robin Camp put this question to a 19 year old rape victim; he was subsequently appointed as a federal judge.

no clear water flowed from you<sup>9</sup>.  
You were not clean.  
You were eleven. You were twenty nine<sup>10</sup>,

you did dirty things.  
You did not *kepe your body clene from synne*<sup>11</sup>  
because you would not walk away from life.  
You did everything you could to survive.  
There was a long drop beside you

but you would not fall.  
You were not Joan<sup>12</sup>  
though you carried her story in your bones,  
though you were crazy.  
You were shocked

beyond words, you were bewildered.  
You ate an apple<sup>13</sup>.  
You were happy to get out alive.

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<sup>9</sup> Winifred is Patron Saint of Incest Survivors. After she was decapitated whilst fighting off her rapist, clean water flowed from the ground where she fell.

<sup>10</sup> I was eleven years old when I was raped.

<sup>11</sup> From John Fisher's Exposition of the Penitential Psalms.

<sup>12</sup> Joan of Arc, another Patron Saint of Rape Victims, was kept in a men's prison at the age of 19 where she was subject to sexual violence, before being publicly burned at the stake.

<sup>13</sup> In her novel *Dark Chapter*, Winnie M Li presents a semi fictionalized account of her own rape; the main character Vivian eats an apple as she waits for her rapist to leave the scene