

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

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SAINT OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

*The love of devotees in reportage
of the feast of Saint Rita*

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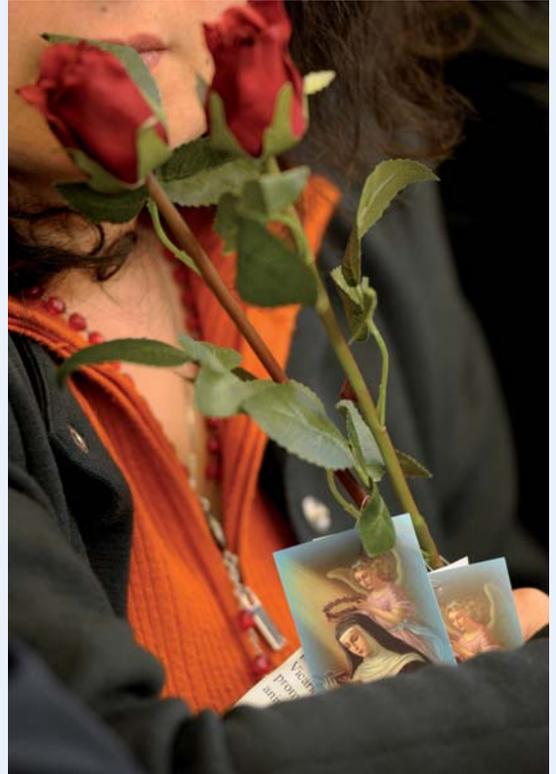
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Simona's story

Dear friends of Saint Rita, I think the best way to celebrate our beloved Patron Saint is through stories of lived experience. This is why we are sharing this beautiful and felt testimony of grace received without adding anything more. It is the story of Simona, who lives with her family in Turin.

“At my second pregnancy, the doctor told me it would be a difficult twin pregnancy because the two unborn babies were absorbing nourishment from the same placenta. The greatest risk was that they were being fed in an imbalanced way, with the result of low growth of one of the two or, worse, with the possibility that only one was being fed at the expense of the other. Natural childbirth would therefore be unwise, if not impossible, because during labour, with the two babies being in the same amniotic sac, they could have hindered each other at birth, risking both lives. Concern, anxiety and fear took over from the joy of this pregnancy. I placed myself in the hands of Saint Rita, asking her to protect these two creatures and allow them to be born healthy. I asked for the dust of the vine and on the day of the morphological ultrasound in hospital I took it with faith and hope. I was given amazing news: there was a subtle partitioning wall between the two children that had not existed before. This made the pregnancy less risky because it allowed both to feed independently of each other.

But my doctor was sceptical, saying that when there is a partitioning wall it can be seen well at the beginning of the pregnancy, not at the 5th month; in fact, as the months go by it tends to disappear. I never stopped praying and that “blessed” partitioning wall that had been created continued to be clearly seen in subsequent ultrasounds. Saint Rita had taken care of us and with her powerful intercession had made the impossible possible: in 2004, at the 37th weeks of gestation, Anamaria and Francesca were born through natural childbirth and labour lasted only an hour and a half! The little girls, both beautiful and healthy, did not even need the incubator, despite my minute physique.



I also felt well and as strong as a rock ... All the medical staff were incredulous. Thank you, Saint Rita!

The other grace received concerns my son Alessandro. He was in 2nd year and listless, apathetic, with little sense of duty and complete lack of stimulus and interest. The result was disappointing school performance. I decided to entrust my son to the saint of the impossible and I started the practice of the Fifteen Thursdays, convinced that Saint Rita would intervene “to save him”. As I went forward with the Thursdays, Alessandro began to show interest and commitment, gaining ground in one subject after the other. The boy was promoted with full votes in June and it was a beautiful victory. I promised that I would come to Cascia, to the foot of the urn of Saint Rita, to thank her personally and, with my heart full of joy, I am here to keep my vow with all of my family.

I allow you to publish this testimony to give hope to those in trouble, exhorting them to pray and believe that nothing is impossible for God!”

When the heart is emptied, there is room for God

from the homily of Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Augustinian Order, on the occasion of the Solemn Eucharistic Concelebration of the Augustinian Family at the Basilica of Cascia, on May 21, 2017, during the Feast of Saint Rita.

In moments of pain, the question that can to the mind of all of us is: what if God has abandoned us? But it is precisely in this drama that faith becomes stronger. When in our heart everything is dead and our soul is emptied, that is where there is space for God. However, God, on the

same situation. Look at our neighbours in Africa: so many who are abandoning their families and their homes, running towards places where they try to find life, but instead find death. This is what Saint Rita experienced in some moments of her life: without any hope, with immense pain due to the death of her children and her husband. I think today of the many marriages now broken

God never abandons his children

up (and children abandoned), of countries in war (like Syria). Faced with these realities, we believers have the Resurrection of Jesus. The testimony of the Word of God, with his promise of the Spirit made by Jesus himself, confirms the feeling that, as sons and daughters, we are confident in Him, that God never abandons his children, that he watches over us so that we can receive the gift of the Spirit that fills the hearts of us believers. In these moments of pain, difficulty and sadness, let us take the example of Rita, and like her, let us listen to the word of Jesus, confident in his promises, which have been proclaimed in the Gospel: "I will not leave you as orphans: I will come to you ... Whoever has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them". We only have to accept and observe the Lord's commandments, for those who act so love God and their neighbour. And he who loves the Son will be loved by the Father, and the Son will love us and will manifest himself in each of us. ■



Father Moral (first left), during the Solemn Eucharistic Celebration of the OSA Family.

other hand, cannot enter a heart that is full of egoism, pride, money, and so on. But in an empty heart, yes. Death and life always go hand in hand, like two sides of the same coin. The only difference is knowing how to interpret the signs in the midst of pain. Be prophets who read the message of God or know how to announce it in the midst of human tragedies. The body, the flesh, tangible things can die ... but not the spirit. The same pain that we could find on Easter morning in the heart of Mary Magdalene emptied of all hope. And precisely because of this pain and this emptiness in having lost the dream of her life, which was Jesus, Mary Magdalene managed to proclaim the Easterly Hallelujah. Many people today find themselves in the

Saint Rita, a true friend

from the homily of Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, President Emeritus of the Governorate of the State of the Vatican City, pronounced during the Pontifical Mass on May 22, 2017, in the square of the Basilica of Cascia, during the Feast of Saint Rita.

One of the most beautiful things in life that the Lord gives us is friendship. “Whoever finds a friend, finds a treasure” is not only a popular proverb but is the Scripture that is taught in the book of Ecclesiastics: *A faithful friend is a sure shelter, whoever finds one has found a rare treasure. A faithful friend is something beyond price, there is no measuring his worth. A faithful friend is the elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find one. Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, for as a man is, so is his friend* (Ecc 6, 14-17). Jesus is an unequalled friend, but he does not want to be the only one. We are surrounded by many friends. They are the people we live with, in reference to whom it has been said: *Love each other in the same way I have loved you*. But there are also some other of His friends, who are really special: they are the saints. Among these our heavenly friends we find our dear Saint Rita. She accompanies us with discretion and generosity in the small and great needs of our lives. What a wonderful friend the Lord has given us! Saint Rita, so united with Jesus Crucified, *helps us*



Cardinal Lajolo signs the guest register of the Monastery of Saint Rita, in the presence of Mother Priora, Sr. Maria Rosa Bernardinis.

welcome on ourselves and spread the love and joy of God. For this reason, the faithful resort to her to obtain all kinds of grace from God. What is the grace we need most? Jesus tells us what it is when he says to his disciples: *“Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven”* (Lk 10:20). Our names written in heaven: this is our hope, this is the end of our journey. But as we move toward it, in the difficulties that make the journey difficult, we feel that we need much help, many graces that will make our journey safer and easier. The Lord, who is always generous with us, loves that we also be generous with others. For this reason, the graces we need and we must ask of Him cannot be only those that concern our

person, but also, and above all, those for all who are in need. When we beseech God with faith to obtain the graces we need, Saint Rita comes to our side. She, who had to overcome great and difficult trials in life, knows how to show solidarity with us, as a faithful friend that God has given us. Yes, in Saint Rita we have a true friend, so dear to God. Let us therefore turn to her with humble trust, for ourselves and for others. Let us ask for obtaining the grace of living coherently the love of God for us, as she lived it, so that we can be instruments of the peace of Jesus. May her example and her intercession always keep alive in us the hope that we are given the words of Jesus when he reminds us that our name is written in heaven. ■



PROCESSION OF THE BANNER



The Sunday before the Feast of Saint Rita on May 22, the "Procession of the Banner" takes place in. It was established by the Municipality in 1731 to thank the then blessed Rita for protecting the city during the earthquake of 1730. On May 14, the citizens of Cascia united the ancient thanks to that renewed today, for having survived the earthquakes of 2016, and in prayer in memory of the victims.



Local school pupils and students, humanitarian and religious associations, and the Beehive of Saint Rita were among local participants.



Commissioned by the Municipality of Cascia in 1614, the banner represents, on the one hand, the entry of Rita to the Augustinian monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, and on the other side, the saint receiving the stigma. Initially, the banner giving the name to this procession accompanied the procession of the Feast of Saint Rita on May 22.



SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

On May 20, at the Sanctuary of Cascia, TV conductor Francesca Fialdini presented the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2017 (photo above), which was then handed over the following day to:

Luciana Mosciatti (photo below) for forgiving the boy young man who caused the death of her son in a road accident, **Federica Lisi** (photo alongside) who, after losing her husband, volleyball player Vigor Bovolenta, picked herself back up again with tenacity, reborn in love for her 5 children.





Anna Montebruno (photo alongside), for having pardoned the man who ran into and killed her daughter.

Antonella Leardi (photo above) for having pardoned the murderer of her son **Ciro Esposito**, who died in 2014 during the clashes that preceded the Coppa Italia final between Napoli and Fiorentina.



TRANSIT OF SAINT RITA



The body of Saint Rita is kept in the Basilica of Cascia, which is named after her. Immediately after her death (recalled at the ceremony of the Transit on May 21 in the same Basilica), her body became a pilgrimage destination for the inhabitants of Cascia and the neighbouring countryside who knew Rita well for her charity. Considered a saint from the moment of her death, Rita was never buried.





PRAYER

PRAYER OF THE ALPINE SOLDIER (*)

On the bare rock, on the perennial glaciers,
on every crag of the Alps where providence
has put as bulwark of our districts,
we, purified by the duty
dangerously implemented, we elevate the soul to
you, Oh Lord,
who protects our mothers, our spouses, our children,
our distant brothers,
and helps us to be worthy of the glory
of our ancestors.

God all powerful, who governs all elements, save us,
armed as we are with faith and love.

Save us from the relentless frost, the vortex
of the storm, the momentum of the avalanche,
make our foot stand safe

on the vertiginous peaks, on the steep face,
beyond the insidious crevasse,
make strong our weapons against whomever
menaces our Homeland, our Flag,
our thousand-year Christian civilisation.

And You, Mother of God, whiter than the snows,
You have known and collected

Every suffering and every sacrifice
Of all fallen Alpine soldiers,
you who know and gather every soul
and every hope

Of all Alpine soldiers alive and in arms.
You bless and smile at our Battalions
And our Groups.

So be it.

(*)Alpine soldiers are Italian army mountain troops



“Nec videar dum sim”, from the Latin: “Not to appear, but to be”. This is the motto of the 5th Alpine Regiment of Vipiteno (photos above and below the Prayer) which, after the Feast of Saint Rita, on June 19, was thanked at a ceremony for having protected Cascia following the earthquake and having loved the Sanctuary with generosity. Thank you, to all friends of Saint Rita!





PARIS-CASCIA TWINNING AND TORCH



For the 59th edition of the “Twinning of Peace and Faith” in which the Municipality of Cascia unites with another town in the world devoted to Saint Rita, Paris was chosen. The twinning was sealed with the Chapel of Saint Rita, situated in the red light district of Pigalle.



The Torch of Peace that seals the twinning left Paris (see pages 22-25 of this issue) and reached Cascia, crossing the communities hit by the earthquake. The votive tripod was lit by the mayor of Amatrice Sergio Pirozzi and the parish priest of Pigalle Fr. Pierre-Oliviers Picard, in the presence of Fr. Bernardino Pinciaroli, Rector of the Basilica, and mayor Gino Emili.





CRISTINA'S FOREWORD

by Cristina Siccardi, biographer and historian of the Church

How the Basilica of Saint Rita came about

Mother Fasce has no capital, neither large nor small. For the moment, Cascia only has a small church dedicated to Saint Rita, in life Rita Mancini, who was beatified by Pope Urban VII in the seventeenth century and devotion to whom was limited to the region of Umbria. Thanks to the canonisation in 1900, the Augustinians had spread Ritian devotion even wider, divulging the figure and holiness of Rita of Cascia, but without surprising results. So much so that in the Roman Santorale (still today, despite enormous popular devotion) Saint Rita does not appear, although she is considered of universal interest, demonstrating that devotion to her rose spontaneously from the people with no support whatsoever from the Church. But how can Mother Fasce, from within enclosure, contact people willing to embark on a project of vast proportions in the land of Cascia with which to radiate love for Rita,

saint of the impossible throughout the world. Moving between the twists and tangles of bureaucracy and the interests of power? For her, just wanting is sufficient. First of all, she calls on the friendship of a priest, Augustinian Father Possidio Marabottini, rector of the church; then she engages in propaganda and use of the few instruments available to her. She uses a periodical to be distributed in Cascia and also beyond its borders: she calls it *From the Bees to the Roses*. At that time, pilgrimages to Cascia were real events, and their sporadic nature fuelled the curiosity of the town's population. *From the Bees to the Roses* overturned the situation and visits to the urn of Saint Rita become more frequent. In a single year, from 1923 to 1924, the flux of faithful creates considerable difficulties due to reasons of space. The offerings of the faithful continue to arrive thanks to the newsletter, on the pages of which, 25 years after the canonisation of Saint Rita, the idea of a new Temple is launched.



Mother Teresa Fasce.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

In the words of Sister Maria Giovanna Lucidi, who lived with the Mother from 1937 to 1947: "One day, during construction (of the Basilica), which coincided with the unfolding of the events of war (Second World War), I asked her what she would do if a bomb had destroyed the Temple under construction and she candidly replied, "We build the Temple for the glory of God, but if He believes that he will be more glorified by its destruction, may his will be done".

The Basilica of Saint Rita: the novel of a restitution

by the editorial staff

The story of the Basilica of Saint Rita and, consequently, of the new Sanctuary of Cascia (the idea of which was launched in “From the Bees to the

Roses” in 1925) is a story so full of difficulties, controversies and dramatic turns of events that it almost resembles a novel. Major problems were foreseeable and in-

evitable, but perhaps exceeded the expected limit and were part of the cross that Providence wanted Blessed Mother Fasce to carry on her robust shoulders. The first

Excavations (September 20, 1937) for construction of the new temple of Cascia, the Basilica of Saint Rita, which rises alongside the Monastery.





Earthworks for construction of the Basilica

stone of the Basilica was laid on June 20, 1937. It was then consecrated on May 18, 1947. This year, the Basilica, home of our beloved Rita, is 70 years old. But let us go back in time to when the idea of the new temple was conceived.

It was foreseeable that there would be problems in choosing how the Basilica should have been from the aesthetic point of view, not to mention the difficulties of a historical and landscaping nature. In fact, it is never easy to construct a new building within a context such as that of the Monastery of Cascia, which is so ancient (just think that the part where Saint Rita lived dates back to 1200). It was a question of finding the most effective so-

It was a question of finding the most effective solution for erecting a huge building

lution for erecting a huge building (compared with the existing church) in a restricted environment.

Some of the “misadventures” related to construction of the new temple were also related to the fact that the work contractor was a cloistered nun of the monastery and that this monastery belonged to a religious order (this implied a certain autonomy with respect to the diocese, but also caused misconceptions and misunderstandings). With ease and, probably, a bit of naivety, the Augustinian nuns

invited various people to become interested in the great project of the Sanctuary and these people felt automatically authorised to take initiatives, including entrusting charges to third parties, while the nuns thought they were the only ones with the right to decide.

In this confusion over “who has the right to determine what”, the Superior Generals intervened several times to give advice, but these were taken by the various interlocutors and professionals of the moment as definitive decisions, coming as they did from the highest authority of the Order of Saint Augustine.

If to these misunderstandings are added human passions, we

It is a story so full of difficulties that it almost resembles a novel

A M O T H E R ' S W O R D

You have to thank God now.

can imagine how things went, how controversies took hold, without forgetting judicial disputes (which, however, always ended with peaceful compromises).

There exists a wealth of documentation and, in particular, various testimonies (diaries, memoirs) about such agitated events. Often, however, they are polemical and therefore personal (only for the writer). What are missing, however, are official documents we would expect to find in the archives.

What is clear is that if we see Cascia as it is today, we must focus mainly on the farsighted genius of our Mother Fasce, but also on the collaboration of her “daughters”, the Augustinian nuns who have been able to accept the desire of the Blessed as a true spiritual testament, continuing her work over the years. Just think of the House of Pilgrims-Hotel delle Rose, the Augustinian Seminary

(now Saint Rita Home of Spiritual Exercises), the House for Confessors, the Hospital (subsequently donated to the municipality of Cascia) and the works to widen the avenue of the Sanctuary.

The Augustinians of contemplative life have continued the projects of Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, succeeding in realising things that seemed to be incredible before given the poverty of the Monastery and the restricted space of the territory of Cascia, but we must not forget that Mother Fasce had chosen her as her model Rita, the saint of impossible cases. Neither should we forget the precious collaboration of the Augustinian fathers, above all of Father Possidio Marabottini.

Over the years, the Sanctuary of Saint Rita has been tied to one goal: to offer the best welcome to devotees from all over the world. To do so, even when the devastation

of earthquakes compromised everything in central Italy in 2016, the nuns of Saint Rita did not forget the importance of welcoming. Thanks to the number of donations that people have generously offered to support the post-earthquake renovation of the Basilica, and thanks to MSC Crociere which, by financing internal and external works, made it possible to accelerate times considerably, thanks to all this wonderful charity, the nuns and the fathers continue to welcome, listen and support millions of pilgrims and devotees. In a virtuous circle, good restitutes good, continually. And the house of Saint Rita, which houses her incorrupt body, is the symbol of this restitution.

(Historical sources: Positio by Maria Teresa Fasce; the book by Mauro Papalini, “La Beata Maria Teresa Fasce, Ed. Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia) ■

THE TESTIMONY

FROM THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS OF MOTHER FASCE

Text no. 32:

My name is Giuseppe Pièche, born in Florence in 1886 and domiciled in Rome. Carabinieri* general and prefect in retirement, 83 years old.

“During the Second World War, my son Enrico, a Carabinieri official, was taken prisoner and we could have no news of him for many long months. Desolate, I wrote to Mother Fasce, and she comforted me with letters she had written herself. In one of them, she said to me, “While we Sisters were praying for your son we smelt the perfume which is a sign of grace that the saint gives without doubt”. Two months later, my son returned: in the meantime, I kept writing to Mother Fasce to tell her about our anxiety and the Servant of God answered that Saint Rita does not provide half graces and that more than hope we should have certainty”.

* The Carabinieri are one of Italy's four armed forces



HISTORICAL PARADE



The parade in fifteenth-century costumes takes place on May 22, the feast day of Cascia's saint. It leaves from Roccaporena, Rita's birthplace, and after about two hours reaches the feet of Cascia where it is joined by other figures. Along with the devotees of today who walk in the procession carrying the statue, the parade concludes at the end of the sanctuary avenue, on the square of the Basilica, where it receives the blessing.



PROCESSION

Saint of the family and forgiveness. Rita da Cascia is “one of us”. Woman, wife, mother, widow, nun and stigmatised, devotees love her because of her “normality” and for having borne the cross, welcoming it. More than a million pilgrims travel from around the world every year to the Sanctuary of Cascia, where the Augustinian nuns and fathers offer a service of listening.





THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

To you, Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead because, as in their mortal life they have always been loved by you of immense love, so now, freed from all evil, may they enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Take them into your Paradise, where there is no more grief, no pain, no tears, but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

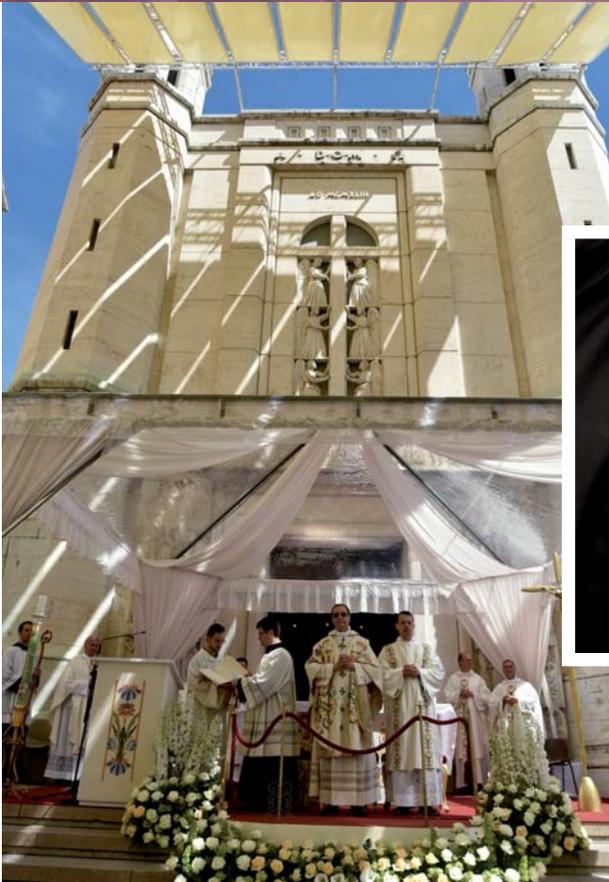
- Alessandro Biasu (Civitavecchia RM - Italy)
- Sr Assunta Perosa OSA (Monastery of S. Chiara and S. Sebastiano, Genoa - Italy)
- Davide Cantone (Verrua Po PV - Italy)
- Emma Quaresima (Ganshoren - Belgium)
- Francesco Di Donna (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
- Giovanna Nesci (Cittanova RC - Italy)
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- Maria Lioy (Venosa PZ - Italy)

- Piervito Di Donna (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
- Rita Caviglioli (Greve in Chianti FI - Italy)
- Venanzio Di Romolo e Nara Bolelli (Avezzano AQ - Italy)

The statue is taken in procession up to the square of the Basilica on the morning of May 22. Millions of people turn to the saint. Saint of "impossible cases", Rita teaches us that if we place our trust in God, everything can happen.



PONTIFICAL MASS



Pontifical Mass on May 22 was opened with the Supplication to Saint Rita. Card. Giovanni Lajolo closed the celebrations with the traditional Blessing of the Roses.



A carpet of red roses emerges from the asphalt of the avenue of the Sanctuary: in the ritual of the Blessing of the Roses, devotees raise the symbol of the saint to heaven so that the celebrant can bless it. On their way back home, many then give their rose to a sick person or a person in search of help.



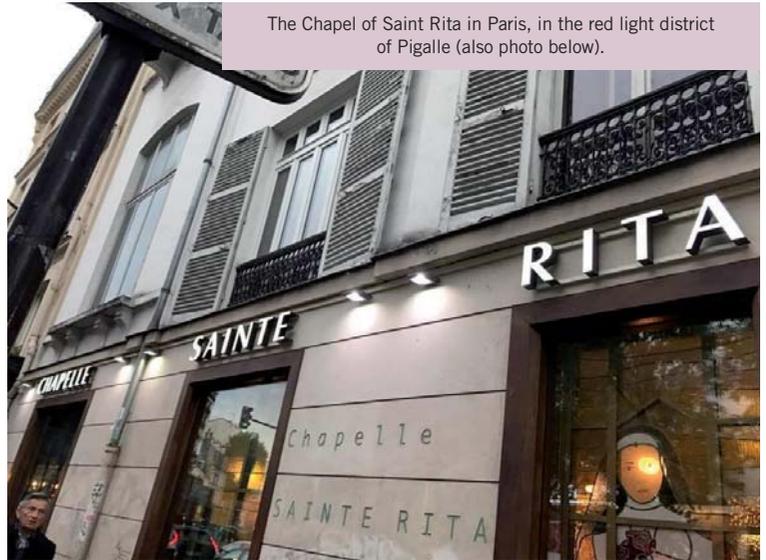
In his message to the nuns, Pope Francis wrote: "Be torches that accompany the path of men and women in the dark night of time".

The Chapel of the impossible

Testimony of the Paris-Cascia Twinning of Faith and Peace 2017, which linked the two cities in Ritian devotion, on the occasion of the Great Feast of Saint Rita

by Marta Ferraro

This year, the Torch of Peace, symbol of the twinning that unites Cascia each year with a different city where devotion to Saint Rita is particularly felt, left Paris to launch the 59th edition of the event. This time more than ever, the journey of the Italian delegation took on a special significance. Representatives of the Umbrian town left their homeland still suffering from the earthquake to another land which was also suffering, but this time from international terror-



The Chapel of Saint Rita in Paris, in the red light district of Pigalle (also photo below).

The people from Cascia found a city troubled by terrorist attacks

ism. Paraphrasing the title of a famous novel, this year's edition could be titled "Twinning at a Time of Earthquake and Terrorism", two painful plagues of our time. Despite everything, the Italian delegation left for Paris on April 27 to seal the twinning of faith and peace with the district of Pigalle, where the Chapelle de Sainte Rita (Chapel of Saint Rita, ed.) stands. The people from Cascia found a city

troubled by terrorist attacks.

Pigalle is a tourist district, where the famous Moulin Rouge is located. Anyone who has visited Paris is bound to have made a stopover in this district and at least been able to admire the exterior of the famous nightclub. Not so prominent is the chapel of our Saint, which is located right in front of it and is considered a true corner of paradise, in this place full





On April 28, the Chapelle de Sainte Rita fraternally joined Cascia in a ceremony that saw both delegations side by side.



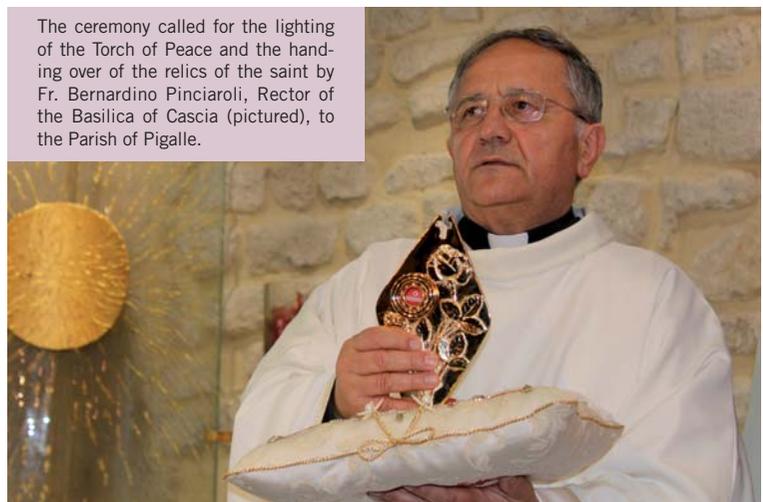
of carnal attractions mixed with poverty. How much suffering is experienced in the district known worldwide for can-can, sex shops and fun! I cannot forget a whole family with two little girls who lived on the streets and slept on a mattress placed on the pavement; “refugees from the war in Syria”, someone told me. Pigalle is a difficult neighbourhood, and not just for this reason. There is a ring of prostitution and vagabonds and drug addicts find shelter among its streets.

In a situation not very different from the present one, in the early 1900s, right in the streets of Pigalle, a corner of light was born, between one sex shop and another: the Chapelle de Sainte Rita. When he died, painter Yves Klein, who was not Catholic but however extremely fascinated by the Umbrian saint, left one of his buildings on condition that it became a place of worship devoted to Rita. Over the course of

time, this chapel has become a point of reference for the needy of the area. At the Chapelle, as those who frequent it like to call it, people obviously pray, but many other volunteer activities are also carried out to soothe the neediest. With its 40 volunteers, this place manages to provide 200 free meals to those in need, who, on certain days of the week, go to the canteen organised by the volunteers; right there, where there is never a lack of someone willing to listen and heal

the wounds caused by the habits of the neighbourhood which, with lights and ribbons, entices people to seek earthly pleasures. This, for example, is the case of a girl who, tricked by a man who had made her believe that he loved her, ended up working in his bar as a barmaid but, above all, had the task of luring girls and inducing them to prostitute themselves. The woman, as I was told, was always sad and often unwell. She often went to the chapel to give vent to her

The ceremony called for the lighting of the Torch of Peace and the handing over of the relics of the saint by Fr. Bernardino Pinciaroli, Rector of the Basilica of Cascia (pictured), to the Parish of Pigalle.





During the Eucharistic concelebration, Cascia and Paris also came together at the altar (centre, the parish priest of Pigalle, Fr. Pierre-Oliviers Picard).

feelings. More and more often she said she wanted to make the man who had ruined her life - the man who had placed that burden on her shoulders and in her heart - pay. Only after many meetings was it possible to start talking about forgiveness, one of the main virtues of Saint Rita. The parish priest said to her, "If you

cannot manage to pardon him, at least let God forgive you". And, in this way, the young woman began a fruitful path of conversion.

But this is not the only story that the Chapelle guards among its walls. There are women who have been through the terrible experience of being exploited by prostitution and pre-

cisely there have found the courage to leave behind that ugly life which had removed their dignity to let themselves be shaped by God in the example of Rita. The community calls them "Mary Magdalenes" even if they are not known directly, or rather, everyone knows they are in their midst following religious functions with them, but nobody knows their identity. All this to protect them from prejudice and to help the community not pass judgment, to give as much privacy as possible to these women and to those who seek understanding and support in the Chapelle. One of the socially significant events organised by the chapel is the Christmas dinner for just the Mary Magdalenes together with the volunteers who have taken them off



Love for Saint Rita in the difficult district of Pigalle can be touched by hand and found in testimonies of faith and conversion.

the streets. Some of them do night watches to meet and talk with the needy of the neighbourhood and especially with women who have become sex slaves. Several nights a week, the Chapelle itself remains open for worshipping the Holy Father. In short, the Chapelle is a corner of Paradise in the chaotic neigh-

His presence among us was a real miracle. If heaven had not intervened, he would probably have been ignored passing by or perhaps given a compassionate look and some coins, convinced that this would be sufficient. But heaven, however, can give much more: Saint Rita is the saint of the impossible and had thus led

counter changed his life forever. One day he was tired of aimlessly wandering around the streets of the neighbourhood and found himself on a bus. He was still a clochard and not accustomed to the fact that someone could speak to him; in fact, few even looked at him. However that day, a woman seeing him so desperate asked him, "Do you know the Moulin Rouge?" He was doubly surprised: no one spoke to a homeless person, much less a woman. The woman, with Maghrebian traits, continued to talk to him: "Not the nightclub, the chapel, just in front". Annoyed, he got off the bus. But that woman had planted a doubt in his mind and after a few weeks he decided to enter the chapel, where he found a sensation of great serenity and interior peace. Well, at Easter this year, Michel - as he is called today called in honour of St. Michael the Archangel - received the sacraments of Baptism and First Communion. On May 21 for the Feast of Saint Rita, it was Michel who walked along the avenue of Cascia carrying the French flag, accompanying the mayor of Amatrice, Sergio Pirozzi, who brought the torch of twinning - which had left Paris to reach Cascia after passing through all towns affected by the earthquake of October 30 last year - to the square of the church. In other words, nothing is impossible for Rita. ■

Painter Yves Klein left one of his buildings on condition that it became a place of worship devoted to Rita



Every day, Fr. Picard concretely helps women who are victims of prostitution, people who do not have a home, and who need assistance and listening.

bourhood of Pigalle.

In this atmosphere, on April 28, the Chapelle de Sainte Rita fraternally united with Cascia. The civil and religious authorities of the Umbrian town lit the Torch of Peace and Faith together with civil and religious Parisian authorities and the relic of the saint was handed over in a very simple ceremony, which was also attended by Michel.

Mohammed to the point of making him Michel. When asked "where is Mohammed now", he answers: "He's gone, he's far away". In his previous life Michel was Mohammed, a non-practising Muslim who due a series of sad circumstances of life had found himself first living as a clochard (tramp, ed.) and then locked up in a psychiatric hospital. An unexpected but decisive en-

Volunteering in the love of Saint Rita



For the first time, on **Sunday May 7, 2017**, more than a thousand volunteers appeared on the squares of Italy with the **Roses of Saint Rita** in favour of the girls and boys of the Beehive, the welcoming house of the Augustinian nuns of Cascia. Organized by the **Santa Rita da Cascia onlus** foundation, the event has reached the extraordinary number of 194 solidarity banquets spread throughout Italy. From the depths of our hearts, **THANK YOU** to the volunteers who have believed in the project and generously invested time and energy in this initiative, to the donors who chose our rose seedlings, and to all those who gave us a helping hand!



Foligno (Perugia)



Catania



Treviso



Acquaviva delle
Fonti (Bari)



Medio Campidano



Gonnosfanadiga
(Cagliari)

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who is most vulnerable
in your will can change someone's life
for ever

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Write to us at monastero@santaritadacascia.org and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.



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a nest to
those that
have none.

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Here, every day, the nuns and educators lovingly take care of our Little Bees. They are girls from 6-18 years of age with a difficult past behind them for whom, thanks also to your help, we ensure the warmth of a home and the education needed to build a better future.

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