

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

NO. 1 JAN-FEB 2014

INTERVIEW WITH LUCIANA LOMBARDI
"If you don't have great love,
you won't make it"

AUGUSTINIANS
One Hundred Years with
Father Luigi in Cascia

IN THE WORLD
The ladies of Facen

LIVING ILLNESS

*When a person falls ill,
the whole family is involved*

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Postal rates have increased considerably and this leads us to ask you for a little help in support of our magazine.

To continue spreading the message of hope of St. Rita, help us to support 'From the Bees to the Roses' the voice of Saint Rita throughout the world.

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Thank you all!

Sr. M. Giacomina Stuani
Editorial Director

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of Saint Rita of Cascia
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I gave much thought to the preparation of the editorial for this issue of “From the Bees to the Roses”, dedicated to illness as an experience of everyday life. I confess that it was not easy. If my goal is to talk to those who find themselves in the difficult situation of facing an illness, both from the point of view of the patient and in terms of the loved ones that decide, willingly or not, to share this heavy cross, I confess my feeling of inadequacy. I therefore place myself in the hands of God, because mine are fragile.

And so, I started from my point of reference, Saint Rita. Thanks also to the efforts of Father Giuseppe Caruso (see his article on pages. 16-17 of this issue), my mind went back over the years of the stigma and, with a leap through time, to the illness, espoused, wanted, loved as a gift by Blessed Mother M. Teresa Fasce.

Rita and Teresa.

Two women, two extraordinary instruments of the Lord, who, embracing the Cross, received in return the embrace of Christ. Writer and scholar Cristina Siccardi explains that for these two women the evil of the body was “the optimal way to invest the soul in property of great values”, that “for both, pain was neither a trial nor a temptation nor or a difficult choice, but a fulfilment, a fulfilment of life projected in the joy of God ... To conceive and understand that the torment, the hardness and the roughness of evils are granted by the Father to his children is not easy ... This is not the case with Mother Fasce and her teacher ... pain was welcomed, softened by God, with gratitude, to make it a privileged bridge to a better goal” (C. Siccardi, *Maria Teresa. Alla conquista di Cascia* [To the conquest of Cascia], p. 268, Gribaudo Ed, 1993).

And I think of the people that I have accompanied or not accompanied before they left this world. I come back to the fearful suffering, etched on the faces of some of them. I come back to the Light that I have seen piercing the faces of others. I come back to that moment, sometimes invoked, prayed, feared, where

everything ends. I come back to the odours, acrid, harsh as bile. I come back to my thoughts, which, God forgive me, I wanted to place before who wept death of the body. I come back to you, my dear readers and friends, with the awareness of my own limitations and the certainty of feeling you closer than I could imagine.

Rita and Teresa



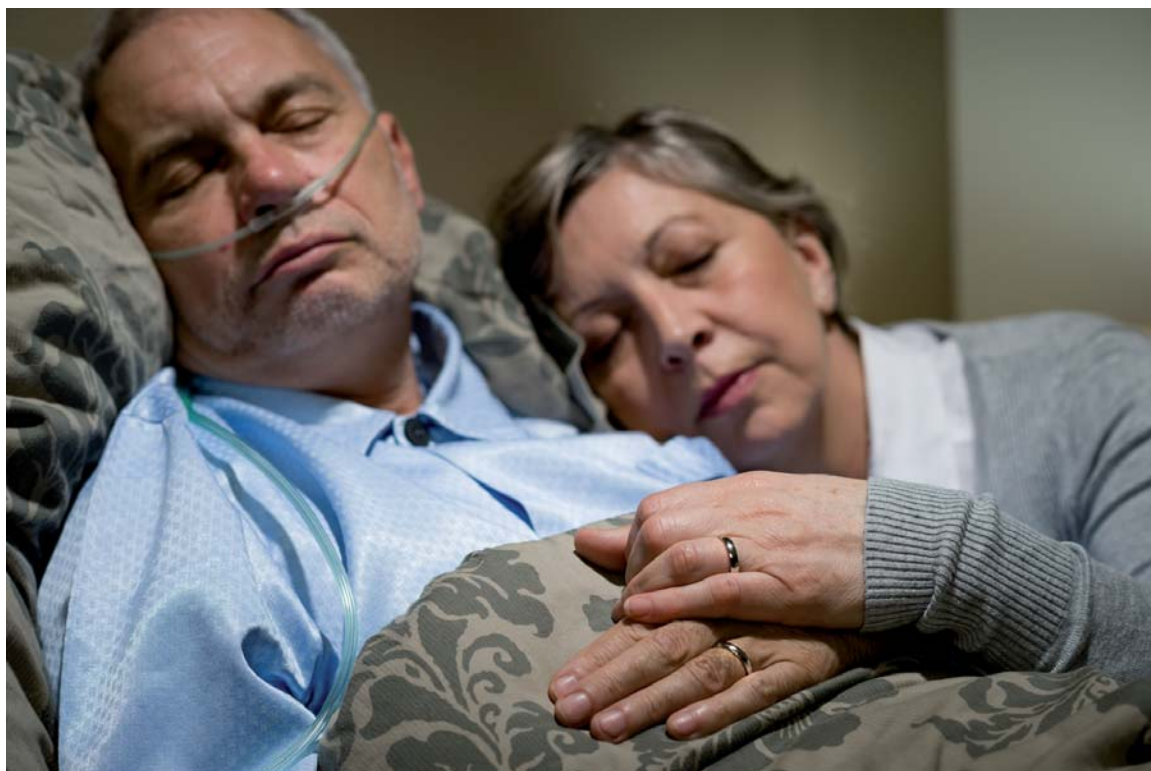
Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce
in a portrait by Andri.

It's been 67 years since Blessed Mother Fasce abandoned this world, that 18 January of 67 years ago. However, over five and a half centuries have passed since the death of Rita. But, despite the vast distances dictated by the line of time, I feel them here, next to me, and I pray that you also feel them close, call them, like me, to guide towards the light, you call upon them to feel less alone and closer to God.

When a loved one falls ill, the life of the whole family, of all those around, is relentlessly turned upside down and devastated. The words come from Luciana Lombardi, wife of Adriano Lombardi, a former captain and coach of the Avellino football team, who died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, in November 2007 at the age of 62. Also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS is "an evil disease," says Luciana. "You are trapped in a body that no longer responds, while the brain remains lucid. This is the greatest pain for relatives and for the patient". And it is only through love that we are able to forget ourselves so that the other lives.

Luciana Lombardi: "If you don't have great love, you won't make it"

interview by Marta Ferraro



How does the life of the family of an ALS patient change? We're talking about an evil disease. It came as a bolt from the

blue, without warning. When they give you the diagnosis, you also receive the sentence because it's incurable. The first symptoms (of my husband) were in 2000. Then,

on 30 November 2007, he passed away. It's an evil disease. It takes away everything you have: the voice, the breath, the muscles. You are trapped in a body that no

longer responds, while the brain remains lucid.

It's this that is the greatest pain for relatives and for the patient. This is the drama. Because you see yourself that way and so you go crazy. The relative who sees the patient like this, capable of understanding and reasoning although in that state, wants to keep him alive at all costs. For example, my hus-

The whole family is involved and lives with the patient and the machine

band, even without a voice, without moving, gave his opinion from his chair about running the house, about our children's education ... After three years, he lost the power of speech and began to have trouble breathing and swallowing. He began to live with an artificial machine that kept him alive. To keep him at home, I learned to use it. We lived in the house with this "guest" who was unwelcome but at the same time welcome because it kept him alive with us.

What was Adriano's reaction faced with the diagno-

NON-PROFIT FOR HEALTH

There are more than 340,000 volunteers active in Italy in non-profit health bodies, and 158,000 working for the 11,000 non-profit organisations dealing with the right to health. Volunteering is now an indispensable resource for Italian and European welfare. Each day, hundreds of thousands of people team up with the traditional health-care service free of charge for one reason only: solidarity.

sis? As long as he could, he kept it hidden. Then, the disease began to gallop and he told us. Every night, for two years, I got up at three in the morning and gave him his medicines. In the meantime, I had the twins who were tiny. Living with a sick person like this is difficult; the institutions don't help you, they're not prepared. You must be careful and on the lookout 24 hours a day. I could not get away for a moment. If I wanted to go out onto the balcony, I left one of the girls to watch him and they told me right away: "Mum, mum, you've got to breathe". The whole family is involved and lives with the patient and the machine. You can never be distracted, never. When he could not speak, he invented a sound that he was still able to make and meant that he needed something. Until he lost the use of his facial muscles, his smile never left him. (Adriano) had an incredible force, a 'captain

courageous' also in life ... If you don't have great love, you won't make it, because you have to annihilate yourself completely. It was hard, my daughters have been through so much.

Did your husband have faith? He had faith, but he told me, "I don't know how to pray" and cried. One

It's an evil illness. It takes away everything you have

thing that he missed so much was a religious figure, someone who would give him a word of hope, a different sort of comfort. I didn't think about that. I was too busy helping him physically, trying to save his life with that machine. At home there is no sense of time. But what it is unbearable is

THE WORD

by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi osa

... a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine ... and took care of him.

(Luke 10, 33-34)

SAINT RITA IN MONTEFERRANTE

On 3 January 26 years ago, the inhabitants of Monteferrante (Chieti) placed a statue of Saint Rita in the parish church of St. John the Baptist, so that they could meet each year together in love and devotion of the patron saint of impossible cases.

Since 1988, in fact, the small community has rallied round the effigy of the saint. "The devotion to Saint Rita," explains Nicola Ambrosini, who sent his testimony to the editorial staff of 'From the Bees to the Roses', is really very strong and originates from the personal devotion of a girl from Monteferrante who "during the years of the Sec-

ond World War, was doing her postulancy in the Monastery of Cascia, under

the guidance of Reverend Mother Abbess, Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. Unfortunately, during the war, many girls were forced to return home, including that girl, who remained faithful to her ideals. My devotion began at the age of 15 with an old book of prayers to Saint Rita that the girl had given to my mother in those years".



The statue of Saint Rita, in the parish of St. John the Baptist, Monteferrante (Chieti).



A group of people from Monteferrante during the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the blessing of the statue of Saint Rita, 3 January 2013.

the psychological pressure that doesn't allow you to relax for a moment and you can't afford to be sick. In the hospital, you must be even more watchful than at home, plus you don't have the amenities that you have at home because the person suffering from ALS needs a suitable bed and, besides, you can't expect the nurse to be at the side of the sick person 24 hours a day; in addition, such patients have an immune system at zero so the situation becomes more dangerous. In the final moments, he cried in continuation. First, he tried to hold himself back and

was always smiling for his daughters, but at the end he was tired. He couldn't take it any longer. It's a pain that's really devastating ... You risk getting ill. It's a disease that's too evil and too long. The thing I missed most was a word of comfort. I was too busy saving his life, taking care of him in body but not in soul. But no one came. Sometimes I lost my patience, gripped by fear. Sometimes I didn't have the time to be by his side, always caught up with calling the doctors, with taking care of the practical and bureaucratic problems of the disease.



Dear readers, with this issue "From the Bees to the Roses" comes out with new graphics. New colours and the symbol of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia (the rose in the heart), with the hope that you like it, just as we like it. Let's continue to be together with the Magazine of Saint Rita of Cascia. *The Community of Nuns*

One Hundred Years with Father Luigi in Cascia

interview by Rita Gentili

Born in 1913, an Augustinian, Father Luigi Giuliani was ordained a priest at the age of 23. Dean and honorary citizen of Cascia, Father Luigi has been offering his priestly service for 60 years to the town of Saint Rita. His catechesis to the pilgrims visiting the Monastery of Saint Rita is precious. Accompanied by what he calls "my nanny", actually his stick, at the age of 100 he still shows his vitality as a man of spirit and priest.

On 29 October 2013 you celebrated your 100th birthday, still a very lively person. How do you do it? Life comes from God; and so I always thought of myself, of my lengthy existence, as a gift of God. You receive the gift of God but you don't understand it; you don't even deserve it, at times.

Your life is a gift that God has given, but it is also a gift that you give to others. Not because I am 100 but because I have been a priest for 77 years. My life as a priest has had this programme: make others happy. You live the universal family, being available to all.

You Augustinians build that family every day, with the many pilgrims who come to Cascia, and you have been doing it for 60 years. How has the pilgrim changed over these years? In earlier times, people had pity, they looked at the miraculous, they stood there and prayed and prayed. Today, however, we still pray but we also pray in the understanding of imitating the saints. Faith is not only "who prays" but "who does the will".

It makes me think of your statement a few years ago: "The story of Saint Rita should be told by the common people, because it is the common people who have understood Saint Rita" ... That's exactly what I'm saying. The devotion to Saint Rita is extraordinary. While other saints have needed transmission, culture, modernity, order, congregation, Saint Rita has done everything by herself. This woman has grown in Egypt, where we Augustinian are and are not present, in Japan,



Father Luigi Giuliani during the Feast of Saint Rita celebrated in Cascia, 22 May 2013.

Faith is not only "who prays" but "who does the will"

South Korea, China, India, where we are now but were not before. Rita came first, she did it by herself: the mother, she took care of things for the good of the children. **You talk about mother and I am reminded of the Blessed Mother M. Teresa Fasce (remembered here at the Sanctuary on 18 January, the 67th anniversary of her death). Did you meet her? What do you remember of the Mother?** Beautiful! The first time was on 20 June 1937. I was in the International College in Rome, at the university. We came for the laying of the first stone (of the Basilica of Saint Rita, *ed.*) and I saw her for the first time, but I didn't talk with her. The second

time, when I was a philosopher in Tolentino (Macerata, *ed.*), I must have been 18-19; Father Angelini, from Cascia, came to celebrate the first Mass in Cascia and the teacher took me with him. And that time we saw and talked a bit with Mother Fasce. The third time, when I was already a priest, I was a superior in Perugia. I had come to Cascia to take the devotional trinkets that were then sold on the day of the feast in Perugia. After the feast, we went back with the money. I went to Mother Fasce, who was already ill. She told me about the construction of the temple and I gave her the money. She said, "No, Father Giuliani, this is for your community". Mother Fasce, the Mother par excellence, was not only the Mother of the nuns, but also of many poor families in Cascia. I spoke with children who told me: "Father Giuliani, we were poor, mummy went to the monastery of Mother Fasce and came home with something to eat". Mother Fasce is not only a saint because she prayed, but because she was a woman of charity. The Queen of



Father Luigi with the Community of the Nuns of St. Rita.

Italy, Elena (Elena of Savoy, wife of Victor Emmanuel III, *ed.*), the beautiful Elena, came to speak with Mother Fasce. It was a feast that day. Everyone wanted to see the Queen of Italy. She came with her daughter, Giovanna. Just think, a Queen of Italy who came to Cascia, a historical fact that has never been repeated ever again. The fame of Mother Fasce is not only that of a woman who prayed and said, "I'll pray for you"; she was a woman who did, who gave advice.

Your life has been one full of experience and wisdom ... In my life I have met many

**TAKE
AND READ**

FIVE MINUTES WITH THE AUTHOR

Your book is a journey "inside and outside" Rita of Cascia. It is not simply the story of the life of Saint Rita, but it also lets us perceive vividly the emotions that she perhaps experienced. This gives a glimpse of the bond that exists between

you and the saint of the impossible ... The link is of a generational nature. My grandmother went to Cascia in 1950, Jubilee Year, and since then began to pray, to invoke and to have a spiritual connection with the Monastery of Saint Rita. Devotion to the Saint of the impossible then passed to my mother, who passed "love for Rita" on to my sister and me.

A moment that I had never fully considered is that which Rita experiences when she asks to enter the monastery of St. Mary Magdalene but is denied. Rita wanders through the fields, climbs onto the Rock venting "the zeal for God". This makes her seem "crazy" in the eyes of her fellow citizens. Are there documents showing this? Does following God means not being understood by men? The first St Rita sources record how Saint Rita was seized by an immense love for God, so great as to express herself in an irrepressible anxiety, which found no respite if not in the cloister: "crazy for love" and for some just "crazy". It is difficult, sometimes impossible, for anyone who does not contemplate the supernatural dimension, to understand this mystical state ... sometimes it becomes a motive for slander and persecution. On the other hand, the Truth brought by the Redeemer is a motive for "scandal", as scandalous was the Cross (Gal 5:11).

Rita of Cascia.

**La santa degli impossibili
(Saint of the Impossible)**

Cristina Siccardi

La Fontana di Siloe, 14 €



personalities, so many cardinals, so many bishops ... But my wisdom is that of agricultural culture. What use do young people make of my wisdom? They don't need it.

And do you believe that all this culture is of no use to us young people? I don't know, I have a doubt. Today, PCs, e-mail, have solved everything. It's not like in our time. For me, civilisation is marvellous. When I have to write to cousins in America, I go to the rector who helps me and he does this (imitates writing with a keyboard, *ed.*) ... and it arrives in America! You understand that this is a wonderful thing, but I didn't want to get

My wisdom is that of agricultural culture

interested in computer knowledge. I accept it and I'm surprised.

And also afraid of technology? Well done, that wraps up my thoughts about civilisation, yours is too fragile. Very nice, excellent, from all points of view, but too fragile. A blackout in New York paralyses everything, but nature, on the other hand, cannot destroy rural civilisation, it can change it, enrich it, but not destroy it. With evolution, it's not that my rural civilisation has been destroyed; perfected. Beyond the countryside, here's the factory. Homo sapiens who evolves.

A positive trend that has also brought negative effects, such as no longer loving poverty, as you already said thirteen years ago ... Absolutely. We have forgotten the profoundness of our lives. When he wrote the rule, as a model St. Augustine took the first community of Jerusalem, the true Christians, "one heart, one soul, held out towards God." Today, we are too rich. Today, the superfluous no longer exists. Today, everything is necessary.

And how can you go back to loving poverty? I refer to St. Francis. Go and restore my church (these are the words heard from the saint while he was praying in front of the crucifix of Saint Damian, *ed.*) Here is the work of Pope Francis. We, not just the Vatican, not only Rome, but the whole church and all religious orders radically need to return to the first Christians.

SMILING AT LIFE

Send photos of your children to monastero@santaritadacascia.org with the consent of both parents for publication



1. Aurora Legittimo, Casarano (LE) - Italy
2. Edoardo Bonaiti, Lecco - Italy
3. Edoardo and Roberta Trudu, Cagliari - Italy
4. Eros e Naomi Manca, Nule (SS) - Italy
5. Francesco Filippo Genati, Calatabiano (CT) - Italy
6. Gabriele Agostino Radicia, Gela (CL) - Italy
7. Gaia Colletto, Vinci (FI) - Italy
8. Giovanna and Giulia Miroto, Valeggio sul Mincio (VR) - Italy
9. Helena Aita, Porto Alegre - Brazil
10. Joshua Landini, Melbourne - Australia
11. Maria Lara and Maria Livia Barelli, Quaranti (AT) - Italy
12. Sasha and Ethan Glovelier - Switzerland



The Beehive on Facebook

by Giulia Di Lauro

In this issue of 'From the Bees to the Roses', we want to share with you readers great news: the official Facebook page of the Beehive of Saint Rita is finally online at www.facebook.com/apettedisantarita. We thought it was high time to create a permanent presence on one of the most widely used social networks in the world to share with all supporters of the Little Bees and the Wildflowers the goals that we continue to reach thanks to your generosity and to raise awareness of the Beehive of Saint Rita also among those who

*Our desire
is to create the page
of a large family*



Click on LIKE

Go to the Facebook page of the Little Bees of Saint Rita www.facebook.com/apettedisantarita and click on **Like** to enter the house of the Beehive.

It will be the Little Bees who tell you about their day

have never heard of it. Our desire is to create the page of a large family, our large family, of which each one of you is an active part. We looked for a place that, despite the distance, could bring us closer. This place is Facebook.

Day by day, we will try, through images and thoughts, to convey the everyday life of the Little Bees (young girls living in the Beehive) and Wildflowers (girls and boys assisted by teachers during the day). We will try to make you breathe the atmosphere of love and commitment between the walls of this great structure, a place that has become home for many children. For these reasons, it will be the Little Bees themselves who tell you about their day, their experiences, creating part of the contents of the page.

You will always be kept up to date on new initiatives

Through moments of celebration, outings and educational workshops, every picture taken and posted on Facebook will be an opportunity to enter the house of the Beehive. Alongside the Little Bees, as always, are the teachers, precious collaborators of this charity project who talk about the Beehive of Saint Rita from the point of view of those who dedicate heart and professionalism every day.

By clicking "Like" on the official page of the Beehive of Saint Rita, you will always be kept up to date on new initiatives and activities, participating directly in the life of this important Saint Rita charity work which, for 75 years, has been taking care of those who have most need. ■

SUPPORT THE BEEHIVE PROJECT WITH US

12€

buy a textbook for a girl in need.

20€

provide one hour of educational support to youngsters taking after-hour schooling.

50€

is the cost of one week's meals for girls in difficulty.

100€

provide professional medical care to a youngster in need.

200€

allow us to buy a complete kit of teaching materials for a girl.

The Beehive is a structure that lives solely through the donations of people who make their devotion concrete, through aid to the weakest.

A donation, however small, is enough to support the Little Bees and Wildflowers, through:

Bank
IBAN: IT27T0200821703000102136901
BIC/SWIFT: UNCRITM1J35

Post Office Account No. 1010759072
made out to:
Fondazione Santa Rita da Cascia onlus

to make a bank transfer
IBAN: IT-59-S-07601-03200-001010759072

Credit Card
at www.santaritadacascia.org/donazioni
indicating "Alveare" as the reason.

I also help the Little Bees

If you also support the Little Bees of the Saint Rita Beehive and want to share your personal experience of charity with the readers of "From the Bees to the Roses", send us your testimony at redazione@santaritadacascia.org
Thank you!

APPOINTMENTS

edited by Fra Paolo Zecca OSA

Cascia (PG), 6 February - 15 May

Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita

Every Thursday, starting from 6 February, we celebrate the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita that accompany us until the feast of the patron saint of impossible causes on 22 May 2014. In memory of the stigma that Rita bore on her forehead for fifteen years, the Fifteen Thursdays of the Sanctuary of Cascia celebrate Holy Mass at 17.00 (February to March) and at 18.00 (April to May).



Cascia (PG), 30 March - 2 April

Forty Hours' Devotion

Starting from the fourth Sunday of Lent, we will start the Forty Hours' Devotion of the Eucharistic Adoration. Holy Communion will receive the prayers of the faithful in the Basilica from 8.30 until 17.30 every day from 30 March until 2 April.

Cascia (PG), 5 - 6 April

General Meeting of the Primary Pious Union Saint Rita

The pastoral theme proposed for the general meeting of the PPU, "Go in peace: celebration and mission", offers devotees of Saint Rita an itinerary that starts with the Mass and leads to the evangelising mission that every Christian should feel as his or her own. The

meeting is open to everyone: to affiliates of the Primary Pious Union, but also to anyone who is not registered and is simply interested in learning about this great Augustinian and St. Rita family.

Here's the schedule:

Saturday, 5 April

8.30 - (Avenue of the Sanctuary) 'Via della Spina' Procession

11.00 - (Great Parlour) Meeting of the heads of local PPUs with the Nuns

15.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Visit to the urn of Saint Rita of Cascia

16.30 - (Hall of Peace) Lecture given by Mons. Felice Di Molfetta, Bishop of Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano

18.15 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Vespers with the Nuns

21.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Adoration with the Nuns (and new affiliations)

Sunday, 6 April

9.15 - (Hall of Peace) Lecture given by Augustinian scholar Father Remo Piccolomini

11.00 - (Avenue of the Sanctuary) Pious Union Procession

12.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Holy Mass with the choir of Nuns. Afterwards, group photos and greetings

To participate, simply book by calling the Sanctuary Information Office at tel.

+ 39 0743 75091 before 22 March.

Cascia (PG), 16 - 19 April

Conference of the Friends of St. Augustine

The Friends of St. Augustine await you at Hotel delle Rose during Holy Week to discuss an increasingly pressing issue of social importance: "Hearts in the periphery. How young people can escape the emargination of our time". Thanks also to Pope Francis, the theme of the periphery is more felt today. Young people live in the periphery of the world, at the margins of society, and have little chance to redeem themselves, find a job and build a family. We invite you to the conference, to discuss together and propose solutions.

▶ **Italy, from 1 May until 12 October**
Regional Meetings of Primary Pious Union
Saint Rita

The members of the Primary Pious Union are part of the great Augustinian-St Rita family and live the Gospel following the example of St. Rita, in an atmosphere of brotherhood and faith. The regional meetings are an excellent opportunity for anyone who is already a member of the PPU or those who want to know more. Here is the schedule of events:

San Vito dei Norman (Brindisi), 1 May.

Puglia Regional Meeting

Info: Arcangelo Carrone, mobile + 39 348 9967 771 - carroneced@yahoo.it

Vizzini (Catania), 2 June. Sicily Regional Meeting

Info: Lucia Scirè, mobile + 39 337 1023016

- lucia.scire@regione.sicilia.it

Marcellina (Cosenza), 29 June. Calabria Regional Meeting

Info: Don Paolo Raimondi, mobile + 39 320 2249899 - paolorai79@libero.it

Coccaglio (Brescia), 14 September. Lombardy Regional Meeting

Info: Cirillo Olmi, mobile +39 340 2465678 - marcobarretta@alice.it

Avellino, 7 September. Central Italy Meeting

Info: Luigi Della Sala, mobile +39 328 4205409 - piaunione2011@libero.it

Cascia (Exercises House), 10-12 October. Meeting for Heads of local PPUs

Info: Sanctuary Information Office
 tel. +39 074375091

infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org

BASILICA OF SAINT RITA. WORK ON THE ROOF GOING AHEAD

Dear friends of Saint Rita, at the end of 2013, we nuns wrote to many of you, asking for help to renovate the dome of the Basilica. And your loving and generous response was amazing! Thanks to the contributions of so many devotees of the Saint, we quickly reached the figure of 20,000 euros which was necessary for the most urgent intervention on the dome. Despite the severe winter, work has gone ahead actively and we are pleased to announce that the dome of the Basilica has been made safe through re-roofing.



Work on the dome, before the harsh winter.

Now, work continues on the rest of the roof, which has been damaged by weather, earthquakes, and the rigidity of winters. Offers from all of you are continuing to reach us and we are infinitely grateful. Please continue to help us.

With the intercession of the great Heavenly Patroness, we sincerely hope that the home of Saint Rita, home of all devotees, will once again be ready to welcome you in all its beauty for the next feast on 22 May.

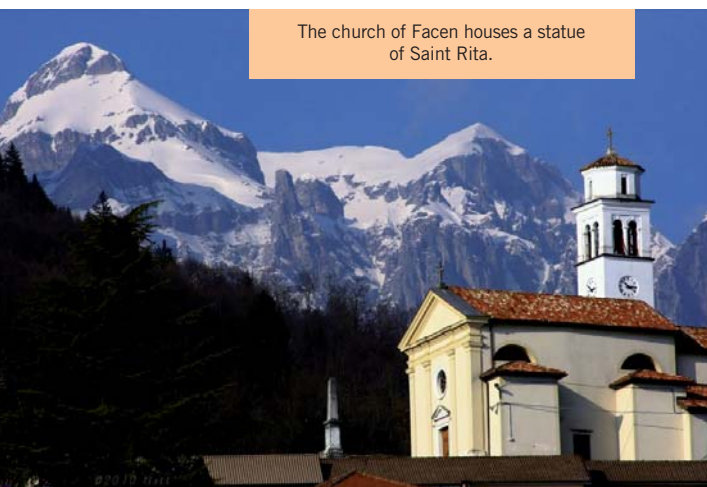
The Community of the Nuns of Saint Rita

The ladies of Facen

by Giulia Di Lauro

In the beautiful landscape of the Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park lies Facen, a small village in the municipality of Pedavena, in the province of Belluno.

In the village centre, at the top of a steep climb, as if it embraces the houses from on high, stands the church of Facen, dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle. Established as a parish in 1944, it has quite ancient origins, although the present building is the result of numerous renovations and restorations. The church houses a small chapel dedicated to Saint Rita of Cascia, where a statue of the saint is kept.



The church of Facen houses a statue of Saint Rita.

The devotion to the patron saint of impossible causes is deeply felt by the inhabitants of this small town. Every year, in fact, on 22 May, the day which marks the Feast of Saint Rita, Holy Mass is celebrated, followed by the traditional blessing of the roses and holy cards depicting the saint of Cascia are distributed.

Some time ago, another happy tradition accompanied these celebrations: every five years, in addition to the usual celebrations, a procession through the streets of the town was organised in honour of Saint Rita. Unfortunately, due to various

difficulties, it was not possible for 30 years to respect this beautiful custom, which was thus in danger of being lost. At least until 2013, that is, when a group of the town's women, driven by the enthusiasm of Maria Antonia, reawakened devo-

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Italy

Town: Facen Pedavena (Belluno)

Worth knowing: Facen is a village in the municipality of Pedavena, in the province of Belluno, Veneto. The Belluno area is the setting for 'I miracoli della Val Morel' (The Miracles of Val Morel), the last literary and figurative work by journalist and writer Dino Buzzati (San Pellegrino di Belluno, 1906 - Milan, 1972).

'The Miracles of Val Morel' recounts some imaginary miracles which popular tradition attributes to Saint Rita, accompanied by votive paintings all by Dino Buzzati and collected along with the story. One of these votive paintings, Table of Saint Rita, is preserved in the Municipality of Limana (in the province of Belluno); on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita in 2013, the votive painting was exhibited at the Sanctuary of Cascia, next to the urn of Saint Rita.

THE OTHER FACE

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The University of Udine has established a degree award in memory of Silvia Gobbato. Reserved for students of the Faculty of Law at the Friulian university, the award aims to promote "gender studies", with particular attention to issues concerning violence against women, giving depth to the theme of gender violence. But who was Silvia Gobbato?

Born in San Michele al Tagliamento (Venice), Silvia was 28 when she was killed in September 2013 while jogging on the bike path that leads from Udine to Buja, starting from the Cormor park. A graduate in law (with highest honours) at the University of Udine, she would soon have become a lawyer. Her body was found by a passer-by who, alarmed by the presence of a cell phone on the road, stopped and found the lifeless body. The perpetrator of the crime was arrested by the police two days after the incident.

A small chapel dedicated to Saint Rita



The devotion to the patron saint of impossible causes is deeply felt by the inhabitants of the town.

tion and enthusiasm among the citizens of Facen. For many years, this close-knit group has been meeting, usually on a Wednesday, to share and organise initiatives for the town. And so it was also for 22 May last year.

For the occasion, all the inhabitants gave their contribution: there were those who packed the fabric roses, those the chains, some decorated the streets or cleaned the public washhouse where a statue of the saint of Cascia had been erected. In short, each did something to revive a tradition that had been abandoned for many years.

The feast was attended by about a thousand people, some of whom had also come from neighbouring towns to celebrate the beloved saint of the impossible. The day was experienced by all with great intensity and participation: the elderly were moved to see an ancient custom finally reinstated, and the young, even the most sceptical, let themselves be caught up by the general enthusiasm.

Thanks to the commitment and devotion of the hard-working ladies of Facen, love for St. Rita of Cascia continues to shine in the mountains of northern Italy.

Reflection on life

Fr. Giuseppe Caruso OSA

The inscription on the solemn chest tells us that Rita, for fifteen years, the last of her earthly existence, bore the sign of the thorn on her forehead. Biographical narratives extend the story of a continued suffering which forced the Augustinian religious figure to a retired life in her small room, throughout that long period. We can conclude that Rita knew the experience of illness, of a long illness that had become chronic. Illness is an experience of the body, of course, but also of the soul; besides, the human person is always a synthesis of its two ele-

ments, and each affects the other. When we are ill, we experience, with sad surprise, that our body does not respond to our desire for life and that we are not masters of our days, because these will end, although we would like them to go on and on. Illness leads us to the margins, the margins of life and, often, even the margins of social life: a sick person no longer frequents places of meeting, doesn't go to work or for a walk. Even Rita, after having

THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

To you, O Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead, because as in their mortal life they have always been loved by you with immense love, so now, freed from all evil, they may enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Carry them to Paradise, where there is no more grief, nor pain, nor tears, but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Alberto Conati (Palazzolo di Sona VR - Italy)
Anna Maiolini Pisapia (Genoa - Italy)
Arnaldo Lolli (Teramo - Italy)
Carolina Porcaro (Salerno - Italy)
Emilia Ratasi (Canneto sull'Oglio, MN - Italy)
Fausto Gaffi (Cascia, PG - Italy)

Filomena Crotoli (Ascoli Piceno - Italy)
Gioconda Visintin (Trieste - Italy)
Giovenale Gottardo (Saliceto, CN - Italy)
Giuseppe Carbonara (Rutigliano, BA - Italy)
Giuseppe Ferri (Nepezzano di Teramo, TE - Italy)
Ivana Antinori (San Pietro a Vico di Lucca, LU - Italy)
Lorenza Rocchi in Castellucci (Cascia, PG - Italy)
Luciano Barbanti (Concorezzo, MB - Italy)
Onorina Lucchini (Vergato, BO - Italy)
Maria Berardi (Rutigliano, BA - Italy)
Maria Ingravalle (Bisceglie, BT - Italy)
Maria Librizzi (Villarosa, EN - Italy)
Pietro Discipio (Rutigliano, BA - Italy)
Rita Cardilli (San Giovenale di Leonessa, RI - Italy)
Rosa Rita De Santis (Reservoir, Melbourne - Australia)
Stefano Magrelli (Ocosse di Cascia, PG - Italy)
Totò (Maglie, LE - Italy)
Ubaldo Ceccarelli (Gubbio, PG - Italy)
Vito Grazio Giuliano (Rutigliano, BA - Italy)
Vittorina Baudino (Cuneo - Italy)
Vittorina Nicrosini (Tortona, AL - Italy)



Ancient Monastery Choir, Stigmatisation of Saint Rita (unknown author, XVII century).

Illness is an experience of the body but also of the soul

so wanted to enter the convent of Cascia, at one point, when she was confined to bed, had to give up so many moments of community life. Yet, despite the condition of the sick person being so painful, it can become an opportunity to learn something important: illness, far from the chaotic flow of life, allows us to reflect on it which, like a precious gift, can be offered to all. In her illness, Rita understood that, well beyond the thousand fine words that you can say, well beyond the many things that you can do, the most important thing, the secret spring of each really significant gesture, is love: a love modelled on that of Christ who, to save the world, rose, alone and abandoned, on the cross, trusting in God the Father to the very end. ■

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the Eucharist is a bath in your Person: miracle, power of grace, grace of conversion, of purification that You alone, Most High, could operate and conceive and only for creatures made in Your image and likeness.

In the Eucharist, when You, Christ Jesus, come inside me, the miracle of my transparency happens by Your mercy alone. Sweet Jesus, come into me and communicate to me all of You in all your infinite purity; my being is penetrated and transformed into Thee. You are the Light, I am the transparent, for Thee and for all, all, all brothers!

Extract from a prayer written by Mother Alessandra Macajone OSA (1931-2005), whom we remember on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of her ascent to heaven on 27 January.

TESTIMONY OF VANESSA GIAMPAOLI (ROME, ITALY)

On 4 September 2010 in Rome, Ludovica Rita was born. At the beginning of the pregnancy, I was diagnosed with chromosomal alteration and the doctors could not give us any certainty or reassurance about the state of health of the child, which could have suffered mental retardation or cardiac malformations. These risks would only have been averted after the birth, and even within the first year of life, even though all the diagnostic investigations of the case had been carried out. Ludovica was so desired by me, my husband, my 11-year-old son and my 8-year-old daughter, and together we addressed our prayers to our Patron Saint, Rita, going on a pilgrimage to Cascia, firmly convinced that she would have listened to our prayers, watching over the little one about to be born. At the Monastery, also accompanied by my mother, a very loving and caring grandmother, we found a family atmosphere where you could feel brotherly charity, love and peace, and there we promised we would return with the little one, praying with faith and deep devotion. Meanwhile, the pregnancy progressed, Ludovica gave us signs that she wanted to live, she was tenacious and strong. We all continued to pray to Saint Rita that she would watch over our child. At birth, all went well. Today, Ludovica Rita is a smart girl, very nice, sweet and good. She is adored by all of us and we're back together again at the Monastery, as promised, to pay homage to our dear Rita, Saint of the impossible who never abandons anyone, and thanks to whom we have received immense grace. Thank you, Saint Rita.

GRACE RECEIVED



edited by Natalino Monopoli

Go in peace: celebration and mission

This is the theme chosen to prepare the great feast of the Pious Union for the general meeting in Cascia on 5 and 6 April 2014. On 26 and 27 October 2013, as many as 18 affiliated associations, in the person of the

food for thought in individual local situations, waiting for the annual pilgrimage) is to offer devotees an itinerary that can find the centrepiece of celebration and mission in the Holy Mass, to be carried forward throughout the world at the end of the Eucharistic celebration.

During the break in the organisational meetings, the Saint conceded her caress to those present during the prayer of the Pious Union around her urn (pictured); this is always such an intense moment that recharges and refreshes the mind and the spirit of the programming activity (details of the dates are in the Cascia Events on page 13 of this issue, *ed.*)

In April, on Saturday morning, there will be the Way of the Thorn and the meeting of heads with the Community of Nuns; in the afternoon, the prayer to Saint Rita and the lecture by His Excellency Mons. Felice Di Molfetta, Bishop of the Diocese of Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano. On this occasion,

the Pious Union of Ortanova (Foggia), inserted in the diocese of this town, will bring the venerated image of the Saint to Cascia, and it will accompany moments of prayer in the Sanctuary and in the Sunday procession, at

The aim of the pastoral theme is to offer devotees of the Saint an itinerary

the end of the Augustinian catechesis. Details of the regional meetings have finally been defined: starting in spring, PPU's will walk and meditate with "a lone Heart and lone Soul", carrying the message and testimony of faith of a "woman of small stature, but great in holiness" throughout Italy

(John Paul II, Hearing on 20 May 2000).



spiritual fathers and presidents, and a representation of individual members, actively and energetically worked to define the details of the programme of fraternal union in the name of Rita. The aim of the pastoral theme *Go in peace: celebration and mission* (also as

JOIN THE PPU

Whether you are an individual or member of a group, join the PPU! In this way you will take part in our meetings, getting to know people like you devoted to the beloved St. Rita. For information, you can contact the general manager, Alessandra Paoloni: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org

Story of faith

Dear readers, let me share with you the story of Vincenzo di San Giacomo from Spoleto (Perugia): Dear Father Rector, I was born in 1942. In the hospital in Ancona, I was operated on twice for an aneurysm, and then, some time later, operated on again because of a narrowing of the spinal canal. In the operating room, they inserted a catheter that damaged my prostate, and this caused me to lose a lot of blood, causing me serious damage to the bladder, which prevented me from urinating.

I was then forced to carry the catheter for about two years, reaching the limit of endurance.

This was the beginning of my ordeal. I was visited by experienced professors, and no one took the responsibility of operating on me because my heart could not support surgery. My physiotherapist told me to do a test to return to normal and finally I received a "great gift". In the evening, while I was in bed, in my dream

Saint Rita told me: "Come on, you can make it". In the morning, the nurse came and took my catheter out.

Suddenly, I returned to the normality of my life, no longer feeling anything.

I am sure that Saint Rita came to my help and I want to thank her, participating in this miracle.

In his story, short but full of suffering and faith, Saint Rita played an important role. Why not to believe it? Between the lines of his testimony, there vibrates a simplicity, sincerity and naturalness of a language that is appropriate and raw, but this is precisely why it merits trust and credibility. Thank you, Vincenzo, for sharing it.

Father Mario
De Santis OSA,
Rector
of the Basilica
of Saint Rita



WRITE TO FATHER MARIO

Every pilgrim who comes to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita makes a journey along the path of Rita's values. Send Fr. Mario De Santis your testimony of pilgrimage at padrerettore@santaritadacascia.org, giving your consent for publication, to reflect together on the values that Rita transmits to us.

My mission in seclusion

by Sr. Maria Grazia Cossu

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you (Jer.1.5). This could be the beginning of my story, a story of love and mercy that the Lord wanted to start and is building every day with me. The first of three children, I grew up in a very religious family, where life is steeped in faith and prayer, with a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary, who always accompanies me on my jour-

The Lord wanted me totally dedicated to Him in seclusion



Sister Maria Grazia Cossu during her Temporary Profession on 7 October 2013, in the Basilica of Saint Rita.

ney and in my choices. Always to seek the Will of God was the main teaching of our parents and I soon began to wonder what could be the Lord's plan for me. I didn't have a spiritual guide and I didn't even know that this would have been very useful and necessary. I just knew that I had a great love for silence, prayer and the desire for a life that would give me more than the normal life led by all. At around 14, knowledge of some missionaries planted the seed in me of a life consecrated in mission. Years of various experiences at parish level followed and, through the path of volunteerism, I began to open up to the world

of gratuitousness. These were also the years of the first contacts with some missionary organisations that encouraged me to continue with the missionary ideal. All this, however, only as an act of will: it was my project, not that of the Lord, but I was only to realise this some years later. The decisive factor was my move to Pavia to study. These were very beau-

I LIKE SAINT RITA

For some months, the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia has been on Facebook, with the **official page of Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia**.

In addition to being remembered as the patron saint of the impossible, Rita is the saint of dialogue, a woman that is open to everyone. As bearers of Rita's message in the world, we Nuns thought of promoting Saint Rita's Facebook page, thinking that this instrument would be a means of communication and closeness, a window open to the outside of the seclusion, to all of you devotees of the dear Saint. Not being practical in these so-called "social network", we were slightly afraid at the beginning of this journey, but we are very pleased to see that instead the page is visited by many devotees. There are so many of you sharing the prayers of St. Rita, accompanied by beautiful images of the Saint and the Sanctuary of Cascia. In addition, in our Facebook space, you can find the message of faith of our beloved Pope Francis and the thoughts of St. Augustine.

Hoping that this small contribution might be of help and support in everyday life, we invite you to follow the official page of Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia at

www.facebook.com/monasterosantarita



Sr. Maria Grazia and her brother Alessandro (next to her), mother Gemma and Abbess Sr. M. Natalina Todeschini.

tiful years: rich in commitments, surrounded by an atmosphere of peace and serenity, also encouraged by the collegial structure where I lived and the wonderful friendships made during that period. Not disappointed by life, not discouraged, always with a positive outlook on existence: and yet ... something was missing. I decided to try this “something” in the Franciscan Order that I had known recently. But the Lord had other plans and His providential intervention led me to change direction. To open up the doors and make me an opening to what was His project, He used some friends who invited me to attend meetings held at the convent of the Augustinian Fathers. Initially somewhat unconvinced, I nevertheless decided to approach this reality which was unknown to me. It was precisely in that moment that the Augustinian vocational journey opened up for me: I was going in a direction that I could never have imagined. Among the Augustinian Fathers, the Lord put me next to the guide whom I had so much need, and together, we sought the will of God on my life. I had now ceased to follow my own will, but obediently, I let myself be led by the Lord, without asking for anything if not to know and do His will. I recognised more and more clearly that the Lord wanted me totally dedicated to Him in seclusion and in the Augustinian Order. I went a few times to the monastery which had been recommended to me and, on leaving, I always felt that my place was inside, not outside. Overcoming the inevitable obstacles and difficulties, on 10 October 2011 I entered the Augustinian Monastery of “Saint Rita” in Cascia and on 7 October 2013, with

the Temporary Profession, I said my “yes” to God in front of the church, surrounded by the Community and the people dear to me. I'll never be a missionary as I had wanted but, according to the mind of God, I will be more widely: with unceasing prayer, I can reach the whole world. “In Thy will, O Lord, is my joy” is the phrase that I have chosen for the day of Profession. Because, in the contemplative life as in any state, only in the fulfilment of His will can you can make a journey of faith and Love, letting Him lead, constantly living His presence in daily life, and receiving, in return, real joy, the joy that our heart so desires. ■

FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE Open yourself to the Truth, you will bring Life

from 18 to 23 August 2014
Monastery of Saint Rita, Cascia (Perugia)

Your vocation is witness of the Truth,
discover it ... with us and with other girls
looking for it like you...



For more information:
Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia
tel: + 39 0743 76221
email: monastero@santaritadacascia.org

My marriage is in crisis, how do you make a family?

I have so much need of Saint Rita's help, I have lost peace at home, I have not been able to become a mother for now and my marriage is in crisis. I can't find peace, I can't find my way. We often talk about separating. He has surrendered to life, he survives, he doesn't believe that the Lord can grant us the grace of a child. And so he thinks like a single person, as a bachelor. I suffer a lot. He doesn't know how to change the situation. We've been together for 20 years, but often we find no more reasons for staying together. It seems that nothing is moving in the right direction. How do make a family? I just don't know.



Dear friend, I understand your suffering and emptiness that wants to be filled by a son or daughter and the discomfort that makes you confused. Every woman feels fulfilled in becoming a mother, and if this dream is not fulfilled, it can lead to frustration. However, I believe that a distinction must be made with respect to where each of us can find happiness despite the situation in which we find ourselves. What the man and the woman create and makes them happy is fertility and this does not always mean generating in the flesh. Yes, for feeling good, the man and the woman must be fertile, that is give life, hope and love. We are always loved by a good Father who is in heaven, and who in time became flesh

in the Son so that we could know him more closely and feel His Love. God has put this love in our heart and only by giving it to others does it become life, become fruitful, generate ... Our wishes are not always granted, but God still loves us with faithful love. With your love, you are called to give life to your husband, to your parents, to the many brothers you meet in your work, and giving life means giving a smile, a friendly word, a hand on the shoulder, a caress, a bit of your time, space and listening to the other, courage and trust ... in short, a gesture of affection that is good for the heart of the other and so life is no longer empty but is full of meaning and worthy of being lived to the full. This motherhood is called spiritual but is just as real. Life is given to us to be given again, we can't live it in a sterile way only because a son or daughter does not "arrive".

Give yourself and all that is good that the Lord has given you as a gift to your husband, your neighbour near and far. Don't always see the glass half empty, God loves you and wants you to be happy. Open yourself to love towards others and He will show you the ways to achieve it; you will feel happy and full of vitality. You still have so much to give, this is just the beginning. I pray and we pray for you, God bless you together with your loved ones.



THE ABBESS REPLIES

If you want to share with us your fears, your doubts or your happiness, write to monastero@santaritadacascia.org, indicating your consent for publication of the letter. Mother M. Natalina will respond to everyone, in the magazine or in private.

A bequest, a gift of love

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

Allocating even a small bequest to the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia means leaving a sign of your generosity in time.

Thanks to bequests, we can support the Beehive of Saint Rita, a hope for all Little Bees, the children who will inherit your love.

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



It is our
task to let
them grow
serenely.

estrogeni

SUPPORT THE INITIATIVES OF SAINT RITA'S BEEHIVE WITH A DONATION

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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BIC/SWIFT: UNCRITM1J35 INDICATING CAUSE BEEHIVE**



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