

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 2015

THE SANCTUARY, HOUSE OF THE LORD
**Reflections of the Abbess
of the Monastery of Cascia**

FEATURE
The Year of Consecrated Life

AUGUSTINIANS
**Blessed Simon of Cascia
and the Eucharistic miracle**

AT HOME

*The Sanctuary of Saint Rita,
place of the essential and the search for God*

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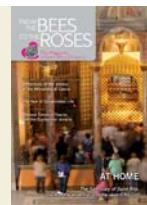
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*The Nuns of the Monastery
of Saint Rita of Cascia*

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A Special Year

My very dear friends, starting from this number, “From the Roses to the Bees”, the Magazine of Saint Rita of Cascia, will have four more pages. And, on the occasion of 2015, the year dedicated to consecrated life (which officially began on 30 November 2014 and will close with the World Day of Consecrated Life on 2 February 2016), we have decided to create a special insert which, throughout this year, will accompany us on the discovery of some experiences of consecrated life. To emphasise the value of the event, we start by presenting the logo used on the website of the Holy See (of which we present an extract below) and which you will find shown on this page: *a dove supporting a multifaceted globe on its wing, while it sits on waters from which three stars rise, guarded by the other wing.* In the graphic symbol profiling the dove can be seen the Arabic Peace: a call to the vocation of consecrated life as a promoter of universal reconciliation in Christ. The **dove** represents the action of the Holy Spirit, the source of life and inspiration for creativity. It is the call at the start of history: in the beginning, the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (see *Gen. 1, 2*). The dove, gliding on a sea full of unexpressed life, recalls patient and confident fertility, while the signs that surround it reveal the creative and renewing action of the Spirit. The dove also evokes the consecration of the humanity of Christ in baptism. The **waters**, formed by mosaic tiles, indicate the complexity and harmony of the human and cosmic elements that the Spirit makes “groan” according to the mysterious designs of God (see *Rom 8, 26-27*), because they converge in the hospitable and fruitful encounter that leads to new creation. The consecrated men and women in the sign of the living Gospel in the Church in the heart of the world, always pilgrims among peoples, live their charismatic and diaconate variety as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 *Peter 4, 10*). The **three stars** express the circularity and relatedness of Trinitarian love given to the world, that the consecrated life lives daily, creating awareness. The stars also recall the trinal golden seal with which Byzantine iconography honours Mary, Mother of God, model and patron of every consecrated life. The **multifaceted globe** signifies the world with the variety of peoples and cultures that the breath of the Spirit sustains and leads to the future. In the **heading** *Vita consecrata in Ecclesia hodie. Evangelium, Prophetia, Spes* (Consecrated Life in the Church Today. Gospel, Prophecy, Hope), *Evangelium* symbolises the Gospel that gives orienting wisdom and joy (see *EG 1*). *Prophetia* recalls the prophetic character of the consecrated life which “is set up as a special form of participation in the prophetic office of Christ, communicated by the Holy Spirit to all the People of God” (*VC 84*). *Spes*: sign of hope, the consecrated life becomes closeness and mercy, the parable of the future blessed by God and freedom from all idolatry. “Animated by the charity which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts” (*Rom 5, 5*), consecrated men and women therefore embrace the universe and become memory of Trinitarian love, mediators of communion and unity, watchmen praying on the ridge of history, in solidarity with humanity in their sorrows and silent search for the Spirit.



Logo of the Year of Consecrated Life.

The sanctuary, place of the essential and the search for God

by Sister M. Natalina Todeschini OSA, Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita

Pilgrims in the Basilica of the Saint, Cascia

Let me start by three quotes, which everyone certainly knows, to analyse three words related to the value of a sanctuary.

Sanctuary: Paul VI called sanctuaries “clinics of the spirit for the modern world”, where those who need care for their soul can find the medicine.

Essential: “Here is my secret. It is very simple. It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye”, says the fox in the book *The Little Prince*.

Search for God: I quote St. Augustine in his exposition on Psalm 38: “I seek the simplest IS. I seek the real IS, the legitimate IS, that IS that resides in the Jerusalem bride of my Lord (where there will not be death, there will not be failing; there will be a day that does not pass away but remains, that is not preceded by yesterday, nor chased by tomorrow) (St. August-

tine, Exposition on Psalm 38, 7). Sanctuary, “clinic of the spirit”, temple and image of the “tent of God among men” (Rev. 21, 3), which welcomes among its stones the feelings of the pilgrims who enter with hope and simplicity. Only God, who sees in the

The sanctuary is a visible sign of the presence of the invisible God

heart, who is in the heart of everyone, knows which are the questions, sufferings, joys, everyday life and family experience that each person brings with him by entering the door of the sanctuary. As Msgr. Veglio said in the inaugural speech at the 2nd

World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Pilgrims and Sanctuaries in Santiago de Compostela in September 2010, “the exterior journey is nothing but the reflection of an inner journey”. And, he continued: “What drives a man and a woman of today to make a pilgrimage? What are they looking

Sanctuary, "clinic of the spirit"

for? Dare I say that, deep down, they hope to find the meaning of life and a force to support their steps. Perhaps the pilgrimage that they are going to make hides the desire to return to God, a search for renewal and reconciliation”. It is God himself who calls man to this journey, awakening in his heart the nostalgia of eternity and the yearning for happiness which, as a creature, he enjoyed strolling in the Garden of Eden with his Creator. Here, then, the sanctuary is not only a human work, but also a visible sign of the presence of the invisible God. It is the mystery of the encounter with the Living. Everything that comes from God is mysterious like God, incomprehensible like God, infinite like God. Man cannot know how God will communicate with him, how he will seize him internally. He can imagine it, but God always precedes him, always surprises him because he is a living God, lover, friend, inner teacher, traveller who is alongside on the journey, Samaritan who bends down on wounds, servant who gives an example, the bread of new life that lets himself be broken, eaten, distributed. The categories of God are those of gift, of love,

of grace, of the folly of a gratuity without calculation. Only close to Him does human pain acquire real meaning. Only the encounter with Him makes possible the change of life. If we ask whether the sanctuary continues to be the place where God communicates, where the Trinitarian communion becomes effective and active in the personal history of each pilgrim, I can answer with certainty that it is, whether beholding the crowds who come here to Cascia and receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, or exercising the ministry of hospitality, comfort, listening, amiability in the Parlatory. God calls and attracts, and the man, moved by trust, is detached from his world and moves towards the abode of God. And God walks with man, walk with me because he loves me. St. Augustine wrote: “God loved us first and gave us the ability to love him. He did not love

God walks with me because he loves me

us to dismiss us ugly as we were, but to transform us and make us beautiful ... How will we be beautiful? By loving him, who is always beautiful. As love grows within you, so beauty grows; charity is precisely the beauty of the soul” (St. Augustine, Commentary on the Letter of St. John, IX, 9). In 1993, John Paul II, today Saint, wrote: “The celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist gives sanctuaries a particular dignity: they are not marginal or accessory places but, on the contrary, places of the essential, places where

THE WORD

by

Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA

**We implore you on behalf of Christ:
let yourself be reconciled with God.**

(2Cor 5,20)

Reconciliation is offered by God to man as a gift to enjoy the good of life that is communicating in peace, in joy of meeting. This, like all gifts, is not imposed, and, to enjoy it, should be accepted in Christ Jesus, He alone is able to heal the wounds of dissension. Christ has already done his part, now it is our turn.

IN THE PENITENTIARY, TO RETURN TO GOD

The Penitentiary of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia offers the pilgrim the chance to celebrate the sacrament of Forgiveness or Reconciliation, following a path made of reflection, listening to the Word of God and prayer until the confession of Sins. Unique in its originality, the Penitentiary was opened on 10 May 1986 to celebrate the sixteenth centenary of the conversion of St. Augustine. Puglian artist Armando Marrocco has created various works of art that are inside and also studied the colour tonalities of the different rooms. In the last act of the path of reconciliation, you arrive in the "Hall of Thanksgiving", where the statue of the Risen Christ towers, surmounted by a wonderful group of seagulls in flight. On the wall is written: There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent (Luke 15, 7). He who, through sacramental confession, returns to God is, like the prodigal son, a new creature who has decided to abandon sin and its attractions forever.

you go to obtain the "Grace", even before "graces". It is the Grace of God that transforms our life into love. Speaking of crowds, the crisis of recent years has not brought a decline in attendance here at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita in Cascia, where people continue to come in droves: families, groups,

The people who come here are attracted to Saint Rita

young people, and also consecrated and religious people. I can say that all the states of life and categories are represented. And because acting is determined by being, the patterns of behavior, the concrete choices in our lives cannot fail to express the beliefs that guide them, indeed, acting verifies, more than words and speeches, what we believe in and that which effectively directs our existence. Certainly, the people



Cascia, Sanctuary of Saint Rita.

who come here are primarily attracted to Saint Rita, beloved and revered around the world for her unique experience of life in all states that a woman can live. Many feel her their Saint, the Saint of the family who has the charisma to carry souls to God through the Sacraments. Here many find peace again by placing their problems in the heart of God and of their beloved saint, and thus hope flourishes anew. Today more than ever it is important to redefine the hierarchy of values in our lives according to what St. Augustine called *ordo amoris*, that is the order of love, behaviour and priorities; there is a need to reawaken the consciousness of what is really “essential”. To discern the essential in the daily requires putting ourselves, without conditions, in the hands of the living God, remaining in his presence. The essential is to live the Gospel truth, to pass from dispersion to inner unification. We have asked ourselves what the sanctuary is ... Now let me ask this question: what is the sanctuary with a monastery alongside? To answer, let me make

Our Sanctuary has become the house of the Lord

a little detour from the sanctuary to the monastery, which is next to the sanctuary, indeed, the sanctuary is the extension of the monastery, not only in a spiritual but also material sense. The Parlatory of the Monastery of Saint Rita is the final leg of the journey of the pilgrim who, on arrival, goes first of all to the Sanctuary. The grating of the parlatory is not seen or felt as an object of separation but as an essential sign of welcome that combines charity and attention, mercy and compassion, kindness and respect for every single person and for their sensitivity. So many people come to the Monastery grating who have seen faith, love, joy and peace extinguished and who seek consolation try to keep alive the important light of hope. What hope? Jesus Christ. Charity urges us to

take on responsibility for them, to take all of them to heart, to get lost for a while in them to be able to understand them intimately, and to let them experience friendship, Providence, the acceptance of God. The encounter between the misery of man and God's mercy, between despair and consolation, takes place at that grating; it is there that the ministry of human consolation through the mystery of divine consolation occurs. Sanctuary and Monastery work in spiritual and material synergy to be places of accompaniment towards the experience of God and communion with Him, to meet the many requests for the charity of Christ and, when they leave Cascia, the pilgrims take with them moral relief and spiritual strength. The Lord works deep down to bring out in every heart the demand for meaning in their lives. Our Sanctuary, in the name of Saint Rita, has become “the Lord's house set on a hill towards which people flow” as Isaiah said. I end this reflection with the prayer that Benedict XVI wrote in September 2010 at the conclusion of his Message for the World Congress of Santiago de Compostela: *Lord Jesus Christ, pilgrim of Emmaus, you make yourself close to us for love, even if, at times, discouragement and sadness prevent us from discovering your presence. You are the flame that revives our faith. You are the light that purifies our hope. You are the force that stirs our charity. Teach us to recognise you in the Word, in the house and on the Table where the Bread of Life is shared, in generous service to our suffering neighbour. And when evening falls, Lord, help us to say: “Stay with us”. Amen.* ■

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Family in Christ

by Father Ludovico Maria Centra OSA,
Chaplain General of the PPU

edited by Natalino Monopoli

Dear members of the beautiful Rita-Augustinian family of the Saint Rita of Cascia Primary Pious Union, we have recently started the New Year in the Lord's blessing and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of our dear Saint Rita and I hope that the entire year may continue this way, accompanied, supported and enlightened to be that light, that salt and that yeast that tells us to be the Gospel and, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, spread the good perfume of Christ throughout

It is Jesus Christ who makes us family

the world. You have surely noted that the theme chosen by the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita for the year 2015 is: Family in Christ to be Holy in Love. As is immediately evident, it is Jesus Christ who makes us family ... children in the Son; he is the Father who acts as a point of reference, so that all of us feel and are brothers. And it is in this heart of compassion and care for all that we meet our

brother and sister Saints who inflame our hearts with love for the Kingdom of God. We know that, in this period, the Church is reflecting on a great theme that is not and cannot be a stranger to anyone: the Family, first and irreplaceable cell in which "divine and human love is born and develops". This will also be the theme that will accompany us in celebrating

the Fifteen Thursdays in honour of Saint Rita, thanks to the great willingness of Don Paolo Raimondi. What else to say? Onward and upward, as Venerable Father Matteo De Angelis said of Carpineto Romano (better known as "Father Master")! The road ahead is long and not always easy but, together, will surely be good to face. With all my heart, I bless you. ■

PPU GENERAL MEETING

"Family in Christ to be Holy in Love" is the pastoral theme proposed for the General Meeting of the PPU, which will take place in Cascia on 21 and 22 March. The meeting is open to all: to affiliates, but also to those who are not registered and are interested in learning more. Here is the schedule:

Saturday, 21 March

- 8.30 - (Viale del Santuario) "Way of the Thorn" Procession
- 11.00 - (Great Parlatory) Meeting of local PPU leaders with the Nuns
- 15.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Visit to the urn of Saint Rita of Cascia
- 16.30 - (Hall of Peace) Conference on "Family in Christ to be Holy in Love"
- 18.15 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Vespers with the Nuns
- 21.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Adoration with the Nuns (and new affiliations)

Sunday, 22 March

- 9.30 - (Hall of Peace) Holy Mass (for groups: each with its own dress). At the end, Procession through the streets of Cascia, with the relic of the belt in the new reliquary donated by the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita.
- 12.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Final Blessing, group photos and greetings. For info and participation: Information Office, Sanctuary of Saint Rita - tel. +39 074375091.

The parish community of Calamonaci has always been linked to great devotion to Saint Rita of Cascia. The arrival of the statue of the Saint dates back to 1989, thanks to the will and commitment of a group of devotees, with the establishment of the Celebration Committee in her honour. Our devotion takes shape in living intense moments of prayer and in promoting cultural, aggregative and support initiatives for people in need, the elderly and the sick of the community; traditionally, on 22 May, it is these people who receive the blessed rose and a devotional souvenir. In recent years, we have wanted to learn more about Rita's message in order to try to enhance devotion and make the masterful example of our dear Saint Rita operational in the daily life of everyone. Recreational play initiatives aimed at the children of the community have therefore been organised, involving the participation in synergy of many operators; above all, we tried to convey to the youngest the message of peace, solidarity, sharing and forgiveness that Saint Rita embraced during her lifetime. This entire journey has evolved into a spiritual and educational service for the community, which had long been advocated and strongly

Experiencing Rita concretely

Saint Rita Group of Calamonaci, Agrigento



supported by our parish priest, Don Mario Di Nolfo, finding its natural and fruitful engagement in the PPU, presented and proposed by Don Orazio Greco during his visit to our parish with the Holy Relic of the Saint; that visit turned out to be a providential occasion for strengthening the faith and starting a spiritually and morally uplifting training pathway. The Calamonaci PPU is a prayer and operational group of just over one hundred members, a group that is gradually learning, organising and is

growing in listening, sharing of initiatives and moments of prayer: community celebration of the 15 Thursdays, celebration of the Transit and periodic follow-up meetings. For us, being part of the Augustinian Family is a privilege because it is a wonderful reality in which we really feel that we are brothers and sisters and in which the community perceives itself and connects despite territorial distances. Praise and glory to God and Saint Rita who wanted all this to happen. ■

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 Secretary General Alessandra Paoloni: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org



FONDAZIONE
SANTA RITA
DA CASCIA onlus
Fiore di carità

In the social sphere, with the Beehive

Testimony by Barbara Peppoloni, social worker who cooperates with the Beehive of Saint Rita

Since 1938, the Beehive of Saint Rita has been offering girls and boys the opportunity to change their future. Every year, new Little Bees arrive and others who have concluded their journey leave, ready to take flight towards life. When a young girl enters the Beehive, it is never easy: she faces an experience that is still unknown, she is far away from everything she knows and her family, her points of reference. Sometimes, girls enter the house of the Beehive on the recommendation of the social services, which cooperate with the Beehive in the rehabilitation and reintegration of children within their family units. Barbara Peppoloni, 44, is one of the social workers who cooperates with the Beehive. After over 10 years of collaboration with the project of the Monastery of Saint Rita, Barbara tells us about her experience ...

I have been a social worker for some time, specifically in a small town in Umbria, where I take care of children and families in difficulty. And it was precisely as a result of the needs that emerged in my experience of supporting some girls in their difficulties that I got to



know the Beehive of Saint Rita. "Deciding" to give a place that is different from one's family and for minors is not simple, is not easy, and often they are difficult decisions for both for the Social Services and the families concerned. Therefore, the place in which to place the children concerned must always be considered seriously because, in any case, these are decisions that will af-

"Deciding" to give a place that is different from one's family and for minors is not simple



SUPPORT THE BEEHIVE PROJECT WITH US

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:

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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!

The impact with the Beehive was immediately positive

fect the course of their lives. So it was that, more than ten years ago, while I was considering various options for some girls with the help of a colleague, explaining my desire to want to give them a place that could ensure the warmth of a family, and not be an aseptic place, my colleague told me about the Beehive of Saint Rita. I contacted the director at the time, Bernadette Salciarini, and went to Cascia. The impact with the Beehive was immediately strongly positive, both for myself and for the family of the minors concerned. The Beehive welcomed girls completely free of charge, becoming a second home for them, welcoming – albeit remotely – even the parents of the girls, in their social, economic and cul-

With the Beehive we have created a global project of life for girls

tural difficulties, and supporting them in their role as parents. With the Beehive, over the years, we have carried out – and are still carrying out – a comprehensive project of life for the girls who are admitted. In particular, the Beehive provides them the opportunity to study, to be followed every day, also in their afternoon studies; to gain experiences of social life that are constructive and situated within the community citizen context; to acquire the values and awareness of respect for their dignity as women, future mothers, enhancing and strengthening the concept of family. Today, the children of then are now girls engaged in their studies and heading for the future thanks to the Beehive, which welcomed them in their global needs.

Give us this day our daily love

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

For Valentine's Day 2014, Pope Francis spoke in St. Peter's Square to more than 30,000 engaged couples: "When you recite the Our Father, dear engaged couples, do not say to the Lord 'Give us this day our daily bread' but say: 'Lord, give us this day our daily love'." It is in this prayer, said Pope Bergoglio to those in love, "that you have to reveal the joy of Yes, forever". Today, the Pontiff stressed, it is true that everything changes quickly and nothing lasts for long, but conjugal love, according to the plan of God, is not part of the temporary planning of our

choices, because love is a reality that is built like a house and the house is built together with the moral certainty that it will not collapse, even though it is subject over time to the elements and the fury of the wind. "Building," recalled Bergoglio, "means helping growth with artisanal means; and marriage is an "artisanal" labour, every day, in which the husband helps his wife to become ever more a woman, and wherein the woman has the task of helping her husband to become ever more a man. This means growing together. This growth does not come from the air, but from your hands". In the journey of "artisanal

love", there are words and rules to be followed, such as "may I, thank you, sorry". Where "may I" means being able to enter into the lives of others with courtesy, outlawing all toughness and aggressiveness. Where "thank you" is gratitude for an important sentiment, is to keep alive the awareness that the other person is a gift of God and that you give thanks for gifts, thus strengthening the union. Where "sorry", is to recognise one's own mistakes, is to know and understand that the error of the other can be caused unintentionally and without malice. "The perfect family doesn't exist," said the Holy Father, "nor is there a perfect husband or a perfect wife, or the perfect mother-in-law". For this "daily love" to never lack but be the daily bread that strengthens, increases and stabilises the union, Francis calls on the language of tenderness, the language of brotherhood, the language of proximity: a triad that makes it possible to handle inevitable conflicts and necessary for a deep maturity and interpersonal relationships. "Conflict is essential. It should be taken on, it should be discussed, it should be solved, accompanied by a new process of maturation that leads to relating through an authentic culture of encounter". At the end of the encounter, Pope Francis urged the future brides and grooms to hold the marriage celebration within precise limits of sobriety, without unnecessary ostentation, "because what makes marriage full and true is only the presence of the Lord".

*Love is a reality that
is built like a house*





Here begins our journey into the world of consecrated life. What is it? Are there differences between one kind of consecration and another? Why make such a choice? How does my life change when I learn that a dear one has decided to consecrate himself or herself? Starting with this number of the magazine, we will ask these and other questions throughout the Year of Consecrated Life. To offer and give ourselves a few more tools for discerning, living and sharing a "radical" choice which, every day, men and women raise up to God. Good reading.

Father Vittorino Grossi, executive director of "From the Roses to the Bees"

Dear brothers and sisters, Francis Pope calls on us to celebrate 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life. The chronological reason for this celebration is to be found in the publication of the document of Vatican II, devoted to the consecrated life: *Perfectae Caritatis* - decree signed by Paul VI on 28 October 1965. A text that maintains freshness and relevance (through its indications, such as, *ed*):

Constant return to the sources of Christian life (baptismal roots of our lives). Remember that baptism inserts us in Christ and in his mystery of death and resurrection. This is the equality and responsibility of all those who have been baptised. The various ministries and charisms and lifestyles are in debt to each other, and create a dynamic experience of communion.

Return to the original inspiration of the institutes (charismatic dimension). St. Augustine coined a spirituality that rests on four pillars: inner life, community, poverty and ecclesiology.

Adaptation of our lives to the new conditions of the time (mission). Life, the Church and the world

We live in today, rereading the origins

by Father Alejandro Moral Antón,
Prior General of the Order of St. Augustine

are much greater than our approaches. Pope Francis invites us "to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the objectives, structure, style and methods of evangelisation of one's communities" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 33).

Sisters and brothers, this year can be an opportunity for a fresh air that the pontificate of Pope Francis has brought us – the message of joy that comes from the Gospel and fills the heart – bringing new oxygen to our lives and refreshing our community environment. That behind the closed doors in our inner spirit we can find the time and the way to celebrate our vocation and that, by emanation of our hearts, we can create new opportunities of encounter with the diocesan Church or other religious institutions to show through the colours of the different charisms the great gift of the Spirit which is the consecrated life for the Church and for the life of the world!

*(Extract from the Letter to the Augustinians
for the Year of Consecrated Life, 10 October 2014)*

FEATURE: THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

"We also have our way out"

Sister M. Monica Gianfrancesco,
President of the Federation
of Italian Augustinian Monasteries,
is interviewed by Monica Guarriello

coming young Filipinos interested in living the Augustinian monastic experience. We ran into some difficulties, but slowly, slowly, they were smoothed over but they are certainly not over. Today, in the Philippines, there is an Italian sister, along with seven Filipino sisters and one Korean sister. You ask me why sisters of the contemplative life are dealing with evangelisation and humanitarian support. There are human dimensions that are related to our nature, regardless of the vocation to which a person is dedicated. The so-called corporal works of mercy do not excuse anyone from practising them and create a way of "feeling" with others and for others which is help, opening, acceptance, and it is

Born in 1955 in L'Aquila, Sister Mary Monica Gianfrancesco was 17 when, as a novice, she entered the Community of the Augustinian nuns of the Lecceto Hermitage, an oasis of contemplative life outside Siena. But the life of Sister M. Monica has not always been between the silent walls of the hermitage. In 1991, in fact, she left for the Philippines to launch the Bulacan mission, along with Sister Natalina M Todeschini, current Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia. "Works of mercy excuse no one from practising them," explains Sister M. Monica, "and create a way of "feeling" with others and for others which is help, opening". And the journey, the going out into the world, continues for Sister M. Monica, head of the Federation of Italian Augustinian Monasteries and as Abbess of the Lecceto Hermitage, which houses 18 sisters.

Mother, how did the mission in Bulacan come about? Why are sis-



Sr. M. Monica (front row, centre), newly elected President of the Federation of Italian Augustinian Monasteries, 1 October 2014 in Cascia.

ters of the contemplative life dealing with evangelisation and humanitarian support? We started on 10 January 1991. We were two nuns: Sr. Natalina M. Todeschini, the current Abbess of Cascia, and myself. Sent by the Federation of Italian Augustinian Monasteries, we left to create a new community for wel-

natural to want to respond, with the means at one's disposal, to the various calls of those who knock on the door. Certainly this "petty charity", a fragment of the one bread, does not place us physically "on the front-line" like the Sisters of Charity or other congregations dedicated to this activity, but it certainly puts us

FEATURE: THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE



The Hermitage of Lecceto (Siena), where Sr. M. Monica is Mother Abbess of a community of 18 nuns of the contemplative life.

in tune with needs, with the miseries of the heart and the spirit of man, who is always thirsty and often abandoned at the margins of the moral, emotional and social life.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father Francis tells us that “the Church “going out” is a Church with the doors open”. Do you nuns also “open the doors”? In which way? The experience of one’s own humanity, of one’s wounds, tangles and inner ugliness, one’s lies and more or less obvious masks, places us in solidarity with all men, in fact it leads us to the root of human insecurity. And this experience is the way for freedom which, from sincerity, moves toward the truth of ourselves, to be rooted in Christ and be in Him a new creature; open to listening, the welcoming of the heart, to that friendly empathy with the vicissitudes of the human heart that we encounter in our parlatories or through correspondence. This is demonstrated by our Saints, Rita, Chiara, Sisters in Spirit in Augustine, whose participation in the cross of the Lord has made them evangelically mothers and open to hospitality, beyond all measure. In concrete terms, our community here

in Lecceto, performs the ministry of hospitality, providing time and space for prayer and reflection to those wishing to unwind in the Spirit and draw from the source of the Liturgical Life of the Community. We too have our typical way of going out, of going further, beginning in the morning, when we ask God to open our lips to free the Word with the singing of psalms. And in this way, our prayer takes to the roads of the world. Furthermore, fraternal relationship, which is central for us Augustinian nuns, is another “battlefield” of our going out of ourselves, of that continuous making room for others so that the presence of the Risen Jesus reigns between us and our hearts are modelled on his. Augustine says in the Rule: Defend at all costs unanimity and harmony with each other and reciprocally honour God for whom you have become Temple (No. 9). As you see, the stakes are high: the going out itself leads us to enter into the dynamic of the Trinitarian relationships and this means to be the Church: one heart and one soul reaching out for God! Song and parable of God’s love for humanity. I like to say that, in fact, our little hu-

man story begins with the coming out of the womb and is projected in relationships for building its identity as a structure of relations. Even in the Gospel we find invitations to come out from situations of death or slavery to enter, take root and remain embedded in the life of Jesus. The consistency of a human life depends on the ability to weave healthy relationships, where the law of the gift is until the end, according to the Eucharistic dynamics of Jesus.

What would you like to say to women who want to come closer to the contemplative life, or simply to know more? The contemplative life leads every woman thirsty for God and happiness to the source of being and of life. Our God is the God with us that reaches us with his Word made Eucharist, Sacrament, Sacred Scripture, beauty that shines in creation and in the goodness that circulates among men: all talks, He translates. But you need to be in tune, enter in tune with his style of saying, of doing, of acting in the history of mankind and in our small lives. You must then become adept at perceiving his waves of transmission and, this we can do by taking care of the organ of hearing of the heart. It is his privileged way. The Word is light or darkness, grace or condemnation: it depends on the heart. Faced with this, we can open up and do it by dropping a seed and bear fruit, or let it slip away. For this reason, for every woman in the fullness of her humanity, the monastic life tells her to cure the quality of health of the heart with attention to listening and acceptance of the Word. God knows what is in the heart of the human being, and only He can respond exhaustively to his questions.

My life consecrated to *Ordo Virginum*

Testimony by Michaela de Beyer

The vocation of Ordo Virginum (Order of Virgins) is to follow Christ the Lord more closely, especially in the commitment of virginity, as a sign of the Church Bride, ready for her Husband. All this takes place in the real world, in the secular world. Michaela de Beyer, 44, from Germany, tells us about her experience as a virgin consecrated and working in the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone ...

It was not me who decided to enter the Ordo Virginum, but God. Before the vocation, I did not know the virgins. The Lord told me "Come and see" (see John 1, 39) and after ten years of the journey has made my life so beautiful as to arouse in me a deep admiration! The added value is the inner relationship with God, the opportunity to meet him in love and in the ecclesial community, to grow in the apostolate. I consider myself very lucky because in my diocese (Bolzano-Bressanone, *ed*) I was able to develop a personal project of re-evangelisation (www.glaubenserneuerung.de) with pathways of faith for adults, children and families in collaboration with the Franciscans. I also founded the "Gloria" community to stimulate encounter among lay people: I organise prayer circles every week and days in the monastery every month, in order to share the experiences of life and mature in the faith. These activities fill me with an indescribable joy! Usually in our diocese, women who submit the application for consecration write a rule and send it to the Bishop before being admitted. My rule is five pages long and I cannot express it in full (summarising, *ed*): I intend to learn to live the relationship with Christ in an ever more profound way, not as a simple ecclesiastical service.

Life dedicated to prayer: every day I recite the Liturgy of the Hours and the rosary. I try to establish a link between work, encounter with others and my life marked by prayer. Every week I

dedicate time to Eucharistic adoration and the study of Scriptures and every year I perform spiritual exercises.

The sacraments, source of life: I participate daily in the Eucharistic celebration and I pledge to live by its precepts.

Life of a consecrated virgin in the world: I try to testify to the presence of God with my life and show others the light emanating from the joy of the faith, which is contagious.

Poverty: I consciously accept the condition of poverty linked to my vocation, which makes fruitful the relationship with Jesus.

Obedience: I am committed to listen to the voice of God and to respect his will.

Sacrifice: I intend to follow my vocation for my entire life, praise and glorify, fight and persevere, receive and give, invoke and thank God, sacrifice myself for the sake of my brothers, my sisters and all the holy Church.

The life of a consecrated virgin allows me to have different freedoms but also entails a precise responsibility, a very important one. I intend to cultivate my vocation with care and renew it always, so that Jesus Christ remains my first love.

APPOINTMENTS

by Fra Paolo Zecca OSA

Cascia (PG), 5 February to 14 May Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita

Every Thursday, starting from 5 February, we come together to celebrate the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita. Holy Mass is celebrated at the Sanctuary of Cascia at 17.00 (February to March) and at 18.00 (April to May).

Cascia (PG), 15 to 18 March Solemn Forty Hours

The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the Basilica of Saint Rita for Eucharistic adoration from 8.30 to 16.30 every day, from 15 to 18 March.

Cascia (PG), 1 to 4 April Conference of Friends of St. Augustine

As usual, the Friends of St. Augustine await you at Hotel delle Rose in Holy Week. This year the theme is "The Young and Easter". We invite you all to participate, to discuss and share useful insights.

Cascia (Perugia), 2 to 5 April Easter Celebrations at the Sanctuary

The Augustinian Family of Cascia awaits you to celebrate the Easter Triduum in the Sanctuary of Saint Rita:

Holy Thursday

17.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Mass of the Lord's Supper;

21.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, until 24.00.

Good Friday

10.00 - (Monastery of Saint Rita) We retrace the testimony of faith in the suffering of our dear Rita, through the procession known as "Way of the Thorn".

17.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Celebration of the Passion;

21.00 - (departure: Parish of St. Mary of the Visitation) Procession of the Dead Christ.

Holy Saturday

21.00 - (Basilica of Saint Rita) Easter Vigil. When Easter Sunday arrives on 5 April, we

celebrate the Risen with great joy, participating in one or more liturgical celebrations to be held in the Basilica. Holy Mass will have the following schedule: 7.00 - 8.00 - 9.00 - 10.00 - 11.00 - 12.00 - 16.00 - 18.00.

Italy, from 26 April to 7 September Local Saint Rita PPU meetings

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

Abbiategrosso (Milan), 26 April Lombardy Regional Meeting

Info: Francesco Roccio,
mobile +39 3393353309
piaunionesainrita.lombardia@gmail.com

Calamonaci (Agrigento), 2 June Sicily Regional Meeting

Info: Lilla Buggemi,
mobile +39 3206896892
lillabuggemi1@yahoo.it

San Marco Argentano (Cosenza), 28 June Calabria Regional Meeting

Info: Antonio Cupone,
mobile +39 3482856435
toninocupone@libero.it

Olevano Romano (Rome), 6 September Central Italy Meeting

Info: Maria Teresa Bovi,
mobile +39 3334938960
mariateresabovi@gmail.com

Molfetta (Bari), 27 September Puglia Regional Meeting

Info: Pia Camporeale,
mobile +39 3299656968
pia07@hotmail.it

Travelling towards God

by Father Giuseppe Caruso OSA



G.B. Galizzi, Pilgrimage to Rome (XX. cent.), Chapel of Saint Rita, inside the Basilica.

One of the most common images used to express an entire life is that of the journey.

As in a journey in which you go through different places, so in life do many circumstances change; as in the first you can take long stretches of road accompanied by some people, who then sometimes stop or take other directions, so too in our earthly existence do we cross paths with many faces, some of whom are with us for a long stretch and then take their leave of us, leaving us alone to continue on our way. A trip is made up of many small steps, seemingly insignificant if we consider them individually; in the same way, life is made up of many moments, of days that follow each other and are similar but which, taken together, constitute our existence. But not all travellers are the same: the tramp and the pilgrim are united by a sense of insecurity and uncertainty typical of being on the road; but while the first walks without knowing where to go, the second knows

THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

Lord, we humbly recommend our deceased, that they may participate in the eternal Joy of Heaven. Amen

Alfonso Izzo (Arpaia BN - Italy)
Don Angelo Corona (Spoleto PG - Italy)
Anna Miliani (Scandicci FI - Italy)
Anna Maria Sbarra (Cittadella del Capo CS - Italy)
Anna Rita Angelini (Monteleone di Spoleto PG - Italy)
Annamaria Roscani (Cascia PG - Italy)
Antonia Baratta (Latina - Italy)
Antonia Di Francesco (Rome - Italy)
Armando Bruno Bassetto (Marostica VI - Italy)
Armido Comberlato (Villaverla VI - Italy)
Efisio Puddu (Quartu Sant'Elena CA - Italy)
Ernesto Sessa (Arzano NA - Italy)
Filomena Accettura (Carbonara di Bari BA - Italy)
Francesco Corelli (Rome - Italy)
Francesco Culichetto (Rimini - Italy)
Giovanna Vescio (Sydney - Australia)
Giulia Di Amicis (Cascia PG - Italy)
Giuliana Paoloni (Cascia PG - Italy)
Isabella Conversa (Noicattaro BA - Italy)

Jole Pozzi (Como - Italy)
Lucia Scaranello (Toritto BA - Italy)
Luciano Coletti (Latina - Italy)
Maria Giramma (Modena - Italy)
Maria Santaguida (Crotone - Italy)
Maria Terraneo (Bovisio Masciago MB - Italy)
Mariella Brugnoli (Perugia - Italy)
Mariuccia Chiarenza (Recco GE - Italy)
Marta Bove (Bitonto BA - Italy)
Massimo Angelini (Grottazzolina FM - Italy)
Matilde Dell'Anno (Comiziano NA - Italy)
Micheline Carlevaro (Cuccaro Monferrato AL - Italy)
Olimpia Di Placido (Bologna - Italy)
Paola Fontana (Forte dei Marmi LU - Italy)
Rinaldo Luoni (Gallarate VA - Italy)
Roberto Cambi (Cascia PG - Italy)
Rocco Martino (Melicuccà RC - Italy)
Rosa Romanini (Montefano MC - Italy)
Settima Prestini Caldara (Collegno TO - Italy)
Teresa Paoletti (Cascia PG - Italy)
Vincenzo Lattaruolo (Cerignola FG - Italy)
Vincenzo Pappalettera (Italy)
Vittorio Pennino (Tor Lupara di Fonte Nuova RM - Italy)

TESTIMONY OF RAFFAELE CONTI – ITALY

My name is Raffaele, I am 89. I and my family have always been devoted to Rita. We have received many graces from Her and I want to speak about the most recent. It was the afternoon of a spring day. Together with my wife Maria, I was attending the funeral rites in the village church for someone we knew. Suddenly, I felt a strange discomfort and without speaking with anyone, so as not to alarm, I left the church and headed for my car that I had parked nearby. Unfortunately, the effort I had made in covering the distance, by the way all uphill, worsened the situation, so much so that, after I had started the engine, I lost consciousness and, consequently, also control of the vehicle. Imagine a car out of control, worse still going downhill, heading to the square in front of the church where, in the meantime, those who had been at the funeral had gathered. It could have been a massacre, but invoking our Saint, looking intently at her face imprinted on my key holder, averted the worst! The machine stopped miraculously after having caused only some minor damage to the cars parked along the way. I was admitted to hospital and, after heart surgery, returned home safe and sound and infinitely grateful to our holy advocate, whom I will never stop thanking and invoking, together with my wife Maria and our children Tonino, Mario and Rita, so that we may continue to benefit from her holy protection.

GRACE RECEIVED

well that, step after step, he is coming closer to the ultimate goal of where he is going, that is, the encounter with God; it is this awareness that gives meaning to the steps, those steps which, as we have said, do not seem to be worth much if we consider them in themselves. Rita knew well the experience of pilgrimage; it is said that, a few years before her death, she went to Rome to venerate the tombs of the apostles and that, on that occasion, the wound on her forehead, the sign of her participation in the passion of the Lord, was miraculously healed. Perhaps, travelling along the quiet roads of the Umbrian Apennines together with her sisters, she reflected on the mysterious journey that is life, a journey that alternates strenuous climbs and comfortable descents, sunny peaks and dark valleys; a journey where the only certainty is that of always being accompanied by the love of God. ■

PRAYER

THE EUCHARIST, DRUG OF IMMORTALITY

Lord Jesus, the Eucharist is a bath in your Person:
miracle, power of grace,
grace of transformation, purification
that only You, Most High, could operate and conceive
and only for creatures made in Your image and likeness.
In the Eucharist, when you, Christ Jesus,
enter inside me, by Your mercy alone
does the miracle of my transparency occur.
Sweet Jesus, enter into me and communicate all in You;
in your infinite purity,
my being is penetrated and transformed in You:
You are the Light, I the transparent,
for You and for all, all, all brothers!
The Eucharist is the moment when my will can be fully realised,
my need for transparency, purity and simplicity.
It is the Eucharist that makes me simple
and new like every child; every day.
How marvellous this is, my Lord! Amen.

Prayer written by Mother Alessandra Macajone OSA (1931-2005), whom we remember on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of her ascent to heaven on January 27.

“People recognise themselves in Rita because she suffered greatly”

Msgr. Shlemon Warduni, Auxiliary Bishop of the Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Baghdad, is interviewed by Monica Guarriello

Is Saint Rita known in Iraq? She is a very famous saint. In particular, in Baghdad, in the Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, there has been devotion to Rita for about 30 years. During the Novena that leads to the feast in her honour, the church is full, the road in front is blocked by many cars and people, because everyone wants to participate in the Novena of Saint Rita. Then, on May 22, comes the great feast. Usually, the celebration is presided over by our Patriarch, Louis Raphaël I Sako, or by the Auxiliary Bishop, in order to emphasise the importance of the event.



Msgr. Shlemon Warduni

Usually, Rita is very beloved by women, who recognise some aspects of their lives in the saint. In Baghdad, who are the devotees of Rita? I think that women are more devout than men in general, but the important thing is to hope that devotion is deep so that it can bring about miracles. Very often the faithful tell us of graces received or episodes that seem to be miraculous, through the intercession of Saint Rita: for example, the reconciliation of husbands with their wives, or the healing of a spiritual wound, or even an illness of the body. The truth is that this devotion is felt not only by women, but also by men. People

recognise themselves in Rita because she suffered greatly. And the person who suffers in Christ always reaches a fruitful result. Consider that half of the churches in Baghdad, including the non-Chaldean churches, celebrate

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Iraq

City: Baghdad

Worth knowing: In 2014, the number of displaced people forced to flee to the advance of the Islamic State rose to 1.9 million. The war in Iraq also threatens the survival of the last Christian, Yazidian, Shabak and Turkmen communities left in the country; communities that for centuries have made up that mosaic of unique civilisation that was Iraq and which, today, are in danger of disappearing because of persecution (*Source: osservatorioiraq.it, 18 November 2014*).



The flag of Iraq, chosen by parliament in 2008, in the period after Saddam Hussein's dictatorship.

the Novena of Saint Rita. And the image of the saint is also present in many homes. The days of the Novena of Saint Rita are a big feast for everyone, even if now, unfortunately, the tone is more subdued ... because there is no security, no peace, but car bombs and suicide bombers ... many people are afraid of big gatherings ... and then so many of our faithful have left ... with the U.S. occupation, more than half the Christians left the country. The country has been emptied of Christians, but also Muslims migrate, and for us this is an enormous misfortune. If there were slightly less than 1 million Christians in Iraq before the occupation, there are now about 400,000. In the city of Baghdad, we had thirty or so churches, now there are 15 or 16 that "function".

Is the rose also the symbol of Saint Rita in your country? The rose is the symbol, for ex-

ample, of the feast of St. Valentine, but not of the feast of Saint Rita ... It would be nice to transmit the tradition of the blessing of the roses, but people would say: "What are you doing, Monsignor, bringing us the feast of St. Valentine?". However, we do have the ritual of kissing the image of Saint Rita. And, in any event, there is the same sense of love connected to the saint. Before ending this interview, I would like to turn to the readers of "From the Roses to the Bees" and ask them to pray to Saint Rita for peace ... these days we have a great need of peace, whether personal with God or social and international where there are so many interests and people live only for the material and there is corruption ... The world needs conversion. Many people now are like Rita's husband, many people need God and have left God, putting other material things in his place. ■

SEND US YOUR TESTIMONY

If, like us, you love Saint Rita and want to tell us about popular devotion involving your community, describe how you celebrate the feast of the Saint or other initiatives in her honour by sending an article with photos to redazione@santaritadacascia.org

Blessed Simon of Cascia and the Eucharistic miracle

by Father Giustino Casciano OSA

On the occasion of the Solemnity of Blessed Simon of Cascia, on 16 February 2015, Father Giustino Casciano, Augustinian of the Parish of St. Augustine in Gubbio (Perugia), tells the story of the Eucharistic miracle linked to the memory of the blessed.

The Eucharistic miracle of Cascia occurred in 1330. It did not happen in Cascia, but in Siena. In that year, in Siena, a priest was called to assist a dying farmer. Lacking faith and respect, he placed the small consecrated host

in the parchment of his breviary and with the book under his arm went to the sick man. After having confessed, he opened the book and saw with astonishment that the host was exuding blood and was stuck to the paper. The priest told the sick man and his family that he would come back later for Holy Communion and hurriedly went

back to his church. As soon as he was free, the priest went to the Convent of St. Augustine and asked to speak with Fra Simon of Cascia, who was preaching the Lenten season in the town, with a large influx of people and many spiritual fruits. Fra Simon listened attentively to the story of the priest and acted prudently. Before granting absolution, he asked the priest to bring him the breviary with the bleeding host. He prepared a small altar in his room and ascertained what had happened. With the consent of the priest, he held close to himself the two bloodied pages with the liquefied host. Fra Simon of Cascia, who was then

over forty, drew new inspiration and new vigour to announce the living, real and substantial presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, as a few decades earlier St. Thomas Aquinas had masterfully explained and as Pope Eugene IV had solemnly affirmed in

1264 when setting up the feast of Corpus Christi for the whole church, following the Eucharistic miracle of Bolsena-Orvieto. On finishing his preaching in Siena, Fra Simon returned to Umbria; he left the fragment of parchment imprinted with the stain of blood in the Convent of Perugia and took the other fragment with the host liquefied into

blood to his Convent in Cascia. Because he was surrounded by high esteem for his upright style of life and the beauty and power of his preaching and his writings, when he spoke of the miracle of the Eucharist, showing it to his Augustinian brothers and the faithful, he was certainly believed and reverence for the miracle began. Fra Simon died in 1348 as a result of the great plague that struck Europe. The Eucharistic miracle that he donated to his town is well attested to in historical documents. It is referred to in the Statutes of Cascia of 1387; papal bulls of 1401 and 1408 approve the miracle and regulate the great popular devotion



The Eucharistic miracle displayed in the Lower Basilica in Cascia, beside the relics of Blessed Simon of Cascia.



Lower Basilica, A. Marrocco, Blessed Simon of Cascia (XX cent.).

which surrounded it. In those solemn processions in which the miracle was carried throughout all districts of Cascia, we can certainly imagine the presence of Rita, accompanied by her husband Paolo and her two sons. After so many centuries and countless historical events, that fragile piece of parchment paper with the host that became blood has been kept in the Lower Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia since 1987, and all devotees of the Saint of the impossible can see it and venerate it. The Eucharistic miracle of Cascia help us to believe strongly that in the consecrated hosts there really is the Risen Jesus, our God and Lord, to love him and worship him also outside of Holy Mass and when he is taken into the homes of the sick and dying.

SMILING AT LIFE

Send photos of your children to monaster@saintritadacascia.org with the consent of both parents for publication. Photos with incomplete or illegible consent will not be considered.

1



2



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4



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8



9



10



11



12



1. Alessia and Federica Rita Crupi (Reggio Calabria - Italy)
2. Domenico and Riccardo Calabrò (Reggio Calabria - Italy)
3. Edoardo Trudu (Monerrato CA - Italy)
4. Federica Rita Candullo (Biancavilla CT - Italy)
5. Gioele Deriu (Bauladu OR - Italy)
6. Giulia and Giovanna Minotto (Valeggio sul Mincio VR - Italy)
7. Giuseppe Alex and Cristian Genati (Gela CL - Italy)
8. Marika and Alessandro Nicolò Mosconi (Trevi PG - Italy)
9. Pierpaolo Di Pietro (Noto SR - Italy)
10. Roberta Trudu (Monerrato CA - Italy)
11. Sara Francesca Loddo (Orosei NU - Italy)
12. Simone and Marco Gaetani (Racale LE - Italy)

50 years of yes

by Sister M. Pia Conversa OSA

Sister Maria Pia Conversa celebrated her 50th anniversary of solemn profession "to reaffirm with greater responsibility my total yes to God" in the Basilica of Saint Rita on December 8 last year. After celebrating such an important event, we offer readers her testimony of gratitude to the Father.

For each of us, God has a plan of love, we are all called on to find it so that we may live it with dedication. I was a girl like any other, full of dreams and vitality. One May, the month dedicated to Mary, I accepted the invitation of some friends to attend the Marian prayer and the Word burst into my soul, into my heart. It was the beginning of the journey of deeper understanding, the stages of which were to direct my life towards total Augustinian contemplative consecration.

I admit that the fear of not being able to respond responsibly to the divine call surprised me. I got over the fear thanks to the

whisper of the word dedicated to Mary that rang like a continuous inner chant: "I am black but comely" (Song of Songs, 1,5). Black for the fragility of creatures, but comely for the "grace" that transforms persons making them capable of generating and taking Jesus Christ to the world through prayer. "Your love is worth more than life" (Psalm 62) ... It is God who works in each of us; day after day, He completes his work, we must always be atten-

We receive the ring with Christ Crucified

tive and open to his continual calls. The Word has enlightened, supported and confirmed my journey in these 50 years of consecration to the Lord. On the occasion of the First Profession of Vows, I chose as the little souvenir-image the words of our Father St. Augustine, in which I saw the syn-

Sister M. Pia during the ceremony for her 50th anniversary of solemn profession.





The Word removes all selfishness

thesis of the call-answer: "Lord ... You lavished your fragrance, I gasped, and now I long for you. I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst. You touched me, and now I burn with desire for your peace" (Confessions, X, 27, 38). For the solemn profession, that of the "lifelong" vows, I chose the words of the Sacred Scripture: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death" (Song of Songs, 5, 6). In them I find myself, because we receive the contemplative Augustinian ring with Christ Crucified, the nuptial sign of the everlasting covenant between the person consecrated and Christ and God the Father through the Church. The Augustinian contemplative life takes shape in the school of

It's beautiful with You...!

"It's beautiful with you" are words that we can imagine spoken by God about you or by you about God or, at the same time by God and you, by one about the other! "It's beautiful with you expresses a relationship, a journey that touches our gaze and turns it into a vision of faith, able to recognise the beauty of the Lord". Come and spend a few days in the company of Jesus, with other friends in search, with we Augustinian Nuns and Fathers ... And it will be ... surprise ... gratitude ... adoration ... journey ... beauty ... relationship joy ... We are waiting for you!

**FEMALE VOCATIONAL
ORIENTATION COURSE
FROM 17 TO 22 AUGUST 2015**



For information:
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the Word which, once welcomed, resonates in a continuous harmonic movement in the soul-heart like music that is an expression of all strong, acute, less strong, quiet, very quiet, very strong, sweet movements... This is the daily confrontation between the person consecrated and the Word that removes all selfishness, straightens the will, until "the same feelings of Christ", He who

is splendour and consoles, are taken up. I celebrated my 50th to reaffirm with greater responsibility my total "yes" to God the Father, "giver of every perfect gift", to express with the Church my gratitude, my "thank you" for having made me faithful. Faithfulness makes love fullness, only in faithfulness does love expand and makes the person joyful. The Augustinian Community is consecrated to Love, it tries to look like and express the radiant image of the Holy Trinity. Each tries to be herself accepting the other in Love. It is the richest school of humanity because it is always intent on drawing the fullness of life from Christ the Lord. I decided to celebrate December 8 (2014, *ed*), the day dedicated to Mary the Immaculate, so that it will still be and will always be She, with her maternal protection, to guide me in the light of Christ so that my life of praise become increasingly transparent and pure. "I thank you, O Father, because you reveal yourself to the small ...".

REMEMBERING MOTHER MARIA GRAZIA

During the Solemn Novena towards Christmas, Mother Maria Grazia Sacconi crowned her journey, uniting her long and beautiful earthly life to the eternity of God. Let us give thanks to the Lord of Life for her 92 years, including 62 as a contemplative Augustinian. She was not young when she entered the Monastery. Up to the age of 29, she had been trained in the school of Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action), starting as a "favourite". Then, the call to a more intimate life with Jesus, silence, prayer and contemplation, took the upper hand and she entered the Monastery of Varese Ligure (La Spezia), where, for 60 years, she was able to put to the service of those asking for them, both inside and outside the monastery, the abundant gifts of nature and grace that the Lord had given her. The first thing that struck you in her were her sky-blue eyes and a smile that made her look like an eternal girl full of joy and vitality, even when she was over 90. She always sought the will of God, and this phrase written in October 1985 on a piece of paper, is confirmation: "Lord, make me able to create total emptiness inside myself and thus be open to the Holy Spirit in imitation of Our Lady". Of her, as of Abraham, the Lord asked the sacrifice of leaving her land late in life and letting herself being taken where He indicated. She never hid this suffering, but like the wise woman she was and forged by communion with God and the life of community, she tried to offer everything to the Lord, praying continually, until the last breath, for peace in the world. Thank you, Mother, your beautiful smile is the precious memory of a life spent thinking about others and not about yourself.



Where we are happiest

I am 35 years old and have been separated for four years. In the first three years, I experienced the darkness of suffering after have been left by a woman in whom I believed, with whom I had been hoping to build a family. The last year was very significant for me. I came back closer to Mercy, to the Light, to the Love of a God who was waiting for me, who wanted nothing more than my burning love for Him. The flame of faith was rekindled with a pilgrimage to Medjugorje; from there, I came back with the same thirst of the Samaritan



woman at Jacob's well. I began a search for the Truth, for this God who knew how to wait, picked me up from the mire of sin and hugged me as the Father did with the prodigal son. This search was and is accompanied by the Holy Rosary and Holy Mass every day, which are sources of serenity, forgiveness and peace. There is no greater joy than to forgive, I understood by forgiving my wife, but especially by reciting the Holy Rosary for her, so that the Heavenly Mother would take her hand and lead her to Jesus. It all depends on how much we are willing to open up our heart. A quote from St. John Paul II: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ". My faith is an intimate relationship with him, I

talk to him as if he were a person of this world entrusting my problems, my everyday uncertainties to him and He makes me understand which is the right way, where my happiness is ... Yes, because the Lord does not want anything special from us, he only makes us understand the place where we are happiest. With faith, you see the world through different eyes, you give more importance to the real values of life ... to needy brothers needy, to sick brothers, to brothers who just need someone who listens to them. God bless you.

(Andrea from Perugia)

Dear Andrea, thank you for your beautiful testimony.

There is nothing to add ...! I just want to underline where you say that "the Lord does not want anything special from us, he only makes us understand the place where we are happiest". It is an immense grace to understand this.

God gives us all with His Love, we have only to accept it, fill ourselves with it to give it to others as you did, by forgiving your wife and praying for her.

Continue to throw open the doors of your heart so that God's love is the inexhaustible source of your happiness and continue to give it to everyone with your faith, your joy, your prayer.

God bless you and may Mary look after you as a loved and blessed son.



THE ABBESS RESPONDS

If you want to share your hopes or fears or your doubts or happiness with us write to monastero@santaritadacascia.org, specifying your consent for publication of the letter. Mother M. Natalina will reply to everyone, either through the Magazine or in private.

Lets give
a nest to
those that
have none.

SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE HIVE OF ST. RITA WITH A DONATION

It is here that every day the nuns and educators lovingly take care of our young Bees. Girls between the ages of 6 and 18 who have a left difficult past behind them and for whom, thanks also to your help, we can ensure the warmth of a home and a better future.

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