

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 2016

THE REVOLUTION OF SLOWNESS
Interview with sociologist Giovanni Gasparini

PILGRIMAGE, TO BE WITH GOD
Interview with Monsignor Paolo Giulietti

JUBILEE SPECIAL
Special insert on the Year of Mercy

THE RHYTHMS OF LIFE
Living with slowness, in an age of speed

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A Year of Mercy

On Sunday 20 December 2015, while this issue of From the Bees to the Roses was in preparation, the house of Saint Rita also officially opened the Holy Door, which all devotees can choose to pass through bearing in their hearts the intention to be reconciled with God. At 11:00, our Archbishop Renato Boccardo officiated at the opening ceremony at which we Augustinian nuns, with deep emotion and joy also participated exceptionally, together with the family of Augustinian fathers of Cascia. The Holy Door of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia will be open for all of you, for anyone wishing to take this path of faith, conversion and mercy together with the patron saint of impossible cases, throughout the year, until 6 November 2016. In the next issue of our magazine, we will devote considerable space to this important moment that was made possible by the will – or dream come true – of our beloved Pope Francis.

Starting the new year with this immense joy in our hearts, we are prepared to live the event of the 20th Day of Consecrated Life, and the end of the year dedicated to it, on 2 February 2016. At the same time, we continue on the path of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which has just begun, devoting a special insert to the holy year for everyone in 2016, through a series of reflections with contributions from our executive director, Father Vittorino Grossi, Bishop Emeritus Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino, Augustinian and great friend of the Community of Cascia, and testimonies of life lived in the section entitled “The son who returns” which closes the insert reminding us that God is waiting for us, God welcomes us, God forgives, God loves us, and he does so always. In the current affairs section, you will find a reflection on “The rhythms of life”, which is approached from a sociological point of view with Professor Giovanni Gasparini and from a spiritual point of view with the help of Msgr. Paolo Giulietti. Dear friends of Saint Rita, in their complexity and

richness, these rhythms can be the opportunity given to us to enter into contact with our hearts and the hearts of our neighbours. How? Through pausing. Let’s stop. Let’s



The Community of the Monastery of Saint Rita, during the ceremony of opening of the Holy Door at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia on 20 December 2015.

pause. Every so often, Let’s do it. And let’s never stop looking in wonder at the things that the Lord offers us. During his interview, Professor Gasparini quoted a poem by Tagore, Indian poet, philosopher and writer who epitomises this concept. Unfortunately, due to space restraints, we have been unable to include it. For this reason, I share it with you in the editorial, wishing you a 2016 of Love and Mercy, of Reconciliation and Dialogue.

*Day after day, O lord of my life,
shall I stand before thee face to face.
With folded hands, O lord of all worlds,
shall I stand before thee face to face.
Under thy great sky in solitude and silence,
with humble heart shall I stand before thee
face to face.
In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous
with toil
and with struggle, among hurrying crowds
shall I stand before thee face to face.
And when my work shall be done in this world,
O King of kings, alone and speechless
shall I stand before thee face to face.
(Rabindranath Tagore)*

The revolution of slowness

Giovanni Gasparini, poet, writer and professor of Sociology at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, is interviewed by Monica Guarriello



Depiction of the Little Prince, the protagonist of the novel of the same name by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Professor, in the era of “everything at once”, of optimisation, of instantaneousness, do we necessarily have to go fast? Speed is one of the most characteristic aspects of industrialised societies. But today we have to connect it to other elements that distinguish our society from all others that preceded it, namely: *complexity* (no society has been as complex as ours); *continuous connection* (what Americans and Anglo-Saxons call “24/7 system”, that is, a system that is always active, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week); and finally, the *global dimension of communication*. All this is extraordinary, but it poses major problems in terms of

values and capacity of adaptation on our part.

In your studies, you frequently refer to *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, which well represents this human need to return to the enjoyment of little things ... In Chapter 23, the Little Prince meets the merchant who tells him: “I have invented these pills that soothe thirst. If you take them once a week, you will no longer feel the need to drink”. The Little Prince replies “But why take this stuff?”, to which the merchant answers: “It saves a lot of time; it has been calculated and you can save 53 minutes a week.” But the Little Prince asks the fundamental question that we can

also ask ourselves in the face of the technological, social and cultural development that we are experiencing: “What is the use of saving time? What do you do with these 53 minutes?” And the merchant explains: “You do what you want”. And here the Little Prince gives one of his wonderful responses: “If I had 53 minutes to spare, I would walk slowly, slowly towards a fountain”. So, let us ask ourselves what is the meaning of saving time obtained by technology. Given that, thanks to our knowledge, today we can do extraordinary things, like interact instantly thousands of kilometres away, stay informed about what is happening; just think of the fact

that right now there are more mobile phones than people in the world.

Speaking of mobile phones, I sometimes hear the phone ring and then find out that it didn't. And I get anxious when I can't be reached. Does this "anxiety of disconnection" depend on the fact that we do not know how to be with ourselves? I think so. We're living in a society that continually enhances the means of social influence, so you if you're not on a social network, if you don't look at the smartphone every ten minutes, you feel different from the others. Here the keyword to retrieve is *concentration*, an exceptional value that we risk losing with this continuous connection, with this ephemeral instantaneous communication. You can't follow ten things at the same time. At a certain point you have to write, or take an exam, or prepare a curriculum, you need to concentrate. Concentration requires the need to detach, to have space-time that you choose and in which you are alone with yourself. A young person who does not confront his problems personally, who does not concentrate and does not take a few hours

away from Facebook or the smartphone to think about his own life runs a very big risk. What consoles me is that the need to return to deep values is increasingly shared. That means: let's take back our time. It's not easy. Maybe we have to do as the Little Prince says: look for the meaning of what we



According to Professor Giovanni Gasparini, each one of us can make gestures that, in their own small way, are revolutionary. A first revolutionary gesture is to take a break.

are experiencing. I need recreation, to stop, to have a day of rest during the week (which is an ancient socio-cultural institution). And the continuity that we must face goes against this. So how do you react? You have to make gestures that are, in their own small way, revolutionary. A first revolutionary gesture is to take a break. For example, by leaving the

mobile phone aside for a while.

But there are also other forms of reaction already under way. I can think of concern for the environment, or *slow food* rather than *fast food*. All this is important for affirming the need for values that are linked to the virtue of slowness.

Today, if someone tells me I'm slow, I'm not receiving a compliment ... Can slowness come back to having a positive sense? In our society, slowness is considered a non-value. Actually, it needs to be revalued. It's not that we must return to the Middle Ages, but slowness is essential for our social and cultural life, for our life in general. Just think of the fact that no technology can shorten the nine months of pregnancy, for example.

So, unplugging is the solution for having a healthy relationship with technology? I think so, but not just that. We have to create a social consensus around this, because if it's just me and just you, if very few of us are doing this, we risk being penalised. So the important thing is that in our society there is recognition of these spaces for the right to pause and for slowness. ■

THE WORD

Edited by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA

**"[God] Has shown mercy to our ancestors
and remembered his holy covenant"**

Gospel of Luke 1, 72

The Lord has remembered his holy covenant. In introducing the birth of Jesus, Luke the evangelist presents that moment through the experience God had with elder priest Zechariah, when the son he no longer hoped for, John the Baptist, was born. The elder Zechariah felt that gift as mercy towards his old age and that of his wife because "the Lord remembers his holy covenant (with Israel)".

Pilgrimage, to be with us and with God

Msgr. Paolo Giulietti, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Perugia-Città della Pieve, is interviewed by Rita Gentili



Msgr. Paolo Giulietti.

Inundated by daily activities, we often find it difficult to recover a bit of time for ourselves and for God. Monsignor Paolo Giulietti, aged 52 from Perugia, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Perugia-Città della Pieve, has this contact with the religious and spiritual dimension very clear and also promotes it through his role as chaplain for the Confraternity of St. James of Compostela. In fact, for Msgr. Giulietti, pilgrimage is a way of discovering or rediscovering that by living differently, savouring experience, recognising the important things, we can ...

Technology has come to dictate the pace of our lives, in a flow that is so fast and intrusive that it threatens to overwhelm us. How can we keep in touch with ourselves and with God?

I am convinced that each of us can decide which and how many spaces of our lives are “colonised” by the media. If we do not succeed, it is because we find it hard to master our choices, taking models of behaviour about which we have never stopped to think for granted. When an instrument becomes a means, an end, this means that something is going wrong. In the words of St. Ignatius,

it is necessary to “restore order in our lives”.

Pilgrimage seems to offer such a possibility ... During the pilgrimage on foot, everyone has the experience – initially disconcerting then exciting – of long spaces of solitude and silence. These, together with the general simplicity and the particular atmosphere of the route, produce real conversions: the discovery that you can live in a different way – and that some things are really more important than others – generates a profound change of life. In some cases, it opens the doors again to the religious dimension and prayer.

You can live differently

What do you think of the relationship that we have today with technology? For many lonely people it is a way to find company. On the other hand, with it we never “detach” ourselves. In the same way, we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the urge to take pictures of the wonders in front of and we forget to admire them ... Personally, I suggest walking with the phone switched off and savour the experience to the full; even photographing, when it becomes obsessive, leads to a certain estrangement from what is being experienced. On the other hand, uploading the Bible, breviary, missal and guide into the 130 grams of the smartphone is very convenient. Evil never resides in instruments but in the way they are used. People who have a rich and healthy capacity for relating know how to use these devices well, without allowing themselves to be dominated, but using them to enriching their relation-

ships at the level of friends or work. Their compulsive use is rather typical of those who spend little time in company or are unable to establish satisfactory relationships with others.

Is digital technology fictional company?

I would say no. Although it is an incomplete

way of relating, it is not false: it contains elements of authentic humanity. My two grandchildren live very far away, so I'm happy to talk via Skype or WhatsApp and bless these opportunities. Of course, when I can hug them and spend time with them is quite another matter! ■

THE SEVEN MOMENTS OF THE PILGRIM

All pilgrims undertake a journey to change their way of looking at life in an experience which, spiritually, is called "conversion". On the pilgrimage, the entirety of the pilgrim is involved – body, mind, spirit and soul – in seven specific moments that we invite you to experience on your next pilgrimage:

1. DETACHMENT. Leave your everyday life to become a pilgrim in a different reality. Carry only the bare essentials in your rucksack.

2. FATIGUE. Discomfort, fatigue, uncertainty: these are the accessories of pilgrimage. You need patience, but the truth about yourself emerges through fatigue – the best and the worst. On the way, you discover who you are.

3. SOLITUDE. Returns to yourself in solitude. Interior work is essential for change. In silence, you can reflect on the goal and the motivation (who makes you do it?).

4. COMPANY. Company is unprecedented, it is found. Get rid of the myth of self-sufficiency, you need others like they need you. You also have an "invisible" company: your living and your dead.

5. WONDER. On the way, focus on the things that you usually see in haste. Walking, you are struck by creation: sun, rain, dust. Take time to look at things, live them, without consuming them in three seconds like you usually do.

6. TRADITION. The routes have existed for centuries and, on the pilgrimage, you know that you're not the first, nor the last. Get closer to the deep meaning of the *road* for you, today. You can be helped by the account of a friend who has been there, by a book or article about the journey that you are undertaking. So, in turn, write down or recount your experience.

7. PRAYER. Transcendence slips in in surprising, unforeseen, unexpected ways. Prayer is the desire to respond to this mystery that awaits you.

(Considerations drawn from the "Visiting Shrines: escape or return" meeting, held by Msgr. Paolo Giulietti on 10 July 2015 at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia, as part of the 3rd National Itinerant Convention "Ci rimettiamo in gioco" (Putting ourselves back in the game) promoted by the Leisure, Tourism and Sport Office of the IEC, in collaboration with the Episcopal Conference of Umbria).



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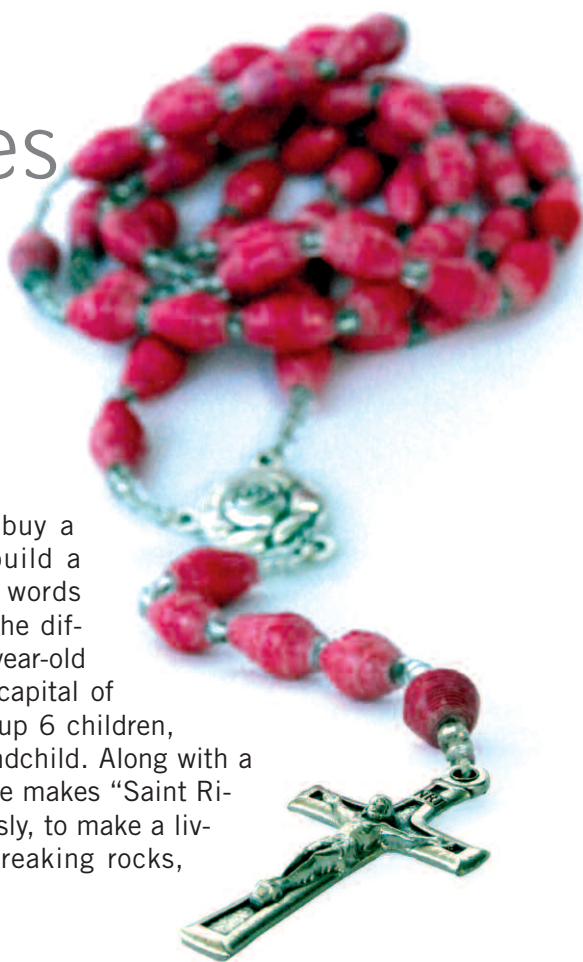


Saint Rita solidarity rosaries

Made for love,
from Africa to Cascia

by Roger Bergonzoli

“Through this project, I was able to buy a small piece of land on which to build a house for my children”. These are words that express a common dream, but the difference lies in who is saying them. Alice is a 49-year-old widow living in the extreme outskirts of Kampala, capital of Uganda, in the middle of Africa. She has to bring up 6 children, besides take care of her younger brother and a grandchild. Along with a group of women, all of whom have fled from war, she makes “Saint Rita solidarity rosaries”. This is their new job; previously, to make a living, they had been forced to produce lime by breaking rocks, which is backbreaking and unhealthy work.



CHOOSE YOUR ROSARY FROM THE ONLINE CATALOGUE

To request the Saint Rita solidarity rosaries, just visit the online catalogue at www.santaritadacascia.org/ecommerce. You can choose the **rosary beads** in the versions on offer (**necklace or bracelet**) and in various colours (**magenta, sky blue, white**). You can also find the rosary bracelet **for children**.



"The women have organised themselves into small groups, each one choosing a model or a different colour, requested by the Monastery of Saint Rita in Cascia. They work from home, so they can follow even the youngest children for whom it would certainly be difficult to find someone to entrust them to," says Marilisa, an Italian co-operation worker for the non-profit Italy Uganda Association and coordinator of the

Alice is a 49-year-old widow who has to bring up 6 children

project in Uganda, who goes on to stress how "producing the Saint Rita rosaries has made them happy, to the extent that they appear to compete to be ahead of their colleagues in delivering them, but above all they are keen to do a good job".

Now, finally the result of the commitment of the Saint Rita Women's Group – the name they have given themselves in honour of our beloved Santa – is available here in Cascia, in the parlatory of the Monastery, and on the sanctuary website (tadacascia.org), for all devotees who would like to hold a rosary in their hands that is very special, because it combines devotion and charity. A beautiful, all-female story, starring African widows, the nuns and the Little Bees. In fact the purchase of rosaries by the nuns provides sustenance to the wid-

ows and their families, while the proceeds go to the girls of the Beehive of Saint Rita in Cascia. Charity, devotion but also respect for the environment because the paper with which each single bead of the rosary is made comes from the processing waste of a number of printers in Kampala. The beauty lies not only in the aesthetics of the Saint Rita solidarity rosaries but also in the values that they represent and in the hearts of those who choose them, knowing that they are made with love and for love. ■

SUPPORT THE BEEHIVE PROJECT WITH US

The Beehive is a facility that exists solely through donations from people who make their devotion tangible, also by choosing Saint Rita solidarity rosaries. A donation, however small, is enough to support the Little Bees and Wildflowers, through:

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edited by Natalino Monopoli

The small community of Caltabellotta has long been devoted to Saint Rita of Cascia. In the name of Rita, the faithful invoke the graces of the Lord for the community and families who, as devotees, come together in a spirit of dedication, trying to fol-

low the path of life that She traced: following the example of the Saint, humility, perseverance, indomitable love for Our Lord are a stimulus in prayer and on the daily path of the human journey.

Despite centuries of Christian tradition, devotion to Saint Rita in Caltabellotta is relatively recent and is mainly associated with some families who, in their devotion to the Saint of Cascia, have been making known her human and spiritual vicissitudes as Saint of the impos-

sible since the 1970s. In the early 1980s, a popular collection, above all among local residents of the Itria neighbourhood where the church of the same name stands, made it possible to purchase a wooden sculpture of Saint Rita, currently preserved and venerated in this church. Since then, the devotion to Rita has grown among the inhabitants of Caltabellotta.

Particular attention is given each year to the feast of 22 May, with the statue carried on the shoulders of

A new spiritual path

by Mario Cusumano, head of PPU Caltabellotta (Agrigento)



devotees of the Saint through the narrow streets of the town, together with the ritual of wearing the Augustinian habit every Thursday.

This year, to celebrate the Fifteen Thursdays, we gathered together with our families in prayer in the Cenacle of the church in Itria, meditating on the themes of soli-

darity, fraternal sharing, mutual respect and acceptance of others. On 22 May, through rediscovery of the pleasure of meeting, of prayer, of sharing joys and sufferings, we celebrated the Way of the Thorn, united in prayer. This event has heightened our awareness that the Christian path, often fraught with difficulties and

suffering, inevitably leads to the Resurrection of the soul and eternal joy.

Our constitution in the Pious Union and solemn affiliation during the regional meeting of 2 June 2015 in Calamonaci was not so much a point of arrival, as a new, purely spiritual path, marked by prayer in the name of Saint Rita. ■

COME AND MEET US!

The meetings of the PPU are open to everyone and are a great opportunity to learn more and meet the friends of Saint Rita first hand. The main appointment is in **Cascia**, for the **PPU General Meeting on 12 and 13 March**, when members and supporters will gather for an experience of faith and friendship, reflecting together on "Mercy: source of love". Here is the schedule:

General meeting

SATURDAY 12 MARCH

- 9:00 – Way of the Thorn.
- 11:30 - Meeting for PPU heads with the nuns.
- 15:30 - Visit to the urn of Saint Rita.
- 16:30 - Conference "The love of God in Holy Scripture", held by Card. Francesco Coccopalmerio.
- 18:15 - Vespers in the Basilica with the nuns.
- 21:00 - Adoration with the nuns and new affiliations.

SUNDAY 13 MARCH

- 9:30 - Hall of Peace (each with their own uniform and banner).
- 10:00 - Holy Mass celebrated by Card. Francesco Coccopalmerio.
- 11:00 - Procession.
- Photos and Greetings.

Everyone is responsible for their own hotel accommodation and meals.

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e-mail: infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org

Regional meetings

Regional meetings allow those who prefer it to know about the PPU closest to their own town. Here are the appointments planned for 2016:

PPU Sicily Regional Meeting

Messina, 25 April

contact person: Assunta Arlotta,
mobile phone: 3393235458

PPU Calabria Regional Meeting

Ciro Marina (Crotone), 26 June

contact person: Angela Colucci,
mobile phone: 3298754401

PPU Interregional Meeting for Central Italy

Viterbo, 2 June

contact person: P. Ludovico M. Centra,
mobile phone: 3382441681

PPU Puglia Regional Meeting

Palagiano (Taranto), 11 September

contact person: Rocchina Capriola,
mobile phone: 3478175016

PPU Lombardy Regional Meeting

Coccaglio (Brescia), 25 September

contact person: Cirillo Olmi,
mobile phone: 3402465678

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.





God forgives everything, always

by Father Vittorino Grossi OSA

Executive Director, From the Bees to the Roses

The Jubilee, proclaimed by Pope Francis on 11 April 2015 with the papal bull entitled *The Face of Mercy* to be opened on 8 December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council (which was closed on 8 December 1965 by Pope Paul VI), has as its motto “*merciful like the Father*”, recalling the parable of the Gospel of Luke (15, 11-32) and has the objective of “showing mercy”, following the example of the Good Samaritan, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10, 25-37). In other words, the term *mercy* translates an intervention for someone who is in need, exerting oneself, not only for relatives and friends, but for anyone in need.

Pope Francis calls on Christians of the third millennium to continue what the apostle Paul, in his day, asked of the Romans: “He who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness ... abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good; be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Outdo yourselves in honouring one another. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practising hospitality” (Letter to the Romans 12, 5-16). And this especially for confessors! I am convinced that the entire Church, which is so much in need of receiving mercy, because we are sinners, will find in this Jubilee the

joy of rediscovering and making the mercy of God fertile, with which we are all called on to give consolation to every man and every woman of our times. Let us not forget that God forgives everything and that God forgives always. We never tire of asking for forgiveness. Let us entrust this Year as of now to the Mother of Mercy, that she may look upon us and watch over our path: our penitential path, our path with open heart, during a year, to receive the indulgence of God, to receive God’s mercy.

The plenary indulgence granted by Pope to those who pass through the Holy Door of the Roman basilicas or churches appointed ad hoc locally (for example, the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia, *ed.*), is just the sign of the wide and deep conversion that is needed in the conscience of people today, at both individual and community level. For this reason, the central act of the Holy Year for the Christian will be the confession sacredly and Eucharistic communion worthily received, in order to reach a renewed discovery of the love of God who offers himself. The Holy Year is not therefore a ritual moment in its own right, unrelated to Christian life. If it were so it would be reduced to a parody. It is rather a sign of the path taken and still to be taken, like the ancient pilgrims who expressed the choice of that state of being in the sandals carried on the shoulder on top of a stick.





The desire of Pope Francis

by Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino OSA

Pope Francis has expressed this sincere desire for an extraordinary Holy Year: “How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!” (Bull of Indiction, *Misericordiae vultus*, 5).

For this extraordinary Holy Year it is not a matter of just a ritual, for a possible plenary indulgence, but an experience that leads to testify the mercy of God in a concrete way. A pilgrimage, a passage from a door officially open to prayer and reconciliation, is not enough. It is the Holy Year of mercy: we must make the experience of mercy, we must learn mercy from God the Father, to then offer it to everyone with the same quality and generosity. Otherwise it is not a Holy Year and one cannot speak of indulgence, let alone plenary indulgence!

It is like the question of peace. This can only come from a global, community experience of peace itself. If none of us knows peace, does not experience it, as Christ proposes it (*I leave you peace, I give you my peace*), it cannot be constructed in the family or in the community; and together we cannot construct it in society. Peace comes only from an experience of peace and from a gift of peace itself: if even just one person does not experience it and does not know how to give it, peace is in constant danger, and we see it every day in an ever widening and concentric way, from the family to the community and society.

Pope Francis confidently tells us: the time is propitious for an extraordinary Holy Year, and I propose it to you about mercy. The newspapers commented: yet another Holy Year! But don't Popes know how to do anything else? The Pope adds: but you have not understood; I spoke of a Holy Year of mercy! Here is the extraordinariness: I propose that you learn the mercy of God in order to offer it to everyone: this is how we will construct peace! Not with words and political strategies, but by sowing the real root of peace, namely the mercy and love

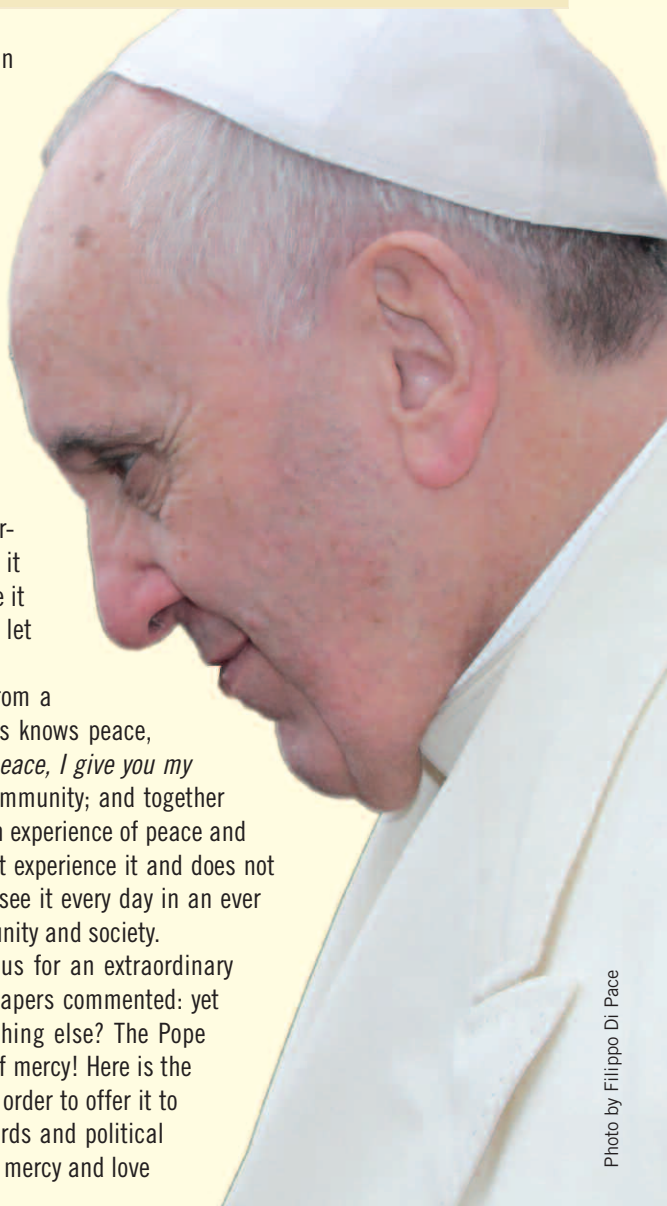


Photo by Filippo Di Pace



of God. We must learn to look at each other with “a look full of mercy”, otherwise no one is converted because we do not know how to love one another as the Father loves us and as Jesus taught us.

This is a small, great revolution. Small, because it concerns every believer and every person of good will. Great, because it would involve the whole world, the three major religions (Judaism, Islam, Catholicism), every other noble religious tradition and every form of true humanism. Let us not be carried away by haste and formalism. We have a whole year and we have to use it above all in listening and meditating in the heart. As was done by Mary, who “*treasured all, meditating on it in her heart*” (cf. Lk 2, 19 and 51). In this way we must read the Gospel: ruminating in our hearts, with the precise intention of learning every nuance of God’s love. Mercy is the love with which God the Father succours our misery; it is his heart as Father that bows over our wounds and medicates them to heal them, as the Good Samaritan of the parable did. If all persons did like him, the atmosphere of life would change. Usually we do not believe it, because it does not seem true, because we do not believe such effective love is possible. At the time of the Apostles, Jesus decides **one day** to choose the worst, the most dishonest, a great swindler. He thinks: “If I manage to *catch* this one, mercy and salvation are taken care of”. He asks the opinion of some theologians of his day, the Pharisees, but the answer is disconcerting: “convert a publican is divinely impossible; another life is not enough to remedy all the evil done”. Even the disciples disagree, but Jesus insists, he begins to look at him every day, “with a look full of mercy”, with the eyes of God, and he realises that hope begins to grow. Until one day he calls and answers, leaves the workshop of dishonesty and follows him - *miserando atque eligendo* (the Latin phrase means “looked with mercy and chose him” and refers to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus meets the publican Matthew. This is the motto chosen by Pope Francis, taken from the homilies of St. Bede the Venerable, *ed.*)! He had been struck by the heart of God, who offers the possibility of salvation even where there is no way out for people. The Church is born in this encounter. Peter himself will have to think twice when his eyes meet the gaze of Christ after having betrayed him.

WHAT CAN I DO?

The Pope invites us to perform the seven works of corporal mercy and the seven works of spiritual mercy. In this issue, let us reflect together on the first three works of corporal mercy:

FEED THE HUNGRY

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6, 11). This request that we recite in the *Our Father* means that God offers us bread, but also that God offers bread through us. We are thus fully responsible for contributing to feeding the needy. It would be sufficient to avoid waste, to be able to offer something of our own every day to those who have nothing to eat (through a soup kitchen or directly). This is as if we had added a place at the table for Jesus Christ.

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

In the *Laudato si'* encyclical, Pope Francis stresses that entire populations fall sick and die because they drink unsafe water: “access to safe drinking water is an essential, fundamental and universal human right,

because it determines the survival of people and is thus a condition for the exercise of other human rights”. It would be enough to support the project of a non-profit organisation or a mission for the construction of a well where no drinking water is available, for example.

CLOTHE THE NAKED

It is helpful to donate one’s used clothing to charities or to the missions in the South of the world, having the foresight to select clean clothing in good condition that can actually be used. Especially when clothes are sent to missions, it is important to send what the missionaries ask for and can allocate directly, otherwise there is the risk of donating useless things. In the case of missions, it is better to donate a sum of money, even a small amount, but which allows the missionaries themselves to buy what is needed on the spot, according to the needs of people in need, with the advantage of also supporting local trade.



The son who returns

Stories of life lived,
going back to God

The painting

by Giuseppe Furina, detainee in the maximum security prison
of Maiano in Spoleto (Perugia)

I believe that art represents the maximum expression of creativity. Something introspective. I approached art as a child and was already playing with coloured pencils during primary school.

My teachers often told me: "One day you'll be a great painter". At the time, I did not follow a particular model, I was fascinated by holy figures, but also rural landscapes. I remember a pencil drawing I made depicting the church in my town. It was a real success, everybody liked it and it was widely appreciated at the time. It was here that my passion for drawing started. Towards art.

Like all my works, what prevails is the introspective. The heart. The mind. But the figure of Saint Rita has inspired me in a decisive and particular way; a bit as if there was an invisible hand that gave me suggestions and guided me towards shades of light and dark, the magic of tonalities, the play of shadows, the "music" of colours. It has been a really wonderful adventure that has left an indelible mark inside me. Yes! If I think about it, I believe that Saint Rita has also *given a helping hand*. A miracle. In fact, just after the work had been completed and then delivered, the next day I went

to the lab where I keep the colours and brushes and, incredibly, I felt her presence beside me. A little bit like her figure was still on the easel waiting for a touch-up. For my caress. For my eyes. It is really amazing and I wonder how it was possible to make something out of nothing which in such a short time has involved me so much and, above all, has given me magical and strong feelings and today see me in the histories of the great artists; in fact, they have always said that they often fell in love with their works. I think the same has happened to me. So, something magical. Many prisoners had got used to the painting of Saint Rita and now many of them ask me about it. I'm happy to have com-

pleted this work and I like to imagine that, in her great mercy and among fragrant roses, Saint Rita can also be happy and smile. The idea that everything started from my brushes is magnificent. I wish to thank all those who made this project possible, and a heartfelt thanks to the head of the detainees' mail unit in the prison of Spoleto who provided me with valuable information as well as being supportive for the entire design process. I really am grateful. Thank you! A special and sincere thanks to the Augustinian nuns. And finally, thanks to you, Saint Rita, who quickly entered my "tormented" heart, the hearts of the prisoners, the hearts of everyone, and will remain forever.



Giuseppe wanted to express his coming closer to Saint Rita by donating his painting to the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia.

Holy Door at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia

If you wish, during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we await you in Cascia to pass through the Holy Door of the Sanctuary of Santa Rita, which will remain open from 20 December 2015 until 6 November 2016.



APPOINTMENTS

Cascia (PG), from 11 February to 19 May

The Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita

Every Thursday, starting from 11 February, we gather in the Lower Basilica of Saint Rita to celebrate the Fifteen Thursdays preceding the Solemnity of 22 May, when we remember the patron saint of impossible cases. The celebrations foresee Holy Mass with entrance to the chapel which houses the body of the saint starting from 17:00 (February to March) and from 18:00 (April to May).

Cascia (PG), from 13 to 16 February **Triduum and Feast of Blessed Simon of Cascia**

Every day from 13 to 15 February, at 16:30, we await you in the Basilica of Saint Rita for the Triduum in preparation for the feast of the Blessed Simon of Cascia, a feast that will be celebrated on 16 February, again at 16:30. For the occasion, Fr. Antonio Lombardi OSA, expert and translator of the works of Blessed Simon, will organise a preaching cycle.

Cascia (PG), from 5 to 6 March **Jubilee of pilgrimage operators**

Appointment at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita with the operators, group leaders and guides for pilgrims for the Jubilee dedicated to them. Here is the schedule:

Saturday, 5 March: (morning) arrivals and reception; (15:30) training session in preparation for groups of Jubilee pilgrims; (18:00) Eucharistic celebration; (21:00) Memory of the Thorn.

Sunday, 6 March: (10:00 am) Visit to the Monastery of Saint Rita.

Cascia (PG), 24 to 27 March

Easter Triduum and Easter Sunday

The Sanctuary of Saint Rita is getting ready to celebrate Easter with all devotees who come to Cascia:

- Holy Thursday: (Basilica, 17.00) Mass *in Coena Domini* (Basilica, 21:00) Eucharistic Adoration at the Altar of Repose.
- Good Friday: (Monastery, 10:00) Way of the Thorn led by the Rector of the Basilica, Father Mario De Santis OSA; (Basilica, 17:00) Adoration of the Cross.
- Holy Saturday: (Basilica, 21:00) Easter Vigil.
- Easter Sunday: (Basilica, 16:30) Holy Mass with the contribution of the Saint Rita of Cascia Choir, followed by Solemn Vespers sung with the Augustinian Nuns (from 17:15).

For real-time updates on the events recommended by the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia, see our website
www.santaritadacascia.org/diary

Looking at ourselves

by Father Giuseppe Caruso OSA

Slowness or speed? The dilemma between these two ways of being and doing seems to be a question with no possibility of reconciliation.

If we think back for a moment to the period in which Rita lived, the 15th century, we imagine her life as characterised by slow and regular rhythms of nature, made of an intelligent alternation of times and seasons, slow days of patient expectation: a life where people did not go after but rather waited for events.

In our day, however, modernity has accustomed us to a kind of “cult” of speed: eating in the sign of *fast food*, ever faster transport, the possibility of connecting immediately with everyone, further shortening distances. Obviously, here we do not want to linger on complaining about everything: that moving and communicating, as well as cooking or simply performing domestic and professional work, have become processes that require less time is



Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia. F. Ferrazzi,
Saint Rita in Glory (20th century).

THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

To you, Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead. Take them into your Paradise, where there is more grief, no pain, no tears, but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ada Poncetta (Mantello SO - Italy)
Adelia Tessari (Thiene VI - Italy)
Agostino Garratana (Canicattì AG - Italy)
Albina Carracoi (Villamar VS - Italy)
Amelia Venturi Naldini (San Casciano in Val di Pesa FI - Italy)
Angelo Mancini (Tivoli RM - Italy)
Antonio Biagioli (Terni - Italy)
Armando Paoloni (Puro di Cascia PG - Italy)
Benedetto Ranucci (Cascia PG - Italy)
Bonaria Siddi Pisano (Cagliari - Italy)
Calogero Lauricella (Canicattì AG - Italy)
Chiara De Luca (Rome - Italy)
Ciro Cozzolino (Ercolano NA - Italy)
Cornelio Gennari (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Elena Maggi (Mirabella Eclano AV - Italy)
Gerardo and Michelina Passannante (Vietri di Potenza PZ - Italy)
Giancarlo Diotallevi (Cascia PG - Italy)
Gianni Agostini (Tivoli RM - Italy)
Gino Colombo (Rome - Italy)
Giorgio Lovison (Mestrino PD - Italy)
Ines Salonia Matera (Syracuse - Italy)
Lauretta Capovilla (Vigonza PD - Italy)
Lina Negretti (Biandrate NO - Italy)
Lorenzo Barelli (Verderio Inferiore LC - Italy)
Luigi Giardina (Canicattì AG - Italy)
Margherita Ghietti (Cumiana TO - Italy)
Maria Bernardo (Naples - Italy)
Maria Antonia Cammalleri (Canicattì AG - Italy)
Sr. M. Concetta Iaria OSA (Eremo di Lecceto, Lecceto SI - Italy)
Maria Flora Poloniato (Candia Lomellina PV - Italy)
Michelina Carlevaro (Genoa - Italy)
Milena Morselli Tinelli (Gessate MI - Italy)
Osvaldo Voltan (Padua - Italy)
Paolo Zanda (Fluminimaggiore CI - Italy)
Pasquale Lamparelli e Grazia Bozzi (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
Riccardo Visini (Candia Lomellina PV - Italy)
Roma Tonolli (Corsico MI - Italy)
Rosa Magrelli (Ocosce di Cascia PG - Italy)
Rosa Maria Mocci (Oristano - Italy)
Rosalina Rognini (San Giovanni Lupatoto VR - Italy)
Tommaso Scanu (Alà dei Sardi OT - Italy)
Vincenza Cavalieri (L'Aquila - Italy)
Vito Sacchitella (Orta Nova FG - Italy)

GRACE RECEIVED

TESTIMONY OF ROBERTO CONTI, PISTOIA (ITALY)

It was Christmas Eve 2006. I was having fun with my grandchildren and other relatives. At a certain point, blood started coming out of my mouth, and the spurting was enough to make me shudder. I was rushed to hospital in an ambulance ...There, the doctors and nurses said they had never seen anything like it. I lost a lot of blood and had many transfusions. Nevertheless, the bleeding stopped and I stayed a few days in intensive care and then in a ward. On 3 January 2007, I began to bleed again and that was when I got really scared and thought that I would not make it.

They rushed me to the operating theatre and filled me with tubes. The doctors didn't know what to do. They decided to remove all of the stomach, but luckily they were enlightened by the Heavenly Hand and were able to see that the cause was an artery hidden by the stomach and the diagnosis was "Dieulafoy's lesion". I didn't react to treatment and the situation became more and more serious, blood had entered the lungs and I also got pneumonia. The situation was degenerating! My family tried to cheer me up, give me courage, but my gaze was lost in a void. One day, at my bedside, I saw a nun with the crucifix who was leaving, a blinding light, a unique and indescribable emotion. From that moment, you won't believe it, I began to feel better; I improved day after day. I firmly believe that I received a miracle and am very aware of the skill and professionalism of all the healthcare staff. I am convinced that the Lady who appeared to me in the intensive care unit was really Saint Rita. As soon as I was a bit better, I felt the strong urge to go to the Sanctuary to pay homage to her. There, I feel really strong emotions and sensations that make me relive those bad, but also unforgettable, moments.

certainly something to be welcomed, insofar as this has left us with more time to devote to other things. But what else? The problem seems to be this: how else do we use the time *saved*? Used to a slow pace and waiting, Rita had time to question the meaning of what was happening to her, on the orientation to give her own own existence; but how about us? Perhaps the time that technology allows us to save is continually filled with other things to do, see, listen to: to the extent that as spare time increases so do the things with which to fill it, to the point that it disappears from our perception. Perhaps the *slowness of the past* can teach us something: to look at ourselves and to live every moment with awareness. ■

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Rita of Cascia merciful

Dear Saint Rita, you were married, mother, widow and finally Augustinian nun. You knew different conditions of life but a golden thread united all the seasons of your life: the precious thread of love!

Dear Saint Rita, today the world is experiencing a dramatic famine of love: many people no longer know how to love because selfishness seems to have infected the whole of humanity. Through your powerful intercession may a shower of rose petals rain from heaven: petals of true love that reach the hearts of spouses, fathers, mothers and persons consecrated to the Lord.

Dear Saint Rita, may a thorn of the Passion of Jesus enter our soul and remind us that the Love of the Divine Crucifix has long awaited the response of our love. Pray for us, pray for our conversion. Amen!

Card. Angelo Comastri
Vicar General of His Holiness
for Vatican City

Lebanon and Italy, united in the name of Rita

by Alessia Nicoletti

With the inauguration of the monument to Santa Rita, Cascia has seen yet another miracle by the woman of love and peace, whose faith spreads throughout the world and brings together two different communities, united in Her name. On Sunday, 18 October 2015, many faithful – especially from Lebanon – united in an embrace of faith, giving rise to a day of shared joy, to celebrate the monument to the Saint, donated to Cascia by the Sarkis family on behalf of the Lebanese people.



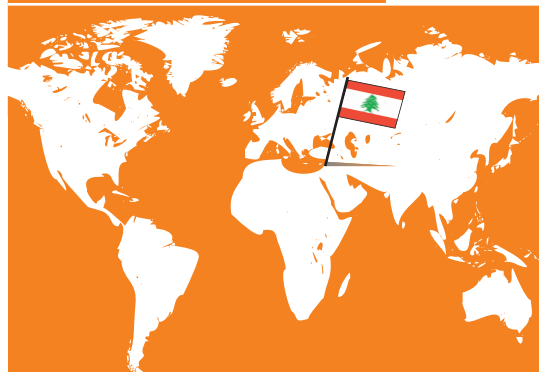
We thank the family of Gianfranco Giustini for permission to use this photo.

On 18 October 2015, numerous faithful gathered at the entrance to Cascia to celebrate the monument to the saint.

The day that marked the hearts of the participants and the history of Cascia started at the new roundabout at the entrance to the town with the welcome of Mayor Gino Emili to the civil, military and religious authorities present, mayors of Umbria, Card. Bechara Boutros Rai, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, accompanied by Monsignor Renato Boccardo, Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, Rector of the Ritian Sanctuary Father Mario De Santis, Catuscia Marini,

President of Umbria and the Hon. Gianpiero Bocci, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior. Opening the ceremony, Msgr. Boccardo said: "The image of Rita welcomes pilgrims so that everyone feels at home, in Her family. I hope that, besides enriching this beautiful valley, the monument will be a sign of welcome and brother-

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Lebanon

Worth knowing: Dbayeh is the Lebanese town united with Cascia through the Twinning of faith and peace, which takes place every year during the Feast of Saint Rita, in the town which houses the mortal remains of the patron saint of impossible cases. For the occasion, the Lebanese delegation gathered in the square of the Ritian Basilica on the eve of the Solemnity of 22 May, had brought the "Torch of Peace" to Cascia from the land of the cedars to sanction the union of the two peoples in the name of the saint. The Lebanese statue donated to the Municipality of Cascia on 15 October last year, had been blessed by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square on 30 September, at the end of the general audience.

POPE FRANCIS: RITA, SIGN OF GOD'S MERCY

On blessing the great statue of the Saint, I invite everyone to reread, in the forthcoming Jubilee of Mercy, her extraordinary human and spiritual experience as sign of the power of God's mercy.

(Message of Pope Francis about Saint Rita of Cascia, delivered on the occasion of the General Audience in St. Peter's Square on 30 September 2015)

Card. Rai, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, said: "I hope that through the intercession of Rita, which today unites two people in the faith, the Church can become teacher of the family, strong and united in love".

We thank Alessia Nicoletti for permission to use this photo.



hood so that those who come to the sources of the life of Saint Rita can find inspiration to continue the pilgrimage of everyday life with wisdom". Then the Patriarch prayed for Christians in the Middle East and for all those present before blessing the beautiful monument, saying: "Through this monument, everyone can be illuminated by the example of Rita, imitating the virtues of this woman Saint. I hope that through the intercession of Rita, which today unites two people in the faith, the Church can become teacher of the family, strong and united in love".

The monument, surrounded by roses, was unveiled, moving the crowd which, accompanied by the band of the Fire Department, sang the Italian and Lebanese national anthems. After the speech by the mayor, who stressed the importance of the event thanking all those who had made it possible, the crowd listened to the sincere and strong emotion of the donor of the statue, Sarkis Sarkis, who said: "This is happiest day of my life and that of my family, where there is a special relationship with Saint Rita, from whom I ask the gift of peace and tranquillity for the people of Lebanon". ■

The pilgrimage of the relic

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

Dear devotees of Santa Rita, I would like to share an experience that started 10 years ago with you.

It is the story of how he started what we religious people call the *Peregrinatio reliquiae* in Latin and which means “the pilgrimage of the relic” of Santa Rita. The great demand for the relic from parishes around the world has made the Augustinian Family of Cascia very happy. That is why we wish to divulge it even more and urge Parish Communities to request it, to give the opportunity to the many devotees of the Saint to have it and enjoy its presence. But let us return to the origin of this beautiful tradition.

In October 2006, His Excellency Monsignor Giancarlo Bregantini, then Bishop of Locri-Gerace, paid a visit to Cascia. On that occasion, Ms-

gr. Bregantini expressed the desire to have the precious gift of a relic of the saint in the diocese because he was determined to propose a popular mission to the well-known town of San Luca, where hatred and violence had reigned for some time. The friars and Nuns immediately accepted the request with joy, getting down to the job of producing a relic that would contain a piece of bone from the body of Saint Rita. The more senior Nuns will remember that in one of the latest recognitions, three small bones were removed from the body of Rita which is jealously guarded with the Monastery. But no one will remember from what part of the body they were taken. A subsequent analysis carried out by an expert from the SS. Annunziata Parish in Torre del Greco allowed us to know the



From 2007 until today, many towns have welcomed the relic of Saint Rita.

origin: it was the left metacarpal (a bone in the hand) of the body of Saint Rita. Today, that same reliquary still contains one of those pieces of bone embedded within a small silver rose.

Having thus made the reliquary, the Augustinian friars took it to San Luca in 2007 for its first *Peregrinatio*. Since then, many other towns and dioceses have had the privilege of welcoming the relic of our Saint. On each occasion, there is a great crowd that draws the beloved Rita around it, seeing the participation of many devotees in the celebrations of Penance and Holy Mass testified by priests who have promoted and enjoyed the *Peregrinatio*.

HOW TO REQUEST THE RELIC?

To receive the relic of Saint. Rita of Cascia, a written request from the parish priest is required (specifying the reason and the period), to be sent to the Mother Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita:

- by **post**: Sr. Natalina Todeschini, c/o Monastero di Santa Rita, 06043 Cascia PG (Italy)
- by **e-mail**:

A copy of the request should also be sent to the Rector of the Basilica:

- by **post**: Fr. Mario De Santis c/o St. Augustine and Saint Rita Convent, 06043 Cascia PG (Italy)
- by **e-mail**:

The relic will then be delivered solemnly to the parish priest before the Abbess and Sisters as part of a Mass in the chapel of the Monastery.

WORK CONTINUES ON THE SANCTUARY

"Look how beautiful our home is now," says Sister Maria Natalina Todeschini, Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita, as she shows me photos of work progress at the sanctuary in Cascia. "It's all the merit of our benefactors, in love with Rita. Thanks to them, the home of Santa Rita and her devotees is ready to better accommodate the many pilgrims coming for the Jubilee of Mercy". **Renovation** of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia, which started in 2013, is proceeding only through the many offerings of devotees. The first **20,000 euro** were used to **make the dome of the Basilica safe** after it had been damaged by earthquakes and harsh Valnerina winters. In 2014, the goal was to collect **55,000 euro** to **repair damage** caused by **seepage** that had compromised the walls of the **Penitentiary**, where pilgrims can be reconciled with God. "So much has been done," continues Sr. Natalina, "to make sure that the Sanctuary is not only welcoming but also safe. And now we are thinking about the frescoes". In fact, the **splendid frescoes** inside the dome of the Basilica need to be urgently protected from the infiltration of rainwater. This time, the funds necessary amount to **115,000 euro**. "It's a substantial sum, and thanks to God none of our benefactors are abandoning us," says the Mother, "because we have to replace and build to measure 24 single-light windows for the dome and 45 single-light windows along the gallery reserved for women". The works are delicate and some points are hard to reach, so special scaffolding and maintenance specialists are required. "To cover the cost of the work, **every donation, even the smallest, will be of great value for us**. We sincerely hope that our benefactors help us keep alive the **historical testimony** of Rita of Cascia, a testimony that is also handed down through art, through the unique frescoes that enrich our Basilica". (MG)

SUPPORT THE HOME OF SAINT RITA AS WELL

All it takes is a donation, however small, through:

- **Bank: IBAN**

IT68Y05428392400000000001781

BIC/SWIFT: BLOPIT22

- **Post Office:** Postal a/c 5058 – made out to Monastero di Santa Rita da Cascia, specifying "Sanctuary Works" as the reason.

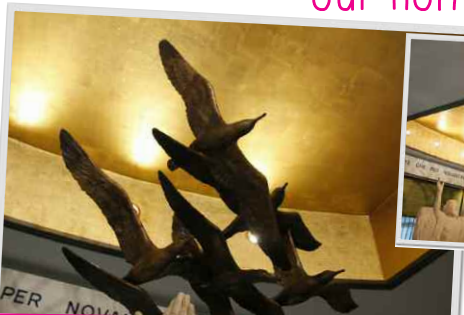
Thank you for whatever you can do!



The Penitentiary of the Basilica was in urgent need of renovation. Here is how it was in 2014



Thanks to you,
look how beautiful
our home is now.



Today, thanks to your help, the Penitentiary has once again become a place of welcome for pilgrims.



Sister Teresa, heir to Mother Fasce

edited by the Sisters

On 7 November 2015, Sister Maria Teresa Ciavatta rose to heaven. Before doing so, she left the world her testimony of maternal charity, running the Beehive of Saint Rita welcoming house with deep faith, giving all of herself to God and listening to others. In memory of Sister Teresa, who lived by following the example of Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, the Sisters entrust her to the prayers of the readers of From the Bees to the Roses.

On 25 August 1938, there was a knock on the door of the Monastery of Saint Rita. Sister Veronica, the concierge, went to answer and, after a few minutes of talking with a few persons, she went to Mother Teresa Fasce and told her: "Mother, there's an old woman who wants to become a nun", "An old woman," exclaimed the Mother "And how old is she?". With a smile on her lips, Sister Veronica replied: "She's twelve ... !!!".

This is how the vocation of Palma Ciavatta began: at the age of twelve, accompanied by her parents, she had knocked at the Monastery door to become a nun.

With her, Blessed Mother Fasce decided to open the Welcoming Home (what is now the Beehive of Saint Rita), then inside the Monastery. For four years, until 1942, Palma lived with the nuns and other young girls. Then, Mother Fasce sent her back home to think carefully about her vocation and in 1946 she joined the monastery as a

postulant. In 1947, shortly before Palma's vestition as a novice, Mother Fasce promised her a kiss for that important day and announced that because no one else was called Teresa, after her, Palma would take that name.

That is how Palma became a nun with the name of Sister Teresa on 31 October 1948.

Sister Teresa inherited not only the name of Blessed Mother Fasce, but also her heart, her spirit, her maternity, her attention for the children and girls of the Beehive, where she was director for many years. This was testified to by her life as a nun, lived entirely in that oblation love that becomes gift and loves to the point of pre-empting the needs and desires of others. It was testified to by her many "Little Bees" who, having become women, wives, mothers and

grandmothers, came to find her in the Parlatorio of the Monastery ... and who greeted her with so much sentiment and emotion on the day of her funeral.

No one left Mother Fasce empty-handed: some received advice, some encouragement, some material help, some the assurance of prayer. Sister Teresa was the same: she had always a thought (even material), a prayer, an exhortation for everyone. Her life was lived entirely in the praise and glory of the Lord, in prayer and in service to the community, giving all of herself and giving up the moments of afternoon rest to devote herself to the tasks that had been entrusted



Sister M. Teresa Ciavatta.

Sr. Teresa dedicated herself to the Little Bees of the Beehive of Saint Rita following the teachings of Blessed Fasce (pictured, Mother Fasce with the Little Bees by M. Bonaduce).



to her and to the internal and external charity of the Monastery.

The last few years, those of the disease due to old age, did not take away this oblation love: charity, prayer, thinking more of others than herself, had become part of her DNA. We thank the Lord for the testimony of this Sister and we ask her to continue to "think" about each of us, also from Heaven. ■

Thinking

"Don't forget, always be with Jesus and go forward, without looking at this and that, otherwise you will not do anything!"
Sister M. Teresa Ciavatta

SMILING AT LIFE

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



1. Carlo and Gaetano Petronella (Noicattaro BA - Italy)
2. Edoardo Trudu (Monserato CA - Italy)
3. Emilio Taormina (Italy)
4. Filippo and Edoardo Biagetti (Rome - Italy)
5. Gaia Rita Bruno (Italy)
6. Giada Rita and Eva Asnicar (Montecchio Maggiore VI - Italy)
7. Gioele Stracquadanio (Scicli RG - Italy)
8. Lydie Iskandar (Strasbourg - France)
9. Margherita Albore (Bisceglie BT - Italy)
10. Maria Lucia Barello (Quaranti AT - Italy)
11. Rita Martino (Serino AV - Italy)
12. Roberta Trudu (Monserato CA - Italy)

Grateful to the Lord for the call to contemplative life

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

We are grateful to the Lord who inspired Pope Francis to dedicate a year to consecrated life (30 November 2014 – 2 February 2016). We are grateful to the Church that has provided us with valuable tools to help us think about how to renew our life of *sequela Christi* (following Christ). We are grateful to all those who have prayed for us in this year and have been a stimulus for deepening the gift received from the call to religious consecration. Through his writings, the Augustinian Holy Father tells us that we cannot remain static on the spiritual journey: you either go forwards or go backwards. We have repeatedly received appreciation for the consecrated life, but there have also been many “prods” to renew ourselves in heart and mind. The Pope often invites us to the radicality of the Gospel, to authenticity, to not losing

our identity as women and mothers in the Spirit, to be faithful to the charism received, to prayer, to be expert in humanity attentive to the needs of everyone. Also as a community, we are questioned on what we have to change, where to improve to always be more *Church going out* towards existential peripheries while remaining in

The Pope invites us to the radicality of the Gospel

seclusion. I have always believed in the need to have a deep inner life. Christ always at the centre of the heart, in first place, the comparison always and only with Him, devoted to the Father in prayer, in silence, in complete abandon to His fa-



therly will and ready to save brothers up to death and to death on the cross. Faithful to prayer, to praise, to intercession for the whole world. In harmony with the sentiments of the Son of God to live his way of life in freedom and joy. Then, taking care of fraternal life, communion, looking at each other as the Father looks at us, that is, as very dear and precious daughters, and then as sisters who know how to ac-

Christ always at the centre of the heart

cept one another in diversity, bearing the limits of who is next to me, supporting each other in needs, rejoicing in small everyday events, learning to appreciate the qualities and seeing the face of Jesus in everyone. Then yes, you can leave for the mission, because you have the equipment necessary for not failing on the path and doing this while remaining in the Monastery. Being *Church going out* is knowing how to welcome the brother who knocks on the gates of our parlatories and be available for listening, always. With the ministry of consolation, which Saint Rita asks us to perform alongside the Sanctuary which houses her holy mortal remains, we do not need to go into the peripheries because it is the peripheries themselves that come here to us from from all over the world. As the Pope told the Poor Clares in Assisi, so he tells us to be mothers who joyfully welcome with a smile the brother who comes with difficult and insurmountable problems, which humanly we are unable to resolve but for which we can transmit hope, trust in a God who is always beside him. We are not alone, we are all awaited, welcomed, loved, forgiven by a Father who is all love and mercy. If we consecrated sisters are truly in love with God we can help brothers to meet the heart of the Father and thus find happiness and the way of peace, even amid the contradictions of life. Deo gratias! ■

"Rich in Mercy rich in Thanks! "

Dear friend,
how many reasons we have to say THANKS to the Lord, grateful above all because we are loved.
Thanks because ... God bursts into our lives with his Word.
Thanks because ... God seduces us with his gaze that attracts.
Thanks because ... God chooses us and leads us to the fullness of life.
Do you also want to try to say your "Thanks because ..." and to repeat with Saint Augustine: "I now exist because of Your goodness, which made provision for all that You have made me to be and all that You have made me from ... My happiness depends on You" (Confessions, 13: 1,1)?
We await you!

Women's Vocational Orientation Course From 8 to 13 August 2016



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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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