

90
YEARS

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES ²

LIVES IN PRISON

**Interview with the director
of Casal del Marmo**

THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF SANITÀ DISTRICT

Interview with Don Antonio Loffredo

DIALOGUE WITH THE MONASTERY

The joy of Easter

AFTER THE DARKNESS, LIGHT

*From the darkness of discomfort,
the youngsters who are reborn*

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In 2011, postal charges increased considerably and this has led us to ask for a small contribution to support our magazine.

To continue spreading Rita's message of hope, help sustain "From the Bees to the Roses", the voice of Saint Rita throughout the world.

By writing "subscription" as the reason, your small contribution will help us maintain contact with you.

Thank you all!

Sr. M. Giacomina Stuani,
Editor-in-Chief

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FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES

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It's as though the University of Milan had disappeared. Suddenly, *poof*, it's gone. On 31 January, the National University Council reported an alarming decline in enrolment: between academic year 2003/2004 and 2011/2012, students registered in Italian universities fell by over 58 thousand units. In fact, just as if a university as large as the University of Milan had disappeared. Behind this fact there lies much more.

We should be careful, it could be a symptom of an illness, a "depression" that is plaguing the youth of our country.

For whole generations of youngsters who lack not only the future but also the present, the risk (of enormous seriousness) is that young people have lost any incentive to focus on themselves and the future.

The university, in fact, has always also been a way to grow and improve one's personal and social conditions: the decline in university registration raises fears of a lack of confidence that runs the risk of becoming chronic. And this is unacceptable.

We need to return to investing in the future, in schools, universities and research.

These youngsters and their families must be helped to breathe, they must be given back the light. Because "light makes life possible," as Benedict XVI said on the occasion of Holy Saturday last year. "It makes encounter possible. It makes communication possible. It makes knowledge, access to reality and to truth, possible. And insofar as it makes knowledge possible, it makes freedom and progress possible. Evil hides. Light, then, is also an expression of the good that both is and creates brightness."

The Easter of youth

The night on the Mount of Olives, the solar eclipse of Jesus' passion and death, the night of the grave had all passed (*cf.*

Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 7 April 2012). "Now it is the first day once again – creation is beginning anew. 'Let there be light,' says God, 'and there was light' ... Life is stronger than death. Good is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than lies."

At Easter, Jesus rises and dies no more.

We pray to the Lord so that we may become bearers of His light, so that the darkness of selfishness gives way to the Easter of youth.

A Holy Easter of Resurrection in the Year of Faith from all of us, from the Augustinian Fathers, from the Little Bees and from the Wildflowers.



Lives in prison

by Rita Gentili

The Casal del Marmo Young Offender Institution in Rome is one of the largest juvenile detention facilities in Italy. It is the last resort for many young people, for whom there is often no possibility of applying alternative measures such as house arrest, which is only possible if there is a residence of reference. 45 males and 10 females. The most represented age is 17 years. Eighty-five percent are foreigners (North Africans, Romanians, gypsies). Here, the pain is palpable. Youngsters who come from situations of degradation, social and economic poverty, and loneliness, described by the director of the institute, Liana Giambartolomei, on 15 January.

I arrive in the outskirts of Rome, and think I have taken the wrong road: low, well-kept buildings surrounded by lots of greenery. Then, walking, I run into a high concrete wall, beyond which is the Casal del Marmo Young Offender Institution, where the director, Liana Giambartolomei, is waiting for me.

“Here you come into contact with human misery,” she says. “They are youngsters who come from situations of degradation, social and eco-

The reality of Casal del Marmo is the mirror of our social system

nomic poverty, and loneliness. Anyone who enters prison has already gone beyond a series of his own limits and failed.”

The majority of young people entering the institute are repeat offenders and then find themselves in a prison for adults: “This morning I spoke with a volunteer who told me that of two guys who had just left, one is in Viterbo and the other in Regina Coeli ... The successes are few, but it remains true that there are also those”. And “healthy love” plays an important role in recovery, because love is often exchanged. But “if you have not had a

In collaboration with "A Sua Immagine", the programme hosted by Rosario Carello and broadcast by Rai Uno on Saturdays at 17.10 and Sundays at 10.30.

ROSY'S SACRIFICE

Rosy Canale is a young businesswoman of 31 years, when in 2004 she is savagely beaten by two members of the 'Ndrangheta who have just threatened her with a gun. It happens in San Luca in the province of Reggio Calabria, on the road back home from work which she takes every night after leaving 'Malaluna'. For refusing to hand her business over to drug dealers, Rosy is attacked: "They broke almost all of my teeth, then I fell to the ground with injuries to my arm, ribs and leg," says Rosario Carello of her drama during the



episode of 'A Sua Immagine' broadcast on 19 January. Her drama has now become a book, co-written with journalist Emanuela Zuccalà, entitled 'My 'Ndrangheta'.

Rosy Channel talks about her meeting with the bosses, the repeated threats, the tragedy. And, in between, love, daughter, a volunteer with the women of San Luca, the portrait of a sick society

from which emerge many questions about the manifestation of the 'Ndrangheta, and faith, which is the "engine" of her existence.

mother who took care of you, a father who took care of you, if you lived in solitude, getting angry and surviving, where," stresses the director, "do you find that 'substitute'? ... Too often (the kids) fall in insane loves, accomplices in their deviance and so that way doesn't work, in fact ...".

The reality of Casal del Marmo is the mirror of what the director calls a "paradox" of our social system. Within the institution, for example, prisoners receive all the medical care they need or the possibility of learning to read and write for immigrant chil-

Anyone who enters prison has gone beyond his own limits and failed

dren. But "why" asks the director, "do you have to commit a crime to come into contact with certain things?". This is an attitude that Giambartolomei extends, in some ways, to civil society, which she defines as 'am-

biguous': "As long as these kids are out, society joins forces to empty the gypsy camps or "clean up" and wipe out criminality; then, the moment the kid enters detention, the same people take a compassionate attitude towards the prisoners."

"We don't save anyone," she tells me, confessing that she takes her pain back home when she closes her office door, just like many of her staff. "But for those kids who have wanted it, Casal del Marmo has been where they started over again, here is where they began their new life."

THE WORD

edited by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi osa

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

(Acts 2:17)



A youngster of the social cooperative "La Paranza" at work for the revival of the Sanità District.

“We put the unpredictable in place of the inevitable”

Don Antonio Loffredo, parish priest of the Sanità District of Naples, answers questions by Maria Chiara Albanese

Don Antonio, what does it mean to you to “return to the light” in today’s world? Certainly to continue to hope. Recently I happened to read a beautiful poetic text which said that faith is something taken for granted, as is charity. Because you’d have to be an animal not to offer a piece of bread to others. So, thinking of the light in this moment of darkness means

THE FUTURE IS IN THE COMMON GOOD

Pastor of the Basilica of Santa Maria della Sanità in Naples since 2001, Don Antonio Loffredo has successfully experimented the value of culture understood as a common good and opportunity for the many young people of the Sanità District who do not have jobs or alternatives for changing their future. In twelve years of work, an efficient organisational machine has allowed the recovery of places abandoned to themselves, but full of charm, such as the Catacombs of San Gaudioso, San Gennaro and San Severo, the treasures of the churches of Sanità, and much more. Through the establishment of the ‘L’Altra Napoli’ NGO and the ‘La Paranza’ social cooperative, the boys of the parish have started work on recovery of the district, creating a real opportunity for their future. They are not looking for ways to “make money”, they do not discuss in bureaucratese, but they clean, illuminate, regain lost spaces and build. A new attitude towards work, inspired by the human and Christian values of personal responsibility, solidarity and cooperation, in the belief that something can and must change.

TAKE THIS
AND READ IT

The explosion of an unprecedented economic crisis has come to call into question every certainty, and even to shake the very foundations of coexistence. This situation gives rise in an even more surprising way to the thread that runs through 'The narrow gate', which brings

together in chronological sequence the prolusions at the Episcopal Assemblies and meetings of the Permanent Council of the Italian Episcopal Conference held by Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, called by Benedict XVI to lead the Italian bishops on 7 March 2007.

La porta stretta
Card. Angelo Bagnasco
Ed. Cantagalli, 19 €



leaving the door open to hope, which is the tiniest of the three virtues. But perhaps it is what binds charity and faith.



Don Antonio Loffredo.

What is the meaning of darkness for the youth of today? It takes shape precisely in this fear that we communicate to them: of not seeing any certainty in their future. And so to lose the only necessary virtue, which is hope. The darkness that can fall on a young man now is to look at his future without expectations or prospects. Therefore, staying close to my youngsters in the neighbourhood – the Sanità District – has

meant rekindling this flame of hope in their hearts. Keeping open the possibility that the future is not already written. We like to say something, maybe it's very Easterish, which is that through our everyday actions we put the unpredictable in place of the inevitable. To begin talking about the unpredictable means countering something that could happen.

An episode of life lived? I teach the kids that you can work in freedom and that co-operation makes the work multiplied by others. So for years now, I have been watching the wonders that these young people have been able to accomplish, reviving build-

ings and abandoned properties in the Sanità District. These kids have made them reflourish. If we give them confidence, especially those who live in situations of social distress, we can break the nature of the ghetto: closure. The tourism that the restored works generate breaks this social and human exclusion.

What is the responsibility of us adults to the younger generation, so that they do not get lost among the difficulties of everyday life? Our greatest responsibility is to have created a world that does not put the human being at the centre, but the product, gain and ephemeral wealth. ■

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The conversion of St. Augustine

by Fr. Remo Piccolomini OSA

Because it involved the story of his life and of his thought, the conversion of Augustine is primarily an interior and religious fact. God gave his word, he accepted it and allowed himself to be transformed by it. The *Confessions* are its vibrant and religious transcription: the story of his mistakes that is full of regret and sadness, but also the story of the merciful presence of God to achieve his goals of wisdom and goodness. Evil is overcome by the infinite mercy of God.

Augustine was born in Tagaste, now Souk-Ahras, in today's Algeria, to a Catholic mother Monica, who educated him as a Christian, and a pagan father, Patricius, who died as a Christian when Augustine was still a student at Carthage. Augustine pursued the entire course of studies, from grammar school to that of rhetoric at the University of Carthage, away from his town, away from his family. Those years were very sensitive for his human growth; adolescence and early youth, which were developed without a guide, although he would have needed to be guided to channel the explosive energy of this age. When the river is in flood, it overflows and wreaks damage. Augustine followed the group and in the group, he did what he would never have done on his own. Augustine no longer prayed, no longer showed protective supervision of the mother. He walked away from the Church and religious practices. What remained of his maternal education was his faith in God and his Providence, his love for Jesus, who became a discriminating factor of his profane readings.

The turning point in life came in Carthage when, at the age of 19, he read Cicero's book *Hortensius*. The young student realised that he was a philosopher, a seeker of immortal wisdom. The pagans did not set themselves the problem of faith, so wisdom, to which Augustine was to dedicate all his efforts, was to be found



The statue of St. Augustine, in Cascia, in the house of the same name.

MOTHER FASCE

THE BEES OF SAINT RITA

by Cristina Siccardi

The real masterpiece of love forged and shaped by Mother Fasce is the Beehive of the "bees of Saint Rita," a work that the nuns of Cascia still manage and coordinate with great dedication and extreme efficiency. It is a reality that was the starting point in a very troubled moment both because of the internal situation of the monastery, which was experiencing the problems caused by construction of the Sanctuary, and because of the economic conditions in which the country found itself. Anyhow, Mother Fasce decided to create a structure adapted to the needs of the small bees, as she like to call them, pouring in all her tenderness, all her protective instincts, and all her maternal energy.

Sister Maria Teresa seemed to have been waiting for nothing else, it was the just spark to ignite a powerful fuse, so without hesitation she welcomed the first "bee". The girl's name was Edda Petrucci, but the nuns immediately nicknamed her Mercy, because she had crossed the threshold of the monastery on the day when the Church celebrates Our Lady of Mercy, 24 September (in the year 1938, *ed.*)

[from the book by Cristina Siccardi, *Maria Teresa - alla conquista di Cascia (Maria Teresa – the conquest of Cascia)*, Gribaudo Ed.]

through the exclusive exercise of reason. Reason is the human faculty capable of explaining everything, this was his conviction, just as it is today: reason and science explain everything. In fact, they have explained very little: problems have increased, and today we are all experiencing a deep crisis in all areas of life, which has impoverished us spiritually and financially. Augustine became a rationalist, then a materialist: everything is matter, even God and the human soul. Reason is not enough, it is not true that all is matter: and feelings and affections? And love, family, friendship, society? Reason performs its task when it stays within its scope of being human reason, and not absolute, capable of doing everything.

Following only reason, Augustine became sceptical, he became convinced that truth does not exist or if it exists is unattainable: it is useless to look for it. This was the time of the most dramatic episodes in the life of Augustine. In this state of mind, he arrived in Milan and here he found the road of truth.

The preaching of St. Ambrose, frequentation of Milan's cultural circles, the religious and social vitality of the Church, appealed to him, and without hesitation he returned to the bosom of the Catholic Church. Careful reading of the letters of St. Paul did the rest: from these he learned that there is only one Mediator between God and man: the Man Christ Jesus.

Through meeting the Neoplatonists, philosophers who believed in the existence of a spiritual world beyond the material world, Augustine learned: first, where to start the journey in search of truth – return to thinking and reflecting because “in inner man dwells the truth”; and second, that there are also spiritual realities, God and the human soul, thoughts and ideas.

Who can shoulder the entire eighth book of the *Confessions*, which describes the dramatic struggle that broke out in the heart of St. Augustine in fulfilling his radical choice: Augustine had great difficulty leaving a woman to follow and serve God fully. However, the final choice was God. Between tears and prayers, Augustine felt like a lullaby singing: “Take and Read!, Take and Read!”. He took the letters of St. Paul, and read: Put on Christ! This was the conversion. After a long spiritual preparation in Cassiciaco, Branzan, he was baptised by St. Ambrose on the night of Holy Saturday, 24/25 April 387. Peace returned to his heart. “Our heart is restless until it rests in you”.

SMILING AT LIFE

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



1. Alessandro Pitzalis, Maracalagonis (CA) - Italy
2. Alessia and Letizia Pigozzi, Alà dei Sardi (OT) - Italy
3. Angel and James Wetzel Barthelemy, Woippy - France
4. Davide and Riccardo Montanari, Rivoli Veronese (VR) - Italy
5. Ester Ferrari, Gavignano (RM) - Italy
6. Francesca and Matteo Greco, Priolo Gargallo (SR) - Italy
7. Giulia and Gabriele Malgaroli, Oleggio Castello (NO) - Italy
8. Luca De Gaetano, Pisa - Italy
9. Martina and Marino Di Pierro, Noicattaro (BA) - Italy
10. Sara Mary Demirjian, Sydney - Australia
11. Sophia and Emma Impellizzeri, Toronto - Canada
12. Vittoria Bedetti, Sacrofano (RM) - Italy



The feast of the Abbess

by Antonietta,
Little Bee of the Saint Rita Beehive

I'm here to tell you the latest news about us, the Little Bees of the Saint Rita Beehive. On 18 January we celebrated the feast of Blessed Mother Teresa Fasce, better known as the "feast of the Abbess". For us, it is a very important day because it reminds us of her ascension to heaven.

On 18 January, we celebrated the feast of Blessed Fasce



Presentation of awards to the Little Bees who participated in the cooking course.



The cook, who has generously taught the course as a volunteer, teaches the girls to cook.

The Mother is the right example to follow, she is the founder of our large house which survives thanks to your funding. Of course, with the current crisis it is not easy to give money, but just a very little is enough to bring a smile to a person. Now, back to us. As tradition has it, on that day we had lunch with the Abbess, Mother Natalina, and the Vicar Sr. Maria Rosa. The Little Bees (the girls who live in the Beehive) and the Wildflowers (the boys and girls who are day guests) who attended the cooking workshop, delighted us with excellent tiramisus: some classic, others with wild berries. Immediately after lunch, there was the ceremony to award workshop participants for the commitment and perseverance they had shown; as certification, they received a personalised apron carrying their name and a wooden spoon. They were very happy!



The Mother is the right example to follow

At 18.00, Holy Mass was celebrated in the Lower Basilica, where the choir of Saint Rita, one of whose members, Mirela,



SUPPORT THE BEEHIVE PROJECT WITH US

- 12€** buy a textbook for a girl in need.
- 20€** provide one hour of educational support to youngsters taking after-hour schooling.
- 50€** is the cost of one week's meals for girls in difficulty.
- 100€** provide professional medical care to a youngster in need.
- 200€** allow us to buy a complete kit of teaching materials for a girl.

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

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

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at www.santaritadacascia.org/donazioni

indicating "Alveare" as the reason.

is also one of us, animated the liturgy and sang a song to the Blessed. Finally, we gathered in the parlour, where we had dinner with the people of Cascia, with the nuns and the Augustinian Fathers. You'll be hearing from us at the next events!

APPOINTMENTS

edited by Fra Paolo Zecca OSA



▶ **Cascia (Perugia), March 28-31**

Easter Triduum and Easter Holy Thursday: Mass at 17.00 in *Coena Domini*; from 21.00 until 24.00, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. **Good Friday:** 17.00, Celebration of the Passion; 21.30, Procession of the Dead Christ. **Holy Saturday:** 21.00, Easter Vigil. On **Easter Sunday**, Holy Masses will be celebrated at the following times: 7.30 - 9.30 - 10.30 - 12.00 - 16.30.

▶ **Cascia (Perugia), March 29**

Via della Spina (Way of Thorns)

At 10.00 on Good Friday, in the Monastery of Saint Rita, we will celebrate together the testimony of faith in suffering of our dear Rita, through the suggestive procession known as the "Via della Spina" (Way of Thorns).

▶ **Cascia (Perugia), April 25**

Year of Faith in the town of Saint Rita

With the Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, Holy Father Benedict XVI proclaimed the Year of Faith. For the occasion, the calendar of events sponsored by the Augustinian Community and the Municipality of Cascia will meet you on 25 April:

18.00 Mass in the Basilica and entry to the urn;

21.15 In the Sala della Pace (Hall of Peace), meeting with Chiara Amirante (founder and president of Comunità Nuovi Orizzonti and Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2006), entitled "Faith and Evangelisation".

▶ **Ramnicu Valcea (Romania), April Twinning**

The annual Twinning, in which the protagonists are Cascia and an Italian or foreign town which feels a strong bond with Saint Rita, has reached its 55th edition. The town chosen for 2013 is Ramnicu Valcea, Romania, where the cult of the patron saint of impossible cases is growing. In 2006, a Greek-Catholic church was built, the only church dedicated to the saint from Cascia in Romania, where Catholics are a minority. The Cascia delegation, headed by mayor Gino Emili, will be received in April in Ramnicu Valcea by the mayor of the town, thus starting the celebrations, which will conclude in Cascia during the feast of St. Rita, from 20 to 22 May.

▶ **Cascia (Perugia), from April to October** **Visits to the urn of Saint Rita**

From April to October, every last Thursday of the month, at the end of the Holy Mass at 18.00, pay homage to Saint Rita, joining a procession to the chapel that holds her body. You are all invited to participate. The following are the event dates: 25/4 - 30/5 - 27/6 - 25/7 - 29/8 - 26/9 - 31/10.

▶ **Cascia (Perugia), May** **Marian Month**

Every evening of May, at 21.00, we will meet in our Basilica for the prayer of the Holy Rosary.

▶ **Cascia (Perugia), May 5** **Celebration of the Family**

At 16.00, Holy Mass will be celebrated for all families celebrating the anniversary of their marriage. All those celebrating 10 / 20 / 25 / 30 / 35 / 40 / 45 / 50 / 55 / 60 years of marriage, will receive the Remembrance Scroll of Saint Rita and a rose during the Celebration. To receive the Scroll, it is necessary to be present and booked in advance with the secretariat of the Basilica at phone number 0743.75091.



Come to the Feast of St. Rita!

May 12-20 - Novena of St. Rita

The Novena of Saint Rita begins on 12 May in preparation for the great Feast of 22 May. Here is the programme (daily): 15.30 Reception of pilgrims; 16.00 Confessions; 17.00 Guided tour of the Monastery; 18.00 Holy Mass; at the end, prayer in the chapel containing the body of St. Rita.

May 19 - Procession of the Standard

The procession, which traditionally takes place on the Sunday before the Feast of Saint Rita, will take place on 19 May at 21.00. It was established by the Municipality of Cascia in 1731 to thank the then Blessed Rita for her protection of the town on the occasion of earthquakes. The seventeenth century standard which is carried in procession depicts Rita's entry to the Augustinian monastery and the Saint in the act of receiving the stigmata.

May 20-21-22 FEAST OF SAINT RITA

May 20

21.00: Presentation of three women whose lives are very close to that of Rita and chosen to receive the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2013.

May 21

16.30: The Augustinian Family gathers for the Solemn Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr Robert Prevost, Prior General of the Augustinian Order.

17.30: Presentation of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2013, followed by the Solemn Celebration of the Transit of Saint Rita, which commemorates the passage of our Saint from earthly life to that of Paradise, chaired



by the Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, Mons. Renato Boccardo.

21.30: Arrival of the Torch from Ramnicu Valcea, Romania, the twin town of Cascia in 2013.

May 22

5.00 am: Start of Holy Masses, with the joyful sound of the bells of Cascia, continuing at 6.00 / 7.00 / 8.00 / 9.00.

10.15 am: Arrival of the historical parade on the square in front of the Basilica.

11.00 am: Start of the Solemn Pontifical Mass; at the end, the Blessing of Roses and Supplication to the Saint.

18.00: Last Eucharistic Celebration for Benefactors of the Sanctuary.

Studying with St. Rita

John Holubik, a seventeen-year-old student from the St. Rita of Cascia High School in Chicago, answers questions from Monica Guarriello

St. Rita is a private Catholic school operated by the Augustinian fathers. Why did you choose this type of school? Did you know St. Rita before you enrolled in the school? What is your relationship with her? The reason I choose St. Rita is because there is a family atmosphere. St. Rita has made me feel at home since I was a freshman, and the school also has so much to offer in terms of

a better future. I did not know of St. Rita before attending high school, but now that I have been here for the past four years I have learned so much and have a much closer relationship with her.

A woman of dialogue and reconciliation, St. Rita is open to all: to Christians in the

I didn't know, but I have learned a lot about her

RITA IS HERE TOO



Country. Illinois, USA

City. Chicago

Worth knowing. Chicago is the largest city in Illinois and the third in terms of population in the United States, after New York and Los Angeles, with 2,853,114 inhabitants. Its metropolitan area has a population of 9,505,747 inhabitants. Chicago is part of the Augustinian Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel (Augustinians of the Midwest), founded in 1941. Here, the Augustinian Fathers carry out preaching and teaching activities in parishes, hospitals, theological research, the arts and the sciences; the Fathers teach in high schools and universities.



Hockey is one of the sports practised by the students of the "St. Rita".

THE OTHER FACE

THE MASSACRE OF NEWTOWN

On 14 December 2012, twenty primary school children, between the ages of six and seven, and six women were brutally killed by Adam Lanza, 20, in a school in Newtown, Connecticut. Victims of the massacres also included Lanza's mother, a teacher, who was killed with a gunshot to the face in her house, before her son carried out his horrible plan, which ended with his suicide.

Adam Lanza opened fire with two handguns that were said to have been brought from home, since the weapons were legally registered in the name of the mother. A carnage carefully planned by the boy, affected by Asperger syndrome (a type of autism, *ed*), who is said to have entered the school building in the days before the massacre, hiding some of the weapons he would use.

The massacre of Newtown is one of the most serious in the world, including those that occurred in the last twenty years.

world, but also to people who have a different religious faith. Not all students are Catholic in your school. Why do you think their presence in school is important? Non-Catholic students open me up to the world. These students are a key part because their diversity is what helps me learn about other religions and gives my faith a better understanding from a non-Catholic point of view.

St. Rita High School has a Ministry programme rooted in three core values: Truth,



Fr. Rich Young OSA with the school choir.



The St. Rita High School in Chicago.

Unity and Love. What are these values for you? We call these our core values because we represent them in our lives.

What are the daily activities through which you express your devotion to Saint Rita at school? Every Thursday we have a Novena to St. Rita. This Novena connects me to St. Rita through praying for others as well as myself.

Do you celebrate the feast of St. Rita on 22 May? Yes, we have an all-school mass and pray to St. Rita.

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

The rebirth of Cecco

by Fr. Giuseppe Caruso OSA

History has not been kind to Saint Rita: many details of her biography elude us, and only through patient work can we manage, among the folds of narratives that come to us from the past, to enter in some way into the soul of Rita, to spy on her feelings, emotions and above all on her determination to be faithful to Christ in every moment of her life, even in those most painful. Certainly, the existence of this nun must have left a deep mark in the lives of her contemporaries, if, immediately after her death, they began to turn to her for healing. The *Codex miracolorum*, the collection of miracles that took place at the tomb of Rita, which was prepared by the municipality of Cascia starting from 1457, not long after her death, offers us stories that are simple and full of charm: there is the story of the blind man who, miraculously and against

all the odds, regains his sight, or the story of Cecco Barbari, the carpenter from Cascia, who had lost the use of his hands [the text says he was “struppiato” (maimed)].



Entering church along with the many people who had come to see the lifeless body of Rita, he complained of his disability, because otherwise he would have taken steps to build a case to contain the body. Instant-

The solemn case that contained the body of Saint Rita from 1457-62 to 1745.

THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

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

Adriana Sposito (Brusciano, NA - Italy)
Acerise Magalhães Carneiro (Rio Grande do Norte - Brazil)
Adèle Lettré Carneiro (Rio Grande do Norte - Brazil)
Adriano Ballestrazzi (Formigine, MO - Italy)
Agnela Lopez Carneiro (Rio Grande do Norte - Brazil)
Alice Meirele (Rio Grande do Norte - Brazil)
André Lopez Carneiro (Rio Grande do Norte - Brazil)

Anna Giocosi (Palù, VR - Italy)
Anna Gravagnone (Pontecorvo, FR - Italy)
Assunta Bergamini (Povegliano Veronese, VR - Italy)
Fernando Bussolini (Magione, PG - Italy)
Luigina Sitta (Soave, VR - Italy)
Maria Fodale (Matera - Italy)
Sr. M. Giovanna Riello OSA (Eremo di Lecceto, Siena - Italy)
Sr. M. Rosario Ponzoni OSA (Presentation of the Virgin)
Mary in the Temple Monastery, Milan - Italy)
Norina Gobbo Cumin (Campolongo Tapogliano, UD - Italy)
Orlando Paolo (Bosco Marengo, AL - Italy)
Rita Casali (San Giovanni Lupatoto, VR - Italia)
Palma Di Latte (San Vito dei Normanni, BR - Italy)
Tiziano Torrisi (Harefield - United Kingdom)
Ulisse Bonomini (Cavriana, MN - Italy)
Vincenzo Bilotti (Cosenza - Italy)

TESTIMONY OF MAGGIE PATRON COSTAS BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

I would like to testify to what is for us a miracle of our venerated Saint Rita. My daughter was 26 and was about to marry, when they found Hodgkin's lymphoma. We always prayed a lot Saint Rita during her long treatment, which my daughter tolerated well and resulted in success. We always went on the 22nd of each month to pray in the church of Saint Rita in Buenos Aires. I had already been doing so for more than thirty years. We decided to come to Cascia to thank the Saint on her ground. Without realising it, we arrived exactly on the 22nd, it was 22 September 2006. My daughter prayed above all to be able to have a baby, after all she had endured and that could have prevented pregnancy. We thanked her for the health of my daughter, though we knew that it would be difficult for her to become pregnant. The Saint listened to us and ... how wonderful! On 22 September 2007, exactly one year after the day of our visit to Cascia, Felicitas Rita, her first daughter, was born. The health of my daughter has gone for the better, and she has had a second daughter, Catalina Rita. She is now pregnant again and the date of birth that the doctor has given her is 22 May! We believe in miracles and thank Saint Rita with all our heart.

PRAYER

FOR CHILDREN

O my glorious protector Saint Rita, you, who have been a mother, turn your benevolent gaze on me. To you I entrust my children, these children whom I love so much. Teach me to guide them with a steady hand, as thou hast guided yours, by the way that leads to God. Grant me to act with tenderness, but without weakness, with strength, but without harshness. Shape my heart in the image of yours; let it be that all children see in adults, the reflection of your virtues, so that, after having learned from us to love the Lord and serve him in this world, they come one day to praise and bless him in heaven. For this goal, I invoke upon them your protection. Amen

ly he healed, and built what, because of its unadorned simplicity, was to be called the "humble case" of Saint Rita, which still conserves her. I like to dwell a bit on the figure of this man, a craftsman from a long time ago, almost to be able to understand the secret. Maybe Cecco was happy with his profession; we can certainly imagine him as a conscientious and skilled carpenter; illness, or an accident, marked his body, enough to make him unfit for work. What would have become of his dreams and expectations? Yet Cecco does not let himself be trapped by his misfortune and he does not lose heart: he joins the many pilgrims and tries to see Rita, to come into contact with a woman whose story he knows, a story where love and pain, violence and forgiveness are deeply intertwined. He tries to see Rita and, rather than asking, he would like to give her something, a case for keeping her lifeless body. His generosity is, I think, the key to healing, as if to say that, in meeting the needs of others and in the gift of himself, he was offered a new chance of life, a rebirth. ■



edited by Natalino Monopoli

Pink bow in Lombardy

**Saint Rita Group of Abbiategrasso,
Milan**

Six years and eight months after the birth of the Primary Pious Union of Cascia, born on 6 December 2005, Lombardy also displays its pink bow.

The birth took place in a hospital, on the border between the mortal remains of St. Augustine in Pavia and the church of the Barona dedicated to Saint Rita in Milan, to follow and spread the cult and the example of our patron saint. On 11 February 2012,



in the hospital in Abbiategrasso in the province of Milan, a chapel was inaugurated, dedicated to St Riccardo Pampuri doctor and Blessed John Paul II. For this event, a group of people worked to accommodate and organise the activities of those days, creating the embryo of the nascent Pious Union.

Francesco Roccio, current president, and Maurizio Gadolini, vice-president, asked the chaplain, rector Don Osvaldo Salleri if they could become a group of prayer and charity, and so seven people embarked on this initiative between requests for authorisation and registration forms.

This embryo began to grow more and more and, on 6 October 2012, after receiving permission from the vicar-general, the statue of Saint Rita made a solemn entry and was placed to the left of the main altar.

At the end of Mass, registration forms were handed out and, among the first people to register, was Rosa, the current head of the prayer branch who, through her charisma, made the birth of the group

The statue of Saint Rita makes a solemn entry

known to many people and in this way brought in many members. Elisa Casarini, on the other hand, was nominated for her attention to those next to her, and is head of the charity branch. Today, Lombardy has 63 members and, as a sister born in the Year of Faith, will make its official entry in Cascia on 16 and 17 March 2013, on the occasion of the national meeting.

To all of you, we ask for your support in prayer. ■

SUBSCRIBE TO PPU

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

Understand our vocation



Pierluigi, 46, writes to me: *I suffer from mental infirmity. Ever since adolescence, I have harboured a great desire to embrace the religious life, and enter the ministerial priesthood.*

But my inspiration has not found objective answers and soon turned out to be unfounded and unrealistic, mainly because of the precarious state of mental health and an intellectual heritage seriously flawed, deficient and, as such, unsuitable for strict theological studies.

Even if I have been unable to take the vows and the Lord did not want me to

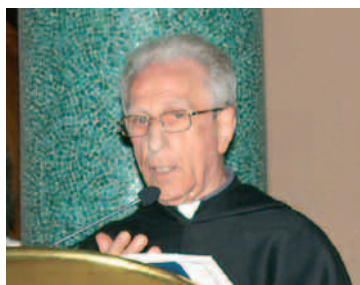
follow him as a priest, I have not given up living to the full my baptismal consecration, the “priesthood of the Cross”, by which God, in his wise and inscrutable providence, has gifted me with rock-like faith, active charity and deep piety. And here Saint Rita has done her part, interceding for me and giving me the strength to accept me as I am.

I would be very grateful if you would, next to Saint Rita, assure me of a special remembrance in prayer, so that the Lord takes care of me in peace, grants me the bliss promised to the afflicted and hungry for jus-

tice, to the poor in spirit and to the merciful, so that in judgment I may “shine like a spark in the stubble” and present myself at the heavenly banquet clothed in wedding dress, rendered purer from my tribulation.

Dear Pierluigi, thank you for your beautiful testimony, hoping that those who read it treasure it, trusting in the Jesus who is always ready to help us understand our vocation and way of life and give us grace and light, illuminating it with the gift of faith.

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



WRITE TO FATHER MARIO

Every pilgrim who comes to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia undertakes a journey on the right track of Rita's values. Send testimony of your pilgrimage to Fr. Mario De Santis at padrerettore@santaritadacascia.org, giving us your consent to publish so that we can reflect together on the values that Rita transmits to us.

The joy of Easter

Sr. M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

As Christians we have this certainty: “... *no one will rob you of your joy ...*” (Jn 16, 23). What is the joy that no one can take away? It is the joy of Easter, the fruit of the Resurrection of Christ, which does not leave us in the dark tombs of our sadness, loneliness, emptiness, but is our traveling companion. The disciples of Emmaus are sad and forlorn before they feel their hearts warmed by the Risen One who walks beside them and recognise him when Christ repeats the gestures of the Eucharist (Lk 24: 13-35). Mary Magdalene weeps before the empty tomb before she hears the Risen Master call her by name and recognises him, “*Mary stood outside the tomb crying. ... She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’ Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary’. Then she turned towards him and said*

A legacy is a gift of love

Allocating a small legacy to the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery means leaving a sign of your presence over time.

Thanks to these legacies, we support the “Beehive of Saint Rita” project, giving hope to all the children who will inherit your love.

Write to monastero@santaritadacascia.org and receive information on how to help children in difficulty who need you.

to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!', which means Master!" (Jn 20: 11-16).

The Holy Father Augustine comments: "Mary had in fact run to the tomb and at first thought that the Lord, who stood there in front of her, was the gardener, and said, Lord, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have placed him and I will go and take him. In answer, the Lord pronounced her name: Mary. And immediately she recognised the voice of the Lord in the sound of her name. He called her and she recognised him. That call

made her happy because in this way he made himself recognisable" (Discourse 375/C, 1).

The sentiment of man at Easter is the Alleluia: he sings with new senses of his being alive in communion with the Father and the Son, and he knows that his being a creature is not a destiny of being submissive to evil, but is preparation to welcome and assume the quality of risen life. Christ, who came into the world, lived with us, died, rose again and has remained ever present with His life-giving Spirit, is our true joy, which helps us to

never trade moments of spousal intimacy with the Beloved for the sparkling propositions of the world, humanly more rewarding, but which leave arid and deserted the space of interiority that He has placed in our hearts. The sky is our heart; joy is the bridge between heaven and earth, between us and our insatiable expectation, between the life that absorbs us in the multiplicity of its aspects and the mystery that draws us towards an eternal dimension where all our questions run out and everything becomes response and silence. ■

Plan with God, live in the present.

Come visit us
to discover yourself.



Dearest friend, we are living the Year of Faith. Do you want to make a sharp acceleration in your journey as a Christian woman? With God, plan the vocational dimension of your life, giving it a horizon of meaning and significance.

If you ask yourself, "Can I be happy?", faith in Jesus will answer that you can as long as thirst is alive in you and you have the burning desire to discover what God wants to accomplish in you. He can revive your heart and give you the courage to try new paths and roads for making you confident again each day.

We are waiting for you to live a few days with Friend Jesus, with we nuns, with other girls thirsty like you, in prayer, in friendship, in silence, in joy.

FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE

19 - 24 August 2013

Monastery of Saint Rita, Cascia (Perugia)

For information:

Tel. 0743-76221

e-mail: monastero@santaritadacascia.org

Maybe God does not exist?

I am a young man aged 23, an aspiring researcher in biotechnological sciences. My observations have led me to doubt the existence of God. If everything was created by God, why is it that in nature the survival of an individual is linked to the death of another? Why should God, a dispenser of peace and love, create a system based on suffering and death? Why should a child die before the eyes of his helpless mother who carried him in her womb for 9 months feeding him day after day with hopes and dreams? So I ask: Where is God in all this? These reasonings, and others like them, have led me to believe that in fact we and everything around us are only the result of case and its progress. But a part of me refuses to accept this condition and looks forward to your help, Mother. Massimiliano

Dearest Massimiliano, Thank you for your letter. Your questions are those of many young people and the first thing I would tell you is to take to praying and listening to the Word. United with Jesus, in the contemplation of the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection, we can illuminate the mystery of our pain and death, and the heart can find the answers. God did not create pain, nor death, but unfortunately they have entered the world because of man's sin and the envy of the malicious. The Book of Wisdom tells us that "God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world" (Wis 2, 23-24). The Sacred Scripture says that suffering and death were not in God's plan for humanity, but entered the world through the misuse of freedom by Lucifer and other angels who followed him from the world of Light to that of darkness, and through the choices of evil of men that produce suffering to themselves and to

others. But God, who is Father and loves us with infinite love, has not abandoned us in the power of darkness and death, but sent his Son Jesus so that as a man he would unite with all men and take upon himself the sufferings of the world and give them a sense of hope. Jesus suffered, died, but rose again. He is the living and death has been defeated for ever. In the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, we read in paragraph 22: "Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death. He has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit: Abba, Father". If we know how to read even painful events of our lives in the light of the resurrection of Christ, nothing can sadden our existence. Our hearts will be inhabited by hope, joy, love, and we will be credible witnesses of the resurrection. It is worth placing ourselves humbly at the feet of the Cross of Jesus and let our hearts receive His Light and the warmth of His Love. I do not know if I have been able to respond in part to your doubts, but I can tell you from personal experience that even in pain I experience the love and goodness of God.



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.



No one may cross the sea of his age, unless he be carried by the Cross of Christ...
So do not forsake the Cross, and the Cross will carry you".

St. Augustine

Lets give
a nest to
those that
have none.

ESTROGENT

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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