

# FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine  
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY  
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN  
MONASTERY  
OF SAINT RITA  
OF CASCIA

NO. 2 MAR-APR 2018

Poste Italiane S.p.A. - Postal subscription - Leg. Decreto 353/2003 (subsequently Law 46 of 27 Feb 2004), Art. 1, Para 1, Auth. GIPACI/PG/06/2012

EDITORIAL

**Servant or friend?**

THE PSYCHOTHERAPIST SPEAKS  
**«Friendship is a construction  
not a spell»**

DIALOGUE WITH THE MONASTERY  
**Friends are the most  
effective medicine**

## HE CALLED US FRIENDS



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## FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES

Bimonthly of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia  
No. 2 March-April 2018



Auth. Court of Spoleto No. 9 of 26.06.1954. ROC Registry No. 29665  
Italian edition: Year XCV English edition: Year LVII  
French edition: Year LVI Spanish edition: Year XLVI  
German edition: Year XLVI Portuguese edition: Year V

Cover: Sr. Anna Maria Mannarà, sacristan of the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia.  
Photo by Giovanni Galardini

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*Thanks to*  
Sr. Maria Rosa Bernardinis, Sr. M. Natalina Todeschini, Alessia Nicoletti, Valentina Fabbri, Mons. Giovanni Scanavino, Marta Ferraro, Mauro Papalini, Alessandra Paoloni, Violanda Lleshaj

*Photos*  
Giovanni Galardini, Massimo Chiappini, Lamberto Manni, Roger Bergonzoli, Fotolia.com: © MurielleB - © strichfiguren.de - © Eugenio Marongiu

*Graphic Design and Layout*  
Bruno Apostoli graphic designer - [www.brunoapostoli.it](http://www.brunoapostoli.it)



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FOR GERMANY  
Post office: a/c 14421706  
Payable to: Superior of the Monastery of Saint Rita  
06043 Cascia PG - Italy  
IBAN DE11600100700014421706

Finished printing in February 2018 by Litografotodi srl on behalf of Tau Editrice srl, Via Umbria 148, 06059 Todi (PG).



MISTO  
Carta da fonti gestite  
in maniera responsabile  
FSC® C111553

The From the Bees to the Roses magazine is printed on environmentally-friendly FSC-certified paper

# Servant or friend?

**T**he choice is hard, more than you might think. Being a servant or being a friend? At first glance, anyone of us would say: it's clear, I'm a friend, not a servant. A servant obeys and suffers, I don't. But it is also true that too often we tend to debase friendship in our daily life, too often we tend to bend it to our exclusive needs. Let's think about it: who is the servant? I am also a "servant" when I am not interested in knowing the other, if I do not care for friendship. In fact, Jesus says to his disciples "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (Jn 15: 15). Friendship, therefore, requires me to use my time to listen to the other, to know them and accept them for what they are, with merits and defects. Otherwise I behave like a servant who does what he has to get something in return, without being interested in the owner. If I am a servant I do not get involved, I do not expose myself, I limit myself to doing what is expected of me. But likewise friendship imposes it on me to make myself known with my strengths and weaknesses, to confide in whom I consider a friend. In short, strict rules underlie friendship. It is not free interpretation, due to the simple fact that in friendship there are two (or more) people, not one, so common and shared rules are necessary. If these rules are lacking, or rather if the only rule that exists in friendship is lacking, friendship ends or is false. What is this rule? Again it is Jesus who tells us: "You are my friends, if you do what I command you ... This is my commandment: love one another". Loving. This is the only imperative that Jesus commands us to follow. We must impose it on ourselves because it is not easy to love. Loving is not a foregone conclusion. Loving is intuitive, but not automatic. It has to be applied. We must sacrifice ourselves. Loving someone means respect them, accepting them, know-

ing them and recognising them, but also make oneself known and recognised. Friendship is reciprocity.

Jesus asks us to let him in, to know him and to follow him (knowledgeably, not passively). With his own example, the Lord reminds us that there is no greater love than this: to give one's life, or to give oneself to one's friends (read the whole passage, it is beautiful: Gospel of John 15: 13-17). Like He, by climbing on the cross, did for us.

***Holy Mary, lead us by the hand to the threshold of light, of which Easter is the supreme source.***

***Repeat to us that there is no cross that does not have its testimonies. There is no human bitterness that does not dissolve into a smile.***

***There is no sin that does not find redemption.***

***There is no tomb with a stone on its opening that is not provisional. Holy Mary, woman of the third day, awaken us from the sleep of the rock.***

***And the announcement that it is Easter for us too, come and bring it to us, in the middle of the night. Do not wait for the light of dawn.***

***Come first you, with the reflections of the Risen in your eyes and with the perfumes of your direct testimony. When the other Marys arrive in the garden, with their feet wet with dew, they find us already awake and know that they were preceded by you, the only spectator of the duel between life and death.***

*With these thoughts of Don Tonino Bello, we send you our sincere wishes for a happy Easter!*

*The Augustinian nuns and fathers of Cascia, the Beehive of Saint Rita, the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation and the editorial team of From the Bees to the Roses.*

# “Friendship is a construction not a spell”

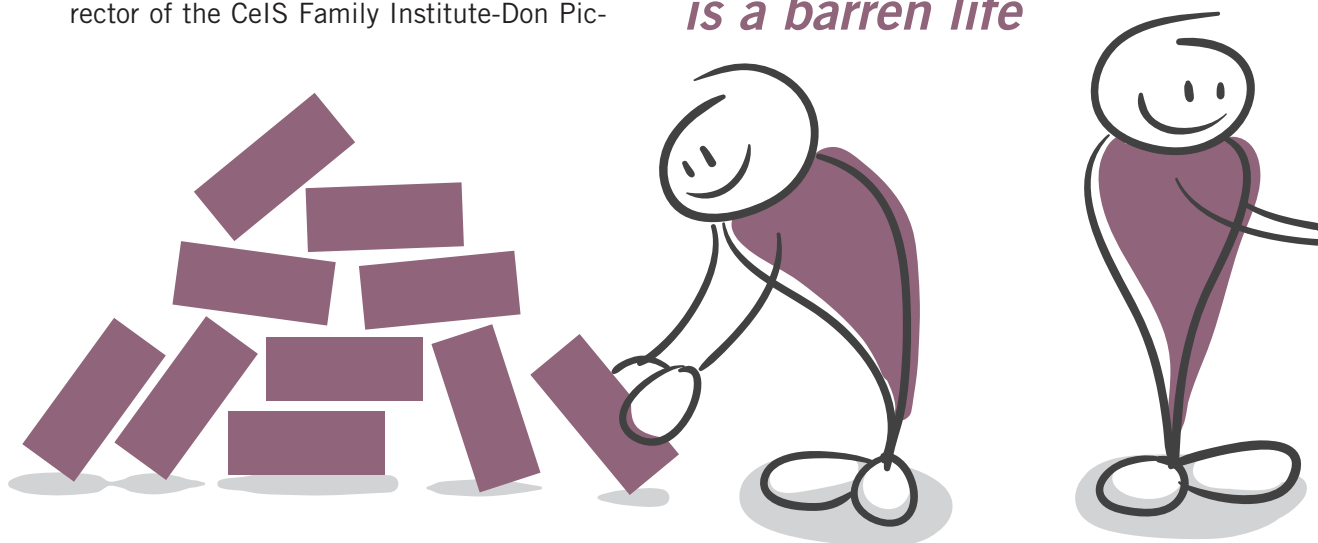
Francisco Mele, psychotherapist and Professor of Sociology of the Family at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, is interviewed by Alessia Nicoletti.

“**F**riendship is a precious treasure that we cannot do without”. With these words, Dr. Francisco Mele, psychologist and psychotherapist, expert in relationships and family, closes our pleasant chat. With a dual Italian and Argentine soul, Francisco Mele was born in 1950 in Valsinni, Basilicata. He studied in Buenos Aires, graduating in 1976 in psychology at the Universidad del Salvador run by the Jesuits and in 1984 he was awarded a Ph.D. at the University of Belgrano. He then became a lecturer at the University and in the “Colegio del Salvador”, where for ten years he held the chair of psychology previously belonging to Pope Bergoglio. In Argentina he also works in psychiatric hospitals, prisons and juvenile institutions. In Italy, where he is a teacher and psychoanalyst, he has been director of the CeIS Family Institute-Don Pic-

chi Centre since 1986 and teaches Sociology of the Family in the “Progetto Uomo” Institute at the Salesian Pontifical University.

**Let's start with the concept of enemy.** In my book entitled “My dear enemy”, I start from the words of Derrida (French philosopher of the last century, ed.), claiming that “the enemy is loved the friend is hated”, because, I add, the friend can betray us, while the enemy never betrays us. These paradoxes reveal that everyone needs another. In this sense the enemy can become the existential organiser of someone who, through him, succeeds in giving meaning to his life, justifying defects, crises and unhappiness. We see it in couples who turn into enemies living under the same roof and do not sepa-

***A life without friends  
is a barren life***



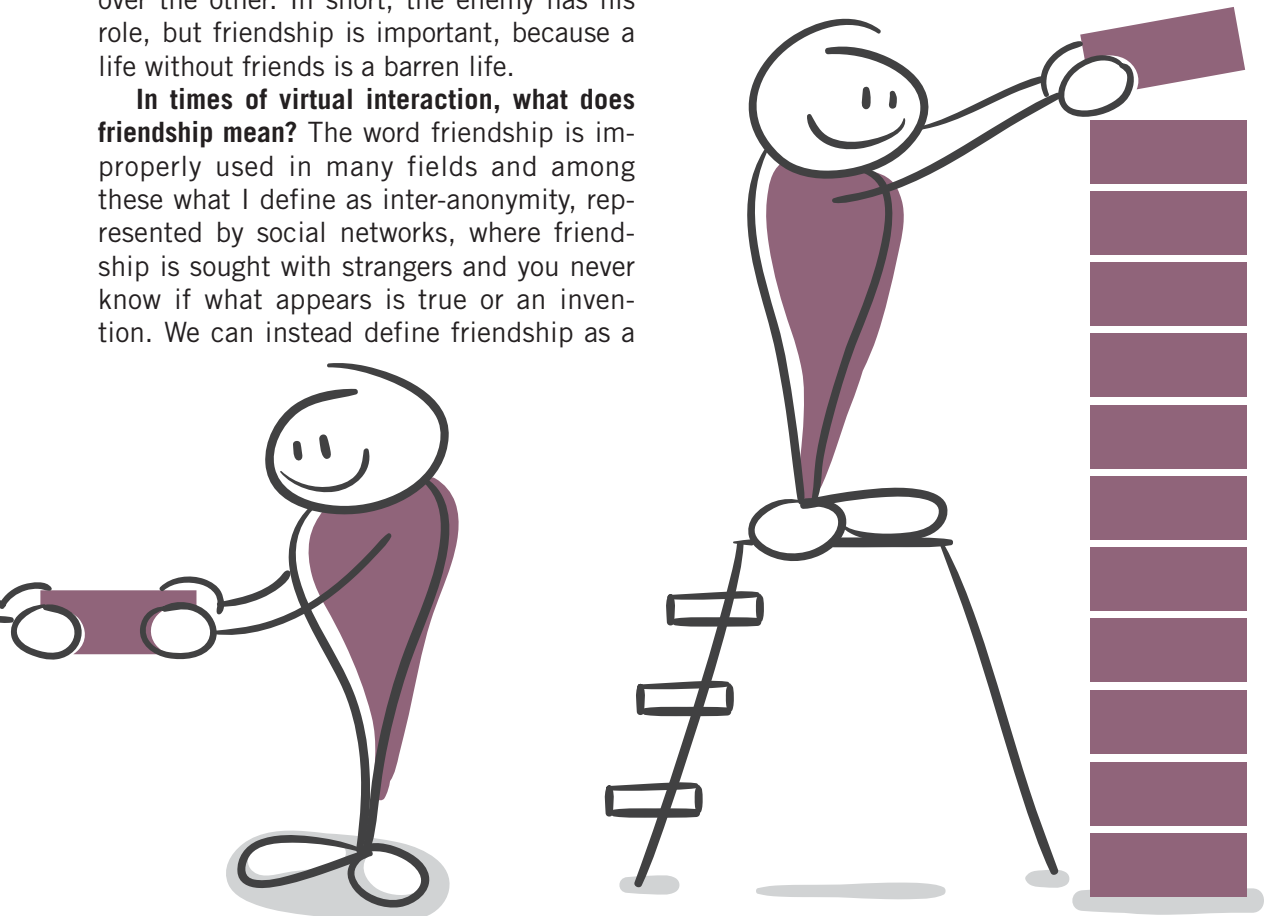


## A FRIEND EXTENDS LIFE

It seems a banality, but it is scientifically proven: “who finds a friend, finds a treasure”. Having friends extends life and improves its quality. This is now vouched for by many scientific studies. Researchers at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, compared a group of people over-80s with no social relationships and a second group of over-80s with friends. What emerged, in practice, is that elderly people who have social relationships have cognitive performance equal to younger people, even 30-year-olds. Giving vent to one's feelings, sharing and confronting others are all activities that we need because they allow us to “download” on the other and be aware of different points of view (keeping an open mind). If we stop interacting with others, we tend to become sad and isolate ourselves. Being with oneself is good, does good, but man is a social animal, said Aristotle. Friendships – those you can count on, physical ones, real ones (not those based on fiction and on the appearance of social media) – close friendships, therefore, can help slow down cognitive and mnemonic decline. This does not mean, however, that we must necessarily have many friends and acquaintances – also because, if through nature, we prefer the theory of “little but good” there would be nothing wrong – and then, we all know, friendship is a “rare commodity”. Few or many friends, the choice is yours. What is really important is to never do without them. (MG)

rate because they need to justify themselves over the other. In short, the enemy has his role, but friendship is important, because a life without friends is a barren life.

**In times of virtual interaction, what does friendship mean?** The word friendship is improperly used in many fields and among these what I define as inter-anonymity, represented by social networks, where friendship is sought with strangers and you never know if what appears is true or an invention. We can instead define friendship as a



## THE SAINT TO THE SPOUSES: KISS FAITH

Friendship also plays an important role in the loving relationship: in 2012, a study published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (by L.E. VanderDrift, J.E. Wilson and C.R. Agnew) demonstrated that the most established couples in love are those who put friendship above passion. In doing so, the relationship as a whole, including the sexual relationship, benefits. And once passion is extinguished, love – so long as it is lasting – probably rests on those feelings of respect, esteem, kindness and trust that are typical of friendship. Those feelings that St. John XXIII had understood to be precious for spouses, when he gave them a “special indulgence”. Pope John equated the kiss of the wedding ring to an act of worship, as a prayer can be (but which does not take the place of prayer), when he invited spouses to kiss each other's wedding ring every day of their life: “It is necessary,” he said, “that every day spouses discover the meaning of the wedding ring they wear on their finger, the small kiss every day promising each other respect, honesty of morals, the holy patience of asking for forgiveness in small failings, and that they look at these rings they wear as a bond of indissolubility in which the children that God wants to send them will learn to grow in the holy virtues that so please God and make Jesus happy, but which then make the family itself happy that it will thus bear witness to how we live as Christians and how happy we are to overcome the difficulties of life together every day”. (MG)

relationship in which there is reciprocal and mutual inter-subjectivity on the horizontal plane. There is also a vertical plane of friendship, of authority towards the person who is below or vice versa: for example, can there be friendship between professor and student, between therapist and patient? There has been debate on this subject and the answer is that there can be friendship which is not mutual but one-way.

**Can there be friendship between parents and children?** There must be a friendly relationship, but also difference. If the child is the only point of support of the parent, he/she will not have the possibility of creating a life project because he/she must support the loneliness of the parent, often the mother. If it is the child instead who re-

## “Hikikomori boys” close themselves in a room all alone

places friends with the parent, establishing an exclusive relationship, you must ask questions about why. Maybe he/she is demanding or idealises friendship, but friendship is a construction not a spell.

**What role does friendship have in the relationship of a couple?** In “The Art of Loving”, Fromm (German psychoanalyst who lived in the 1900s, *ed.*) says: “We have many ways for naming different machines, but not for different types of love”. In a couple there is the initial love-passion that is transformed over the years into love-respect, a bond exactly of reciprocity and not of annulment or possession, just as in friendship. It struck me last year when both a husband and his wife died on the same day, as if one dying had taken away the world of the other.

Does the concept of “best friend” still exist in the new generations? Friendship has changed because there are other forms of encounters between people. In addition, acquaintances include “people of the day” and “people of the night”, which are not the same and this means that there are only partial friendships, linked to that context



and not absolute, as in the concept of “best friend”. What is dramatic are the “hikikomori boys”, those young people who close themselves in a room all alone. Italy has 100 thousand of them, an army of isolated people who are difficult to reach, even for helping them. This phenomenon has undermined parental power and has also shattered systems of friendship; it is tragic because these young people, who use only the virtual for communicating and are creating ephemeral friendships, are defenceless and can, for example, fall into bullying.

**Where do we start in constructing a relationship?** The important thing is to know oneself, not by isolating oneself but rather by

## *Friendship is a place in which to have faith in someone*

mediating this knowledge in others. We must accept that the other returns an image of me that I do not know, so this bond will help me to grow. I must be able to allow the other to be the mediator of my identity: but how to choose who to entrust this task to? Here trust and faith in the other come into play and friendship is still an important place in which to think that we can, despite everything, trust and have faith in someone. ■

### IN A WORD

edited by  
Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA

**“[Wisdom] is an inexhaustible treasure ... those who gain this treasure win the friendship of God”.**

*Wisdom 7: 14*

When the Jews became part of the Greco-Roman world, called Hellenist, their first concern was to enlighten the Greeks about the good of God’s friendship. And they pointed the way: Wisdom. In the vital principle of Wisdom, the Christians saw their Saviour, Jesus Christ: the way for entering the magnetic field of the friendship of God.



# Good is spread by daring

## The Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation for the works of Ritian charity

by Monica Guarriello

**T**hey come from different planets. She has lived in seclusion for more than thirty years. He has been involved in fundraising (literally, collecting funds, but in practice it is much more), marketing and communication for almost twenty. From Udine to Cascia, she breathes Augustinian charisma and the Ritian message in the Monastery of Saint Rita. I am almost certain that he, transplanted from Switzerland to Rome (when he is not on the move around Italy), takes care of public relations even in his sleep. She is devoted to Christ. He is devoted to efficacy and efficiency. She, born in 1958, is called Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis and leads the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia as Mother Prioress. He is Roger Bergonzoli, 47 years of goals, strategies and planning.

I am about to meet them in the monastery library, where we have an ap-

pointment to chat about the non-profit Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation, of which she is president and he is responsible for fundraising and communication. Six years have passed since the first steps that led to establishment of the Foundation, officially born in March 2012 to sustain the Monastery's social projects in a continuous and structured way.



***She is devoted to  
Christ. He is devoted to  
efficacy and efficiency***

"It was something new for the Community," recalls Mother Maria Rosa looking at Roger on the other side of the table, "and like everything new, the Saint Rita Foundation brought with it a certain fear and an



*They come from  
different planets.  
She lives in seclusion.  
He is involved in  
fundraising*



Sr. Maria Rosa, president of the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation, together with Roger, responsible for communication and fundraising.

initial risk. But we did not let ourselves be intimidated by the novelty and, after hearing the opinion of the Superiors, we entrusted ourselves to the experts". In short, say I, nuns and experts: two visions that meet, or a clash between titans?

"We were all committed," continues the Prioress. "Our collaborators gave it everything to get into the methodology, together with some Sisters ... to work in synergy with the Monastery and the Foundation".

But was all that effort made of mutual

knowledge, meeting half way, falling and getting back up necessary? Was a foundation really needed?

"Monica, you must consider the time. The Foundation is part of a path born after a crisis," answers Roger, "which dates back to 2010, when the postal rates for non-profit organisations and religious bodies (and therefore also for the From the Bees to the Roses magazine) had suddenly increased by 500%. From one day to the next, the sustainability of the Monastery's charitable works, in particular the Beehive of Saint Rita, was in danger. New techniques and instruments were needed to support the great values that have always been present in Cascia, around the figure of Saint Rita and of Blessed Mother Fasce. What we have done as a foundation has been 'to work alongside Providence', making our professional skills available".

"What the Foundation brought," stresses Mother Maria Rosa, "was a reorganisation of the choices that the Monastery had already started towards the devotees of Saint Rita, to make them feel even more part of our Augustinian and Ritian family, through modern means of communication in order to be present in the lives of devotees, not only with prayer, which always accompanies them, but also with gestures of friendship, such as sending our text messages with happy birthday wishes (if we have dates of birth), or happy name-day wishes, and so



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In 2017, the Foundation assisted the Monastery of Saint Rita, working in partnership with MSC Crociere, which financed post-earthquake restoration of the Basilica of Cascia.

on. It takes so little to make a person happy, don't you agree, Roger? And it's nice to give people attention."

"Yes, and now we're ready for another step," replies Roger, welcoming the suggestion. "The early years represented the childhood and adolescence of the Foundation, made up of a lot of energy and enthusiasm. Now we are entering into matu-

## *Nuns and experts: clash between titans?*

riety, adulthood, for consolidating the foundations that have been laid so far. We have understood the important potential at our disposal and we must continue to make the most of it by having the good sense to create a solid structure. The world around us is in continuous and increasingly rapid change. This means that we must be able to promptly identify criti-

cal issues and take advantage of new opportunities. What will never change is the centrality of the relationship with the donors who are part of a family, united in beautiful moments but also in difficulties. This is a characteristic, a strong point, of our fundraising. In these first years we have fielded numerous fundraising initiatives that have allowed us to guarantee the sustainability of the Beehive of Saint Rita and contribute to several other projects, both in Italy and abroad. In 2017, for the first time we had to deal with fundraising related to the emergency caused by the earthquakes and started collaborating with companies (MSC Crociere supported the post-earthquake restoration of the Basilica). Now, with the new Cascia Hospital project, the opportunity arose to collaborate with fund-dispensing foundations. In the near future we will have the possibility of devising and participating in broader solidarity projects, always with the aim of uniting charity and Ritian devotion."

## SUPPORT THE NEW HOSPITAL

**Help us to give back a hospital** to the town of Cascia and the entire Valnerina. Today, the nearest hospital is about an hour away, along narrow roads and mountain bends.

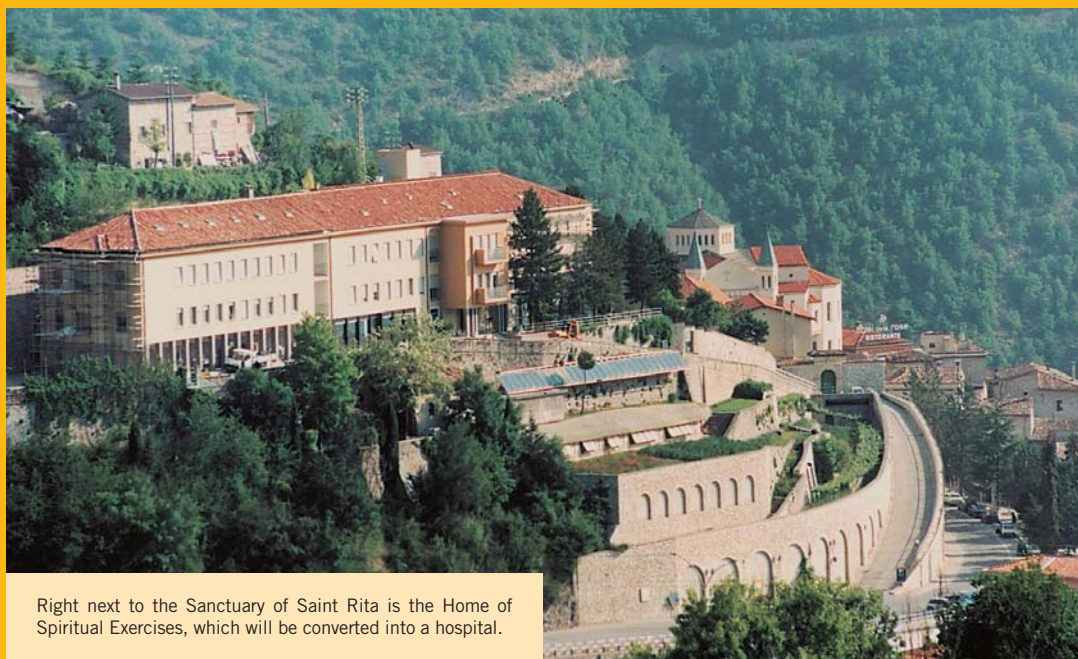
The **nuns of the Monastery of Saint Rita** have placed a building at the disposal of the local area, but we have to convert it into the hospital, with specific renovations and equipment. The project is big and important, but with the help of everyone, even the smallest, we can do it.

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specifying “Nuovo Ospedale” (New Hospital) as the reason.



Right next to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita is the Home of Spiritual Exercises, which will be converted into a hospital.

## *We must show our benefactors that their offers are used well*

“Without the courage to dare and take new paths,” intervenes Mother Maria Rosa, “we impoverish ourselves and do not allow good to spread and reach other people. We must increasingly show our benefactors that their offers are used well and that, together with them, we are creating that city of love that Saint Rita, with her example, has

transmitted and indicated to us.”

I almost do not believe it, but after six years of walking together, he and she do not seem so far apart from each other.

“At the end of the day, it will be what God wills,” says Mother Maria Rosa, raising her timid eyes to the sky. “The Foundation remains open to the future.”



# FEAST OF SAINT RITA 2018

WE AWAIT YOU  
AT THE SANCTUARY  
OF CASCIA,  
FROM MAY 20  
TO 22

## MAY 20

### Hall of Peace

**21:00 - Presentation of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2018**, conferred on the “women of Rita”: those women whose life is close in concrete experience to that of the saint of Cascia.

## MAY 21

### Basilica of Saint Rita

**16:30 - Solemn Eucharistic Concelebration of the Augustinian Family**, presided over by Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Augustinian Order.

**17:30 - Conferral of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2018.** Father Moral hands over the parchment symbol of the prestigious award to the chosen women of Rita.

**18:30 - Solemn Celebration of the Transit of Saint Rita.**

**Basilica of Saint Rita at 20:45 - Musical entertainment** with the “Giovanni e Donato da Cascia” band, the mediaeval Flag-wavers and Drummers of Cascia, who will parade on the churchyard framed by lights lit throughout the town.

**21:30 - Arrival of the Torch of Peace**, symbol of the 60th **Twinning of Faith**

and Peace that this year unites Cascia and Kosice (Slovakia) in the name of Saint Rita.

## MAY 22, SOLEMNITY OF SAINT RITA OF CASCIA

### Hall of Peace

**5:00 - Morning Holy Mass.** Masses will also be celebrated at 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 and 9:00.

### Churchyard of the Basilica of Saint Rita

**at 10:00 - Arrival of the Historical Parade** in fifteenth-century costumes and the **Procession** bearing the statue of Saint Rita. Leaving at 8:30 from Roccaporena, Rita's hometown, the two parades come together at the feet of Cascia (9:30 am). **11:00 - Supplication to Saint Rita** followed by the **Solemn Pontifical**. In closure, the traditional ritual of the **Blessing of the Roses** will take place at 12:30.

### Basilica of Saint Rita

**18:00 - Eucharistic Concelebration for the Benefactors of the Sanctuary**, presided over by the Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita, Fr. Bernardino Pinciarioli, and animated by the choir of the Augustinian nuns.



# Where courage is bought

by Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino, OSA

**C**ourage is the characteristic of saints. They come to choices that astonish because of the disproportion between their human possibilities, which are always very limited, and the superhuman decision with which they complete them. Where do this decision and the strength with which they always manage to break through come from?

**The secret is faith.** Let's start from the faith of Our Lady. At the Angel's proposal, her intelligence remains perplexed and she asks for an explanation: *"Who will do what you tell me if they do not enter my projects?"* The Angel's answer is equally clear: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."* Then Our Lady finds the courage in God's decision and answers: *"All right, if he does, I accept as a servant of the Lord."*

Trusting in God means participating in his courage. Attention then moves on to the knowledge of God, revealed in his Word.

Mother Fasce arrives in Cascia and begins to feed on the Word of God; she proposes to the community the same experience, which was not so predictable. She always prayed, but did not put the accent and habit on listening to the Word of God, of the Gospel; the Bible was rather ignored, she did not identify knowledge and experience of God himself



Solemn profession of Maria Teresa Fasce (work by Bonaduce, XX century).

## Trusting in God means participating in his courage

in listening to the Word of God.

Mother Fasce brought into the Cascian community this wave of newness: knowledge of the Bible as knowledge of God and participation in his own courage. Abraham had found courage in the knowledge of

God; as had the Prophets and the disciples of Jesus: from that afternoon, at four o'clock, when they remained with Jesus in his house, they no longer lost his word or gesture of the Master, until they recognised the power of his Spirit.

## THE BEEHIVE TODAY

assures its young guests (the Little Bees and the Wildflowers) all that is necessary to make them grow in serenity, guaranteeing their education, health care and psychological assistance, adequate nourishment and a home full of love.

## Study, for knowing and knowing each other

Study activity is an integral and fundamental part of life in the Beehive, so much as to articulate it and call for constant commitment. To facilitate the work of the Little Bees and the Wildflowers, we decided to create small groups: each group has a reference teacher who carefully follows not only the performance of tasks, but also the attitudes of each child, the relationship that they have with the school, with the family, among peers and so on.

A good study path represents the lifeline for building a different and certainly better future for these young lives. During the time dedicated to study, the Little Bees and the Wildflowers are supported and accompanied in their tasks, with the aim of developing their skills for acquiring growing self-esteem that can strengthen their self-confidence and their feeling themselves in the world.

An atmosphere of collaboration is created in the group, not only between teachers and girls, and between teachers and children, but especially among them, who manage to make this one of the most precious moments of sharing. Then, paying particular attention, we support those in the group who are most in difficulty, thus creating a good relationship with the constant guidance of the teacher, who helps to structure a serene, supportive and collaborative group. Study is therefore an instrument of knowledge, but it also becomes a facilitator among peers, a moment of confrontation and a stimulus that leads to the discovery of self and the other.

*(Staff of the Beehive of Saint Rita)*





## FEATURE: 80 YEARS OF THE BEEHIVE



Courage is a gift from God, it is his own Spirit, and it is bought only free from him.

Isaiah reminded us: *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without*

of the group of nuns who came from Visso and called her a visionary. (A bit like what happens with the many sceptics of Pope Francis: *"He will stop dreaming, he will soon die too!"*). The conviction and perseverance of Mother Fasce came precisely from the knowledge that this was the

a testimony that had all the guarantees of God. Her faith did not yield even to the most robust trials. She had chosen a monastery, but here the atmosphere was anything but mystical and religious. Rather, the



Mother Fasce (first row, in the centre) together with the community of the Monastery of Saint Rita.

*price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in succulent food" (Isaiah 55: 1-2).*

**A faith that grows and becomes granitic.** For those who begin to know God, faith becomes a new identity and grows precisely through trials. For Mother Fasce, first the irony

### Mother Fasce brought knowledge of the Bible as knowledge of God into the Cascian community

thought of God: if he is with us, what can those who are against us do? Her choice of Cascia was based on the same sanctity as Rita, who had struck her; it was not her project but

temptation was to escape.

Mother Teresa Fasce certainly tried to dialogue with her more serious sisters, but above all leant her loneliness on the heart of Jesus: that

## The flowers and the bees

### WHO I AM ...

My name is Rachele, I was born in Italy and I am 7 years old. Dad works at the supermarket, while mum is at the hotel. Because they could not stay all day with me, they decided to send me to the Beehive, Wildflower group.

### WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT THE BEEHIVE.

Now I attend class II A and every day after school the blue bus is waiting for me with teachers Monica, Roberta, or Anna, or Maria Rita. Together with all my friends we come to the Beehive where a nice lunch is waiting for us. Before doing

homework, we play in the rooms and in the big corridors and we have a lot of fun. What I like most about the Beehive is my friends, because friendship is very important: if you are friends with someone, you help them, when there is not a piece of bread you give it to them because friendship is what unites us all!



Rachele,  
Wildflower



Jessica,  
Little Bee

### WHO I AM ...

My name is Jessica Marie Christiane and I am 16 years old. I attend 1st year of the Catering Institute in Spoleto. I was born in Cote d'Ivoire and I came to Italy 8 years ago. At home, my shelter was my room.

### WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT THE BEEHIVE.

One day my father told me that I would have to come to the Beehive and I had no reaction, because I did not care where I would be. Once here, everything changed: at school I had decided to isolate myself from everyone and it was fine that the others would isolate themselves from me. In the Beehive, instead, I spoke with the others and I had fun, although I also had clashes with the teachers, but finally I had found a place I could call mine. I learned that, despite everything, the people here are fantastic and that I had finally had found a home.

first encounter with the statue of the Sacred Heart became a sign of the necessity of her deepest dialogue with the heart of Jesus. In the evenings, in the company of Saint Rita, she leaned on the Heart of Je-

sus and regained lost courage. She did not give in, but made the false nuns of Visso yield, who were blowing on that wind of terrible scepticism.

The 80 years of the Beehive find their roots right on the granitic faith

of Mother Fasce, on a persevering motherhood, supported by the same love of God for her. It was not simple feeling, but an authentic love of God, that of Christ for his friends, up to the total gift of himself on the cross. ■



# APPOINTMENTS

## **Cascia (Perugia), May** **MARIAN MONTH**

Every evening in May, at 21:00, we await you for the Holy Rosary in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita. On May 31, at 21:00, the Marian month will end with a Procession from Piazza Dante to the Basilica of Saint Rita.

## **Cascia (Perugia), May 6** **FEAST OF THE SPOUSES**

**Sunday May 6**, the **Feast of Spouses** takes place at the **Sanctuary of Cascia**. In memory of Rita's family life, lived in a Christian manner with simplicity and hard work, many families from all over the world take part in the Eucharistic celebration dedicated to celebration of the following wedding anniversaries: 1st - 5th - 10th - 15th - 20th - 25th - 30th - 40th - 50th and subsequent to 50th. The spouses who celebrate their anniversary at the Sanctuary will receive a parchment, a booklet and a rose, the symbol of Saint Rita. **To participate in the Feast of Spouses**, simply contact the Information Office of the Sanctuary: tel. +39 0743 75091  
e-mail [infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org)

## **Cascia (Perugia), from May 12 to 20** **NOVENA OF SAINT RITA**

Appointment at **18:00**, from May 12 to 20 in the **Basilica of Saint Rita**, to recite the **Novena** together in preparation for the great feast on May 22. Holy Mass will be animated by the Parishes of Valnerina, followed by entry to the chapel that houses the body of Saint Rita.

## **Cascia (Perugia), May 13** **PROCESSION OF THE BANNER**

The traditional Procession of the Banner leaves from the Sanctuary of Santa Rita at **21:00** on Sunday **May 13**, and winds

through the streets of Cascia (brought forward to a Sunday this year compared with normal practice). Started by the Municipality in 1731, the procession is a thanksgiving to the saint to whom the inhabitants turned to obtain protection from earthquakes and plague. The seventeenth century banner carried in procession portrays Rita's entry to the monastery. Participants: citizens of Cascia, the municipal administration, schools, humanitarian and religious associations and the Beehive of Saint Rita.



## **CONVENTION FOR SCHOOLS**

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Beehive of Saint Rita, on January 27 we organised a convention for schools on the theme "The presence of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce in Cascia. Context, places, people, works" at the Santa Chiara Auditorium in Cascia. Including senior secondary school classes 3a, 4a and 5a and junior secondary school class 3a, plus other local people, 170 people attended! Speakers included: Fulvio Porena, head of the "Tranquillo Graziani" Municipal Library of Cascia, Diego Mattei, Doctor of Art History and Omero Sabatini, writer and expert in local history.  
*(Staff of the Beehive)*



by Marta Ferraro

# That desire for motherhood that gave rise to the PPU in Enna

In her life, Saint Rita was daughter, wife and mother. Then, she was widow and nun. In all her life she certainly was an excellent friend. For this reason, Rita is the favourite saint of women, constituting an example for all in every circumstance. Although more than six centuries have passed, Rita continues to be a loyal friend, a loving confidant, a secure messenger. Many women rely on her for family problems, to ask her to intercede with God to receive the grace to build a family, to plead for help in situations of misunderstanding with their children, or to have that child they desire so much and is long in coming.

The birth of the Primary Pious Union in Enna is intertwined with a desire for motherhood realised through the intercession of Saint Rita.

Filomena Greco, promoter and responsible for the recent establishment of the prayer group in the Sicilian province, cherished the desire to become a mother. Always close to the church, the displeasure of not being able to hold in her arms that child she had lost in the fifth month of pregnancy led her



Sr. Giacomina, together with the PPU group of Enna, on pilgrimage to Cascia.

to Cascia. Gathered in prayer before the urn of Saint Rita, Sister Giacomina approached her. "I will never forget that loving and charitable look, the serenity of those blue eyes. That nun, who is now my guide, the angel in my land and that of my family, reassured me that everything would be all right", says Filomena recalling her first meeting with Sister Giacomina. A year later Filomena was in Cascia with her little Rita to give thanks to the Saint. On that occasion, the child had the privilege of being placed in the first urn of

Saint Rita as a sign of blessing. It was 2002 and, since then, Filomena had always wanted to realise something tangible to show her devotion to the saint. But we know that the times of the Lord are not ours. She wanted to donate a statue of Saint Rita to her parish, but did not succeed due to a series of ups and downs until much later. Despite everything, Filomena always continued to tell her story every time the opportunity presented itself. Since Rita was born, Filomena has always participated in the Ritian festivals



TAKE PART  
IN PPU  
MEETINGS

## PPU GENERAL MEETING: MARCH 17 AND 18, 2018

The next General Meeting in Cascia will be dedicated to the theme “Love with the measure of Divine Love: Mother Teresa Fasce”, on the special occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Beehive of Saint Rita. Info: Information Office of the Sanctuary,

tel. 074375091

email infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org

### **Saturday, March 17**

9:00 - Via della Spina (from Avenue of the Sanctuary to Saint Augustine)

11:00 - Meeting of leaders with the nuns

15:00 - Visit to the urn

16:30 - Conference: “Mother Teresa Fasce” curated by Sister M. Giacomina Stuari

17:00 - Adoration with the Nuns (in the Basilica) and new affiliations

### **Sunday, March 18**

8:00 - Confessions

9:00 - Hall of Peace (each with its own uniform and banner)

10:00 - Holy Mass

11:00 am - Procession

Photos and Greetings

## ZONAL MEETINGS

We invite you to participate in the zonal meetings organised by representatives of local PPU groups, which are very useful for deepening knowledge and sharing the journey in the footsteps of Saint Rita.

### **SOUTH:**

September 9, Conversano (BA)

referent: Domenica Sidella,

mob. 3926157591

### **NORTH:**

June 17, Abbiategrosso (MI)

referent: Francesco Roccio,

mob. 3393353309

### **CENTRAL ITALY:**

May 1, Sant'Agata Irpina (AV)

referent: Carmela De Stefano,

mob. 3297220218

### **ISLANDS:**

May 6, Campofranco (CL)

referent: Giuseppe Favata,

mob. 3383942809

in Cascia in the month of May and, for some years, she and her daughter have been part of the historical parade. Over time, Filomena became a point of reference for her friends who asked her to take gifts and prayer intentions to Cascia. Because of this habit, Sister Giacomina – who, despite seclusion, never fails to offer her closeness and support – nicknamed her Postina (Post-woman).

Years later, with the arrival of Don Giuseppe Fausciana at the parish of Sant'Anna in

Enna, things changed and speeded up to such a point that what seemed like only a dream was realised within a year. Not much time passed between the formal request to the Bishop of the Diocese, Msgr. Rosario Gisana, to establish the PPU in October 2016, to affiliation in Cascia in October 2017. In addition, between 2016 and 2017, Enna was visited by Saint Rita twice: the first with the pilgrim relic and the second with the relic of the PPU, demonstrating that the time was ripe to build the group in

the town and that Filomena's commitment was precisely that of being in charge of this. The association is made up of about sixty members from Enna, Catania, Caltanissetta and Calascibetta, and is rich in intentions. In addition to the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita, which the group recited even before officially joining the PPU, it had the ambitious aim of taking the relic of Saint Rita to those who come last: in prisons, in hospitals, in hospices and everywhere that needs a caress of the Lord.

# The sower of friendship

by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

**A**ccording to tradition, Saint Rita loved solitude and avoided the company of other children; we know that, in order to fill the historical void, tradition depicts saints in the

same way, made up of clichés. Actually, we believe that Rita, like all little girls, would have had her small neighbour friends around and would have played with them like all children. After marriage, she entered her husband's family with related parents and friends. We do not know what impression the young bride of Paolo Mancini made on his friends, but slowly her presence ended up changing the fiery husband to the surprise of his companions.

Sometimes, however, friends can become enemies: it cannot be excluded that Paolo was murdered by his friends, because

***Rita was able to reconcile her family with those of her husband's murderers***



Birth of Saint Rita (work by G.B. Galizzi, XX century).

## THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

*To you, Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead because, as in their mortal life they have always been loved by You of immense love, so now, freed from all evil, may they enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Amen.*

Ada Grassi (Senigallia AN - Italy)  
Martino Teruggi and Angela Albertinazzi (Fontaneto d'Agogna - NO)  
Antonina Grassia (Randazzo CT - Italy)  
Antonietta Festa (Orta Nova FG - Italy)  
Carla Battezzati (Ozzano Monferrato AL - Italy)  
Claudio Palvarini (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)  
Dalla Pietà Canoli (Varese - Italy)  
Delia Loi (Mogorella OR - Italy)  
Dino Caruso (Avola SR - Italy)  
Edda Jacobucci (Rome - Italy)  
Elena Ruggiero D'Agosto (Moio della Civitella SA - Italy)  
Eraldo Risino (Noto SR - Italy)  
Ezio Palvarini (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)

Filippo Luigi Vitale (Orta Nova FG - Italy)  
Francesco Lanciano (Orta Nova FG - Italy)  
Franco Pani (Manciano GR - Italy)  
Gemma Sacco D'Acampora (Salerno - Italy)  
Giuliarosa Boschetti (Pontevico BS - Italy)  
Giuseppina Ienco (Narrabeena - Australia)  
Gregorio De Pascale (Santa Maria Capua Vetere CE - Italy)  
Isabella Granato (Orta Nova FG - Italy)  
Italia Bianconi (Cascia PG - Italy)  
Liliana Labate (Reggio Calabria - Italy)  
Luigi Mancinelli (Norcia PG - Italy)  
Maria Merico (Cellino San Marco BR - Italy)  
Nereo Gallo (Castelbelforte MN - Italy)  
Paolo Mancinelli (Foligno PG - Italy)  
Pasquina Tilli (Teramo - Italy)  
Pierina Rizzi (Verona - Italy)  
Restituta Cimmino (Richmond Hill ON - Canada)  
Rosa Lanciano (Orta Nova FG - Italy)  
Sara Cauzzi (Goito MN - Italy)  
Ugo Grazian (Levà di Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)



# GRACE RECEIVED

## TESTIMONY OF ANNA, ACQUASPARTA (TERNI) ITALY

In June 2016, I discovered a 3rd stage breast tumour measuring 6.5 cm, to be operated on within 3 weeks. The Sunday before the operation, my husband took me to Cascia and Roccaporena: I asked Santa Rita to help me face the disease and if she would allow me to see my two children – one aged 12 and the other 10 – grow up. I had the operation on July 6 with much serenity, trusting in the help of Saint Rita. I prayed to her every day, as I continue to do to thank her. The morning of the operation I woke up early and I smelt a scent of roses. The operation lasted a little longer than expected, but I came round from the anaesthesia well. I opened my eyes and saw a square of red roses and, at the bottom right, Saint Rita with her hands clasped and her head bowed in prayer. The professor examined me and left. I reopened my eyes and saw Saint Rita again. With half-closed eyes, she turned her face towards me: I understood that everything was fine because she had prayed for me. In mid-July, the oncologist had me undergo a total PET exam, fearing that I had something else in some other part of the body. With the result in hand, he told me with satisfaction: you no longer have anything! What was there had been removed, and now you will undergo chemotherapy and then radiotherapy. I was happy because I was calm and sure that there was always Saint Rita at my side to protect me. In fact, during therapy, I have never been ill. I often return to the Basilica of Cascia and then to the rock to thank Saint Rita: I feel her immense benevolence in every moment.

## PRAYER

Father Augustine,  
you sang the beauty and clarity of human nature,  
to whose divine origin we would like to return, in  
order to build a new society.  
Reawaken in our barren society  
the fascination of the pure heart that finally  
sees God;  
reawaken the trust and joy of true friendship.  
Finally, put us on the path with you  
towards goals of peace,  
making our hearts burn  
of your own passion  
for unity and harmony,  
so that we build a city of God  
where coexistence is beautiful and holy  
and life more worth living,  
to the glory of God and the happiness of men.  
Amen.

*(Extract from a prayer written in 2004 by Mother  
Alessandra Macajone OSA, Dean of the Federation of  
Augustinian Monasteries of Italy, a year before her  
ascent to heaven).*

he had abandoned the lifestyle he had shared with them.

Rita certainly became a “sower of friendship” in her widowhood, when she was able to reconcile her family with those of her husband’s murderers, turning them, so to speak, into friends.

Rita, however, was a great “sower of friendship” in the monastery: the Augustinian Rule is based on true friendship, a friendship that makes one heart and one soul of many. This rule teaches us to live in perfect communion, which so resembles the classical friendship – albeit with some variations – described by Cicero in *De amicitia* and lived deeply by Augustine and his friends, all of whom made the same choice: be baptised and dedicate themselves completely to God.

We are sure that Rita observed the Augustinian Rule all the way. For this reason, she was a model of religious life in her community, living those ideals so dear to St. Augustine.

# In Poland, Rita's fame is widespread everywhere

Father Przemysław Seń is interviewed by Rita Gentili

**C**an you describe the cult of Saint Rita in Poland? In recent years it has grown: in practically every region of our country, new places have been created where crowds of faithful gather. The cult of Saint Rita is connected to the Augustinian nuns who have shown this extraordinary personage to the Poles. Krakow, the only city in which the nuns work, is the place where Saint Rita has been known for longest. Nevertheless, the fame of this unique saint has spread throughout the country.

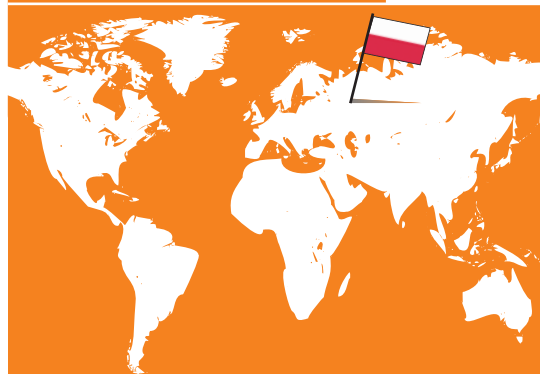
**Who are the main believers in Saint Rita in Poland?** People, regardless of age, women and men. Even the young are increasingly attracted, to the point of choosing Rita as the name for confirmation and parents name their children after her.



A devotee kisses the relic of Saint Rita, from the hands of Father Przemysław Seń.

**And in your parish, in the town of Głębinów?** On May 22, 2015, during an open-air mass of indulgence, Bishop Rudolf Pieraskala showed the relic of Saint Rita to our church. From that moment on, Santa Rita has been attracting crowds of people of all ages. Children at their First Communion, young people with teachers, families, the elderly, nuns and priests. It is extraordinary how the example of life of this simple woman inspires and strengthens the faith of many people.

## RITA IS ALSO HERE



**Country:** People's Republic of Poland

**Town:** Głębinów, south-west area of the country

**To know:** Poland has just over 38 million inhabitants, 88% of whom are Catholic. Polish culture is the result of a mix of Latin and Eastern Orthodox influences, testimony of a nation at the crossroads of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland has given birth to illustrious people, from the famous composer Frederic Chopin to Pope John Paul II.

**What do the faithful ask of Saint Rita?** People pray for the grace of healing: from cancer, depression and neurosis, addiction to alcohol, drugs and gambling. Many requests are an appeal to restore conjugal and parental relationships, or to face divorce or loss of children. Parents often ask for the gift of a child. Virtually everything that is difficult in everyday life.



**What traditions are related to devotion to Saint Rita in Poland?** The important part is to read the pilgrims' requests, together with the blessing of the roses. On the 22nd of each month, Mass is celebrated with readings and ends with the litany sung in honour of Rita. Then, there is the solemn eucharist, which is held by an invited priest each time. At the end of the homily, the roses brought by pilgrims are blessed. At the end of mass, pilgrims kiss the relic of the Saint. Moreover, every Thursday is dedicated to Rita. In addition, every year in January, we prepare a retreat that we call "with the rose of your hand".

**Do you have testimonies of grace received from Saint Rita?** Many of the faithful who have visited Głębinów have come back to us, bringing their testimonies of grace. We have gathered about 300 of them. Among the most recent, a mother talked about how her autistic 5-year-old son showed signs of a return to life after three months of asking Saint Rita for help. He said "mum" for the first time, along with some other syllables, while he did not speak before. He started eating, whereas before it was a huge problem. He looks into your eyes and responds to his name. Then there is also a person who, in the period when he was diagnosed with liver cancer, came across and started praying Saint Rita, only to discover, six months later, that the cancer had disappeared.

# SMILING AT LIFE

Send photos of your children to [monastero@saintritadecascia.org](mailto:monastero@saintritadecascia.org), with the consent of both parents for publication. Photos with incomplete or illegible consent will not be considered.

1



2



3



4



5



6



1. Aurora Maria Legittimo (Casarano LE - Italy)
2. Justina Giaime Roffé (San Francisco, Cordoba - Argentina)
3. Luca Antoinette Bocciarelli (Liesaint - France)
4. Mariagiulia Pasquali (Canneto sull'Oglio MN - Italy)
5. Matteo e Mary Anne Paonessa (Niagara Falls - Canada)
6. Rita Simonetti (Lucca - Italy)



# Friends are the most effective medicine

by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA, Monastery of Saint Rita

In the Gospel according to John we find the words with which Jesus defines his relationship with the disciples: *"You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you. I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, because I have made you know all the things that I have heard from my Father"* (John 15: 14-15). These are the terms of friendship, a sweet and gentle supernatural gift, the fruit of love for one's neighbour.

In the Wisdom of Sirach we read: *"The faithful friend is life-giving medicine"*. Indeed, there is no stronger medicine, more effective for our wounds, in all earthly things, than having those who suffer or rejoice together with us. Without a doubt, the best Friend is Jesus: He is the true light and the model summarized by the words: *"Love your neighbour as yourself"*. The centre and culmination of this friendship is the Triduum of the crucified, buried and risen Lord, where Jesus puts into action the words spoken to the apostles during the last supper and puts his life in our favour: *"No one has greater*



*love than this: to give his life for his friends"* (Jn 15: 13). Jesus considers us his friends. Crucified, in front of enemies, traitors, renegades, He has shown his gratuitous and undeniable love, that of "remaining" to the end giving fulfilment to his existence. Jesus is always and forever our faithful friend.

"An essential element of our Augustinian monastic ideal, the characteristic feature of Augustinian contemplative life, the one that distinguishes it from other spiritualities, is that the contemplative life does not end in an exclusive vertical tension, or rather, in a

solitary ascent. St. Augustine wants us stretched out to God until disappearing in Him, but ... *'one heart, one soul'*. That his ideal is to seek God first of all and above all is true, but with his brothers. The sentiment of friendship in its noblest and highest expression is a natural, inescapable assumption of his monastic ideal. The Augustinian must therefore, so to speak, disappear into the Sisters and then, 'one' with them, lose the self in God: *'I love wisdom above all things and I ensure that many others with me seek it, reach it with me, contemplate it with*



me, and with me enjoy it in full' (Augustine, Soliloquies 1: 13, 22)" (Mother Alessandra Macajone OSA, Thank you, Mother, p. 145).

From the words of Mother Alessandra, one can sense the spirituality sought, lived and desired by Augustine, sensitive and tender in friendship. Friendship as a means to reach the end, which is God. "So in all human things nothing is dear to man without a friend", Augustine writes in Letter 130. He loved friendship, he was not meant to be alone. He loved solitude understood as interiority, re-entering oneself, but then being with others, because he was con-

vinced that man's nature is social. In the Soliloquies, at the question of Reason: "I want to ask you, however, why you want your loved ones to live and live with you", Augustine answers: "In order that we can investigate in harmony collaboration on our soul and on God" (Soliloquies 1: 12, 20).

Let's listen to him again: "To you, our God, thank you ... I existed, I lived, felt, I had at heart the preservation of my being the image of the most mysterious unity from which I came; I kept watch with inner instinct over the integrity of my senses, I did not want to be deceived, I had a vivid memory, I was

furnished with words, I was moved at friendship." (Confessions 1: 20, 31). "If you love security, desire to be in friendship with Christ. He desires to be your host. Prepare a place for him. What does 'prepare a place for him' mean? Do not love yourself; love him. If you love yourself, you will close the door; if you love him, you will open it. And if you have opened the door for him, he will have come in to you, you will not perish for being loved [badly] but you will find [good] together with your friend" (Exposition to Psalm 131 : 6).

Jesus never abandons those he loves and we are among those! Let us not forget it! ■

## GIVE ME A HEART THAT LISTENS...

Dearest friend,

"Return to your heart: see there what perhaps you perceive about God, because the image of God is there: in the inner self Christ dwells, in the inner self you are renewed according to the image of God". This is the thought of our spiritual father St. Augustine. There is a challenge to which we are all called: that of learning to look within ourselves. The choice of life, in fact, is realised in listening to one's heart, in search of the most real and profound desires that the Father himself has hidden from you.

We offer you some days for listening, praying, discerning, living at the school of the Lord ...

**FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE**  
from August 6 (evening) to 11 (morning), 2018

For information: Monastery of Saint Rita - Cascia PG  
tel.: +39 0743 76221 - e-mail: [monastero@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org)

# The Lord has entered my life, how to live it to the fullest?

*Dear Mother, for many years I have been on a spiritual path and reflection and the desire to convert my life in all respects to God is increasingly growing in me. But unfortunately living in the world next to people of all kinds is not easy. Moreover, I try not to express my inner journey in situations or with people far from the faith, while openly declaring my faith and my religious practice. So I ask you how can I keep this treasure, this precious pearl that was given to me when the Lord entered my life with strength and decision and turned it upside down? Carla*

Dearest Carla,

the question you set me is demanding, but I can give you some suggestions and provoke you in turn in order to help you find the answer that is most suitable for your sensitivity. I suggest you also have a spiritual guide to help you understand the path that the Lord is making your soul take, and to support you in the difficulties you will encounter. Because to truly pray, what is needed is commitment and determination, discipline and continuity. When we want to engage ourselves in the things of the spirit, there are certainly obstacles, or unforeseen occurrences that want to distract us, or slow us down, or even make us give up our commitment. What you write, Carla, is true: when the Lord breaks into the life of a person, he “turns it upside down”. There are many examples in the Gospel: Matthew, Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, even Peter and Paul, and Augustine of Hippo, to cite the best known. But the Lord's action also brings joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control. It is his Spirit that works all this in us, if we let it do so. Therefore, a person who lives like this cannot remain hidden, just as a city on the mountain is not. The action of the Spirit gives flavour to life, like salt to food; it illu-

minates important choices and those of the moment, as does light; it knows when to be silent and when to speak, because everything reveals the root, from which springs its work, which is love. All this provokes the people who approach it positively or negatively. “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too,” Jesus assures us. However, we must not be discouraged. We have this reassuring promise of his: “I will be with you every day”. Prayer, even when it is personal and intimate, never leads to falling back on oneself. When it is authentic, it opens us up to the community dimension. Each one is part of a whole, forming a single Body with Christ; He is the Head, we are the limbs. This is the commitment of every baptised person who lives their life in Christ with authenticity. It makes us attentive to the needs of those around us. If, therefore, we want to maintain reflection even during the day, we must commit ourselves to stay away from the “useless chatter” which cools the heart, as the oven cools when the door is left open (an image that Blessed Teresa Fasce used with the nuns).

God bless you.

## THE ABBESS RESPONDS

If you wish to share your fears, your questions or your happiness, write to **[monastero@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org)**, specifying that you give us permission to publish your letter. Mother Maria Rosa will respond to everyone in the *From the Bees to the Roses* magazine.



# *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](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org) and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.





It is our  
task to let  
them grow  
serenely.

ESTROGENT

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

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

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**alveare**  
DI SANTA RITA

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