

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

NO. 3 MAY-JUN 2016

AROUND THE WORLD

Saint Rita Argentina

Mary and Rita, our comforters

CASCIA EVENTS
Feast of Saint Rita 2016

# **WOMEN OF RITA**

Here are the five recipients of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award

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# FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES

Bimonthly of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia No. 3 May-June 2016



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Executive Director Pasquale Grossi

Editorial Committee

Sr. M. Giacomina Stuani (editorial director) Monica Guarriello (editor-in-chief)

Fr. Mario De Santis, Fr. Giuseppe Caruso, Roger Bergonzoli

Monastery of Saint Rita, viale Santa Rita 13 - 06043 Cascia (PG)

tel. + 39 0743 76221 - fax + 39 0743 76786

Operational headquarters

via delle Fornaci 38 - 00165 Rome

tel. + 39 06 39674099 - fax + 39 06 39637399 www.santaritadacascia.org/dalleapiallerose redazione@santaritadacascia.org

Sr. M. Natalina Todeschini, Sr. Maria Rosa Bernardinis, Pfr. Rocco Ronzani, Alessandra Paoloni, Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino, Rita Gentili, Alessia Nicoletti, Marta Ferraro, Valentina Fabbri, Fr. Alipio Vincenti

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### monastero@santaritadacascia.org www.santaritadacascia.org

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# The Women of Rita. for a more just society

he preparations for the Festival of Saint Rita 2016, which will take place in Cascia, at the Sanctuary bearing her name, are well under way. The three days of celebrations organised by the Augustinian Family and the Municipality of Cascia, will start on the evening of 20 May, culminating on 22 May, the day dedicated to the liturgical Solemnity of our beloved saint. Opening the calendar of events on 20 May will be the presentation of the five women chosen this year to receive the Saint Rita International Recognition Award: Angela Sorrentino, Margaret Karram, Sister Carolina lavazzo, Elena Maximova and Vincenza Riccetti (starting on page. 4 of this issue, you find the special section dedicated to them).

Now in its 28th edition, the Recognition intends to symbolically and morally recognise the value of those women who, throughout the world, have been distinguished by their testimony of everyday life in referring themselves to the Ritian and universal values of forgiveness, dialogue and service to others. The Recognition parchment will be

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presented to those whom we like to call the "Women of Rita" by Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Augustinian Or-

der, at our Basilica.

Forgiveness, perseverance, humility, service, abandonment to Christ, the courage to be themselves in a world in which, despite of impressive progress, being a woman is still "too difficult".

These are the main features of the Women of Rita celebrated as part of the feast dedicated to our Heavenly Patroness, precisely to emphasise the importance and indispensability of the role of women in building a fairer and more united society, a society tuned towards listening and welcoming.

We should not forget that the modernity of Saint Rita is always closely linked with her femininity.

As a woman, wife, mother, widow, nun and stigmatised, at every stage of her life, Rita put into practice those values of welcoming and peace that St. John Paul II traces to feminine genius in the famous Letter to Women of 29 June 1995. Those same values that led the saint of Cascia to go against the current and against the historical period in which she lived, a time "of men", made up of family feuds governed by the law of an eye for an eye. Thus, with the Saint Rita International Recognition Award, we want to celebrate precisely the value added of the "little, great woman" of Cascia, and, with her, of all the

the world a little more beautiful.

# Lampedusa, an idea of peace

Angela Sorrentino, Woman of Rita 2016, is interviewed by Rita Gentili

he word *mercy* is more central than ever today, this being the current Jubilee year dedicated to this theme. For you, your parish and the people of Lampedusa, mercy has long been a real way of being. Where do you find the strength to continually help the refugees arriving on the island? Our cardinal (Msgr. Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento, ed.) says that this island must always be an open door through which to find hearts wide open, because from here it is possible to change the history of the world. How often we hear: "But who makes you do it? It's dangerous!" Our heart must beat for God and our Brothers at the same pace. For me, having Mercy means imitating the Lord who bows down before the poverty of people, observing the other with a compassionate heart. Well, yes, it is the Lord himself who gives us strength!

Not infrequently, you found yourself in front of tragedies and humanitarian disasters. For those who manage to survive the "journey of hope", your activity of welcoming people is not limited to material support: in front of you, there are many fragile souls ... We find ourselves welcoming young Eritreans into our homes, making them feel well, making them feel at home. They have told us that Lampedusa is a second place of birth for them, for the rebirth of freedom, the dignity of human beings, the right to have a future without war, without torture and physical and psychological violence. We Lampedusans are accustomed to doing the simplest and most human thing: trying to make the stay of those who are



saved from the sea as dignified as possible. We have started by making available houses that are normally for tourists, the parish has activated a collection centre for clothing, bed covers and everything that could be useful. The looks and embraces we exchange with survivors has no price.

The volunteer work that you are doing evokes what Saint Rita did for victims of the plague and all the emarginated she met on her way. This is a form of behaviour that contrasts with so much of the indifference that we see in the world today ... My solidarity on the island has bodies to save and

# Lampedusa is a second place of birth for them

souls to educate as protagonists ... All human and moral situations that require love, hospitality, solidarity, listening and responsibility. I ask the Lord for the grace to expand our hearts to the other, at all times, anywhere and in any condition, and that selfishness and the hassle of welcoming do not prevail in our hearts. We must strive to go beyond the logic of our calculations, understanding that true joy comes more from giving than receiving.

Pope Francis has said that doing good is not a matter of faith, but a duty; tt is a principle that unites all humanity and creates the culture of encounter that is the basis of peace. Do you feel you are a missionary of peace? I believe that Lampedusa is not just a physical place; Lampedusa has become an idea that we can conceive, dream of, meditate about. An idea of peace that I'd like to be able to exported as a model for the inclusion of people, an island surrounded by the deep blue Mediterranean sea that will never have barriers or walls, because the sea for us will always be the place of encounter and culrural exchange which enriches and in no way divides

# SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

### ANGELA SORRENTINO

As part of the Feast of Saint Rita, on 21 May at 17:30 at the Sanctuary of Cascia, Angela will receive the parchment that is the symbol of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award on behalf of the Caritas group of the Parish of San Gerlando and of the inhabitants of Lampedusa, who every day reach out to many refugees in search of hope. Angela has been chosen as "Woman of Rita 2016" because, together with her community, she embodies the Ritian value of welcoming and service for others, the last, the defenceless.

"No more borders to be protected, but only human lives," says Angela, "is the motto that we have wanted to print, in different languages, on our t-shirts, to signify that poles, fences and barriers impoverish brotherhood and solidarity among peoples".

### THE WORD

Edited by Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall live".

(Gospel of John 11, 25)

"At night," writes poet Roberto Allegri in Easter spirit, "emptiness assails us and shouts: You're just a man! And, seized with fear, we forget the beat of Paradise. But our King is risen, he takes us on his knees and comforts us: I am here! The night no longer exists, we are all dawn. All in All."

# "For real dialogue, friendship is necessary

Margaret Karram, Woman of Rita 2016, is interviewed by Alessia Nicoletti

daughter of division and differences, apparently contrasting but which make up your DNA, you have pursued and construted the ideal of unity. Margaret, how did your story begin? I was born in the city of Haifa, in Israel, into a family deeply rooted in the Catholic faith. Christian values and principles imprinted on my education a strong opening up to the neighbour, beyond any form of religion and culture. Living in close contact with those who are different is a condition that I learned while growing up.

At the age of 14, you came across the Focolare and widened the desire to act to change society and the world, using the **power of love ...** Exactly. That's where my commitment to dialogue started before taking me to the United States to graduate in Judaism from the Hebrew University of Los Angeles. On my return home, together with the Focolare community, I committed myself to spreading the spirit of true and sincere dialogue between the Arab and the Jewish world, through friendship and affection that only human relationships can create. I consider it useless to speak of peace in a political sense unless it is built through contact among people.

What is your relationship with Saint Rita? In her, in her being a "peacemaker", in that world so troubled and stormy, I have



Living in close contact with those who are different is a condition that I learned while growing up

harmonised all my "healing" activities, asking for her intercession to assist all our efforts for peace and forgiveness, so that we can live and work with all in love and charity, by building the city of love, the city of God, day after day together.

What do you feel in receiving the Recognition Award on behalf of your second big family, that of the Focolare? A strong sense of gratitude for two extraordinary women has been spontaneously born in me. My mother, who has always taught me with the



Feeding herself with food of mercy, God's Word andthe Eucharist, Saint Rita followed the teaching of St. Augustine, father and master of

Santa Rita da Cascia. Donna del Perdono (Saint Rita from Cascia. Woman of Forgiveness).

Rocco Ronzani OSA, Ed. Nerbini, 5 €

The book is available (only in Italian)

at the Augustinian Libreria

Tolle lege of Cascia: Tel 0743 750946.



her monastic spirituality, who stated: "In a night full of pitfalls, fear not! Have faith in Christ and search in him the light of day" (In Ps. 100,12). By Father Rocco Ronzani, with a preface by Mother M. Natalina Todeschini, Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, the new biography of Saint Rita is based, among other historical sources, on the recently discovered original text of her beatification process.

# I committed myself to spreading the spirit of true and sincere dialogue between the Arab and the Jewish world

force of small but concrete actions, to pray, to forgive and see in every person a neighbour to be accepted and loved. The other is Chiara Lubich, whose passion has been able to attract thousands of people of every

continent, culture and religion to God, showing them by example that it is possible to overcome any difference or division, contributing to the unity of the human family and to universal brotherhood.

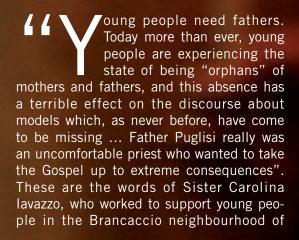


### MARGARET KARRAM

Symbolically, it will be the great people of the Focolare Movement in the world that will receive the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2016 on 21 May in Cascia, as part of the celebrations of Saint Rita. The parchment will be received by Margaret Karram, representative of this family born in Trento in 1943 thanks to Chiara Lubich, and now spread to over 194 countries, with 120,000 members and countless followers. The Movement carries out many initiatives, following the beacon of the spirituality of unity, the feeling of love in God that is the flame burning in the hearts of its members, in order to construct unity and peace throughout the world. These values represent Saint Rita, Woman of Mercy, and are the basis of the life of Margaret. An Arab, Catholic, of Israeli nationality and Palestinian origins, she has encouraged dialogue among Christians, Jews, Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, starting from everyday life. Delegate of the Focolare Movement for Israel and Palestine until 2013, Margaret has also been a member of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land. She is currently in Italy at the International Centre of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa (Rome). (AN)

# The truth will set you free

Testimony of Sister Carolina Iavazzo, Woman of Rita 2016, edited by Monica Guarriello



# Father Puglisi gave his life for them

Palermo alongside Blessed Pino Puglisi, who was murdered by the Mafia in 1993. "He has often been called the "anti-Mafia priest," continues Sister Carolina, "but it is truer to say that he was a priest who posed an *alternative to the Mafia*, in concrete terms". An alternative aimed, in particular, at emancipating all those young people who – seeing no other avenues for their future –

find themselves automatically entering the "circuits" of the underworld. "Father Puglisi had a great dream for them: *make them free*. As Jesus says in the Gospel: 'The truth will set you free' (Jn 8, 31) ...

# Those who create alternatives pay the price of good with loneliness

Street children are the sons of no one, they have no goals, they have no teachers, they have no role models, they have only the street, the only teacher of their journey in life; often thoughtless, and sometimes naive, because they fail to grasp the full extent of the evil that they come across on the street and that hangs over them. It was for them that Father Puglisi died, it was for them that he gave his life. I often ask myself: But me, we, what are we doing for these boys and girls? Where is the alternative to all this? Where is the State? Where are the municipalities? Where is society?

Father Puglisi tried to do something by creating the "Padre Nostro" (Our Father) centre in Brancaccio. He was often alone. Those who create alternatives pay the price of good with loneliness. The message that he has left us as street educators is the importance of acting as fellow travellers rather than teachers with respect to young people; experience the wonder of what they can give you even if our expectations are always too little". Sister Carolina has taken the "Puglisi method" with her, replicating it with good results in the context of the Locride (an area of Calabria around the town of Locri in the Province of Reggio Calabria), where today she is always to the forefront of supporting of those minors "most marked on the face and in the heart by the violence of adults. Children and young people are the first victims of the Mafia! Always, whether it is in Brancaccio or in my Diocese of Locri-Gerace. It is the little ones who pay the price and carry the blame of adults. So, who loves them, takes care of their wounds, reaching the hearts of their parents, on an itinerary of intelligent strategy. Together with my community, the Good Samaritan Society, and other lay activists, we are trying to continue it in Locri, where we have started the 'Padre Puglisi' youth centre, a place for human and Christian growth where we offer educational programmes as an alternative to the Mafia and

MONASTERO SANTA RITA DA CASCIA Comunità agostiniana

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widespread lawlessness. Against the background of this message tuned to fraternity, solidarity, reconciliation, peace, lived intensely and strongly with the grace of the Lord, stands the marvellous figure of Saint Rita, a strong and courageous woman, who, with the help of God, knew throughout her life how to pacify hearts and souls tormented by hatred and violence".

# SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

## SUOR CAROLINA IAVAZZO

As a young woman, she wanted to leave Aversa, her birthplace (in the province of Caserta), to travel the world. Her dream was to be a journalist, but God had other plans for her. Sister Carolina lavazzo, born in 1951, has dedicated her life to young people, fighting against the Mafia and lawlessness alongside Blessed Don Pino Puglisi, the priest from the Brancaccio neighbourhood of Palermo who was murdered by the Mafia in 1993. Having moved to the Locride, today Sister Carolina is in the "Good Samaritan Society" of Bosco Sant'lppolito, a locality in Bovalino (Reggio Calabria), where she has launched "Padre Puglisi" youth centre which hosts 60 boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18. Since the project started in 2005, the results achieved to date by the 15 voluntary workers cultivate a real hope for the future of these young people, and the sharing of the values of dialogue and legality in the territory is on the rise. On 21 May 2016 in Cascia, Sister Carolina will be honoured with the prestigious award dedicated to Saint Rita for her work of youth promotion, aimed at building a more just world based on dialogue and peace.

# Sharing pain makes us strong

Elena Maximova, Woman of Rita 2016, is interviewed by Marta Ferraro

lena, your life seems to have been divided into two moments dictated by pain: the one caused by the illness of your son Maxim, who suffered from cerebral palsy and died at the age of 30 in 2015; and the second, when the pain also found a meaning through sharing it. How important is it not to close oneself in despair, but face it with others? For every family which has a child with health problems, the first period is difficult, it brings with it great pain and you feel lost in front of the disease. You are seized by despair and the frustration eating away inside you. My family was no exception. People who were considered friends turned out to be detached in front of the problem. I had to stop working because Maxim needed constant care. But it was the situation itself that gave me strength, along with faith and new more attentive people. At first, I felt like the only one in the world to have a disabled child, then, meeting with other mothers with my same fate gave me courage, and we supported and gave strength to each other.

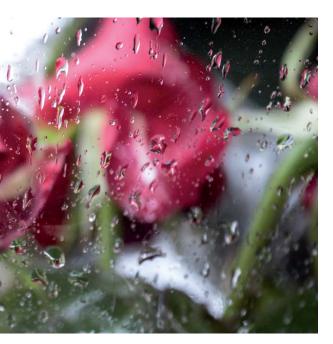
How do you accept the illness of a child? For me, Maxim was the best son I could ever have had and I thank God for having given me him. I never considered him simply ill, but as a child who had come to teach me something extra, at least to help me find myself stronger. Having a son with a debilitating disease is something that would make the heart of every mother bleed. Realising that my son did not react



Real help is much more important than just talking about disability. Families need both moral and material support

to any stimulus was unspeakable suffering. As tiring as it was being at home in that situation, every smile gave me the strength to move mountains. I am grateful to the example of Saint Rita and the help of the sisters which allowed me to understand that if you have faith you can overcome everything. Speaking of this experience is very emotional for me, but it gives me pleasure if it can serve as encouragement to those who are living this trial.

What role does your commitment have in Gomel to the Association of Families with Disabled Children affected by cerebral palsy or spinal cord diseases, of which you are founder and president? Contact with the suffering transforms you, makes you more sensitive to the suffering of others. Being of



assistance and helping young people in a course of insertion relieves my pain. The association was founded to fill the void of loneliness in which the mother of children with disabilities felt themselves. Our motto is "Together we are stronger". This commitment makes me feel gratified, because real help is much more important than just talking about disability. Families need both moral and material support and the association works for this.

# PRAYER

Saint Rita, you are the source / of our hope, / the burning light that enlightens / our path, / the dew at dawn that awakens / in our hearts the gift of faith.

Teacher of life and humility, / we trust in you, / in your infinite goodness, / in your sweet comfort ...

Take us by the hand, / with you we will walk on the paths of love, / we will discover new horizons of fraternity / and rejoice through your sweet presence.

Saint Rita, beloved nun of Cascia, / humble disciple of the Crucified, / pour over us / the grace of your immense Love.

O Saint of peace and forgiveness, / scented rose in the garden of God, / enfold us in your tender embrace / and raising your eyes to heaven ... / intercede for us with the Lord Jesus.

("To St. Rita of Cascia", by Rosario La Greca from Brolo - Messina)

# SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

## ELENA MAXIMOVA

President in Gomel (in Belarus, which was brought to its knees by the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986) of Association of Families with Disabled Children. In the family suffering due to the illness of her son Maxim, who died last year at the age of 30 from the cerebral palsy that afflicted him, Elena has learned again to live in solidarity with the families which as victims of the same painful events.

In the context of the Feast of Saint Rita, on 21 May 21 at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia, Elena will receive the Saint Rita International Recognition Award for having embraced the cross of her son's illness and having transformed that pain into love for life. When she found out she was chosen as Woman of Rita 2016, Elena asked herself: "But why me? Am I worthy of this Ritian recognition? Certainly, Saint Rita came towards me and was close to me, supporting me from heaven and in this way giving me the strength and courage to continue".

# The art of service in everyday life

Vincenza Riccetti, Woman of Rita 2016, is interviewed by Valentina Fabbri

incenza, you have dedicated your life, first as a cook and then as a volunteer, to the "Monsignor Pietro Bonilli" welcome home in Trevi, which houses children and girls with mental, physical and intellectual disabilities. For you, what is the art of service? I entered in the institute when I was young, it was a world I did not know, but being there with the sisters and beginning to know the girls, I began to love them and gradually to understand their problems. Over time, they have become almost like my daughters and slowly I have also involved my husband, my children and grandchildren. We host them at home at Easter and Christmas. Of course, on my own I could not have done anything, I

# I believe blindly in a glass of water given to a needy brother

had to involve the family: in short, a person cannot do it alone. The art of service is making oneself available to others.

How did you experience the fact you have been selected for the Saint Rita International Recognition Award? It took me by surprise, I did not imagine it in any way ... I do not like to talk about myself or put myself on display. I think that there are many people in the world who do much, but

(continued on p. 17)







# Mercy is the culture of life

by Father Vittorino Grossi OSA, Executive Director, From the Bees to the Roses

n conjunction with the Feast of Saint Rita, it is good to talk of mercy. It is the culture of life which, in those who receive it and give it, realises the programme of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, in that by Pope Francis: "No one can be excluded from the mercy of God," recalls the Pope. "Everyone knows the way to access it and the Church is the house that welcomes all and refuses no one. Its doors remain wide open". Refuse no one, leave no one outside is the culture of life brought into the world of men by Jesus of Nazareth. In the three years of his public life, as recounted in the Gospels, he was approached by everyone. Let us recall, for example, the Canaanite woman, the Roman centurion, Matthew and Zacchaeus the tax collectors, the adulterous woman, the ten lepers, the parable of the merciful father who always waits the return of the wayward son, the Pharisees. The Christian generations that have preceded us translated that particular welcoming of Jesus with the name of *mercy*.

This receives its seal in the Christian community through the sacrament of reconciliation. As reconciliated we look at ourselves with a fresh look, the eye of the heart that can only be embraced because it only knows love, we shake hands, indeed — as Pope Francis says — we give a *caress*. Our Fathers also called such a great miracle, operated in the Church by the mercy of Jesus, *recapitulating*. The father of the St. Irenaeus Church says, for example, that Christ wants to *recapitulate* all things in himself: the gifts of the earth, all men and not only those who believe in Him, all creation (cf. *Treaty Against Heresies* II, 18,1-3; IV, 17,4; V, 2,2). At that time, in addition to the meaning of summarising, recapitulating referred to holding pages or chapters to-

gether. In the ancient book, including the scroll written on papyrus, the chapters (called books: for example, the 22 books of Augustine's City of God) were attached to a single central metal shaft, called 'chapter', thereby creating the unity of the book. The same was true for the Jewish Torah, written on papyrus scroll, of which there are many examples. The Fathers of the Church applied this image of the book to Christ. He performs the same operation as the bookseller with us men, called by tradition with the name of *mercy*. Joining us all to himself, He makes us be in Him as a single book. That is why Christ was given the name of *Mercy*. By not revealing the name of the killers of her husband, Saint Rita, faithful disciple of Jesus, recapitulated the families of Cascia, that is, she held them together so that they could live together. With her forgiveness, Rita gave those families the gift of the mercy of Jesus, through which they could continue to enjoy the good of life, thereby stopping the fatal funeral rites that were already lurking.

Rita learned from the Lord crucified, not so much the claiming of a right as that love for life which, when it binds you to another, is a gift of life given, that is, of mercy.

In fact, at all stages of her existence, she embodied the culture of life precisely in the Christian gospel; it still intercedes in her devotees so that, in the passing of the life of families, hatred, the harbinger of death, does not gain the upper hand over life. In fact, life, when threatened by hatred, can be lived and received as a gift only from a heart capable of *mercy*, shaped on the love of the heart of the Lord crucified, as was the heart of Saint Rita.



# The look full of mercy which converts because it forgives

by Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino OSA

often wonder how does Jesus is able to convert certain figures, qualified by the theology and morality of his day as "unforgivable". Another flawless life was not sufficient for a tax collector or a prostitute. The evil already done is so heavy that to right the balance an equally heavy load of good would be needed and for that another life would not be sufficient. However, with a few encounters and a bit of dialogue, Jesus manages to change the heart of Matthew, Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene. It is true that he often eats with them, but what is the secret of the change, of the miracle?

Pope Francis gives us an indication of method: "Even Matthew's vocation is inserted in the horizon of mercy. As He passes the customs post, Jesus' eyes are fixed on those of Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave his sins, and, overcoming the resistances of the other disciples, He chose him, a sinner and a publican, to become one of the Twelve. The venerable St. Bede comments on this Gospel scene: Jesus looked at Matthew with merciful love and chose him, MISERANDO ATQUE ELIGENDO [SHOWING MERCY AND MAKING CHOICES]. This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto. (MISERICORDIAE VULTUS 8).

In dialogue with Matthew, Jesus does not judge him as past redemption. Of course, he stresses the seriousness of his dishonesty, but lets him know that if he wants, he can change immediately because the judgment of God and his forgiveness have the strength to rehabilitate him immediately. Usually, those who are placed in front of the need for a sudden change





are afraid, afraid of not making it; they want to, also in order to not accumulate such a heavy and unfair evil, but just do not feel up to it, are not capable. And if they are also reproached by the unchallengeable judgment of society to start improving ("But it's impossible, it's outside history, that a tax collector be chosen as one of the Twelve!). So we are not talking just about forgiveness and conversion. Instead it is precisely the forgiveness of Jesus, confirmed by the specific choice among the Twelve, that convinces Matthew to follow him.

The look of Jesus full of mercy is above all a message of hope. It is not true that nothing can be done, that the situation is irreparable.

You can change direction and life, because who proposes it is the same architect of the change. It is He who enables us to change, precisely with forgiveness offered to us: this forgiveness ("I do not condemn you either") erases the past with its heap of errors, and replaces our weakness with the strength of the will of God, with the power of his love. This forgiveness and this love give us back the taste of an honest choice lived with love and for love. From now on "you will be a fisher of men": you will not stuff yourself only with money, but you can give back to your fellow travellers a new dignity, and strength for this new project comes directly from He who forgives you. When the prodigal son returns, he recites a long thought about script. He does not know the Father, his capacity for forgiveness, so he only asks what he feels is right: "I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants" (Lk 15, 19). However, the Father, however, restores everything: love, dignity and well-being. This is the forgiveness that heals, each time, seventy times out of seven, because the Father is like this, and he always puts us back on track, precisely because we would not be able to do so. And if we would let ourselves be won over by his merciful style, we would also have the strength to believe in change, knowing that it is just a gift from him that is totally free.

Often , however — almost always — we stop at the doubt of not making it, and we do not believe that it is precisely He who, by the power of his forgiveness, gives us the strength to change, to not return stupidly to the usual vicious habits, but to love with a fantasy that is more human and purer, "with genius and creativity", says Pope Francis: the Spirit of Christ grafts and roots us in Him; if we let ourselves be led by the Spirit, then everything becomes possible, precisely with "genius and creativity" (cf. Speech in Cathedral of Florence, on the occasion of the Fifth National Congress of the Italian Church).



# WHAT CAN I DO?

The Pope invites us to perform the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy. In this issue, we continue with reflection on the 6th and 7th works of corporal mercy.

### **VISIT THE IMPRISONED**

If for us the sick or hungry, or the thirsty, or the naked are victims for whom we feel pity, the prisoner is rather despised because guilty. But the Jesus who became a companion of sinners and the dishonest, announces to all the possibility of conversion. Detainees are mostly poor, immigrants, marginalised and drug addicts. They are the *last*. Often they have no one who goes to visit them, no one for whom they feel important. Loneliness, loss of freedom and the idea of spending a long time in prison facilitate degradation or suicide temptations. The prisoner needs someone who listens and talks to him, let him know that by repenting for his sins, everyone is entitled to a "second chance". It is true that if I want to do something concrete and I turn to the guard at the nearest prison, saying that I want to visit the prisoners, I risk being taken for a madman. But I can, for example, turn to Caritas, or my parish priest, to find out if there are volunteer groups in my town that work in prisons. Or, if I am a lawyer, I can make myself available to those detainees who cannot afford a lawyer. Or, if I know foreign languages, I can offer volunteer service as an interpreter for immigrants and "facilitator" for learning about the habits and customs of the country of origin of a detainee. But it does not end there, because "visiting prisoners" also means helping them to reintegrate into society once out of prison. If a former inmate demonstrates a serious desire to start a new life, he must be helped to do so. But if we are not willing to take him back, it is practivally impossible that reintegration will take place and very likely that the former detainee goes back to crime because he sees no alternatives. This is a challenge for all of us: it is a question, for example, of offering the possibility of a job, or of accepting a former detainee into a group or association. The prisoner does not stop being part of the Christian community. For those whose are politicians, "visiting prisoners" means working for an end to the drama of inhumane conditions caused by overcrowding in particular, improving the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes, reflecting on the possibility of providing alternatives to prison for certain types of crime so that in prison people do not end up by becoming worse, and working for a real improvement of the person.

### **BURY THE DEAD**

Burying the dead means having respect for the dead. Today, it is no longer allowed to physically bury bodies, because there are specific laws governing transport and burial. Certainly, we can adapt the indications to our times and still practise this work of mercy. First of all, I am called to attend the funeral (of relatives and friends. yes, but also that of colleagues and acquaintances, such as neighbours), bearing in mind that taking part in a funeral does not mean "making an appearance", but rather actively living the various moments of the liturgical celebration: the Eucharist, prayer, listening and meditation. And speaking of this, with the help of a priest, I can reflect on the meaning of death and resurrection. Jesus told Martha, sister of the deceased Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he is dead, will live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11: 25-26). Thanks especially to the Second Vatican Council, this Christian thought is being transmitted more strongly during the funeral rite, avoiding focusing on the distressed image of death. St. John Chrysostom writes: "The burial place is called 'cemetery' so that you know that those who repose there are not dead, but asleep". In fact, the word "cemetery" (from the Latin coemeterium) comes from a Greek word meaning "place where one sleeps".

Another thing that can be done to respect the dead is to make a gesture of charity. More and more often we read in the epigraph: "No flowers, but works of good". Of course, the flower will always remain a symbol of the vividness of feelings that are felt in that moment towards the dear deceased and it is quite acceptable to continue to cover the coffin and the tomb with flowers, also as a tangible sign of the beauty that the deceased person transmitted to me when he or she was alive. It is an act of kindness, but only lasts a few days and loses, rather, transforms that meaning which it had initially attributed at the moment that those same flowers wilt. As if to signify that everything dies, even the memory of that person. But since it is not like this, to corroborate my feelings, I can perform a work of good, make a gesture of solidarity, however small, toward someone who, in benefiting, receives something he or she will never forget.

# **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, they may enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Take them into your Paradise, where there is more grief, no pain, no tears, but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Antonia Calia (Bari - Italy)
Antonio Laracca (Rome - Italy)
Beatrice Maria Polimeno (Rome - Italy)
Celesta Pozzi (Pianello Val Tidone PC - Italy)
Dina Amoti (Calenzano FI - Italy)
Emilio Franchina (Capo d'Orlando ME - Italy)
Felicia Allegretta (Molfetta BA - Italy)
Franco Stingo (Villaricca NA - Italy)
Giancarlo Furlani (San Brizio di Marmirolo MN - Italy)

Giuliana Tommasi (Massa Martana PG - Italy) Giuseppe Ianiro (Termoli CB - Italy) Giuseppina Ruccolo (Castellanza VA - Italy) Graziella Rebichini Laccioni (Angeli di Varano AN - Italy) Liliana Altovilla (Norcia PG - Italy) Luigi and Lina Argia Passanante (Italy) Sr. M. Ancilla Pieri OSA, Corpus Domini Monastery

(Cento FE - Italy)
Mariapia Zanetti (Pizzoletta VR - Italy)
Mauro Gadaleta (Molfetta BA - Italy)
Natalina and Innocente Costa-Cortesi (Poschiavo - Switzerland)

Nicola and Lucia Cecere (Italy) Ninetta Defilippis (Rutigliano BA - Italy) Paolina Pin Citron (Sacile PN - Italy) Raffaele Barbati (Foggia - Italy) Tommaso Stanizzi (Cropani CZ - Italy)

Vito Insalata (Bari - Italy)

### (continued from p. 12)

much more than me. But I was told that there are spaces for the great things and we, instead, are talking about the small things ... the things that you do in everyday life, step by step.

Like Rita of Cascia, you are a wife and mother, but also a woman who welcomes the needy. What is your relationship with the saint? And where do you find the motivation to always lend your services? Saint Rita is a myth, looking at her, knowing her and studying her history. For me it is impossible to reach where Saint Rita reached, but I have the aspiration and the desire to

be like her, which means improving myself, increasingly getting closer to her, helping others. As the human that I am, I always ask for her help, so that she does not abandon me and is close to me. The main motivation I find right here, in faith: I always say that, in order to serve others, each person has a way of approaching God that can be meditation or prayer. I believe blindly in a glass of water given to a needy brother ... So I always try to get my hands dirty, where there is need. The intention is to ensure that glass of water. When I do it, I'm satisfied and happy.

What is your message for those who read your interview? To my way of thinking, there is so much need if we look around. From my experience, I would say that "wanting is power": if I want it, I find the time; you just have to believe in what you do. Open oursleves up to others, especially to immigrants. Look around ourselves and towards those in need.

# SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

# VINCENZA RICCETTI from Pigge

Trevi (Perugia). Wife and mother of two children, for years she has reconciled her dedication to family members with volunteer work at the "Monsignor Pietro Bonilli" welcome house in Trevi, which houses boys and girls with mental, physical and intellectual disabilities. On 21 May, as part of the Saint Rita celebrations, Vincenza will receive the parchment of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award on behalf of all those women who, in the normality of daily life, quietly and passionately choose to dedicate themselves to the suffering and those in need, to those who come last, by making welcome and reception concrete through the simplicity and continuity of small gestures.

# Saint Rita Argentine

# Twinning of Peace and Faith Cascia-Buenos Aires

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

ew saints," wrote Father Miguel Angel Orcasitas, Superior General of the Augustinian Order, referring to Saint Rita, "enjoy a popularity so vast in the Christianity of yesterday and today. A popularity due to several reasons, first of all, the fame of her miracles which poured down in abundance soon after her death". Moved and fascinated by this "Ritian popularity", which had already been present for years in Argentina, the Father Oblates of the Virgin Mary (OMV) decided to give Rita a "home" and began the construction in



The Sanctuary of Saint Rita in Buenos Aires.

Buenos Aires of the current Sanctuary dedicated to the saint of Cascia. It was the 1930s, but you have to go well back in time to explain the radical devotion to Rita in Argentina, which was probably the work of European immigrants and of Italians in particular. Tradition has it that a "devotional" had already been printed in 1786, first distributed by the Augustinians in the church of San Agustin (in Las Heras, Mendoza Province) but which immediately crossed the borders to reach Buenos Aires.

and then went further to reach Bolivia. But it was after the canonisation of Rita in 1900 that devotion to the saint spread like wildfire throughout Argentina, in particular after 1928 with the arrival of the Oblate Fathers, when the project for the current Sanctuary was conceived and designed. The church was an important centre of dissemination of Ritian devotion, becoming the Sanctuary of Saint Rita in 1943. A group of women, the so-called zealots, also contributed to the diffusion of devotion. With pious practices and the distribution of images and calendars, usually from Italy, the zealots attracted crowds to the Sanctuary who were enthusiasts of the saint of the impossible. There was no lack of occasions when close relations were established with the mother Sanctuary in Cascia, and which have now been sealed by the Twinning of Peace and Faith that unites the town of Saint Rita and Buenos Aires. Peace and faith will also be symbolised by the Torch which, after being lit in Buenos Aires in the celebration of 25 April 2016, will cross the ocean to reach Cascia during the Feast of Saint Rita, from 20 to 22 May.

Today, the devotion practised in the birthland of Pope Francis is the traditional devotion: the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita are followed and an impressive procession takes place on 22 May, which each year attracts more than 25,000 people. The Association of Saint Rita Devotees is very active and engaged in spreading devotion to the saint throughout the entire country. Love for this little, great woman is so strong that the Buenos Aires Sanctuary conserves around 45,000 plaques of thanks for graces received: from the heal-

ing of incurable diseases, to calls for conversion, up to requests for work. Next to the Sanctuary, in the name of the Ritian value of charity, the OMV Fathers have also set up Caritas centres dedicated to care of the poor and human promotion. Thanks to the huge influx of pilgrims, and at the behest of Cardinal Mario Aurelio Poli, Archbishop of the city and successor of Pope Bergoglio, the Sanctuary has been elected "Jubilee Church", thus sharing with the



Pope Francis, at the time Cardinal, celebrates Holy Mass in the Sanctuary of Saint Rita, Buenos Aires (2005).

mother Sanctuary in Cascia the privilege of have the "Door of Mercy", both opened on 20 December 2015. Rita of Cascia, who is known and revered throughout Latin America, attracts an increasing number of caravans of devotees who every year leave for Cascia to pray to the patron saint of impossible cases.

On behalf of the Augustinian Family and the Municipality of Cascia, I thank the Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, in the person of Provincial Rector Father Luis Costantino. Thanks also go to the Augustinian Fathers of the Vicariate of Argentina, in the person of Vicar Father José Guillermo Medina.

- 1. Alessandro Genuzio (Moncalieri TO Italy)
- 2. Anna Giannini (Chieti Italy)
- 3. Antonio Parente (Benevento Italy)
- 4. Edoardo and Gabriele Giuliani (Fai della Paganella TN Italy)
- 5. Francesco D'Agostino (Leonessa RI Italy)
- 6. Gabriele and Mattia Cannizzaro (Modica RG Italy)
- 7. Gioele Belluzzo (Roccagorga LT Italy)
- 8. Giovanni De Virgilio (Casalnuovo di Napoli NA Italy)
- 9. Margarita Maria Gallina (Mendoza Argentina)
- 10. Samuele Martinelli (Luino VA Italy)
- 11. Sofia Marri (Italy)
- 12. Tomasso Piredda (Cagliari Italy)



edited by Alessandra Paoloni, PPU Secretary General site www.santaritadacascia.org/piaunione email piaunione@santaritadacascia.org

# Special PPU General Meeting

n 12 and 13 March, more than one thousand people gathered at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita in Cascia for the Annual General Meeting of the PPU. Together, we relive the best moments of the two days experienced by the great Augustinian and Ritian family of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita of Cascia, which met to discuss the theme "Mercy: source of love", in the spirit of solidarity, friendship and faith.





The large PPU family met in Cascia for two days of meetings, including the conference held in the Hall of Peace by Card. Francesco Coccopalmiero, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts. Among the most touching moments were the vespers and adoration in the Basilica at which the nuns of Saint Rita also participated.



In the last year alone, the PPU has registered 1,000 new memberships and now has more than 4,000 associated devotees. Always with the same fervour, they come together every year in the town of Saint Rita to address their prayers to the patron saint of impossible cases.







Promoting the values of the family, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. These are some of the objectives that the PPU aims to achieve through the spread of devotion to Saint Rita and her message.





The PPU was born to unite in a large association all those who seek God, following the footsteps of Augustine and Rita, taking the path of faith not only in their own local situations, but being united in a single vision of friendship and devotion through national coordination.



For the general meeting, an effigy of Saint Rita from one of the PPU affiliates is carried in procession in Cascia after a long journey. This yearm the splendid statue came from Molfetta (Bari).



# Mary and Rita, our comforters

by Sister Giacomina Stuani OSA

efore being the month of Saint Rita for all her devotees, May is, above all, Marian month dedicated to Our Lady. These two women, who lived in very distant and different times, have much in common – in fact, have Someone in common who goes beyond time and space and who showed in Himself the transparency of the Father: Jesus of Nazareth. For Mary the Son, for Rita the Bridegroom .. and for both Love. There is also a term that links them: *advocate*. Our Lady, in the beautiful Salve Regina prayer is called "our Advocate ..." and Saint Rita is also known as the advocate of desperate cases.

# Our Lady and Saint Rita instill courage even though we do not ask for it

The term advocate comes from the Latin advocatus ( advoc tus, legal counsellor; orig. past participle of advoc re: to call to one's aid - ed.). The etymological meaning of the word Advocate is therefore ad vocata: called in aid. When used in the female form, it is exclusively (only in the the singular) attributed to Our Lady or to saints, with the meaning of protector, intercessor. The Virgin Mary asks Jesus to show us all his mercy, all his piety, all the richness of his love, all his divine compassion. The Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium (at No. 5) says: "Mary figured profoundly in the history of salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith". This means that Mary



P.P. Agapiti (attr.), Madonna delle Libere (part of Virgin with Child and Saint Rita), 15th century.

is our advocate, not only for her intercession, but also for her person, for what she represents for her Son. In other words: Mary is our advocate not only for what she does, but also for what she is.

Towards us, Our Lady and Saint Rita are comforters, that is, they give strength, instill courage, give support to people who invoke them; on many occasions, even without us asking (at Cana the Mother intervened for the Son without having been requested ...). They are assistants, guides, counsellors, friends who are always close to us to enlighten us. In one of his prayers, St. Bernard invokes Mary with these words:

# Guides, counsellors, friends, always close to us to enlighten us

"Our Lady, our advocate, our mediator, our comforter, reconcile us with your Son, recommend us to your Son, give us to your Son" (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 2 for 'Advent, 5). During the Jubilee of 2000, when Rita of Cascia was taken to St. Peter's, Pope John Paul II (today a saint) said of our holy Sister: "Following the spirituality of St Augustine, she became a disciple of the Crucified One and an "expert in suffering"; she learned to understand the sorrows of the human heart. Rita thus became the advocate of the poor and the despairing, obtaining countless graces of consolation and comfort for those who called upon her in the most varied situations [...] If we ask St Rita for the secret to this extraordinary work of social and spiritual renewal, she replies: fidelity to the Love that was crucified. Rita, with Christ and like Christ, goes to the Cross always and only through love" (Audience of May 20, 2000).

Mary, the highest expression of human freedom; Rita, who did everything willingly for her humble Jesus. Mary, woman of the dance of the Magnificat; Rita, who danced with the heart through passion for the other. Mary, "Mother of Mercy"; Rita, testimony of Mercy.

# "Rich in Mercy ... ... rich in Thanks!"

Dear friend.

how many reasons we have to say THANKS to the Lord, grateful above all because we are loved.  $\label{eq:theory}$ 

Thanks because ... God bursts into our lives with his Word.

Thanks because ... God seduces us with his gaze that attracts.

Thanks because ... God chooses us and leads us to the fullness of life.

Do you also want to try to say your "Thanks because ..." and to repeat with Saint Augustine: "I now exist because of Your goodness, which made provision for all that You have made me to be and all that You have made me from ... My happiness depends on You" (Confessions, 13: 1,1)? We await you!

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



The 50 "Cascian" Years of the Friends of St. Augustine

This year, more than 200 Friends of St. Augustine gathered at Hotel delle Rose in Cascia from March 22 to 26, during Holy Week. The theme of their annual meeting was: "Be happy on the paths of Mercy". Professors and friends Antonio Gentile and Giovanna Vitagliano stimulated reflection on happiness that God gives us each day and to we he calls us despite our daily "being tossed" between the frustrations and fears of life. Fifty years have passed since the input given in Cascia by Augustinian fathers Agostino Trapè e Luigi Giuliani to the rise of the Friends of St. Augustine movement. An entire generation in the shadow of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita, increasingly co-opting new sympathisers, has matured the Christian balance of being Church in a continuously changing world. Many priests and lay friends have contributed to achieving this. Among Augustinians, the stalwart of support and affection has been Father Vincenzo Lolli, who celebrated his 80th birthday during the annual meeting and who dedicated many of his years life to the From the Bees to the Roses magazine as director. From the Augustinian community of Cascia, a special thanks goes to the Monastery of Saint Rita and the Convent of Saint Augustine and Saint Rita, where this year the Augustinian fathers celebrated the 80 years of tireless service of Father Alipio Vincenti. Among the friends who have been summoned by the Lord to himself, we remember Paolo Galletti from Florence and Franco Patrizi from Frosinone. They embodied in the world the Augustinian presence in the form of friendship in Christ Jesus.

# COURSE PROGRAMME 2016

# COURSES FOR PRIESTS AND DEACONS

July 4 (lunch) - 9
"Augustinianum" Patristic
Institute
The "ministry of mercy"

October 10 (lunch) - 15

Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino OSA

Priests of the third millennium:

Spiritual fathers and confessors

## **COURSES FOR LAITY**

August 1 (lunch) - 6 Fr. Giuseppe Pagano OSA Merciful as the Father

August 8 - 12 Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino OSA One rule for all: Daily training for life in the Spirit

### August 26 - 28

Don Gianfranco Basti

Course for engaged couples

Contact: Sophie Alicino,

Mobile 333.81.80.301

e-mail

amicidisantapudenziana@gmail.com

September 5 (lunch) - 8
For friends and collaborators (also potential) of the Augustinians
Fr. Giuseppe Pagano OSA
God is love: comment on the first
letter of St. John by St. Augustine

October 19 - 26 Course in German Fr. Christoph Weberbauer OSA e-mail Christoph@augustiner.de

October 27 - 31
Fr. Francesco Maria Giuliani OSA
May they have life and have it in
abundance

In free time, the House willingly welcomes groups organised by others

The participation fee, including all living expenses, is 40 euro per day, (supplement for single room  $\in$  8).

Reservations should be sent to: **EMAIL**:

casaesercizi@santaritadacascia.org **Post**: Management, Casa Esercizi Spirituali "Santa Rita" -06043 CASCIA (PG)

**Phone:** the House phone (operated only during the courses) is +39 0743 71229; at other times, call +39 0743 75091

**Fax:** +39 0743 76476

# FEAST OF SAINT RITA 2016

### MAY 20

Hall of Peace

21:00 - Presentation of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2016. Simona Branchetti, TG5 (Mediaset) journalist, presents the women of Rita 2016 (women, that is, whose life is close to that in the example of the Saint of Cascia) to the community. Angela Sorrentino from Lampedusa, who will receive the parchment that is the symbol of the recognition on behalf of the Caritas group of the Parish of St. Gerlando and of the inhabitants of Lampedusa who, every day, are reaching out to the many refugees in search of hope for the future. Margaret Karram, a Catholic Arab of Israeli and Palestinian origin who will accept the award on behalf of the Focolare Movement, has encouraged dialogue among Christians, Jews, Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, starting "from below", from the everyday of life lived; she was a Delegate of the Focolare Movement for Israel and the Palestinian Territories until 2013 and a member of the Episcopal Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land. Sister Carolina lavazzo who worked against the Mafia and lawlessness alongside Blessed Don Pino Puglisi (the priest murdered by the Mafia in 1993 in Palermo); today, she is part of the "Good Samaritan Fraternity" of Bosco Sant'Ippolito, a district in Bovalino (Reggio Calabria), where she initiated the "Father Puglisi" multipurpose youth centre. Elena Maximova, president in Gomel (in Belarus, which has been brought to its knees following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986) of the Families Association, who has disabled children. In the family tragedy caused by the illness of her son Maxim, who died last year at the age of 30 years due to the cerebral palsy that afflicted him, Elena has relearned to live in solidarity with the families that have been victims of the same tragic events. Vincenza Riccetti from Pigge Trevi (Perugia), a wife and mother of two children who, for years, has been reconciling her dedication to the family with volunteer work at the "Monsignor Pietro Bonilli" welcome house in Trevi, which houses girls with mental-physical and and intellectual disabilities.

### MAY 21

Basilica of Saint Rita

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

17:30 — Handing over of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2016. Father Moral hands over the parchment to the women of Rita: Angela Sorrentino, Margaret Karram, Sr. Carolina lavazzo, Elena Maximova and Vincenza Riccetti.

**18:30 - Solemn Celebration of the Transit of Saint Rita**, presided over by the Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, Msgr. Renato Boccardo.

Churchyard of the Basilica of Saint Rita

**20:45 - Musical entertainment** with the "Giovanni e Donato da Cascia" Band, the mediaeval Flag-throwers and Drummers of Cascia, who will parade in the churchyard framed by the illuminations all over the town.

**21:30** - Arrival of the **Torch of Peace**, a symbol of the 58th **Twinning of Faith and Peace** which unites Cascia with Buenos Aires, in the name of Saint Rita.

### MAY 22, FEAST OF SAINT RITA OF CASCIA

Hall of Peace

**05:00** - Start of **Holy Masses**, with the joyful sound of all the bells of Cascia to honour the day of the Solemnity of Saint Rita. Masses will also be celebrated at 06:00, 07:00, 08:00 and 09:00.

Mass at 08:00 will be presided over by the OSA Prior General, Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón.

Churchyard of the Basilica of Saint Rita

**10:00** - Arrival of the **Historical Parade** in 15<sup>th</sup> century costumes and the **Procession** bearing the statue of Saint Rita. Leaving Roccaporena, the birthplace of Rita, at 08:30, the two processions join up with that of Cascia at the foot of the town (09:30).

11:00 - Solemn Pontifical presided over by Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, Archbishop of Naples, followed by the Supplication to Saint Rita and the Blessing of the Roses (12:30). The Mass will be animated by the Poliphonica Nova Choir from Parabita (Lecce).

Basilica of Saint Rita

**18:00 - Mass for Benefactors** of the Sanctuary, presided over by the Rector of the Basilica, Fr Mario De Santis, and animated by the choir of the Nuns of the Monastery of Saint Rita.



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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TEL. +39 0743 76201 alveare@santaritadacascia.org www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare