

NO. 3 MAY-JUN 2019

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

ELISABETTA FORLENZA

**The long road
to forgiveness**

FABRIZIA FELICI

**My children,
a gift from God for me**

ROSANNA SERANTONI

Everything for my family

TINA EPIFANIA

**Hoping for my
marriage**



SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD

Here are the "Women of Rita" 2019

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DA CASCIA
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Beautiful and lacerating, as life can be. The red rose, with its thorns, is the symbol of Rita of Cascia. It contains the meaning of the message that the saint has handed down to us: fully enjoy the Love and Beauty of God through the love and beauty of life, accepting thorns as part of this. And she had received the “thorn” on her forehead from Christ, as she prayed to participate in his passion.

One day, while absorbed in prayer and mindful of the preaching on the passion of Christ by Brother Giacomo della Marca in Cascia, she asks the Lord to participate in His sufferings, so intensely that He gave her the gift of a thorn from the crown of Jesus on the cross. This is how the stigmatisation of Saint Rita took place, bringing with it that gift for the last fifteen years before ascending to heaven.

At the end of her days, sick and bedridden, Rita asks one of her cousins who was coming to visit her from Roccaporena to bring her two figs and a rose from the garden of her father's house. But we are in winter, it is impossible that flowers and fruits are in their lushness. Her cousin, however, goes along with her, thinking that she in the delirium of her illness. So, she returns home, and to her great surprise, she finds a rose and two figs in the snow. Faced with such a miracle, she immediately returns to Cascia to take them to Rita and thus honour the promise.

Since then, the rose has been the Ritian symbol par excellence: like the rose, Rita was able to flourish despite the thorns that life had reserved for her, giving the good scent of Christ and dissolving the icy winter of many hearts. The two figs, on the other hand, in all probability represent her sons

The rose and the thorn



Saint Rita with the thorn, detail from the Solemn Case of Saint Rita (Cascia, Monastery of Saint Rita).

and the awareness that, despite everything, their souls are safe. The prodigy of the roses and figs in winter is borne out by various testimonies collected in the process for her beatification in 1626 and is the last miracle performed in life by the saint.

A woman of dialogue and forgiveness, Saint Rita has left us nothing written, but continues to live through her example lived in everyday life and handed down until today. An example made of simple gestures, which however highlight the strong personality of a “small, great woman” who stands against every rule of her time, in order to seek dialogue and peace and thus put an end to the bloody family feud which led to the murder of her husband. ■

Service, tenacity, love for the family and the courage to embrace one's own cross: opening the three days of the Feast of Saint Rita, from May 20 to 22, are the four "Women of Rita", that is, women who incarnate Ritian values in today's world. On May 21, the ceremony for the handing over of the parchment of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award takes place for four, extraordinary women chosen for the 2019 edition.

The long road to forgiveness

Testimony of Elisabetta Forlenza,
Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019

Elisabetta Forlenza from Torrevecchia Pia (Pavia) is the mother of Federico who, at the dawn of his 16th year, in the afternoon of June 23, 2010, while on a scooter, is killed in a car accident, when a drunk driver runs into him and he has no possibility of surviving. This is how, for Elisabetta and her family, a hard path begins that passes through resentment and the inability to accept God's plans, up to conversion of the heart.

My life, like that of my husband Antonio and my two sons, Giuseppe and Federico, was a normal life with its ups and downs. We were not practising Catholics, let's say we went to church only on the most important occasions. Everything went smoothly, until the clock of life for my family stopped on June 23, 2010.

At the age of 16, my son Federico was run into by a completely drunk man. Federico was beautiful, incredibly handsome, but he was even more beautiful inside. He illuminated the dark corners of our existence, of the soul; he brought joy everywhere, even at school. That day, at 14:20, the time of the deadly impact, I was at

home because I felt so ill, I thought I was dying. I could not have known at that precise moment that my son was leaving us. After about an hour, they called my husband and we all met, also with Giuseppe, my eldest son, lying on the asphalt next to Federico. He looked like a wounded pet. He had met his death as he smiled with joy and enthusiasm for life.

After days and days devastated by pain, we didn't have the courage to talk about what had happened. We all suffered in silence: the world had collapsed on us, I felt myself violated from within, as if someone had been tearing my organs from my abdomen for days. I didn't want to hear, I didn't want to understand, I wanted the earth to swallow me up in its bowels. But over time you feel the unbearable and raw suffering. Time made me understand that I could not do anything, that my son was not there, I could no longer take care of him, but at the same time hope grew of being able to embrace him one day, in another dimension, in Paradise.

A voice told me inside: "Search for your son!" So, I followed that voice and completely abandoned myself to reading the Bible. In those days, I no longer knew if day and night existed for me. I read and then read more.



Meanwhile, those words of Jesus echoed in my mind: “Seek and you will find, ask and it will be given to you”. I had to find my son! Federico had come into the world to teach us to live, he loved us, but he loved others too, he did not close himself in human selfishness. He was always the first to get up in the morning, even in summer, and the first to leave the house. I always asked him: “But where are you going? There's still no one around at this time”. And he replied: “Eh ... but there are old men in the square, I'll talk a little with them”. He was like that, Federico. Unstoppable. Many young people, adults and the elderly have suffered and cried, they miss him, and I am sure they will carry him forever in their hearts.

With my husband we went to the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel D'Oro in Pavia and there I met the Prior, Father Giustino, who helped us move forward on this journey towards God. Oh, how many times have I stopped in front of the tabernacle ... And

God answered me by giving me all his Love. The joy donated to us by the Lord led us to give it to others, creating a prayer group in 2012 that was attended mainly by young people but also by adults, many of whom have come closer to the faith, certainly with the help from heaven of Federico, who watches over and prays not only for his mother, father and Giuseppe, but also for those who need it.

This is our story, our experience of faith, of love, of testimony in saying and shouting to everyone that Jesus and Mary love us and know how to enter gently into our hearts, touched by suffering and pain; they know how to inspire us in the feelings of love, charity and forgiveness towards those who have been the protagonists of a dramatic event, such as the one lived and told in these lines: the death of our Federico, caused by a reckless person to whom we have offered, with effort but with joy, our forgiveness. ■

THE MESSAGE OF SAINT RITA IN THE STORY OF ELISABETTA

Tuesday, May 21, at the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, Elisabetta Forlenza receives the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019 for having been able to forgive the man who ran into her son, embracing the cross and thus learning to transform pain into love to offer to others, through the creation of a prayer group that brought many young people and adults who were far from the faith closer to God.

My children, a gift from God for me

Testimony of Fabrizia Felici,
Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019

Fabrizia Felici lives in Norcia (Perugia) and is the mother of a very special child: Rosa Valentina, suffering from a rare form of dysautonomia and epileptogenic encephalopathy. Since her birth in 1991, Fabrizia has lived her life with the certainty of having received from God a wonderful gift: her child who, despite having no chance of staying alive, is now 28 years old and fills the days of Fabrizia and her family.

As a young woman, I lived in Cascia, just below the Sanctuary of Saint Rita. There I spent important years for my human and spiritual formation; the almost daily relationship with Saint Rita was fundamental in order not to lose control of my existence when, at the age of twenty-eight, my first child Rosa Valentina was born; shortly afterwards, she fell seriously ill with a rare form of dysautonomia and epileptogenic encephalopathy.

Enduring such a difficult situation could cause either definitive breaks, or unions so strong as to become one with the whole family. We were too afraid to face that life, it just seemed to have no future, we were stuck inside this terrible reality and this adorable child could not have expressed joy or enjoyed the small things in life because, having become almost a vegetable, she had no chance of life.

***The relationship with
Saint Rita was
fundamental***



Illustration of Saint Rita with her sons.

I remember that as soon as I left the hospital in Cascia, I went to the Sanctuary and left the first photos of Rosy taken by her dad. Finding dear Sister Imelde to welcome me, full of tears I asked her to put her photo at the feet of Saint Rita and insist on asking for the grace of her life.

I seemed to be going crazy, but I wanted so much to understand the designs of God,

which for me is always Mercy and infinite Love. I constantly repeated “I will tire you out with my asking and, so as not to hear me anymore, you will grant me this grace ... but above all, Lord, let me understand what you want from me”.

I have a curious anecdote about my teenage life ... One Sunday morning, I was with my grandmother Rosa and my sister Franca at the exit of the Sanctuary, when a lady came up to me and said in a gentle and delicate voice: “You will receive a great gift from God”. In that head of a thirteen-year-old, and since I wanted to become a flight stewardess, I thought: “Maybe this will be the gift”. This memory resurfaced shortly after the birth of this special daughter,

She is happy also like this. Why shouldn't I be?

and reworking the memory I asked the Good Lord: “Help me to fall deeply in love with this gift, make me able to live up to this situation and not allow me to lose myself in evil thoughts. Lord, I ask you to let me live normality despite the diversity”. What I asked was granted to me. My daughter's life, the joy of not getting lost in the folds of such lacerating pain, and then ... At the age of five her first smile ... What more to ask for? She is happy also like this. Why shouldn't I be?

I never thought I would have other children, because I was so afraid of not making it and of not being able to give enough to everyone. Fortunately, the Lord always does as he pleases and does it exclusively for our own good: he made me a mother for the

second time. Despite the repeated requests of my gynaecologist to do an amniocentesis, I repeated: “I don't want to know anything, only God knows what is good for me, so I just have to respect and love this new life”. At the fourth month of pregnancy the waters break, and my beloved gynaecologist again tells me I have to prepare for the worst. But I, undisciplined as always, go home, try to rest as much as possible and, above all, try to raise awareness of God: “Please, Lord, you cannot do this to me, my heart would not bear it, you gave it to me, now you cannot take it back, give me this new motherhood”. The answer was not long in coming; that same afternoon I dreamed of San Michele [Saint Michael], he himself told me who he was and assured me that everything would be fine. And so it was. Little Michele, so called to honour the great Archangel, was in a hurry to be born. He was early by about a month, a wonderful child, sunny, smiling and always happy.

“The great gift of God” that was prophesied to me are my children who, together with my husband, have coloured my existence, filled my voids, filled my gaps, made me a new woman with great desire to do for love. As a girl, I wanted to gain experience in missions in Africa, but one of the leaders of the organisation I turned to told me that she couldn't take me because I would find my Africa here. I do not know if I will experience Africa, but I know that here in my country there is a small community of disabled children that I would like to be able to bring up, together with other parents, to give birth to the love of men in the heart of men, that special love of Jesus for his most fragile children, yes, but stronger because they have passed through the Passion of the Cross, waiting for the Resurrection. ■

THE MESSAGE OF SAINT RITA IN THE STORY OF FABRIZIA

Tuesday, May 21, at the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, Fabrizia Felici receives the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019 for having been able to embrace the cross welcoming as a gift the birth of her first-born Rosa Valentina, suffering from a rare disease, and to devote herself with joy, love and generosity to her family and the weakest.

Everything for my family

Testimony of Rosanna Serantoni,
Saint Rita International Recognition
Award 2019

Rosanna Serantoni from Cascia (Perugia) is a widow and mother of Fabio and Giovanni. With love and faith in the Lord, she dedicated her life to the family, first and foremost, assisting her son Giovanni who is autistic. Subsequently, Rosanna was called on to take care of her husband during the years of his illness and, immediately afterwards, assisted her eldest son Fabio in rehabilitation following a serious accident that deprived the young man of his independence.

I am 79 years old and I am the first of four children. After I got married, I went to live in Rome to follow my husband, Paolo, since he had a job there as a shop assistant. Also in Rome, in 1965, our first son Fabio was born. Nine years later, I experienced the joy of motherhood for the second time when Giovanni was born, but with autism.

Surrounded by the love and help of his family, Giovanni was able to live a happy and carefree childhood, until health problems arose that forced

him onto a hospital bed for about three years. On this occasion, I stayed by his side, giving him all the love, all the assistance and all the courage that only a mother can and knows how to give to her child.

Giovanni was born, but with autism

After many years of living in Rome for the sake of my family, in 1998 I and my husband decided to return to my native town, Cascia, where my first child, Fabio, also lives. A few years after we move, my husband is diagnosed with a tumour. Also on this occasion, I embrace the cross again and I don't back out. I assist him on a long and painful journey that lasts about three years and ends in 2003 with his death.

I stayed by his side

Just when my life seemed to have found a balance, Fabio, my eldest son, was the victim of a terrible accident in which he risked his life. Once again, the immeasurable love of a mother led me to stay close to him in the hospital for three long years.

I embrace the cross and I don't back out

I think that the fact Fabio did not die in the very serious incident and that he was not completely paralysed was a miracle through the intercession of the Virgin

PRAYER

O Mary, pilgrim of goodness
you walked with Jesus
and you were joyfully mother
and servant of God's plan.
We entrust our life to you
with serene trust
who attracts every child
in the arms of their mother.
Watch over, o Maria,
the growth of Christ
in us and in our families:
that each of our homes be a holy
Home
and each of our families be
a Holy Family
inhabited by peace and love.
The "yes" that made you the Mother
of God
and of all the children of God,
echoes in all of us.
Teach us your "yes", o Mary,
to love Heaven remaining on earth,
for staying in the world
without belonging to it,
for living industriously and serenely
waiting to arrive home with you.
Amen.

(Angelo Comastri, *Consecration to Mary*,
from the book "Prayers for every circum-
stance", edited by Father Gilles Jeanguen-
nin, Ed. Paoline, 2009)

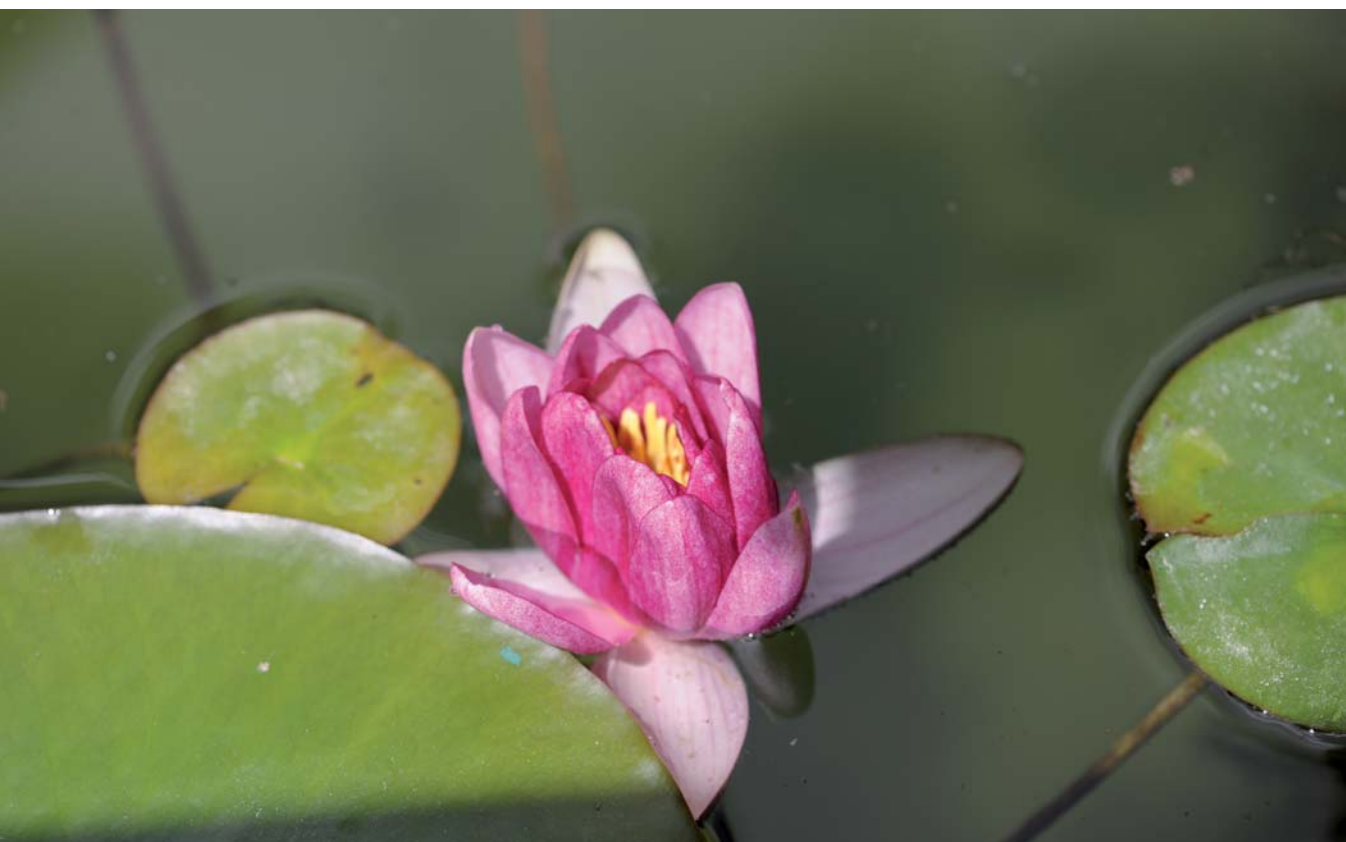
Mary and Saint Rita. I invoked them in a special way for his recovery; given the gravity of the situation there was not much hope. Fortunately, after a long period of coma, Fabio has begun to live again even though he is not fully independent. ■

THE MESSAGE OF SAINT RITA IN THE STORY OF ROSANNA

Tuesday, May 21, at the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, Rosanna Serantoni receives the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019 for having dedicated her life, not spared from daily pain and suffering, totally and lovingly to care of the family.

Hoping for my marriage

Testimony of Tina Epifania,
Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019



Nunzia Addolorata Epifania, known by all as Tina, lives in Matera carrying in her heart the suffering of being widowed, following a troubled marriage. After moving to Turin, she discovers that her husband betrays her, in a relationship that has lasted for years. With confidence, Tina entrusts her family to God and Saint Rita, obtaining her husband's repentance after a long ordeal.

I am Tina and I was born into a Christian family. In 1958, I got married. My husband was called Enzo. Leaving for the honeymoon, Enzo asked me what prayer I recited in the evening and he asked me to recite it together. For all

*I didn't know what
would happen to our
marriage*

the 25 years we shared together, in the evening we would recite together the prayer I had taught him, and this gave us strength to go on, even on difficult days when in the evening we could not fall asleep. In 1959, our daughter Benedetta was born. In that same year we moved to Turin and went to live in the "Santa Rita" district. Five years later, I realised that my

husband was cheating on me with one of our employees. A harsh ordeal began between us, at the same time as a really bad economic crisis (my husband being a tradesman). In Turin I didn't have my parents and my brothers, but I had only my Jesus and my dear Saint Rita, to whom I entrusted myself continuously and in full confidence. Returning to Matera for the period of vacation with my husband and little Benedetta, my father suggested to my husband Enzo that we move to Matera, applying for a license for a shop selling children's items and toys. My husband agreed, convinced that the license would never be granted. Instead, after a few months, the license arrived and he came to Matera to organise the shop. Meanwhile, I stayed with the child in Turin in the shop we had there. I didn't know what would happen to our marriage, because my husband's extramarital affair continued. Meanwhile I was ready to forgive and I vowed to Saint Rita: if everything was to return to normal and I was to have another pregnancy, and the baby was a girl, I would call her Rita; if, on the other hand, the baby was a boy, I would call him Francesco Paolo (in my prayers I had also leaned on San Francesco di Paola [St. Francis of Paola], venerated here in Matera and whose name most men bear).

In the meantime, we moved permanently to Matera. There was no lack of apologies from my husband for returning to Turin often. One day, during a phone call, he told me he couldn't wait to get home: I realised it was finally over and that I had not been wrong to place my trust in Saint Rita and St Francis of Paola. After a few months, I embarked on the much desired second pregnancy. A child was born whom

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.

Americo Gennaretti (Rome - Italy)
 Angelo Russo (Melbourne VIC - Australia)
 Anna Trentadue Rocca (Modugno BA - Italy)
 Antonio Seminatore (Kitchener ON - Canada)
 Emilio Rosa (Suzzara MN - Italy)
 Fabio Pistilli (Termoli CB - Italy)
 Francesco Spina (Spezzano della Sila CS - Italy)
 Gianluca Pistilli (Termoli CB - Italy)
 Giulia Musolino (Simbario VV - Italy)
 Giuseppa Marella (Poggio Moiano RI - Italy)
 Maria Catenaro (Toronto ON - Canada)

Pietro Delfino (Agrigento - Italy)
 Pietro Pistilli (Termoli CB - Italy)
 Pietro Rosa (Biasca TI - Switzerland)
 Verina Tiberi (Anversa degli Abruzzi AQ - Italy)

One day he told me he couldn't wait to get home

I called, as promised, Rita. A few years later, my husband had three heart attacks and in the following years he had serious heart failure. Fifteen years had passed since all this commotion and, one day, my husband thanked me for all those years in which I had never reproached him, nor recalled the suffering he had brought me, and he also thanked me for the forgiveness I had granted him. Meanwhile, his illness progressed, and he suffered a lot. He died peacefully. It was November 20, 1983. ■

THE MESSAGE OF SAINT RITA IN THE STORY OF TINA

Tuesday 21 May, at the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, Nunzia Addolorata Epifania receives the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019 for having believed in the Sacrament of Marriage, defending it so much as to forgive the betrayal of her husband with love, prayer and testimony, bringing him to repentance and conversion.

FEAST OF SAINT RITA 2019

CASCIA, SANCTUARY
OF SAINT RITA
FROM MAY 20 TO 22



MONDAY, MAY 20

Hall of Peace

21:00 - Presentation of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019. Gianluigi Basiliotti, ANSA journalist and director of Umbria Radio, presents to the community the four "women of Rita", that is, women who have known how to put Ritian values into practice:

- **Elisabetta Forlenza** from Torrevecchia Pia (Pavia), for having been able to forgive the person whose car ran into and killed her son Federico, and for having transformed her pain into love to offer to others, creating a prayer group that brought many young people and adults who were far from the faith closer to God.
- **Fabrizia Felici** from Norcia (Perugia), for having been able to embrace her cross by accepting as a gift the birth of her first-born Rosa Valentina, suffering from a rare disease, and to dedicate herself with joy, love and generosity to her family and the weakest.
- **Rosanna Serantoni** from Cascia (Perugia), widow and mother of Fabio and Giovanni, suffering from autism, for having dedicated her life, not spared from pain and daily suffering, totally and lovingly to care of the family.
- **Nunzia Addolorata Epifania**, known by all as **Tina**, from Matera, for having believed in the Sacrament of Marriage, defending it so much as to forgive her husband's betrayals with love, prayer and witness, bringing him to repentance and conversion.

TUESDAY, MAY 21

Basilica of Saint Rita

16:30 - Solemn Eucharistic Concelebration of the Augustinian Family, presided over by Father Joseph L. Farrell, Vicar General of the Augustinian Order.

17:30 - Handing over of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2019. Father Farrell gives the parchment symbol of the prestigious recognition to the chosen women of Rita.

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

Square of the Basilica of Saint Rita

20:45 - Musical entertainment with the "Giovanni e Donato da Cascia" Band and the Mediaeval Flagwavers and Tambourines of Cascia, who will parade on the square framed by the lights lit all over the town.

21:30 - Arrival of the Torch of Peace, symbol of the **Twinning of Faith and Peace between Cascia and Matera** in the name of Saint Rita.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

SOLEMNITY OF SAINT RITA OF CASCIA

Hall of Peace

05:00 - Morning Mass.

Masses will also be celebrated at: 06:00, 07:00, 08:00 and 09:00.

Square of the Basilica of Saint Rita

10:00 - Arrival of the Historical Parade in fifteenth-century costumes and the **Procession** bearing the statue of Saint Rita. Leaving at 08:30 from Roccaporena, Rita's hometown, the two parades meet up at the feet of Cascia (09:30).

11:00 - Supplication to Saint Rita followed by the **Solemn Pontifical**. Closure with the traditional ritual of the **Blessing of the Roses** (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.

Diary of a twinning

Stories of devotion from the city of Matera,
twinning with Cascia for the Feast of Santa Rita 2019

by Maurizia Di Curzio

Thanks to Anna Rita Cappiello for kind concession of the photos of the twinning.

Beirut, Buenos Aires, Parigi: after these great capitals, this year the Twinning of Faith and Peace for the feast of Saint Rita is with another capital - Matera, European capital of culture 2019.

Once in Matera, in Piazza Nitti there is a group of people who, closed in a circle, hide the statue of Saint Rita from view; in fact, as soon as the group opens up, there it is, triumphant on the table with a host of little guards under it, many nursery school children holding a rose - holding it in their little hands like a trophy they have just won. In procession, we arrive at the church of Maria SS. Addo-



The civil and religious institutions of the two twin cities, Cascia and Matera, during the ritual of lighting the Torch.

This year the Twinning is with Matera

lorata [Our Lady of Sorrows].

Don Michele La Rocca, pastor of the Church of the Addolorata, immediately stands out for his energy. He is the director of his community, he is a beacon who with his eyes gives way to all collaborators for making this parish alive and when, in his initial greeting, he says "we Christians do not believe in chance, but everything is a design of God, there is a subtle thread that unites us to the Lord who designed and wanted this twinning", I



This year, the Twinning of Faith and Peace for the feast of Saint Rita saw Cascia join Matera, the European capital of culture 2019.



Raffaello Giulio De Ruggieri (from left), mayor of Matera, holds the Torch of Peace together with the mayor of Cascia, Mario De Carolis.

married. She continues to follow the functions in the church of Purgatory, then due to lack of priests they move to the church of Saint Francis of Assisi, then to the church of Christ the King, until having to continue prayers in her own home.

We are in 2002, when a bolt from the blue strikes Melania's family: her second son is diagnosed with a lymphoma, one of the worst forms of lymphoma. "When I found out," recalls Melania,

With prayer my heart found peace

think that not even Melania knew that his devotion was no accident, together with his tenacity, his stubbornness, his constancy, his being in search of a "hut" like Joseph and Mary.

To tell you the story of Melania Morano - an inhabitant of Matera devoted to Saint Rita - I have to take you back in time. We are in the 1950s. Melania's mother knows the patron saint of Cascia thanks to her friend, who gives a statue of the saint to the church of Purgatory, where it is still preserved today and is the oldest statue in the city. She remembers with emotion when her mother took her to the functions of the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita. Melania gets married, becomes a mother of four children. Life flows, the children grow up, they in turn get



The relic of Saint Rita donated to the city of Matera.

"I fainted. At first, I was angry, but seeing my desperation my mother said to me: 'Pray to Saint Rita, you have seen how many times you have prayed and she has helped you.' I told her: 'But this is something impossible'. She repeated to me: 'Pray, my daughter'. I prayed to Saint Rita aware that we cannot always have graces, but with prayer my tormented heart found peace."

After a journey of hope to Milan, after many months, the doctors decide on a transplant. "And the transplant succeeded, and is this not a grace?" continues a moved Melania, "it was Saint Rita, it was she through intercession with God".

Now four years have passed since Melania and the devotees of Saint Rita finished their pilgrimage; with the arrival of Don Michele in the parish they have found their cave from which to raise the prayers to heaven and spread around the intense perfume of rose that recalls many Christians seeking help

and support. Devotees like Anna Rita, proud of her name, who together with her boyfriend pray to the Saint to have the grace to find a home and be able to crown their dream of love. Or like Anna, who after having found the strength to overcome a sad period in the Saint, spreads the Ritian cult

tance - it was Don Michele who introduced her to Saint Rita and thanks to her intercession today she carries a new life in her womb.

Yes, it is a design of God, the choice of Matera, capital of culture. *Culture* comes from the Latin; it means *cultivate* and in her urn Saint Rita cultivates love for each of us. ■



The people of Matera in procession for Saint Rita of Cascia.

among her friends - even tonight she has convinced one of her friends to follow her. Or like Serena, with her husband next to her, who looks at the statue and the relic of the saint from a dis-

CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS TWINNING

Like every year, on the occasion of the celebrations of May 22 dedicated to Saint Rita, the municipality of Cascia and the Augustinian Family choose a city of the world with which to unite in the Twinning of Faith and Peace, which is characterised by Ritian devotion and worship. This year the city is Matera, European capital of culture 2019.



Don Michele La Rocca, pastor of the Church of the Addolorata, together with children of Matera during a moment of the celebration.



“Stories at the summit” project

The Little Bees walk together to climb every mountain

by the Editorial Team

From July 22, 2019, for a week, the Little Bees of the Beehive of Santa Rita will share an adventure on the peaks of Valle d'Aosta for an experience of growth and sharing within the project “Stories at the summit”, realised with the Camici e Pigiama Association.

“We chose the mountain,” explains Violanda Lleshaj, director of the Beehive, the home for girls and boys from families in difficulty, “as a metaphor for the path we are tracing with our Little Bees. A path made up of many stories that intertwine to form another story: that of the group”.

The project theme is orientation, “and which environment more than the mountain,” continues the director, “can better represent a place where, along the way, you can get lost or find yourself at a crossroads and not know where to go? This is exactly what can happen when we are on the path of life”.

Having a sense of orientation means knowing where you are in relation to the direction you are following or intending to follow. Being aware of having lost the way (in doubt, in failure, in the uncertainty of choice) implies finding this position, also

With the project “Stories at the summit”, we help the Little Bees of Saint Rita write a part of their personal story, encouraging group cohesion, enhancing the growth of autonomy, improving self-esteem and educating in respect for nature.



discovering unexpected and different paths, relying on the awareness of one's own reference points (abilities, relationships, values, passions and wishes) thanks to which it is possible to start walking again.

"Mountain routes," says Lleshaj, "imply the possibility of losing the road or the uncertainty with respect to which path is more appropriate to choose. We will work towards this: identifying our points of reference, knowing that every so often during the journey it will be necessary to look back to become familiar with the road of return, benefiting from the wealth of experiences lived. It is the premise that serves for having the key to interpreting this experience in the mountains, setting it in an educational framework that aims to make the girls ac-

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

If you wish, you can help the Little Bees of the Beehive of Saint Rita to live this adventure on discovery of themselves and the group. To carry out the "Stories at the summit" project we need to collect 12 thousand euro. Together, we can make it.

€ **13** buys a T-shirt and a cap for a Little Bee.

€ **35** guarantees a rucksack and a water bottle for a Little Bee.

€ **60** guarantees a complete kit for experiencing nature for a Little Bee.

Support this project:

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specifying the reason as "Stories at the summit"



quire a greater awareness of themselves, of their emotions and how they can be called by name, of their own abilities, of their limitations, of the importance of relationship and of the strength that can be drawn from cooperation, mutual trust, and how all these elements can be tools to overcome the moments of crisis and difficulties present in life. An experience that can help each of us write a part of our personal history by encouraging group cohesion, enhancing the growth of autonomy, improving self-esteem and the ability to relate, and educating in respect for nature and in-depth knowledge of the mountain".



PIA UNIONE PRIMARIA
SANTA RITA
DA CASCIA
Famiglia agostiniana

by Marta Ferraro

That union born of charity

Testimony of the PPU group of Gallicano nel Lazio

From benefactors of the Beehive to those responsible for the Saint Rita Pious Union of Gallicano nel Lazio (in the province of Rome): this is the gratifying path of Eulalia Randolfi and her husband Mario De Gregori. Their story is linked to the double act of devotion to the Monastery of Saint Rita.

"I am 63 years old and have been coming to Cascia for 64 year, that is, since I was in my mother's womb", says Eulalia proudly, talking about her devotion to the saint of the impossible.

"The story of Saint Rita has always been present in my life. Ever since I was a child, my family was devoted to the saint of Cascia, and especially my paternal grandmother". For this reason, she who was a tradeswoman and had a small restaurant, used to offer the whole town breakfast for the May feast, distributing, in addition to hot chocolate and pastries of all kinds, holy cards and souvenir of the monastery. Then, she sent an offer to the Augustinian nuns

for the needs of the girls of the Beehive, the woman continues in her story.

Having become an adult, Eulalia, along with her husband, continued to feel very strongly, thanks to the example received in the family, the need to contribute to helping the girls who become part of the great Beehive project, which has now been active for over 80 years.

***I've been
coming to
Cascia since I
was in my
mother's womb***

Leafing through the pages of this magazine, Eulalia and Mario got to know about the Pious Primary Union of Saint Rita of Cascia and the desire to become part of this association took root in them, initially as individuals. Soon after, however, the couple understood that belonging to this group of

devotees could be an important opportunity to share with their fellow citizens. "I had many hesitations at the beginning," explains Eulalia. "Gallicano is a small town and already there are several parish activities that are very active and valid, but we nevertheless proposed the idea and, to my surprise, after two days we already had 50 members. Considering the numbers of the small town (around 6,300 inhabitants, ed.), it was a great achievement of which I am very proud".

A little over a year after affiliation, there are 70 members and they already have the banner. The group has also achieved the important goal of moving the statue of Saint Rita from the church of San Rocco which, for organisational reasons is often closed, to the cathedral of Sant'Andrea for worship by the faithful. The PPU of Gallicano nel Lazio meets monthly from September to February for catechesis with Don Alfredo Conforti and recites the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita



The PPU group of Galliciano nel Lazio on a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia.

awaiting the May 22 celebrations.

"It is very important for me to be part of the PPU and contribute to the needs of the Little Bees," confesses Eulalia. "Every year I participate in the 'open doors' of the Beehive - the event during which the benefactors of this work of charity can meet the children guests of the monastery - and participating in their enthusiasm enriches me. Seeing how our offers are put into practice ... I greatly appreciate this. Since then,

my husband and I have become responsible for the PPU, and we have made known that we are benefac-

***After two days
we already had
50 members***

tors, a fact that we had always kept hidden. Now, in addition to participating in the meetings of the Beehive, we also take part in the PPU meetings, like the national

meeting, and we also organise a pilgrimage to Cascia for sharing the beautiful emotions that this land offers us with members".

Eulalia's mission continues at home: having become a grandmother, recalling the example of her paternal grandmother, she says: "When my granddaughter comes home, we never fail to recite a little prayer together". This gesture is intended to be a small germ for continuing the rich and profound relationship with Cascia.

The usher of Christ

Story of the Venerable Giovanni Battista Jossa

Giovanni Battista Jossa was born in Naples in January 1767 and was baptised on the 21st of the same month in the Church of Santa Maria in Piazza. Together with his seven brothers, he was educated religiously by his parents, Giuseppe and Grazia Nepeta, distinguishing himself for his docile, humble character and his innate propensity for charity towards others. At the age of thirteen his father died. The President of the Royal Council, the supreme Court of the time, took him as an usher, grateful for the long and scrupulous service as caretaker lent by his parent before. The con-

ness in imitation of Christ: in the darkness of the world, he was a shining example of life according to the Gospel. He used all the wages he received in support of the family and the needy, without keeping anything for himself, and he

dedicated his free time from work to distribution of the alms collected for the sick and for prisoners. This was the beginning of his apostolate of charity, which was strengthened by constantly engaging in the formation of

He treated the sick and offered himself to the humblest services

duct of a virtuous and pious life nullified the invasion of corruption in the workplace and the provocations of colleagues, strengthening him in faith and on his way to holi-



Portrait of the Venerable Jossa.

In the suffering he saw the same person as the Father

his Christian conscience and spiritually nourished with the Eucharistic body and prayer. Being very close to the Augustinian community of Saint Augustine, he was trained as a Christian according to the spirituality of the Bishop of Hippo.

Consistent with faith in the Lord, he refused to participate in the civil oath imposed by French occupation and left his post as usher of the Court. Without work, he said: "I will be the usher of Jesus Christ". Thus, he began to devote himself totally to his apostolate of charity in the hospitals of the Annunziata, the Incurables and the Pilgrims, places that he called "the antechamber of paradise". Here he treated the sick, prepared them to receive the sacraments and offered himself to the humblest services for meeting their needs. With the same zeal, he offered himself to the inmates of the Neapolitan prisons, especially of the so-called Mandrullo, where the poorest and most forgotten were detained. In the last and the suffering, he saw the same person as the Father, as he himself said: "If you were to come with me to hospitals

and prisons, you would find the same person as Jesus Christ".

Furthermore, he was loved like a father by orphans, to whom he distributed food and clothing that he collected by begging himself. He never kept back anything for himself, dressing miserably, fasting and imposing severe penances. He died on July 4, 1828, at the age of 61, in the odour of sanctity and was buried in the church of Sant Agostino alla Zecca in Naples, which he had long attended as an Augustinian Tertiary.

Like Saint Rita, Giovanni Battista Jossa spent his life in the name of charity towards

Like Saint Rita, he knew how to unite with the cross

God and neighbour. Love is the key word that unites the testimony of faith of these two luminous Augustinian figures. Like Rita, he knew how to unite with the cross, making it an instrument of salvation for him and for others.

The heroic virtues having already been declared, it is hoped that the cause of the Venerable Giovanni Battista Jossa will continue its journey until the desired beatification and canonisation. ■

What you should know. The General Postulation of the General Curia of the Order of St. Augustine deals with promoting the causes of canonisation of members of the Augustinian Family and at the same time fostering knowledge and devotion for the servants of God, venerables, blessed and saints that are part of it.

SMILING AT LIFE

Send photos of your children to 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. Diletta Maelle Battagion (Vicenza - Italy)
2. Eva Leodari (Isola Vicentina VI - Italy)
3. Giulia and Chiara Sanna (Borgomanero NO - Italy)
4. Malvyn and Serena Rita Wetzel (Woippy - France)
5. Olivia Mogentale (Isola Vicentina VI - Italy)
6. Rossella Lomurno (Altamura BA - Italy)

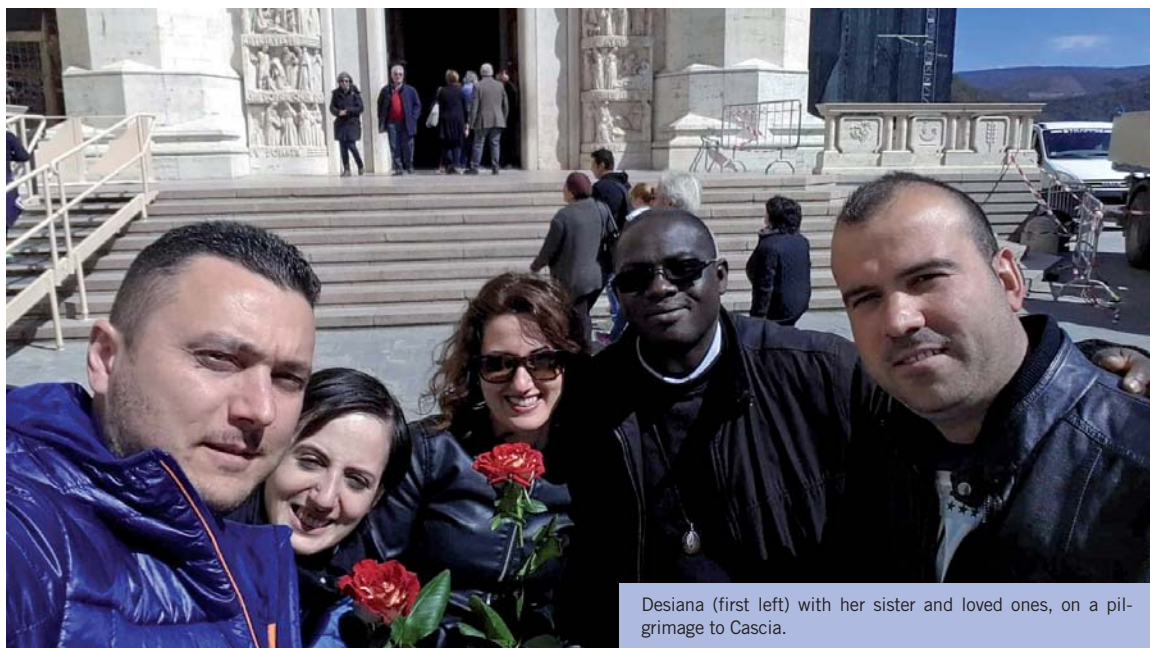
On pilgrimage, for body and soul

In times when life puts us to the test it is nice to have a place to go back to and feel at home, a place to be pampered and listened to, to recharge well and resume living our reality, the battle we are called on to fight.

This is well known by Desiana Di Lodovi-

with her family, approached Saint Rita and Cascia, two “elements” that have now become essential in the story of her life.

In that period of initial discouragement, when everything appeared grey and complicated, Martina approached prayer, rightly thinking that closeness to God could help



Desiana (first left) with her sister and loved ones, on a pilgrimage to Cascia.

co, a 31-year-old woman who has been fighting a difficult form of leukemia for 6 years.

While coming from a very believing and devout family, Desiana had never had the chance to come across the figure of Saint Rita until the illness, unfortunately, knocked on her door. Immediately after discovering the evil, her sister Martina approached a prayer group and it was at that moment that the young woman, together

***It is nice to have a
place to feel at home***

her and her loved ones to endure the difficult test. And, one day, a lady of the group told her: “Entrust your sister to Saint Rita, the saint of impossible cases”. It seemed strange to Martina that a woman she had just met could speak those words to her,

but the young woman who was looking for hope and comfort trusted her. Without knowing it, the lady opened the doors of hope, which has supported the Di Lodovico family so well in recent years.

Shortly thereafter, the two sisters went to Cascia with the family and since then, de-

“Saint Rita, you're accompanying me,” she thought

spite sometimes invasive therapies, Desiana goes at least once a month on a pilgrimage to the town of Saint Rita for restoring body and soul. “As soon as I can, I run there to ask for protection. For me, Cascia is like a blanket. It makes me feel protected. I stop in front of the urn of Saint Rita and feel as if she were telling me 'Come to me' and give me a caress,” says the woman.

Thanks to her frequent pilgrimages to the Sanctuary of Cascia, Desiana, who lives in Pescara, has woven a deep bond of friendship with the Augustinian nuns and with Maurizia Di Curzio, a close collaborator of the Monastery, who never fail to support her and listen to her.

During these years of intense combat in which, despite two bone marrow transplants, the disease reappears undaunted, there has never been any lack of signs that Desiana likes to interpret as gestures of proximity to the saint of the thorn. For example, once, on one of the many journeys

In the garden of her home, a niche for Saint Rita

of hope in search of resolving treatments, while she was going to Bologna for hospitalisation, she met a lorry on the way with an “immense” image of the Umbrian saint. A heartbeat that filled her with joy! Once again, Desiana was not alone. “Saint Rita, you're accompanying me,” she thought.



Desiana next to her chapel dedicated to Saint Rita.

A lady told her: “Entrust your sister to Saint Rita”

To feel even closer to Cascia, the young woman wanted to create a niche in the garden of her home where she could place a statuette of Saint Rita. An indissoluble bond, which is fed by her fervent prayer and that of her family, together with the closeness of the Augustinian family of Cascia with whom they are always in communion of prayer. ■

TELL US YOUR STORY OF PILGRIMAGE

If you have also visited the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia on pilgrimage and wish to tell Marta Ferraro your story, write to us at redazione@santaritadacascia.org and we will contact you to share your experience with the readers of “From the Bees to the Roses”.

The grace of Frederick Dave

by Rita Gentili

The Philippines, an archipelago of over 7,000 islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean; beaches of fine white sand, palm trees, forests, hills, rice fields, mountains, tropical flora and fauna; on the opposite side of the globe with respect to Italy, over 10 thousand kilometres away from Cascia: this is where we

The same parish from which Frederick Dave's testimony of grace comes. Today, he is a young thirty-five-year-old man who has experienced the tragedy of an illness for which there seemed to be no hope of survival. At the age of thirteen, an altar boy in the parish of Saint Rita in Guiguinto, Frederick began to manifest a serious malaise attributed, initially and wrongly, to dengue fever or malaria. Only after a double biopsy to which he is subjected at a paediatric hos-



Today Frederick is happily married to Roma Soria Olores.

10 thousand kilometres away from Cascia

find one of the most deeply rooted and widespread forms of devotion to Santa Rita. A faith that manifests itself in cities, neighbourhoods, streets, hospitals, schools, women and, of course, parishes that bear the name of the little woman from Cascia. One of these is located in the town of Guiguinto, in the Luzon region in the north of the country, where the capital Manila is located. Guiguinto is the parish with which, in 2009, Cascia sealed the twinning of faith in the name of the saint of the impossible.

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Philippines

City: Guiguinto

To know: The Philippines is the only Asian country with a Christian majority, even if there are important Muslim minorities. The theatre of continuous colonisers, Spanish and American above all, the Philippines has a very rich culture, the result of the mixture of foreign influences with indigenous elements.

There seemed to be no hope of survival

married in 2010 in another parish named after the saint of the impossible, in Quezon City, the largest city in the metropolitan area of Manila and, until 1976, capital of the country. The strong devotion to Saint Rita in



Devotees of Saint Rita in procession along the streets of Guiguinto, in the Philippines.

pital in Manila, he receives the diagnosis: fourth-stage non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Thus begins the heavy phase of chemotherapy that Frederick undergoes each week in the first year after diagnosis. Frederick's family, especially the mother, member of a parish prayer group, entrusts her son to God, asking for the intercession of Saint Rita. Even the ecclesiastical family, which Frederick is no longer able to attend due to his grave weakness, addresses its prayers to the Saint of the Impossible to ask for his recovery. Which seems to improve, only to have relapses. The second year of chemotherapy, however, slows down the frequency of sessions, which become one a month and in less than three years, Frederick is completely cured, to the amazement of the doctors who had little hope given the advanced stage of the disease. Today Frederick is happily married to Roma Soria Olores, whom he

Frederick is cured, to the amazement of the doctors

the Philippines is due to the presence in the archipelago since the 1500s of Augustinian fathers and nuns who have spread the cult. Also because of a further, although not very pleasant point in common with Cascia: the Philippines is a highly seismic country and even here the people invoke the saint of the impossible to ask for protection from earthquakes. Exactly like the people of Cascia who, to thank Saint Rita for the protection received during the earthquake of 1730, established the Procession of the Banner which, from 1731, is repeated every year on the Sunday before the May 22 feast. ■

The saint of the people

edited by the Sisters

Rita of Cascia is known in the world as the saint of impossible cases, because she teaches us that if we put ourselves in the hands of God, everything can happen, everything becomes possible. Millions of people turn to her, especially women, the sick and families, who trust in her intercession to overcome the tough obstacles of everyday life.

If we put ourselves in the hands of God, anything can happen

Margherita Lotti is one of the saints most revered in the world. And there are up to a million pilgrims who come every year to this “hill of hope” which is Cascia.

But Saint Rita is also known as saint of the family, of dialogue, of forgiveness or, more simply, saint of the people. Woman, wife, mother, widow, nun, stigmatised, Rita of Cascia is “one of us”. For many, a sister. Despite having more than 600 years, her story and her message are more current and closer

to the people than ever. Devotees, in fact, love her for her “normality” and for having carried her cross in simplicity and with humility.

But Rita is not only considered “of the people”, she

since the day of her death. In the night between May 21 and 22, 1457 (or 1447, as there are two currents of thought on Rita's date of death, as well as of birth), it is said that the bells rang by



Transit of Saint Rita, work by G.B. Galizzi (XX century, Basilica of Saint Rita, Cascia).

It is said that the bells rang by themselves

is also a saint “by popular acclaim”: she was canonised by the Church only in 1900, while in fact her holiness had been recognised by the people many centuries before,

themselves, to tell everyone that Rita had risen to heaven. And the people, from the poorest to the richest, rushed up to our monastery (which was then named after Saint

Mary Magdalene) to honour the holy body. So many people came for days and days that the nuns could not bury her, as was the case for the other sisters when they died. Everyone wanted to venerate the person who was already considered a saint. Everyone wanted to pay homage to her. All of us, pray to God before her, to ask for her intercession. The torchlight procession, which takes place in Cascia at nightfall on May 21 each year (the eve of the Feast of Saint Rita), reminds us of this continuous flow of people for Rita. A flow that has never stopped: still today, the

Her story and her message are more relevant than ever

devotees come from all over the world to flood into the churchyard named after her, with a torch in their hand.

The love of the many pilgrims was so overwhelming that, for the first anniversary of Rita's death, the Municipality of Cascia established her feast as May 22. But to have a mass to celebrate, Ri-

ta's people had to wait a long time: only in 1627, in fact, was Rita proclaimed Blessed and on May 22 of the following year the first Holy Mass was celebrated in her honour during the festivities. On the occasion of Mass (today, Solemn Pontifical), in the past as today, a meadow of red roses emerges from the asphalt of the Sanctuary avenue: in fact, in the rite of Blessing of the Roses, devotees raise the rose to symbolise the saint, so that the celebrant can bless it. That rose is then donated to a sick person or preciously kept by a person in search of help and listening. ■

AS IF SEEING THE INVISIBLE

Dearest friend,

"it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye", writes Saint-Exupery in the book *"The Little Prince"*.

"How could I understand if no one guides me?" could be your question. It is a journey towards oneself and Truth, the path is that of the Spirit. Here are some steps: turn on the search and thirst for God, tell us that we are His children and this is our true identity, remember our history, let the desires of the heart emerge in search of the truest ones ...

We offer you a few days for listening, praying, discerning, living at the school of Jesus, the inner Master ...

FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE
from August 5 (dinner) to 10 (breakfast) 2019

For information: Monastery of Saint Rita - 06043 Cascia PG
tel.: 0743 76221 - e-mail: monastero@santaritadacascia.org



Let's give
a nest to
those that
have none.

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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