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FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

In the love
of **Saint Rita**
we will never
be alone.



SUMMARY

- 3 *Editorial*
Speak, see, listen
- 4 *We are not alone*
In the love of Saint Rita we will never be alone
- 8 *Feast of Saint Rita*
Preview of a historic May 22
- Saint Rita for Syria: a concrete project of charity, peace and hope**
- 12 *Stories from the Sanctuary*
The great strength of faith
- 14 *Around the world*
Saint Rita, a celebrity in Los Angeles
- 16 *Primary Pious Union*
A pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the heart
- 18 *Mother Fasce*
Overcoming illness with a faith full of love
- 19 *Augustinians*
The Bishop who opposed Napoleon
- The last farewell to Father Luigi Montanari**
- 22 *The Archivist*
The "miraculous flight" of Saint Rita
- 24 *Dialogue with the Monastery*
God is Love, God is Communication

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Speak, see, listen

Silence has been the constant note of these long months, in which the coronavirus pandemic has shown itself to us as an evil as powerful as it is invisible. Silence has invaded our life and houses, has filled the empty cities, touching our hearts, shaken by so much suffering and too much death. “We are all in the same boat in this storm”, to use the words of the Holy Father, during meditation in a deserted St. Peter's Square. This time of trial has made us understand the weight and strength of speech and communication. An act at the foundations of human relationships and beyond. Indeed, silence has also brought to light the value of the Word, which is God.

Silence has replaced our lives. But it has failed to break the Lord's communication to us, a universal and omnipresent communication, which has manifested itself and been fulfilled again and again. It has strengthened the bond among us and between us and Him, giving new life to our prayer and new strength to our spirit, to allow us to walk in the ways of the Lord: often new, perhaps full of fears on our part, but always wonderful!

What does communication mean? An interpersonal event, but also of communion and relationship with God. Let us rediscover the three verbs of communication, from the gospel of Matthew: “Go back and report to John what you hear and see” (Matthew 11:4). Speak, see and listen.

Speak. Man is such because he speaks, not because he has a soul or an intelligence. Man speaks, and speaking is a symbolic activity that allows us to express intangible meanings. The word has enormous weight: with it I can express myself, I can relate to others and to God.

See. Authentic seeing implies going beyond the surface of things. For communication, one must see, and see with this depth. “In God we always discover new seas, the more we sail” (St. John of the Cross). The purpose of communication is precisely this: to show that the horizons of religious knowledge are infinite.

Listen. The perception of the presence



of the Lord is demonstrated in the way in which it is proclaimed and in the attention with which the Word of God is heard. Through listening, the assembly manifests the fundamental and permanent attitude of the church “in religious listening to the Word of God”: we are all “under” the Word, we must listen to it, welcome it and serve it, communicating it.

Speak, see and listen, or communicate. Only in this way will there be no more silence, capable of replacing us, as we are “words” and “stories” within the great and magnificent story of God. ■

In the love of Saint Rita we will never be alone

The #isolatedbutnotalone campaign:
united in faith and hope,
against coronavirus

by Alessia Nicoletti



“**W**e live in difficult times, times like never before. Everyone's lives have stopped, have been turned upside down. Everything we took for granted is now missing. The terrible coronavirus pandemic has swept away our certainties, leaving a deafening silence behind. We now know that life has enormous value because it is a gift from God. Now we know that we came into the world not to govern time, but to live it. In the love of Saint Rita we will never be alone. And we will be reborn and embrace each other, stronger than before. The Lord will guide us”.

These words of great vision and hope of the Prioress, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, extracted from the letter that the Mother sent to devotees in April, are the perfect and clear image of how the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery has lived and is living these months, in which Italy and the whole world are facing a test that will indelibly mark the history of humanity. Like all of us, the Augustinian nuns had to close the doors of their home, but they did not close the doors of their hearts at all and in fact, before anything else, they did

not forget people and thought of new ways to be close to them, to listen, to comfort, to bring warmth and hope, especially because of the distance that has been imposed on us and in this urgent moment of need. Like Saint Rita, who in her time became an operator of hope and care for those affected by plague, so the nuns of Cascia wanted to bring their closeness, not only to Ritian devotees but also to all the people involved in the emergency situation

The nuns did not forget people and thought of new ways to be close to them

due to coronavirus, in Italy and in the world, gathering in prayer and asking for the intercession of Saint Rita. Incessantly, the prayers of the nuns have been addressed to the sick, to the deceased, to the families who are in pain and those who are in difficulty, to the health workers and the volunteers who are at the forefront of this struggle for life, to those who govern us, to

THE DEVOTEES OF SAINT RITA FOR THE BELLARIA HOSPITAL IN BOLOGNA

The #isolatedbutnotalone campaign also includes the Pilgrim's Kit - made up of three digital materials for daily prayer: the Supplication-Rosary to Saint Rita, the Examination of Conscience and the Novena to Santa Rita - for supporting the most fragile through the charity works of the monastery. Coronavirus has made people's needs more urgent and for this reason the monastery felt the need to act. At the beginning of April, the first fruit of the charity of devout Ritians, who donated by downloading the Kit from santaritadacascia.org, was concrete help in the form of a donation of 2,000 gowns to the Bellaria Hospital in Bologna in view of the increasing difficulty of finding such protective equipment. By donating 7,320 euro to the Il Bene Foundation, a Bolognese non-profit organisation that for years has been helping one of the hospitals today in the frontline of the fight against the virus, the monastery and devotees activated a chain of good, making a difference. “The gowns were delivered to the Bellaria Hospital. They were completely without them! The gratitude of the operators gushed irrepressibly through the masks!”. This is the message of Francesco Rosetti, President of the Il Bene Foundation, which makes it clear what the 2,000 gowns mean: protection, support and love for one of the most exposed categories in this common struggle for life.

those who work for our safety and for primary needs and to those who do their part, in this great test that we face, by staying at home and respecting the rules in order to protect themselves and others.

The nuns, custodians of the message and example of Saint Rita, have worked every day to reach their large family of

In a family one never feels truly divided

devotees all over the world, because in a family, even if distant, one never feels truly divided. And it is precisely the desire to bring Saint Rita into the homes of the faithful, in this time when they cannot go to Cascia, that gave rise to the campaign called #isolatedbutnotalone: a set of services and initiatives created for joining together in prayer and making no one feel



The president of the Il Bene Foundation Francesco Rosetti and Dr. Fabrizio Salvi, the neurologist in charge of the Il Bene Centre, delivered the 2000 gowns to the Bellaria Hospital in Bologna.

alone, bringing directly into homes the embrace and comfort of the saint of the impossible and of hope, who always reminds us that by entrusting ourselves to God everything is possible. In this way, the work



The nuns have always guaranteed the listening service and have never allowed the proximity and consolation of Saint Rita for the faithful to be missing.

of the Augustinian communities of Cascia has become virtual, adapting to the needs of the present, but never abandoning its

Bearing a message that can instil hope in the hearts of those who receive it

spiritual path and bringing us even closer in the love of Saint Rita and of God. To be close to devotees and to reach them in their homes, the nuns have learned to use the new technologies first-hand, working hard to master all the tools useful for the

IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF CORONAVIRUS

The month of May opened with the special attention that the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery wanted to address to the many, too many, deceased who have lost their lives due to coronavirus and who have died without the affection and closeness of the their loved ones, also unable to attend their funerals. Two initiatives were dedicated to the souls of all the dead and to the comfort of their grieving families. On Saturday May 2, the prayer for the deceased recited by the Augustinian nuns at the urn that houses the body of Saint Rita, ended with the laying of candles: many small lights, symbolically lit to represent all the souls ascended to heaven. Then on Sunday May 3, the Holy Mass, broadcast live on YouTube from the Basilica of Cascia, was a celebration in suffrage for all the deceased. Many people participated virtually in the ceremony and joined in prayer so that the souls of the dead could be welcomed to the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven and for the consolation of their loved ones.

cause, while maintaining the warmth, sensitivity and tenderness that have always characterised their mission.

There are many moments of union, communion and sharing created within the #isolatedbutnotalone campaign and aimed at all those who have wanted to become virtual pilgrims, meeting each other and meeting Saint Rita even at the time of coronavirus. Every day, more than 50 thousand people from all over the world log in to the virtual connection with activated services. They are those who pray the Rosary with the nuns, recited live on the Facebook page of the “Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia” monastery from Monday to Friday, from

Joining in prayer and making no one feel alone

11:45 to 12:15. They are also the faithful who follow the Holy Masses of the Augustinian fathers live from the Basilica of Cascia: every Thursday, on the occasion of the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita, which ended on May 14, and Sunday at 17:00, via the You Tube channel of the “Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia” monastery.

Thanks to digital means and platforms, the family of Saint Rita was able to live to-

gether, virtually and spiritually, Holy Week and Easter, welcoming the joy of the Resurrection of the Son of God, celebrating his mysterious and victorious journey towards ours salvation and praying for the gift of rebirth for each of us.

In addition to these moments open to virtual participation, the nuns and fathers also wanted to address the faithful in an even more direct and intimate way, just as they used to do before the virus arrived in our lives, welcoming, listening and bringing them comfort. They did this by making video messages, again shared through the monastery's Facebook page, every Saturday for the nuns and every Tuesday for the fathers. Bringing a message that can instil hope in the hearts of those who receive it. This was the intent of the nuns, who chose to be guided by the word of the Psalms, which are the way in which God taught us to pray, inspired each time also by the powerful example of Saint Rita, whom everyone feels close to. Along the same lines, the message of the fathers, together with the Rector Father Bernardino Pinciaroli, who wanted to create a moment of prayer with Saint Augustine, founder of the Augustinian Order and spiritual father of Saint Rita, the model she surely looked up to for opening her heart to the Lord and thus overcome the many sufferings she faced. ■

Preview of a historic May 22

In the next number:

Special issue dedicated to the Feast of Saint Rita 2020

This year, the coronavirus pandemic imposed a different Feast of Santa Rita, which literally made history. In fact, the nuns spared no energy in bringing the feast into the homes of all devotees around the world. Hence the #MaratonaFestaSantaRita was born: 8 hours of live global streaming from Cascia. Precisely because of the absolutely extraordinary nature of this May 22, we have decided to tell you about all its aspects, dedicating a special issue – the July-August issue – to it, and this will offer a wonderful journey inside the Feast of Saint Rita 2020.



This year we took the Feast of Saint Rita into the homes of all her devotees, in Italy and worldwide, through a global 8-hour live streaming. The nuns did everything possible to ensure commentary of the Holy Mass in English as well, thus allowing everyone to participate.

PRAYER

The way traced

Lord God, / I'm sure you've traced my way, / but now I'm insecure, confused / and I can't find it. Let me see a comet star in the night sky / and I will follow it because / the way you traced now seems to me / more like a stony mountain path. / Give me the sight to recognise it / among the many stars, / because for this purpose / many years of study of astrophysics / are of no use!!!

by Mario Muzzi, supporter of the Beehive of Saint Rita.

Saint Rita for Syria: a concrete project of charity, peace and hope

Sanitary kits and food baskets for fighting
the new enemy together

Syría had been chosen for the annual twinning that unites Cascia with a place in the world on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita. If coronavirus had not made its appearance in late April, the Cascian delegation would have arrived in Syria to bring the charity of Saint Rita along with her message of peace and dialogue among its people, tried by more than 9 years of war. An important

mission that, although it is not yet possible to understand what will happen with regard to the twinning, the nuns of Santa Rita are deter-

***Less than half
of the
hospitals in
Syria are fully
functional***

mined to carry out, especially after the coronavirus which risks creating a real catastrophe. As in Western countries, the government of Syria has imposed preventive measures and, according to official data, spread of the virus seems to be contained, but among the people there is a strong suspicion that there are many more cases that have not been reported or even tested. Fear is increasing every day, partly because the

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.

Anna Gattazzo (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Adriano Peri (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Amelia Massignan (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Angelo Bonfante (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Anna Conti (Montelupo Fiorentino FI - Italy)
Anna Cusumano (Ribera AG - Italy)
Berta Barban (Noale VE - Italy)
Desiana Di Lodovico (Città Sant'Angelo PE - Italy)
Erio Gentili (Salerno - Italy)
Fabiano Pitrelli (Noicattaro BA - Italy)

Giancarlo Ghilardi (Trescore Balneario BG - Italy)
Gianfranco Scaletta (Castelfranco Emilia MO - Italy)
Gianni Filini (Quinzano d'Oglio BS - Italy)

Gilmo Saccagi (Rivalta Sul Mincio MN - Italy)
Giovanna Repetto (Terni - Italy)
Giulia Rosa Boschetti (Pontevico BS - Italy)
Graziella Ferrari (Locarno - Switzerland)
Italia Fonto (Felline LE - Italy)
Lina Languini (Bosco di Sona VR - Italy)
Lina Cremaschi (Trescore Balneario BG - Italy)
Maria Donati Gennari (Rome - Italy)
Paolo Sinisi (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)
Fr. Marco Morasca OSA (Community of Saint Rita of Torbellamonaca RM - Italy)
Paola Lui (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Rita Anna Frigo in Palmarini (Solarolo di Goito MN - Italy)
Rita Bucchi (Ocosce di Cascia PG - Italy)
Roberto Brugnoli (Spoleto PG - Italy)
Sister M. Angela Cannone OSA (S. Maria di Betlem Monastery of Foligno PG - Italy)
Teresa Borelli (Campi Salentina LE - Italy)
Vittoria Filini (Quinzano d'Oglio BS - Italy)



Eight out of ten people live below the poverty line

Syrian health system is not prepared for an epidemic: according to the 2019 Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System report, less than 50% of hospitals in Syria are fully functional. All in a country that has already mourned over half a million dead and with 12 million displaced people, cramped

SUPPORT THE PROJECT SAINT RITA FOR SYRIA

In Syria, there are 11,500 families who need your help.

Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Tartous: in these regions tormented by conflict, we nuns of Saint Rita have decided we could not look the other way.

Stress, pain, uncertainty, exhaustion, suffering, trauma, poverty. In addition to all this there is the drama of coronavirus.

Your donation allows us nuns to help the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) support Syria's most fragile families and fight poverty and the pandemic.

With **20 euro** you ensure a hot meal for a family.

With **40 euro** you guarantee an entire food basket for a family.

With **65 euro** you give a family a food basket and an anti-covid sanitary kit.

You can donate through:

- IBAN banking IT14T0311139240000000001781 - BIC/SWIFT: BLOPIT22
- IBAN postal IT85R0760103000000000005058
- Online with a credit card at santaritadacascia.org/donazioni

specifying in the reason "Siria" (Syria). Heartfelt thanks.

TESTIMONIES OF GRACE

Your testimonies
presented by **Maurizia Di Curzio**,
assistant to the listening service
for the Monastery of Saint Rita



Everyone stay at home and this is what we have been hearing repeatedly over this long period. A virus has locked us up and by upsetting all our habits has forced us to reformulate every second of our lives. So even on May 22 it took on a different colour, but the scent of Rita's roses was even more intense, and it arrived in the homes of every devotee. I love everything about the feast, I am part of it I know. Great emotion comes from the Holy Mass, the psalm, that refrain makes you a "giant" and you know that whatever happens you can always repeat to yourself; *"Hope in the Lord, be strong"*, because if there is less hope in the Lord there is also less strength and without strength we cannot even hope. I leave you to read the story of Romana, confident and combative, who praised Psalm 26 by singing: *"The Lord is the defence of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"*.

"Saint Rita has always been in my family! Way back in 1955, my mother had a fall with my little sister, only 5 months old, in her arms. My little sister was unscathed but the epilogue of this fall was coma for mum AMELIA. Dad Carlo, devoted to the Saint, desperately invoked SAINT RITA, Saint of the impossible, and as a vow gave the two wedding rings and the little gold he then possessed. Mum came out of coma, the recovery (given the period of the 50s) was to be a difficult and very lengthy path, but she made it. Dad, a deeply religious person who had faith, was sure that the Saint would help him. We are now in 2020: the year of CORONAVIRUS! I, Romana, got infected with the mysterious evil, and was hospitalised urgently on March 15 because I was no longer breathing. After 2 days they put me under the CPAP helmet to help me breathe. But things were not going so well. The doctor called my sister to inform her that unfortunately the situation was difficult because I was not responding to the treatment! I have always been conscious and collaborative, I have always had many thoughts, but the main thought now was to ask Saint Rita for help, mindful of the devotion of dad Carlo. I asked her to give me courage and help me recover because my family, my husband, my collaborators still needed me! I made the promise to make a pilgrimage to Cascia as soon as the conditions of the pandemic allowed it, to pay homage to the saint. After a few days there was an improvement. The doctor informed me one morning that the saturation had improved a lot and that the CPAP helmet would soon be removed. I am now at home, after 22 days in hospital. I am serene and confident that Saint Rita continues to protect me". (Romana, Cesana Brianza LC - Italy)

in refugee camps, where human-social conditions are already unbearable and where arrival of the virus would mean a potential scourge of incalculable dimensions. Furthermore, Syria is economically at breaking point, essential goods are scarce and prices are inaccessible

for most of the population, where eight out of ten people live below the poverty line. The concrete help that the nuns of Saint Rita want to send to Syria is addressed to the most fragile and poor people: 11,500 families in the regions of rural Damascus, Aleppo and Tartous.

The project, "Saint Rita for Syria", born in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), aims to distribute sanitary kits and food baskets to families, to support the most vulnerable and together fight this new enemy, which is creating enormous fear. ■

The great strength of faith

David and overcoming his tragedy

“Faith controls the brain and the brain controls the body”. This is what David Moscarelli told me during our interview. There and then I didn't understand the meaning of his words ... Then, learning more about his story, I understood, with his concrete experience,

Then “in 2015, while I was adjusting the curtains on the balcony, I lost my balance and fell from a height of 11 metres. As I fell, my desperate mother entrusted me to

I fell from a height of 11 metres



David with the nuns in Cascia, at the Open Doors event at the Beehive of Saint Rita.

how effective faith can be in a story as strong as his. I understood how powerful faith can be, as support for physical treatments.

David, born in 1979, is now almost 41 years old. He was a man of the air force.

Mary, mother of Jesus. I went through an exceedingly difficult and critical period. I underwent two operations and went through a long period of rehabilitation that lasted almost a year”.

Told like this, however, David's experi-

ence does not do it justice. Put like this, it appears as the cold chronicle of an unfortunate accident and nothing more. When, calmly and without an ounce of emotion, David added “I think, I write, I speak, I have only lost the use of my legs, but it

David learned the story of Saint Rita in his family

doesn't matter because life is beautiful and must always be lived”, I understood that his experience, although tragic, was not like others, because he did not live it like anyone else. David is not desperate, because he has the powerful weapon of faith on his side. When he spoke these words with calmness and determination, I spontaneously asked him, “Who gives you this strength?”. And, without a moment's hesitation, he replied: “Saint Rita”.

David learned the story of Saint Rita in his family. His mother Maria Rita and his father Enrico went to Cascia even before getting married and once their family was established, they also transmitted their

David's faith matured in the time of trial

devotion to their children. From Sgurgola, in the province of Frosinone, the town in which they live, they still go on pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita a couple of times a year. For this reason, over time they have tied a strong bond with the Augustinian nuns, especially with the Mother Vicar of the Monastery, Sister Natalina

Todeschini. “On one of our many pilgrimages to Cascia, Sister Natalina enrolled me, as an individual, in the prayer group of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita and gave me the Holy Rosary. From that time, I have always kept it with me and at night before falling asleep I put it under the pillow. I always felt Saint Rita very close to me, in all the things I did”.

In the extremely critical post-operative and rehabilitation period, David's family got in touch with Mother Natalina so that the nuns of the Cascia Monastery would pray for a miracle. Sister Giacomina, who answered the call for help, assured her that she would place David's military medal at the feet of the Saint and that she

Ultimately there is no tragedy that cannot be overcome

would remove it only when David left the hospital, as later happened. “It's always nice to go back to Cascia and it's always like it's the first time. It's as if someone is calling us and waiting for us”. David's faith was not born in the period of difficulty, rather in the moment of trial it matured further. “When I was in service, whenever the opportunity arose, I never pulled back. I always spoke about the Lord with my colleagues. For example, when we talked about our holidays or weekends out, I told them about my pilgrimages: to the Holy Land or to Fatima”.

Ultimately there is no tragedy that cannot be overcome. “Faith controls the brain and the brain controls the body,” David taught me. (MF) ■

TELL US ABOUT YOUR 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”.

Saint Rita, a celebrity in Los Angeles

by Rita Gentili

USA, California, Los Angeles: the city of Hollywood, of angels, of the long white sandy beaches, of celebrities. Among these, we can also include our Saint Rita: even if there is no star for her on the “Walk of Fame” (the long avenue bordered with pavements where stars bearing the names of famous people are set), she is certainly the protagonist of a beautiful story of devotion in the city. We are in the parish of Our Mother of

nity of Armenians, very numerous in Los Angeles, who, on May 22, organise the celebration in honour of Saint Rita, with a mass celebrated in Armenian and English and presided over by an Armenian Catholic priest. Furthermore, every Thursday, and in particular on the first Thursday of the month, many of these faithful meet in the

RITA IS ALSO HERE



The original name of LA was “El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula” or “City of Our Lady the Queen of Angels of the River Porciúncula”, given to it by Franciscan colonists who, at the end of 1700, created the city's first nucleus. Today, LA is one of the areas with the highest population density in California and unfortunately one of the cities with the most cases of Covid-19. The virus has literally made the metropolis a desert, so much so that one seems to be in one of the films made in its studios, rather than in reality.



Saint Rita is the protagonist of a beautiful story of devotion

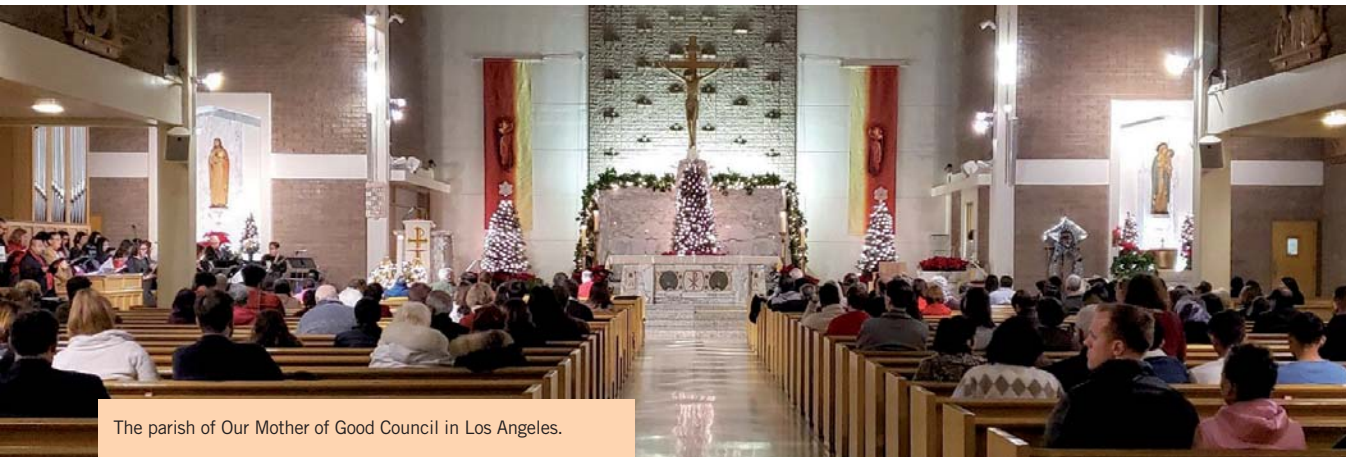
Good Counsel and its parish priest, Augustinian Father Alvin Paligutan, speaks to us of an altar dedicated to the saint of Cascia, in front of which parishioners, visitors and even people of different religions stop. But among these, in particular, a large commu-

church carrying numerous candles and many flowers, especially red roses, in front of the altar of the saint. Although men are not lacking, it is mostly women who attend church, explains Father Alvin; they are of all ages, sometimes accompanied by children, who rely on the saint of the impossible for the most varied reasons: health, mental and physical, children, marriage,

A large Armenian community organises the celebration in honour of Saint Rita

Numerous candles and many flowers in front of the altar of the Saint

the saint with perseverance, just as Saint Monica prayed to God for the conversion of her son Saint Augustine for almost 30 years". And it is precisely from members of the Armenian community that we receive, again through Father Alvin, the testimony of a woman who, entrusting herself to the intercession of the miracle worker of Cascia to receive the grace of becoming a mother, can today embrace a child she



The parish of Our Mother of Good Council in Los Angeles.

healing from an illness, work, or peace in their lives. "Several Armenians who attend this church," the parish priest tells us, "are probably not even Catholics. They could be Orthodox Christians, Armenian Protestants or not belong to a specific Christian denomination. Some of them may not even be so educated in the faith and poorly educated. Still, many of them are devoted to Saint Rita, probably through word of mouth. The reason," continues Father Alvin, "lies in the fact that people can identify themselves with the life of Saint Rita, as a mother, wife and widow and later as an Augustinian nun. I admire," adds Father Alvin, "people devoted to saints like Rita: they have immense faith and rely on

People can identify with the life of Saint Rita

called Rita. Devotion to Saint Rita in the United States of America is really widespread. By simply searching on the web, it turns out that in every state of the federation there is at least one church dedicated to the Saint, among which the national sanctuary of Saint Rita in Philadelphia stands out, and with which, in the past, Cascia was twinned in faith in the name of the miracle worker. ■



PIA UNIONE PRIMARIA
SANTA RITA
DA CASCIA
Famiglia agostiniana

by Marta Ferraro

At this time marked by coronavirus, we bring you the reflection of Monsignor Luigi Renna, Bishop of Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano, who should have held the catechesis of the general meeting of the PPU which was cancelled due to the health emergency.

In recent months we have all made a more demanding and true pilgrimage than is usually made to our sanctuaries. I compare it to that experienced some years ago with the seminarians of my diocese of origin, towards Santiago de Compostela. It was a journey in which we took the essentials with us and which was characterised by long silences, prayers and outdoor Masses. In short, a true school of spirituality. Such, I believe, was the entirely internal pilgrimage of this Lent and of the Easter season that we lived, in which we encountered the suffering, the silence, the “absences” that made us taste nostalgia for Presence.

Let us start with the suffering. We have all heard of it, but it has been experienced directly by those who have lost a relative, a friend, an acquaintance, who died in the tragic condition of solitude, in which perhaps they could find comfort only

A pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the heart

by meeting the gaze of a health care worker, or turning their dimming eyes to the Crucifix. There are catastrophic situations that put a strain on faith, purified as gold in the crucible by the invocation: “God, where are you?”. After each tragedy, one wonders if it is still possible to “speak of God”. Of course, it is no longer possible to talk about it superficially, or with the wisdom of Job's friends, who next to his bedside sought learned explanations. Ours is a God who does not run away from the cross, because he knows

Silence speaks of the Presence of God

that our humanity is nailed to it, and he cannot abandon it in the moment of greatest fragility. Our God has redeemed us by suffering like us, and by leading us beyond life and resurrection. We have experienced or perhaps only encountered suffering and with it the great questions of death, of eternal life, of His mercy, of the resurrection. And in them we have perhaps rediscov-



ered a God who came to look for us in the underworld to bring us back to his Light.

In our inner pilgrimage we have gone from the wide spaces of churches and sanctuaries, to the more intimate ones of our houses and rooms, driven by Covid-19, but also invited by the words of Jesus: “... when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret.

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

The new Saint Rita of Cascia website has a section dedicated entirely to the PPU (santaritadacascia.org/piaunione). Send us the photos of your group by email to redazione@santaritadacascia.org. We will publish them on the website to make known every group that makes up the great family of the Primary Pious Union.



And your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:6). Living the "hard times" and even the Easter Triduum in a domestic dimension has led us to make new discoveries, which

***And finally,
absences that
have called
Presences***

must remain an acquisition: family prayer, listening to the Word, the silence in which the "murmur of light wind" speaks of the Presence of God. If we have lived this time with this attention to the sanctuary of the heart, we will have had another experience, but no less true than being believers and belonging to the Church.

And finally, absences that have called Presences. The

***Where there is
charity and
love there is
God***

absence of direct contacts with many loved ones, especially the elderly, which allowed us to rediscover their importance in our life. The absence of the Eucharist celebrated in our assemblies, of an altar full of lights and flowers, which on the evening of Holy Thursday made us remember the beauty of that Gift, and the "presence" of that basin of foot washing, which in our homes, in Caritas, in the service and sacrifice of so many Christians, he reminded us that "Where there is charity and love there is God". We will not forget this pilgrimage and the signs of faith it has left us in our heart. ■

JOIN THE PPU

Whether you are an individual or member of a group, join the PPU! You will thus participate in our meetings, encountering people who, like you, are devoted to the beloved Saint Rita. For information, contact the Secretary General, Alessandra Paoloni: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org

Overcoming illness with a faith full of love

by Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino, OSA

When Maria Teresa had finally solved the serious problem of disorders in the community of Cascia, she started again with a truly monastic style, made of prayer and evangelical formation. She engaged herself personally with the solemn profession (1912) and collaborated in the training of the younger generation as Teacher of Novices and Vicar of the Superior. In 1920 she was named Abbess, and repeatedly thereafter until her death (1947). But it was also in 1920 that the big surprise came: a malignant tumour in the left breast. It was operated on in the monastery and she thanked the Lord for this great treasure. A gift from God: as for Rita had been the thorn on the forehead, so was her breast cancer. This interpretation was to be fundamental for the rest of her life and offers us a wonderful testimony about how to live illness, with faith and for love. God's gaze was the richness of her inner life. Here lies the secret of her serenity and her smile: love for Jesus, the Eucharistic Jesus and the crucified Jesus, this above all inherited from Rita, became the dominant experience, which allowed her to subordinate the surprise of the illness. That love became a greater joy in her than physical pain. Like Mother Fasce, whoever manages to fall seriously in love with Jesus through the Eucharist and the Gospel acquires an ability to sub-

ordinate everything, discovers that new love is stronger than any other painful experience. After all, it was the same experience of Jesus on the Cross: the greatest love won. This is also the concrete teaching of our Saints, but we prefer to think of the exceptional nature of their experience, which is precluded to us. But the strength of their inner change is also possible for all of us if we were to believe more in the power of a different love. Illness in our life destabilises us. Everything is conditioned by illness, which takes over and makes us neglect that relationship of love for Jesus that should continue to grow. This did not happen in Mother Fasce and it is her inner solidity that we should transplant into the heart of each of us, to not find ourselves unprepared in front of a trial like illness. Love for Christ should characterise our Christian formation to the point of prevailing over everything. A love that does not exclude the dearest affections, but rather supports them to the point of constituting a single security. Love for Christ is the only great love that is guaranteed to us by the same gift of the Holy Spirit, which lives in our heart. We must believe in the greatness of this love. We must increase it with the Eucharist and in the Eucharist, like Mother Teresa. Then the love of Christ, which is the fullness of charity and life, will prevail over every type of illness. ■

THOUGHTS OF A MOTHER

"Come what He wants to come, nothing will happen that is not wanted or allowed by Him".

BLESSED MOTHER MARIA TERESA FASCE

BY THE AUGUSTINIAN GENERAL POSTULATION

The Postulator General of the General Curia of the Order of St. Augustine promotes the causes of canonisation of members of the Augustinian Family. Info: postulazione@osacuria.org

The Bishop who opposed Napoleon

Giuseppe Bartolomeo Menochio was born in Carmagnola (Turin) on March 19, 1741. Such was the example of faith of his parents, that three other brothers before him had followed the priestly vocation. At the age of 19 he decided to join the Augustinians and on April 2, 1760 he entered the convent of Fermo.



On April 3, 1761 he took religious vows and in 1764 he was ordained a priest. In the meantime, he completed his studies in Ancona, Terni, Amelia and Recanati. In 1796 he was appointed coadjutor bishop of Reggio Emilia. Soon after he was expelled from the city by

the French occupiers, but continued to carry out the episcopal ministry in the Marche region, especially through preaching. In 1800, Pius VII appointed him a sacristan and his

For a time, he was the only bishop in Rome

confessor, so the Venerable moved to Rome. After the deportation of the Pope to France, he was not allowed to follow him, so he remained in his residence at the Quirinale Palace, now occupied by the French. For a time, he was the only bishop in Rome. He was loved and respected by the Holy Father as much as hated by Napoleon because, always consistent with his faith and his service to the Church, he stubbornly refused to swear an oath of allegiance. Despite the pressures he underwent, he continued his life by serving the Church and spiritually

leading many religious and monasteries in Rome until his death (1823). The extraordinary exercise of the virtue of faith, fortitude and hope, like service and devotion to the Church, unites the Venerable with the Saint of Cascia. He, like Saint Rita, offered a testimony of total trust in the will of God before any adversity and tribulation, remaining consistent with his religious status and the Gospel. A miracle is expected through his intercession for his beatification. ■

ACCORDING TO AUGUSTINE

**“Let us praise the Lord both in voice, and in understanding, and in good works; and, as this Psalm exhorts, let us sing unto Him a new song. The old man has an old song, the new man a new song. The Old Testament is an old song, the New Testament a new song”.
Saint Augustine
(Commentary on the Psalms - 149.1)**

The last farewell to Father Luigi Montanari

“With him the Lord has done wonderful things”

by Alessia Nicoletti



Father Montanari (centre) in the group of the community of the Augustinian Fathers of Cascia.

“We thank you Lord, because you gave him to us”. With these words, Monsignor Giovanni Scanavino, opened the homily recited at the funeral of Father Luigi Montanari, who left the Augustinian community of Cascia on January 15 this year. Affected for several years by a disabling illness and entrusted to the care of staff involved

in his assistance, Father Montanari died in his sleep, at the age of 92. Born in Rome on September 29, 1926 the religious had however spent most of his life in Umbria, between Gubbio, Terni, Perugia and Cascia, communities where he left his indelible touch.

“We could divide his life into two blocks,” says Monsignor Scanavino, talking to me about Father Montanari, with eyes full of brotherly af-

The service rendered by Father Montanari also made the difference in Cascia

God also entrusted the Little Bees to him

fection. “The first is when he was able to carry out his role as Minister of the Word of God in Terni, where with a group of Augustinians he was one of the initiators of an important work as Chaplain of the Steelworks. Something new for the time and a great job that was done with the workers, who managed to take on a more Christian attitude. In Terni, he was also pastor of the parish of San Pietro for seventeen years, working here also very well among the community, trying to liven it up”.

The service rendered by Father Montanari also made the difference in Cascia. “With him the Lord has done wonderful things,” continues Monsignor Scanavino, “thanks to the imagination, creativity and fighting spirit that he had given him. Here in Cascia, he took on the task of conducting the figure of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce towards beatification, preparing and following the process until the proclamation by John Paul II in 1997. God also entrusted to him the Little Bees of the Beehive of Santa Rita, where as Chaplain he expressed all the greatness of his heart. In addition, he also provided a service of apostolate, together with us confreres, in the Sanctuary for the devotees of Saint Rita”.

The earthly work of Father Montanari was always charac-

terised by liveliness of spirit and commitment to the new generations. “He was an enthusiastic guide of the Cursillos de Cristiandad,” says Msgr. Scanavino, “divulging the Word of God to different groups and thus contributing to the evangelical formation of many young Christians. Between Terni and Cascia, Father Luigi really expressed all the abundance of his gifts”.

Unfortunately, however, the second block of his life came when the arrival of the degenerative disease dimmed his personality for many years. “It was a terrible phase, as if he was blocked”. Monsignor Scanavino recalls that period with visible grief. “We all felt very bad about the emptying of his per-

He had a really big heart and extraordinarily strong humanity

sona. So dynamic before and so immobile afterwards. It was the phase of the great mystery and with his ironic smile Father Luigi has taken away his secret”.

“He had a really big heart and extraordinarily strong humanity. I say thank you to all those who loved him”, concludes Monsignor Scanavino, leaving me with the image of a good man, a true and authentic minister of God. This was testified by the many who wanted to be close to Father Luigi Montanari on the day of his funeral, bidding him farewell with affection and thanking the Lord for the gift of having known him. ■

SMILING AT LIFE

Send photos of your children to monastero@santiritadecascia.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. Ada Bonolo (Cercino SO - Italy)
2. Alice and Serena Monti (Clivio VA - Italy)
3. Francesco Caporicci (Vinchiaturo CB - Italy)
4. Leonardo Iacono Francesco (Naples - Italy)
5. Matteo and Giacomo Cacciotti (Carpineto Romano RM - Italy)
6. Nastase Amelia Georgiana Wostose (Lacul Rosu - Romania)

Archivist Caterina Comino accompanies us in reading the pages of the canonisation process of Saint Rita in 1626, offering us a documentary testimony on the saint accompanied by the comment of the Augustinian Father Rocco Ronzani.

The “miraculous flight” of Saint Rita

Through the intercession of her patron saints, Rita managed to fulfil the desire to enter the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in Cascia. Testimony of this is a painting that depicts the blessed in the act of entering the monastery together with Saints John the Baptist, Augustine and Nicholas of Tolentino, a painting that was exhibited on various occasions and especially for the feast of the blessed, as attested the deposition of Cascian notary Restoro Cesi. In the list of miracles attributed to Blessed Rita, apostolic protonotary Pietro Colangelo also notes this episode.

“My name is Restoro Cesi, I am from Cascia, my father was called Ser Innocentio Cesi and my mother Cornelia Verrucci and I was seventy years of age the last April; I live by my own means and I am a notary public. [...] since I was a child, I have seen that many times the monks of Blessed Rita and in particular on the day of her feast have placed an ancient canvas in the church in the facade where the body lies, where many things are depicted of the blessed Rita and in particular the bees that went to the cradle, the saints who led her to the monastery, the sting that she received from the crucifix, the funeral of her death and other miracles and this same canvas, all those who have used imagination have been able to see it”. (Spoleto, AD, E-20, *Processus* 1626, f.89r, *passim*). October 20, 1626 (CC)

Saint Rita, widow of Paolo Mancini and whose sons died prematurely, decided to enter the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena di Cascia, but found difficulties posed by the nuns. Tradition connects the impediment to the hostility of one nun in particular named Caterina Mancini, perhaps a relative of Rita's husband, and to the desire for revenge hatched by Paolo's family, revenge hindered by Rita with the luminous and heroic gesture of forgiveness

Despite many difficulties, Rita managed to respond to God's call

granted to the assassins. Despite many difficulties, Rita managed to respond to God's call and fulfilled her desire around 1417; in fact, the monastery's code of miracles ensures that Rita lived in the

monastery for about forty years, dying in 1457. The entrance into the monastery was made possible by the miraculous intervention of her patron saints, St. John the Baptist, St. Augustine and St. Nicholas of Tolentino. Over the centuries the event has been enriched by the “miraculous flight” from the rock of Roccaporena into the choir of the monastery, thus giving rise to the daring and shaky interpretations of some scholars, such as Lucetta Scaraffia in the book *La santa degli im-*

possibili [The Saint of Impossible Cases] (pp. 76-86). The book, one of the best historical-sociological studies on Ritian devotion, is negatively affected by the lack of a good edition of the process. The flight episode does not belong to the most ancient hagiographic tradition and when the author quotes the biography of Cavallucci, she does not notice

The powerful intercession of the Friends of God that Rita had experienced remains

flounders, including that which has Saint Rita as a woman who flies “on brooms”! So where does this flight come from? Perhaps it is simply the popular interpretation of the seventeenth-century canvas that represents the three patron saints and Rita in the clouds (clouds are never missing in apparitions). The interpretations disappear like fog in the sun! What re-



Rita enters the monastery thanks to the three patron saints. Cascia, St. Rita monastery, anonymous author, oil on canvas (XVII century).

the absence of the flight from Roccaporena. The Rock – it is Scaraffia herself who says so, p. 115 – does not appear in the sacred places

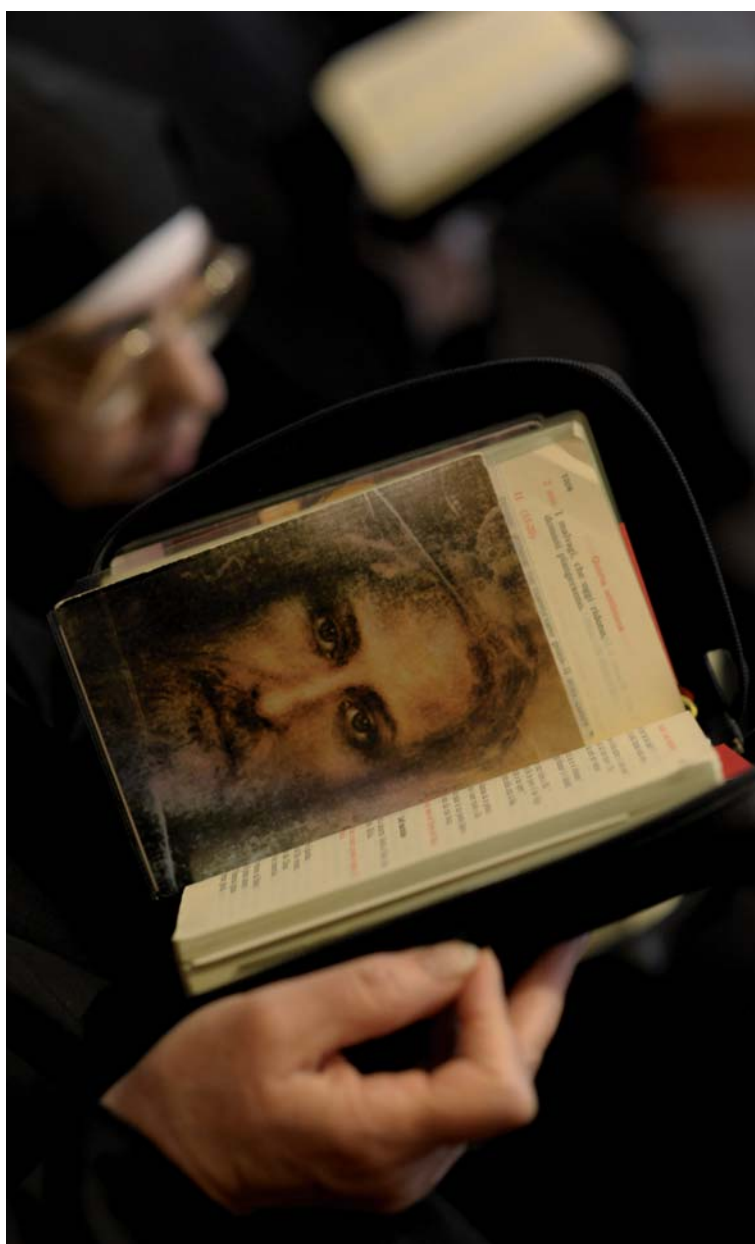
visited for the “beatification” process, but only in the 19th century. Once the flight is removed, which does not exist, the whole interpretation also

mains is the powerful intercession of the Friends of God that devout Rita had experienced in the communion of Saints! (RR)

God is Love, God is Communication

An ancient yet ever new Word

by Sister Giacomina Stuani OSA, Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia



The virus that we are unable to see has shown instead that it does see us and knows us very well. In fact, it has attacked us where we are most vulnerable, taking away our sociability, preventing us from being together and being close. We are, however, stronger and have not allowed it to take away our humanity. We have found new ways to make and feel part of our community, to be alive and to live. By being forced to distance ourselves, we have rediscovered the true value

***We have found
new ways to
feel part of our
community***

and great importance of proximity to each other and paradoxically we have come closer, even if not in physical presence. We have understood that real happiness cannot be achieved alone, through one's own

merit and to the detriment of others, but through a common path. In a word, when the virus threatened to isolate us, we discovered the power of communication, an action as simple as it is complex and necessary for man. Communicating,

When the virus threatened to isolate us, we discovered the power of communication

through words, silences, expressions and behaviour, is a guarantee of survival, it is a mirror of our identity: communication is life, it is the fundamental law of love. We are beings in relationships, with an innate need for aggregation and continuously seeking others. That is why, to live life for, with and in love, there is only one way: through dialogue.

If man, by communicating, expresses a deep need of his soul, which is made to speak and listen, to give and receive, to console and be consoled, then the model of interpersonal commu-

Man cannot do without God

nication between men transcends earthly limits, because it cannot be enough to satisfy us and starts looking for God.

This pandemic has shown this to us once again. In fact, just as we have done among ourselves, faced with the impossibility of attending churches as a community, of attending Holy Mass and meeting the Lord in the Eucharist, we have felt a strong need to reinvent ourselves also in a spiritual

CHOOSE LIFE

Choose life. This is the invitation of God containing a promise that opens the future: choose life, so that you and your children may live (Deut 30, 19).

Choose life. It is the profound engine of our every gesture, of each of our actions: everything we do - basically - is moved by the desire for happiness, by the desire to have life. Sensing the way is to rediscover the struggle of the heart, between good and evil, between what is fruitful and what is not, in the adventure of life, between vices and virtues.

Choose life. It is the discovery of one's vocation.

"Your vocation inspires you to bring out the best in yourself for the glory of God and the good of others" (Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, 257). Choose, then!

"Give yourselves over to the best of life!" (ChV143).

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tel: 0743.76221 - e-mail: monastero@santaritadacascia.org***

and religious sense. Man cannot do without God, in the same way in which God exists to speak to man. God is voice, word and advice; God is Love. Saying "love" is to say giving oneself to others and therefore communicating. God is therefore communication. If we pause to examine this aspect, we understand the importance of interpersonal

God is voice, word and advice

communication no longer between men, but between man and God.

We are talking about a kind of communication that is gaze before being word. We are the reflection of God and only in his gaze can we recognise ourselves for what we really are: his children, modelled in the depths of our soul by the question of good, truth, goodness and beauty that finds full answer in the Most High. This gaze opens us towards the horizon, has to do with the absolute, makes us perceive the infinite. The gaze of the believer is not afraid of mystery, faith is made for the eyes. Christ invites us to open them wide on the mystery: he does not want blind faith. We are reflected in that original gaze and discover ourselves and the bond with Him who is

our beginning and our end.

"In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son," says the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1). Thus, God spoke to humanity and then he also had his words written so that they would remain intact and reach all people. The Bible is the letter that God addresses to each person. He has no privileges and wants his word to reach everyone. In the beginning ... the Word, God, filled the void, that void that frightens us, especially in these difficult times and which we try to fill with noise, He has filled it with his Word. An ancient yet ever new Word. The Sacred Scriptures, which St. Augustine in the Confessions calls "my chaste de-

Communication is life, it is the fundamental law of love

lights" (11:2.3), are for the Christian like the mirror that makes one aware of their own reality, like "a voice that speaks every day".

God speaks to us: it is a speech that has a note of intimacy, of physical tenderness, a communication not at a distance but in involvement. His communication begins with Creation and takes place in its most complete form in Jesus: his

name is in fact "Word of God" (Rev 19:13). Jesus is not like the other prophets, bearer of a message greater than themselves: he is him-

The Bible is the letter that God addresses to each person

self, in his historical existence, this message.

By contemplating Jesus who is the full and definitive communication of God, we understand that communicating is much more than simply exchanging information, news and data: authentic communication establishes a personal relationship, it is meeting, dialogue in which I get involved, respecting the mystery and freedom of others.

We are created for dialogue and communication with God takes on the form of a conversation. A relationship in which we can hear His word and in which God expects a response, free and grateful: the response of faith. Listening is the fundamental characteristic of a communication process: we are therefore all invited to reflect on our ability to listen before our God who continually speaks to us. A

God asks us to create communion with him

God who asks us to listen not only to his words, but to understand him, to give him trust and attention, to empathise with him and

create communion with him.

Let us go back to looking at God, learning authentic communication

from him, which is not only a necessity for the survival of a civil, family and religious community, it is also a gift, a goal to be reached, a participation in the mystery of God which is communication: communication that nothing and nobody can ever interrupt. ■



Dal 1956

HOTEL DELLE ROSE

• Living Cascia •



Mother Earth

RECIPES FROM THE GREEN
UMBRIA OF SAINT RITA

Shepherd's ricotta mousse with ginger shortbread crumbs and berries

Ingredients for 4 people

For the ginger shortbread:

- 25 g granulated sugar
- 50 g almond flour
- 1 g fresh ginger
- 60 g soft butter
- 30 g granulated sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 grated lemon zest
- 170 g "0" flour
- 1 teaspoon tip of baking soda
- 1 pinch salt

For the ricotta mousse:

- 300 g of fresh ricotta flower
- 100 ml fresh cream
- 150 g granulated sugar
- 250 g fresh berries
- 50 g brown sugar

Grate the peeled ginger in a bowl, add the almond flour, the soft butter, the yolk and then, mixing with a spatula, also add the rest of the ingredients. Form a compact dough on a pastry board and put it in the fridge, wrapped in plastic wrap, for about 1 hour. After leaving it to rest, roll out the dough to a thickness of ½ cm. Cut the dough with a wheel, sprinkle with the remaining sugar and cook in the oven on a tray with baking paper at 180°C for 20 minutes. In the meantime, dedicate yourself to the mousse. Whip the cream with half the sugar. Blend the remaining sugar with the ricotta using an electric whisk and combine the two compounds with a spatula, being careful not to break down the cream. Sauté the berries with the brown sugar in a saucepan and allow to cool. Finally, to compose the dessert, crumble the biscuits on the plate inside a pasta bowl of about 10 cm and add the mousse using a pastry bag with a star-shaped tip until it is filled. Garnish with the berry sauce.



We embrace their hopes. Together.



THE BEEHIVE OF SAINT RITA IS A FAMILY WHERE HOPES ALSO FEED ON LOVE. Founded by Blessed Mother Fasce in 1938, the Beehive of Saint Rita has become home, school and assistance for many young girls. A real family that includes all our supporters who, with their help, continue to give a future to thousands of young people in difficulty. Stay close to us, your love is the most solid foundation on which to build new hopes. alveare@santaritadacascia.org • www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare

EMBRACE THE BEEHIVE

BANK IBAN: IT4010311103246000000000483 • BIC/SWIFT: BLOPIT22
POST OFFICE: c/a 1010759072 made out to: Fondazione Santa Rita da Cascia onlus
In both methods specify "Alveare" (Beehive) as the reason

