

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

NO. JUL-AUG 2016

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

REKINDLE THE FEAST

*Reportage of the best moments
from the Feast of Saint Rita*

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Bimonthly of the Monastery
of Saint Rita of Cascia
No. 4 July August 2016



Auth. Court of Spoleto No. 9 of 26.06.1954. ROC Registry No. 2460
Italian edition: Year XCIII English edition: Year LV
French edition: Year LIV Spanish edition: Year XLIV
German edition: Year XLIV Portuguese edition: Year III

Cover: The votive tripod lit with the flame of the Torch of Peace from Buenos Aires, the city featured in the 2016 Twinning of Peace and Faith with Cascia.

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Thanks to

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

Photos

Giovanni Galardini, Lamberto Manni, Massimo Chiappini, Roger Bergonzoli, Fotolia.com: © mavoimages

Graphic Design and Layout

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06043 Cascia PG - Italy

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FOR GERMANY

Post office: a/c 14421706

Payable to: Superior of the Monastery of Saint Rita

06043 Cascia PG - Italy

IBAN DE11600100700014421706

Printed in the month of July 2016 by Litografodi srl on behalf of Tau Editrice Srl Via Umbria 148, 06059 Todi (PG).



MISTO
Carta da fonti gestite
in maniera responsabile
FSC® C111553

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

A "normal" saint

Dear friends of Saint Rita, as usual, the summer issue is dedicated to a reportage that allows us to relive the most significant moments of the celebrations of St Rita, which took place in Cascia from May 20 to 22. The three-day event, organised by the Augustinian Family and the Municipality, began on the evening of May 20 and culminated on Sunday 22, the day on which, as we know, the liturgical feast of our beloved Saint Rita is celebrated – and which, this year, also coincided with the Solemnity dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Once again, the “little, great woman” of Cascia brought together tens of thousands of people from all over the world on the “hill of hope”, asking for her intercession and leaving a prayer intention for themselves or for loved ones in front of the urn conserving the body inside the Basilica of Saint Rita. The saint of impossible cases has taught us by her example of life lived that, if we rely on God, if we have faith, anything can happen, everything is possible, everything can change. Patron saint of the family, dialogue and forgiveness, Saint Rita will in any case always be a “people’s saint”. It was to Rita that Pope Francis referred when he invited everyone, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy, “*to re-read her extraordinary human and spiritual experience as a sign of the power of God’s mercy*” (General Audience of 30 September 2015, on the occasion of the blessing of the statue of Saint Rita donated by the people of Lebanon). St. John Paul II had also

thought of her when *he said: “Rita well interpreted the ‘feminine genius’ by living it intensely in both physical and spiritual motherhood”* (Audience with participants in the Jubilee pilgrimage of devotees of St. Rita of Cascia and Cavalieri del Lavoro (Knights of Work) on May 20, 2000). But what makes this saint so extraordinary? We will never tire of repeating: Saint Rita is much loved because of her “normality.” By following her example, each of us can walk the path of holiness. In her experience, each of us can find a bit of our own. As a woman, wife, mother, widow, nun, stigmatised, at every stage of life, Rita put into practice those values of hospitality and peace that John Paul II traced to female identity in the famous *Letter to Women of 29 June 1995*. Those same values that led the saint of Cascia to go against the current and against the historical times in which she lived, marked by family feuds governed by the law of *an eye for an eye*. Everywhere in the world, she is turned to as a friend, especially by women, the sick and families, to trust in her intercession and to overcome life’s obstacles. Each year, this bond – so strong and alive despite the passing of more than six hundred years from her birth – brings more than one million pilgrims in front of her incorrupt body, conserved in the Sanctuary of Cascia, where we Augustinian nuns, along with the valuable contribution of the fathers and according to the Rule of our Holy Father Augustine, patron of Rita, offer everyone listening and welcome.



"Without love, true faith is missing"

from the homily of Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Augustinian Order, on the occasion of the Solemn Mass of the Augustinian Family in the Basilica of Cascia on May 21, 2016, as part of the Feast of Saint Rita.

During the current jubilee year, discovering the mercy of God is essential. Those who are unable to find that God is love, as Pope Benedict XVI said, will not be able to truly love God. This is also what happens in everyday life: those who do not feel the love of others will feel a huge void in their souls and will be unable to love others.



The moment of Eucharistic consecration, with (from left) the Provincial of Italian Augustinians, Father Luciano De Micheli, Father General Moral, Father Pasquale and the rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita, Father Mario De Santis.

Unfortunately, this is an experience that many people live today, unable to feel love, friendship, closeness. We live in a world without faith, too inhuman, and, if faith is missing, God is missing, the source of true love is missing. Perhaps, it is easier to live without faith, more comfortable living without the commitment of having to love our neighbour, but this lack of faith leads to loneliness, pessimism, anxiety and despair. With her strong experience of God, Saint Rita helps us first of all to feel the presence of God the Merciful and have a deep experience in our

heart. She also helps us to deeply understand the words of Jesus when he says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall be shown mercy". For human life, mercy is an experience of profound humanity, as knowledge of God and fellow men.

Where did St. Augustine and Saint Rita find the face of God's mercy? The word of God answers our question: in Jesus, the Son of God became man to save us from our great misery. Pope Francis says that "Jesus is the face of God's mercy." And it's true! God is love; Jesus, the Son, the face of God's love; the Holy Spirit is

***Those who are unable
to find that God is
love, will not be able
to truly love***

the Love of the Father and of the Son, who lives within us, that we have been given in baptism. This is why we can say: "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit", to God who is, who was and who is coming.

Finally, towards whom should we live mercy in a special way? Logically, Towards everyone. Saint Rita herself found that when mercy invaded her heart, the human being comes out of itself coming closer to God and to others. In this way, along with truth, mercy becomes one of the two ways by which God approaches the human world in its deep roots. ■

We are the Church

from the homily of Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, President of the Governorate of the Vatican City State, pronounced during the Solemn Pontifical of May 22, 2016, in the square of the Basilica of Cascia, during the Feast of Saint Rita and the Holy Trinity.

Today (Feast of Saint Rita, *ed.*), the Church invites us to worship the Trinity. We often make the sign of the cross. When we end our prayers, we specifically remember that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do it almost mechanically. The Trinity is a mystery, perhaps the deepest of Christian doctrine. We know, the creation had a moment of “crisis” when there was sin, the “no” of Adam and Eve to God’s plan. And after this break, the Lord did not abandon humanity, but continued to accompany it. He sent His Son to be our Saviour. And Jesus, with his ascension to heaven, did not want to leave us alone ... Jesus sent us His Spirit so that we could truly continue to be disciples and live His Gospel. God is not a “vague word”, something that exists who knows where, that lives who knows where. God is a person, is Love, and it is through this love that the three Persons are united.

The Trinity speaks of relationship. There is a relationship among God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Well, even our daily life is a life of relationship and I would like us to ask ourselves: what is the relationship I have with God? Do I remember the Lord during the day? Do I think and rely on His goodness and His mercy? Second, what is the relationship I have with my brothers, with those around me (from the family to the world of work, to all the social relationships that we weave in our day)? Today, dominant thinking leads us to close in on ourselves, to think only of our own good and to think that only what we think is good. Today, this feast should make us open our hearts to others: it is the concept of solidarity, hospitality, forgiveness. But there is a second thought that I would like to tell you about, and it is this: the Trinity is one, one

God alone in three Persons. When the priest finishes the Eucharistic prayer, before the “Our Father”, he asks God to ensure that we are all one body and one spirit. This reminds us that, through baptism, we have become Church, Family of God. And so let us ask ourselves: to what extent am I

***The Trinity is one,
one God alone
in three Persons***



Card. Bertello during the Solemn Pontifical of 22 May.

involved, to what extent do I live the life of my Christian community? When we return home, let us return with the commitment of also feeling ourselves to be living members of these our communities. The church is not only we priests, bishops or nuns, the church is all of us and each of us has to carry his or her grain through witness, through commitment and through prayer. It is here, then, that this feast, on the occasion of our feast of Saint Rita, helps us to rediscover the beauty of this our Christian life, the beauty of feeling ourselves disciples of Jesus.

FEAST OF SAINT RITA: REPORTAGE

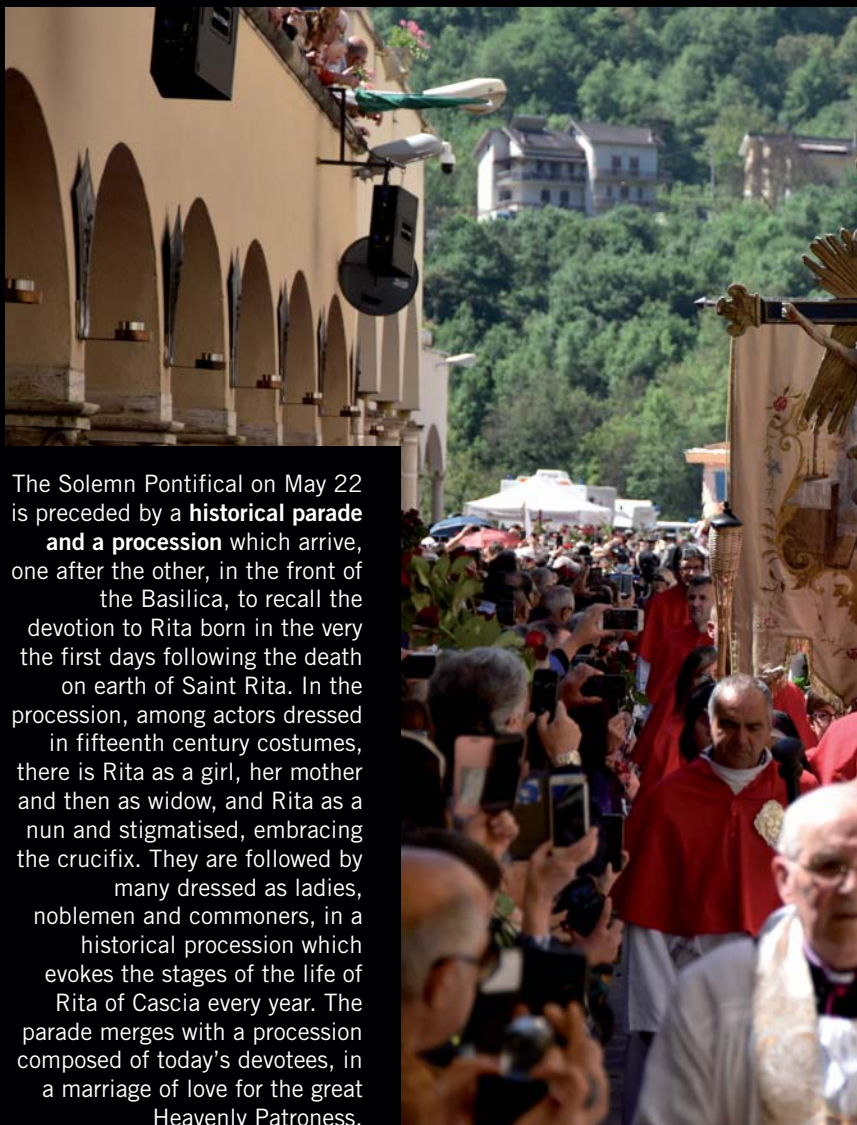


Tens of thousands of devotees from all over the world paid tribute to the great Saint Rita on May 22 in Cascia, on the occasion of her feast. Culmination of the celebrations: Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated in the square of the Ritian Basilica by Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, President of the Governorate of Vatican City State.



The “little, great woman” of Cascia is known as the **saint of impossible cases**, having lived in the firm belief that if we rely on God, anything can happen. Patron saint of the family, dialogue and forgiveness, Saint Rita is in any case the “**people’s saint**”.





The Solemn Pontifical on May 22 is preceded by a **historical parade and a procession** which arrive, one after the other, in the front of the Basilica, to recall the devotion to Rita born in the very first days following the death on earth of Saint Rita. In the procession, among actors dressed in fifteenth century costumes, there is Rita as a girl, her mother and then as widow, and Rita as a nun and stigmatised, embracing the crucifix. They are followed by many dressed as ladies, noblemen and commoners, in a historical procession which evokes the stages of the life of Rita of Cascia every year. The parade merges with a procession composed of today's devotees, in a marriage of love for the great Heavenly Patroness.







Opening the three-day celebrations of St. Rita on evening of Friday, May 20, in the “Hall of Peace” of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita in Cascia was TG5 presenter **Simona Branchetti** (centre, top left photo). The Mediaset journalist presented the five women chosen this year to receive the scroll of the **Saint Rita International Recognition Award**, delivered on May 21 by Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Augustinian Order, in the Basilica of Saint Rita.

Now in its 28th edition, the protagonists of the prestigious annual award are Women of Rita, that is, those women who have distinguished themselves for their witness of daily life that is based on the Ritian and universal values of forgiveness, dialogue and service for others. The Women of Rita 2016 are: (photo below, in the foreground from left) Sister Carolina Iavazzo, Angela Sorrentino, Margaret Karam, Vincenza Riccetti and Elena Maximova.





PRAYER

O glorious Saint Rita, gathered around you on this day of celebration with a glad and grateful heart, once again we entrust ourselves to your prayer which we know is powerful before the throne of God.

You who have experienced different conditions of life and know the concerns and anxieties of the human heart, you who knew how to love and forgive and be an instrument of reconciliation and peace, you who followed the Lord as the valuable good before which all other good pales, obtain for us the gift of wisdom of the heart that teaches us to walk the path of the Gospel.

Look to our families and to our young people, to those who are afflicted by illness, suffering and loneliness, to your Augustinian brothers and sisters, to the devotees who entrust themselves to you with hope: ask for all the grace of the Lord, fortitude and consolation of the Spirit, strength in trials and consistency in actions, and perseverance in faith and good works, so that, in every circumstance, we may bear witness before the world of the fruitfulness of love and the authentic meaning of life, until, at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, we will be welcomed in the house of the Father, where together with you we will sing his praise for ever and ever. Amen!

(Supplication to Saint Rita, recited on May 22 in Cascia, at the opening of the Solemn Pontifical)



Since 1947, the body of Saint Rita has been conserved inside the crystal urn kept in the Basilica of Cascia named after her. The sign of the stigmata is recognisable on her forehead. Immediately after her death (which is recalled in the ceremony of Transit on May 21 in the same Basilica), her body became the destination for pilgrimage by the inhabitants of Cascia and the surrounding countryside, who knew Rita well for her charity. For this reason, a saint in fact from the very beginning, Rita's body was never buried.



THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

To you, Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead because, as in their mortal life they have always been loved by you of immense love, so now, freed from all evil, they may enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Take them into your Paradise, where there is no more grief, no pain, no tears, but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Albino Cannillo (San Severino Marche MC - Italy)

Anna Sofia Correnti (Livorno - Italy)

Annetta Messidoro (Rome - Italy)

Carla Vezzoli Spinosa (Como - Italy)

Elda Rispoli (Arezzo - Italy)

Elsa Marchesi (Rome - Italy)

Emilia Falciano (Turin - Italy)

Giannina Morgantini (Punta Ala di Castiglione della Pescaia GR - Italy)

Gina Basso Marconato (Chieri TO - Italy)

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Giuseppe Arbori (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)

Magda Mezzetti Cadeddu (Pesaro PU - Italia)

Mario Carraro (Busto Arsizio VA - Italy)

Nida Pansarasa (Rovasenda VC - Italia)

Pasquale Ruocco (Turin - Italy)

Piera Santarelli (Turin - Italy)

Rina Mestriner Cerbella (Jesolo VE - Italy)

Wanda Giaccherio (Biella - Italy)



That embrace of love

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

Bringing the capacity for “mercy” into personal, family and social life, as the soul of our day, is part of one of Jesus’ dreams. He, when he wished to teach, exposed himself to misunderstandings that were translated into heavy judgments, not to say, insults. “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him,” said the observant Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7, 39); “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons” (Mk 3, 22; Mt 12,24), and so on.

In the first case it concerned a prostitute, in the second a poor possessed man: at the first, Jesus restored the negative welcome of the religious society of the time; at the second, the liberation from slavery that made life unlivable. Faced with certain human negativity, perhaps in personal secrecy we are more good than appears, that is, we are more merciful. The hard part comes when mercy wants to enter one’s social and family life: we are observed by everyone.

Sometimes, literally, one explodes and appealing to “mercy” may even seem offensive.

The reality is that “being merciful” requires us to take a humble path of re-approaching Jesus (Luke 7: 36-50, as the prostitute who wept at the feet of Jesus did), the Church (somewhat more difficult if you have been shocked), your family, “evil” people in quotation marks, which unfortunately are encountered in life (one does not want to even hear about them). So you arrive at the junction of “no mercy”, if

you enter it someone may die. But you can also arrive at the junction of “mercy” and some life road opens, giving – says the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, (*Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 169) – the pace of accompaniment “reflecting our closeness and compassionate gaze,” which, if respected, “also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”

In the midst of her family difficulties, Rita of Cascia understood these things by dialoguing continuously with the Crucifix. She learned from Jesus who, even when dying, spoke words of love for everyone: for those who loved him (his mother, the disciple John) as well as for those who had sentenced him.

The latter, as they waited for him to bleed to death, mockingly laughed at him: “Hey, you, who are king, come on! Come down from the cross!” But Jesus answered by praying: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” We do not know how many of those present accepted his prayer, but we do know that a short time later that while he was being stoned, a young man, probably of Greek origin named Stephen, died with the same prayer of the dying Jesus. After Stephen, many followed suit and continue to follow Jesus, praying with him in that silent witness of life which is love that saves. They are spouses, children, mums and dads, volunteers, the consecrated. Thanks to them, life continues to produce the beat of its breathe. They have known and made their own that embrace of love with the forgiveness given by Jesus to the prostitute of Jerusalem. This is mercy. Only by giving it, can we continue to live embraced.



The name of mercy reveals “the God for us”

by Ms gr. Giovanni Scanavino OSA

A recent conversation with Father Virgilio Pacioni at the “Holy Spirit Conventions” in Florence revealed an Augustinian gem that I cannot keep to myself. It is too precious and I want to share it immediately. It concerns the most beautiful meaning of God’s name, that of mercy, which allows us to feel it as our deepest and most serene rest in the high seas of this life.

We are at the beginning of the book of Exodus, when Moses approaches the burning bush and receives the Lord’s call. Faced with the revelation of God to Moses (Exodus 3, 14 ff.), each one of us might be perplexed, comments St. Augustine. It is not easy to understand the first name of God: “I am that I am” (*nomen aeternitatis*, specifies Augustine). Here God is revealed for what he is in himself, and for this reason it is difficult to understand it. God himself notes the perplexity of Moses, who must communicate it to the Pharaoh and the Israelites themselves. Then the Lord himself adjusts his message and expresses himself in a more human way, with the name of mercy (*nomen misericordiae*): “The Lord, the God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob”. This is the God for us, that we can all understand because it has descended to our baseness, it has come to live our same humanity, in the concreteness of our contradictions and difficulties.

A direct comment from Augustine can help us to understand the name of the mercy of God and liberate our song of praise to the Lord: all, strong and weak,

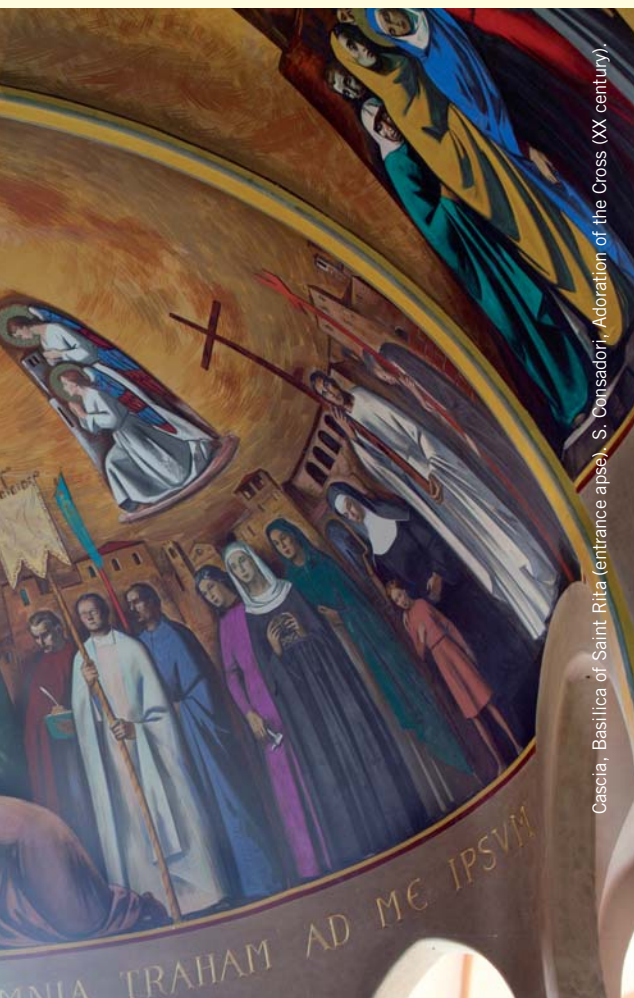




can praise him with this name; we can feel him close with the same immensity and stability which he has revealed with the name of eternity. Father Virgilio thus introduces the comment of Augustine on Psalm 134, in which Augustine returns to the text of Exodus: “In the commentary on Psalm 134, in which it said that it is just and useful for us praise the name of the Lord, Augustine - wondering how it is possible for all, ‘the strong and the weak’, to give praise to God - concludes his reflection with an existential observation that can be of great comfort to all believers”.

“However, we thank the Lord because in this psalm he has mitigated the needs of his praise by making it possible for the strong and the weak. Some-

thing similar happened when it came to send his servant Moses to the Israelites. God told him: *I am that I am; and thus shall you say unto the children of Israel. He who is has sent me unto you*; but because it was difficult for the human mind to understand in reality what was the same being, and on the other hand Moses was a man sent to other men, even by who was not man, God diluted the praise he would have been due. He said of himself what could easily and tastefully be understood, nor did he demand that those his praise would remain at that level that those who pronounced it would never have been able to achieve. He thus said: *Go and say to the children of Israel: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you. this is my name forever*. But, Lord, you certainly have that other name and it was you yourself who said: *I am, and, he that sent me to you*. Why now do you change name and say: (I am) *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob*? Does it not seem that your condescension comes to answer you by saying: As I said before, and that is, ‘I am that I am’, is true but you do not understand, whereas the other phrase: I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob is both true and adequate for your understanding? It is within my reach (*ad me pertinet*) to define myself: I am that I am, while it is within your reach (*ad te pertinet*) the definition: the God of Abraham ... If you lack the forces to understand what I am for myself, at least understand what I am for you “(Commentary on Psalm 134: 6). The name of eternity is within the reach of God, and can open us up to that relationship with Him that gives us inner stability and the prospect of eternity. But not everyone can understand it immediately. Not everyone is trained habitually in philosophical arguments. However, the name of mercy is within reach of all immediately and makes us understand how great and concrete is the love of God for us. Some philosophers (especially the Neoplatonists) argued that God cannot be mixed with men (see *De civ. Dei* VIII, 18). The name of mercy instead shows him in our history, fully involved, “in him we live and move and have our being” (see Acts 17: 27-28). Understanding it straight away also allows us immediately to praise him with perfect gratitude.



Cascia, Basilica of Saint Rita (entrance apse), S. Consadori, Adoration of the Cross (XX century).



WHAT CAN I DO?

The Pope invites us to perform the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy. In this issue of Featuring the Jubilee of Mercy, we continue with reflection on the 1st and 2nd works of spiritual mercy.

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

Counsel seems a positive word. Doubt seems a negative word. In fact, in order to be positive and not the result of presumption and interest in manipulating another person, counsel implies an act of love: “counsel the doubtful” does not mean “give advice”.

Having said that, usually, when we ask for advice, we actually do so because we want to be told what we have in mind. Above all else, counselling means listening. Counselling is to become the mirror of the other so that the other can look him/herself in the face. But, as we know, listening unselfishly is not easy. To listen and advise the other, we have to love the other, as God loves us, counsels us and guides us. The Lord listens to us and counsels us through the Word, the example of the saints, the events of life through which he sends us a message. On the other hand, the doubtful should not be conceived a priori negatively because, for us human beings, doubt is life. Doubt is research: it makes us grow and improve, it allows us to question what we are, what we know, what we do. Doubt is creative. That said, each one of us needs to dissolve his/her doubts in order to proceed along the way and we can only do that through comparison with others. All of us can have doubts when we are at a crossroads and we must make a decision that can change the progress of our lives in one way or another. There was a time when we Christians used to rely on the spiritual father to dispel the doubts that gripped us. Today, this is becoming increasingly less frequent and, instead, we seek false comfort in alternative paid for counsel, like from self-styled magicians. Some people do not confide in anyone.

But keep everything inside leads to sadness, anxiety, loneliness, up the point of no longer seeing where we are going and getting lost. We would do well to remember that we can – and it is healthy to do so – ask for advice on everything. There are no taboo topics. If you are a parent, for example (but it may generally be valid for adults towards young people), you can pay attention and devote time to your children, listening first of all, and avoiding the temp-

tation to start the automatic parental lecture. But, in general, it applies to each of us: we can all learn to put into practice this work of mercy which is easy in appearance but requires love. And, as we know, love involves sacrifice.

INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT

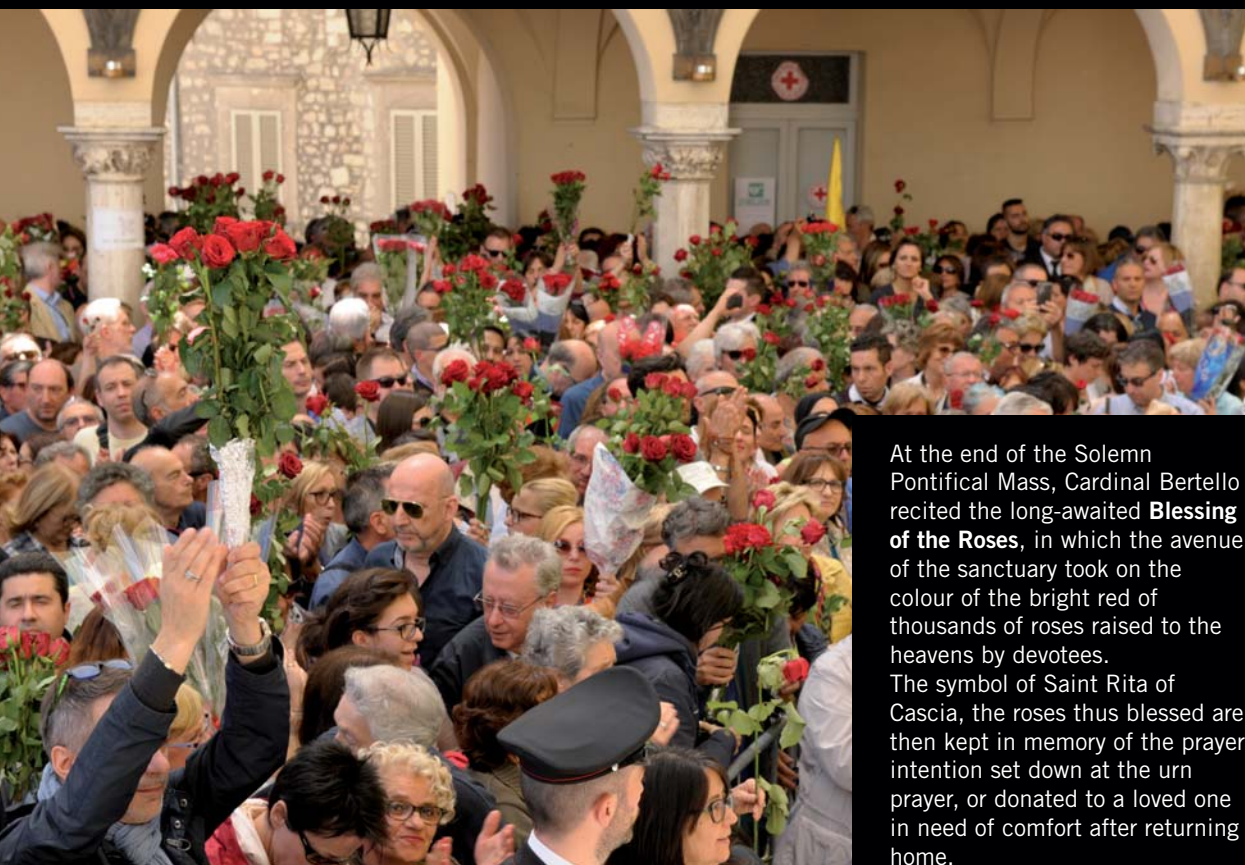
If education is very widespread today and the illiterate are reduced to very low percentages, how do we implement this work of mercy? Well, we can start very concretely by supporting those missions in the world that go out to ensure schools and education in the poorest countries. After that, we can intervene on the illiteracy of values. Today, all-encompassing insecurity and the dominance of a scheme that puts money and appearance above all else have distanced us from the fundamental values of relationships and a civil society. And this would already be an important work, because, first of all, we need to apply this work to ourselves before to others. However, other practical examples could involve teachers: understanding well that in our times the work of the teacher has become a challenge, it would be important that he or she rediscovers or maintains high, depending on the situation, the reasons that prompted him/her to choose this noble profession. Teaching is one of the biggest responsibilities that a human being can take. If we do it with superficiality, it can be detrimental for those who listen and trust our words. Motivation is critical for being good teachers, preparing lessons well and seriously, studying, updating and investing time in also building a relationship with parents who, in turn, may be less focused on the votes of their son or daughter and more attentive to their all-round education, which includes respect, education, stimulation at home, and not only in school, spirit of sacrifice and commitment. Parents, it should be remembered, are the first teachers of their children.

Another person who can apply this work is the catechist, who can be a guide for religious literacy but from whom many of us are moving away. Reading and understanding the Gospel, for example, can be enlightening for their own life experience. But it is worth remembering that teaching also means leaving a sign. The person who teaches is not limited to transmitting knowledge but also “marking the mind” of the listener, giving it a method of approach to reality. In short, the teacher shows a way, yes, but should never impose a law.



The bond between the saint of Cascia and her devotees, so strong and alive despite the passing of six centuries, brings more than **one million pilgrims every year** in front of Rita's incorrupt body, which is kept in the Sanctuary of Cascia and where the **Augustinian nuns and fathers** offer everyone a service of listening.





At the end of the Solemn Pontifical Mass, Cardinal Bertello recited the long-awaited **Blessing of the Roses**, in which the avenue of the sanctuary took on the colour of the bright red of thousands of roses raised to the heavens by devotees. The symbol of Saint Rita of Cascia, the roses thus blessed are then kept in memory of the prayer intention set down at the urn prayer, or donated to a loved one in need of comfort after returning home.







Saint Rita is loved for her “**extraordinary normality**” because, in her experience, each of us can find a bit our own. As a **woman, wife, mother, widow, nun**, stigmatised, at every stage of life, Rita responded to difficulties by entrusting herself to the Lord, putting into practice the values of welcome, dialogue and forgiveness.



From whichever part of the world we come from, we **turn to Saint Rita as a friend**, to confide in her the **desires of our heart**, to ask for her intercession, so that we may **overcome the obstacles** that life places before us.



Pilgrims at the ends of the earth

by Marta Ferraro

One of the most important moments of the Feast of Saint Rita was undoubtedly the annual Twinning of Faith and Peace which unites Cascia to another town in the world where there is devotion to the patron saint of impossible cases. The protagonist of this 58th edition was the city of Pope Francis: Buenos Aires, which opened the first phase of celebrations in April, when religious and local civil authorities welcomed the delegation from Cascia, led by Mayor Gino Emili, bishop Renato Boccardo and the rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita, Father Mario De Santis. Marta Ferraro followed this moving event for us.

It was March 13, 2013, when Cardinal Bergoglio was presented as the successor of Peter, taking the name of Francis. The new Pope opened his pontificate with words which were extraordinary in their simplicity: "Brothers and sisters, good evening! It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get a new Pope". After a flight of 22 hours and 25 minutes, landing in the Argentine capital with the Cascia delegation to ratify the Twinning of Faith and Peace with the city of Buenos Aires in the name of Saint Rita, I could only confirm how right the Holy Father had been. I really had come from the oth-

er ends of the earth to appreciate once again how venerated the saint of the impossible is in all corners of the earth.

It was immediately visible how strong Italian cul-

ture is in Argentina, an inevitable feature when you consider that fifty percent of Argentines have their roots in Italy. Our countrymen and women have now become fully inserted in the host society.

Pope Francis was born into a Piedmont family that had moved to Argentina and perhaps for this reason, in a period in which it is Europe that is the destination of landings, he often sings the praises of a policy of welcoming: build bridges rather than erect walls. In these times, in which tragedies at sea of migrants trying to reach Italy have intensified, I cannot fail to recall the story of hope and faith that I was



told by Francisca who, when still a child, travelled with her brothers and his mother to join her father in Buenos Aires. Francisca's mother, Mariannina, started her 21-day journey from Enna wearing the tunic of Saint Rita in a complete sign of trust in the Saint of Cascia. Francisca recalls that difficult journey but also the certainty that her mother felt protected dressed like the nun with the stigmata.

I have listened to many testimonies of faith and love,



The Torch of Peace was lit in Buenos Aires, the city of the 2016 twinning with Cascia, in the Sanctuary of the Oblate Fathers of the Virgin Mary.



Reaching the "ends of the earth", the torch then arrived in the square of the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia, to seal the union between the two peoples of Argentina and Italy in the name of Rita.

veiled however by a sense of nostalgia in knowing Italians who had come from the land of Rita, perceived as "a little piece of Italy that was coming to visit them", to tell him how things were going there. All this I felt, above all, in the story of Giuliana Fiorini. The lady has lived in Buenos Aires since 1949 and, although now absent from Italy for more than half a century, she still receives the "From the Bees to the Roses" magazine in the name of her now-defunct dear mother, Ida. Giuliana told me how she still hears the tone of her mother's voice as she tells her about the life of Saint Rita, as if it were a story about a relative who lived far away. Ida was a generous benefactor of the Little Bees of the Beehive of Saint Rita. In fact, every time she travelled to Italy, she did not fail to go to Cascia for a pilgrimage and leave an offering for the "children of the Monastery". Giuliana welcomed meeting people who



The Torch of Peace was the star of this year's even more remarkable journey: leaving from Buenos Aires and being blessed in Rome by Pope Francis, it passed through the towns of the Perugian hinterland before arriving in Cascia, in an exceptional relay made possible by the torchbearers of CONI Umbria.

know the condition of the Little Bees that the nuns still take care of today with zeal and love.

Meeting Buenos Aires was like meeting distant friends, happy and well integrated people, well placed, with

memories of distant Italy in their gaze.

The attitude they have in recalling Pope Francis during his visits to the parish of Saint Rita in Buenos Aires is very simple and confidential. Parish priest Father Con-

stantine told the Italian delegation how, the last time he had been in the parish for the feast of May 22 in 2012, Cardinal Bergoglio reassured the Argentine devotees of the saint who, in his view, had a fearful reverence of the saint. On that occasion, said Father Constantine, the Pope uttered these words: "You tend to believe that Saint Rita is a saint who take away. In reality, Saint Rita does take away – envy, despair, sadness – but she gives love, peace and forgiveness".

The experience in Buenos Aires was a delicate one, which I hope is a good omen for contemporary migrants, because we are continuous pilgrims until we find a place that welcomes us with dignity and love.



Representatives of the two delegations, one from Buenos Aires and the other from Cascia, during the first part of the Twinning of Faith and Peace that took place in April, in the city of Pope Francis.



“**T**he Little Bees of Saint Rita are like daughters to us ... We come from Puglia and we have travelled 700 km to take part in this ‘family reunion’,” said Anna and Vincenzo, just two of the over 350 participants in the two-days “Open door at the Beehive” event, which took place in Cascia on June 11 and 12 at the Saint Rita Beehive, the house of welcome founded by the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia 78 years ago. Family, Welcome, Testimony: these were the key values that characterised the event, organised by the Beehive in partnership with the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation non-profit organisation. In an extraordinary and continuous exchange of experiences, supporters came from all over Italy, as well as from the town of Cascia; volunteers, nuns and staff joined together in one big “Beehive Family”, where every-

Open door at the Beehive

Over 350 people
from all over Italy
participated in the
big family reunion

one participated feeling themselves a part of the Beehive. And it was beautiful to touch the authentic bond that donors allow us to have with them, in a project that is felt by all as “their own” – a concrete, tangible help for the Little Bees of Saint Rita, the young girls from families in economic and social difficulty who are guests of the house of welcome.



A moment of the show organised by Little Bees and Wild-flowers on June 11 to welcome the many friends of the Beehive who had come to Cascia.

More than 350 people from every part of Italy attended the two-day "Open door at the Beehive" to witness the reality of the "Beehive of Saint Rita" solidarity project at first hand.



Sister Melania (centre) was one of the protagonists of the event. Former Little Bee Alessandra Paoloni dedicated a letter to her on behalf of all former Little Bees to celebrate the nun's eightieth birthday and her many years of charity in favour of the young guests of the Beehive house.

There were two main moments: the first, on the evening of Saturday June 11, initially intended to be held in the Beehive courtyard but moved to the restaurant of Hotel delle Rose, the main sponsor of the event, due to the uncertain weather and the likelihood of rain. Little Bees – the young guests of the house – and Wildflowers – the

younger children followed by educators in after-school day care – put on a show made up of moments of music, dance, song and theatre, interspersed by the testimonies of those who live the Beehive every day.

Particularly moving was the moment dedicated to the former Little Bees, today women, who honoured the 80th birthday of Sister Melania De Luca, the nun delegated by the Monastery to take care of the young people, flanking the professional work of the staff of educators with love. Listening to the letter of love written by former Little



Little Bees of Saint Rita during the "Open door at the Beehive" event.

Bee Alessandra Paoloni, who spoke on behalf of the former Little Bees present, Sister Melania was particularly moved, feeling strongly the unconditional affection that still binds former Little Bees to her and the Beehive even today.

The second moment, which was not to be missed by supporters from the rest of Italy, took place on the morning of Sunday June 12 inside the Beehive, when people were able to visit and touch the house of welcome. Many of those present lingered on the beautiful handicrafts made by Little Bees and Wildflowers during the year, as part of "Workshops for Growing" project,



A moment of the show: Little Bees enact the welcome received in the house of the Beehive.

with the valuable contribution of professional and volunteer teachers.

There was great participation by the citizens of Cascia, with the town's mayor, Gino Emili, also attending.

In addition to main sponsor Hotel delle Rose, led by Pietro Del Rio, there were also contributions from Hotel Elite, run by Enrico Di Curzio, and Hotel Cursula, run by the Gianfranco Giustini family. The work of teachers from "Workshops for Growing" was also precious: for dancing, Asta Andrijevskyte; for singing, Loredana Birocci; for photography, Giovanni Galardini; for cooking classes, Ivana Demofonti and Marcella Deangelis; for manual skills workshops, Rita Maria Righetti, Gabriella Di Crescenzo, Natalia Cipileaga, Suman Soni, Luisa Di

GOODNESS AWARD

On Saturday June 11, during "Open door at the Beehive," the director of the Saint Rita Beehive, Violanda Lleshaj, handed Little Bee Ioana the Goodness Award 2016 (pictured).

In memory of Sister M. Tarcisia Chiatto, Augustinian daughter of Saint Rita, who rose to heaven on September 4, 2006, brother and sisters Mario, Flora and Ivonne established an annual prize to be awarded to Little Bee or Wildflower who has stood out for sensitivity and commitment towards others. Another exciting moment was the awarding of Little Bee and Wildflower "certificates" to young people who have completed the path of growth in the Beehive: Little Bees Oana, Loredana, Tania, Narcisa and Maria Aline; Wildflowers Marta, Arianna, Domenico, Matteo and Giada. We will always be at their side, with heart and prayer. Best wishes! *(The Augustinian Nuns of Saint Rita)*



Curzio and Anna Pierantoni. There were also contributions from film-makers Leonardo and Luciano Angelini, from the staff of the Monastery and from many irreplaceable volunteers. (MG)

It is our
task to let
them grow
serenely.



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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