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BIMONTHLY  
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN  
MONASTERY  
OF SAINT RITA  
OF CASCIA

# FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine  
of Saint Rita of Cascia

## A NEW LIGHT

*Let's go back to living with the Feast of Santa Rita*

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## FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES

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The winter of January 1457 is a harsh one when Sister Rita, sick and close to death, asks and receives as a gift from the Lord a red rose, miraculously blossomed from the snow. That rose comes into Rita's hands as the divine seal for a human life pierced by many thorns, the pains of which were overcome by her in Him and for Him. For Rita, the rose, which represents the thought for her husband and the strength of conjugal love, is at the same time the door to the light of the Lord, which opens to welcome a soul always surrounded by the wonderful scent of eternity.

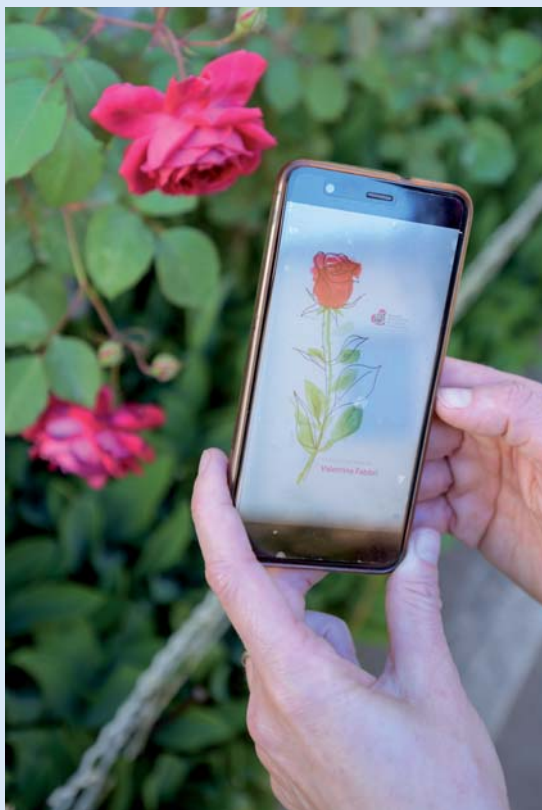
That first rose, which has since become the flower symbol of Saint Rita of Cascia, reminds us that life, as a precious gift from the Lord, is certainly fragile but eternal and capable of regenerating itself even from the smallest of seeds. "I will be reborn," sang Riccardo Cocciante, "so happy to have been born between heaven, earth and the infinite".

Through faith and love for Rita, in fact, the rose shows us the path of rebirth, that of life that starts and renews itself, the one to which we invite you all, illuminated by the new light towards which our beloved saint brings us all, the one reflected directly by God.

This is why the plants of the Roses of Saint Rita, although they were distributed this year in an exceptional form, brought the feast of May 22 to the homes of the many devotees who requested them online or through the network of volunteers. In this way, they were a gift of hope, which Saint Rita knows how to instil in everyone's heart and which gives the strength to look at the new life that blooms, today and always for all of us.

The rose was not missing even at the special Feast of Saint Rita, which indelibly marked this 2020 edition. On paper or digitally, the rose has been not only the sign of the deep bond of every devotee with Saint Rita, but also the fundraising tool that many faithful used to come closer to the spirit of Ritian charity and thus help the needy.

## The rose with the scent of eternity



Because the hope that Rita gives us is multiplied if we follow her steps. This was the sense of the gift which, immediately after May 22, the monastery wanted to give the female staff of the Bellaria Hospital in Bologna, in the form of 200 special and unique Roses of Saint Rita, white in colour, just like their gowns. A gift that we nuns thought of, for the first time, to pay homage to the value of the human and medical work carried out by these women who fought for life during the emergency.

Each rose expresses our thanks and represents the wish for all of you to overcome the thorns and blossom into new life. Once again guided by Saint Rita, once again together. ■

# A historic May 22: the marathon of the Feast of Saint Rita

by Alessia Nicoletti

**A**t 7:30 on 22 May 2020, I left my home in Cascia to go to the Basilica of Saint Rita. I parked the car just before arriving, making the rest of the way on foot, with a red rose in my hand. Arriving along the avenue, it was enough just to see the Sanctuary to have a feeling I had never felt before, that of walking not on a simple stretch of road but along a piece of history that is not only mine and that not only I will always remember.

The Feast of Saint Rita 2020, in fact, has indelibly marked the history of the immense family of its devotees, scattered in every corner of the world. Why? Not because already long before 7:30 the avenue of the Basilica, as well as the other roads leading to it, would normally have been full of the

faithful. And not even because I would normally have heard the voices of men, women, children and teenagers with a thousand accents and hundreds of different languages, perhaps comparing their fatigued progress from the long journey, but with joy in their eyes. No, not because this large family was not physically present in Cascia this year, but because thanks to an impossible undertaking made possible by the hand of Saint Rita, the Augustinian nuns, custodians of her body and her teaching, wanted to take the celebrations of May 22 directly to her devotees in Italy and worldwide. This new, exceptional and pioneering road that the nuns wanted to build towards Cascia bears the name of the marathon of the Feast of Saint Rita, or the 8-hour international live streaming, which the monastery, flanked by



## THE FEAST, LIGHT OF HOPE FOR THE ELDERLY

Especially this year, for many the Feast of Saint Rita has been a new light in which to regenerate. This was also the case in Villa Ilia residence for the elderly in Sestri Levante (GE), Liguria, where May 22 “was the first moment of joy for our guests and for the entire staff, after endless days of fear, anxiety, uncertainty and expectation”. These are the words that the coordinator of the structure Anna Basso wrote to the nuns in late May, in an email that impressed the Augustinians. During these months, unfortunately, nursing homes have experienced a real human tragedy, registering approximately half of the deaths in Europe according to estimates. “To date we have been spared from Covid-19,” continued the coordinator, “but the commitment and attention to protect the elderly and all of us must be constant”. The community honoured the saint of impossible cases with a thanksgiving Mass. “The first step towards the warmth and light of the new season took place precisely with the mass, celebrated on the terrace: a sign of hope. At the end, the Missionary Father of the Consolata who presided blessed the roses: we delivered one to each guest, so that they could keep it in their room”. Thus concluded Anna Basso, wishing everyone peace and health.

the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation, produced and launched simultaneously on all its social channels: the Facebook page, the Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia YouTube channel and the institutional website [www.santaritadacascia.org](http://www.santaritadacascia.org). On these platforms, the video of the marathon, which was widely followed live and which to date has been seen by as many as 300 thousand people, is still visible for those who did not follow the celebrations or for those who want to relive them.

True, we all missed the physical embrace of every single devotee, but we chose not to look at what was missing, but at how wonderful what we have in Saint Rita is and what we could do to make this day unforgettable for everyone. This allowed us to

*The video of the marathon was seen by 300 thousand people*





Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Order of St. Augustine, during the celebrations.

continue, as we have done during the toughest period of isolation, to seek a special way to unite all devotees in the love of Rita. The live broadcast had a truly massive presence on every digital space available to the monastery, in such a way as to be able to do away with distances and thus allow every moment of the feast to reach everyone. In fact, the family of Saint Rita found itself at her feet again this year, in a virtual way yes, but no less capable of transmitting affection, closeness and devotion, the same emotions that are felt every year among the endless crowd of devotees. You were all there for Rita, especially this year, when physical absence turned into a wealth of



The community of the Fathers, including in the foreground Fr. Mario Di Quinzio and Fr. Giustino Casciano, new Prior Provincial of the Augustinians of Italy.

human and spiritual communion.

This is what the historic marathon of the Feast of Saint Rita demonstrated; crossing all borders and arriving in everyone's homes, thanks also to the commentary in English on the Holy Masses. Only the first step towards the firm decision to expand ever more.

The marathon, which I had the great honour and responsibility of commentating, was an entire day spent in the name of Saint Rita to talk about ourselves, share, reflect and rejoice together. Within the 8 hours of streaming, immediately after the start at 10:00, the Solemn Mass of the Feast of Saint Rita was transmitted, with the blessing of the roses and the recitation

## *The Feast of Saint Rita 2020 has indelibly marked history*

of the Supplication, presided over by Monsignor Renato Boccardo, Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia. The closing of the live broadcast came at 18:00 with Holy Mass for the benefactors of the Sanctuary and the second blessing of the roses, exceptionally replicated for those who could not follow it in the morning, presided over by Father Bernardino Pinciaroli, Rector of the Basilica.

Alongside the religious celebrations, the live broadcast event, opened with the nuns' greetings to devotees, saw the participation of numerous guests, with links and various testimonies, also reliving and recounting, with the help of video contributions, moments of the feast that could not be repeated: the Procession and the Historical Parade, which recalls the life of the saint in costume, the "Saint Rita International Recognition Award", which rewards the Women of Rita every year for embodying today values of forgiveness, peace, suffering and love, and finally the Twinning of Peace, scheduled with Syria. The links from some



Italian sanctuaries to unite the whole country in the name of Rita were very emotional. The Sanctuaries of Saint Rita in Milan, Turin and Palermo were linked, but also the Sanctuary of St. Nicola da Tolentino and the Church of St. Mark in Bergamo, which recounted the devotion to Rita there and how they celebrated this May 22 in the time of Covid-19. On current issues, there was also talk about the delicate post-coronavirus situation and the earthquake in Valnerina.

Thanks to the guests, the marathon dealt with many topics including the miracles of Santa Rita, the current devotional atmosphere, the great people of devout Ritanians and the importance of issues such as universality and the topicality of the Ritan message.

There was also space for charity works carried out by the monastery including the Beehive of Santa Rita, the “From the Bees to the Roses” magazine, the family of the Saint Rita Primary Pious Union, with links from Conversano (BA) and Genazzano (RM), and the event of the Roses of Saint Rita with the photos of volunteers.

During the special marathon of May 22, the rose – symbol par excellence of Saint Rita – which devotees were able to request to support the charity works of the monastery, was available in both digital and paper form and personalised with their names. A small sign to remember this virtu-

al Feast of Saint Rita, which did not renounce human warmth and, in the hope of the neediest, brought devotees closer to the spirit of charity of Saint Rita. Speaking of digital rose, a particular surprise was addressed to Pope Francis. The Saint Rita Monastery symbolically wanted to donate a



Alessia Nicoletti with Omero Sabatini during the live broadcast of the feast.

digital rose to the Pope himself: a gift of love that represents the fragility of humanity and at the same time the scent of holiness, which Saint Rita invites us to conquer in everyday life. The virtual rose of Saint Rita, with the name “Pope Francis” was broadcast live at about 13:00, on the monastery's Instagram account @monasterosantarita and sent to the Pope tagging the account @pontifex\_ita.

Virtual and otherwise, the symbol of this



special edition May 22 was undoubtedly the rose. In fact, the blessing of the roses, which on an exceptional basis was also valid for those who raised the roses to heaven from home, was felt more than ever. During the ceremony, 45 roses were blessed, which the Augustinian nuns then sent to the President of the Italian Republic

Sergio Mattarella, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, the Presidents of the Regions of Italy, the President of the Italian Episcopal Conference Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti and the Presidents of Regional Episcopal Conferences. A rose was also delivered to the Mayor of Cascia, while the last 5 roses, symbolically representing the continents,

## 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.*

Adriana Velatta (Cellio VC - Italy)  
Angela Taloni (Galliciano nel Lazio RM - Italy)  
Anna Bruni (Sora FR - Italy)  
Argentina Bartolini (Arcevia AN - Italy)  
Calogero Alfano (Furtwangenim Schwarzwald, Baden-Württemberg - Germany)  
Carolina Armellino (Nocera Inferiore SA - Italy)  
David Onori (Trieste - Italy)  
Desiana Di Lodovico (Città Sant'Angelo PE - Italy)  
Edda Gonnella in Monari (Vicenza - Italy)  
Eulalia Cappai (Quartu Sant'Elena CA - Italy)

Elida Maggiore (S. Pietro Mosezzo NO - Italy)  
Gavino Piras (Olmedo SS - Italy)  
Giovanni Piras (Olmedo SS - Italy)  
Giuliana Guidali in Rancati (Abbiategrosso MI - Italy)  
Ida Santellocco (Rome - Italy)  
Ignazio Sanfratello (Vallelunga Pratameno CL - Italy)  
Lidia Carnicelli (Lucca - Italy)  
M. Innocenza Clerico (San Maurizio d'Opaglio NO - Italy)  
Maddalena Ginocchi (Canada)  
Maria Luisa Schincariol (Canada)  
Pasqualina Maglione (Acerra NA - Italy)  
Pietro Orlando (Rome - Italy)  
Rita Gadaleta (Molfetta BA - Italy)  
Rosanna Volta (Marene CN - Italy)  
Sebastiana Contini (Olmedo SS - Italy)  
Tiles Maconi (Lissone MB - Italy)  
Velia Bertoni (Parma - Italy)  
Zelinda Velardi (Colli del Tronto AP - Italy)

# TESTIMONIES OF GRACE

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



*"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it".* With these words from Isaiah 55 I leave you to read the story of Simona, a sweet, delicate and attentive mother who must fight every day to safeguard and protect the health of her son. Now she is no longer alone on her path, she knows where to find strength, in the Word that reveals to her how much God is considerate of the weakness and fragility of his creatures.

"My name is Simona, I am the mother of Marco, a wonderful child. At the age of three, Marco fell ill with Type 1 diabetes mellitus. My despair was immense, I did not know this disease and I was afraid of not being able to cure it. I was so desperate that I went to various sanctuaries to ask for healing grace. On a pilgrimage I met a girl who talked to me about Saint Rita and gave me an image of the saint. Two years after this meeting, in an exceedingly difficult period with my husband, I dreamed of a voice telling me to pray to Saint Rita, saint of the impossible. I began to turn to her; to pray for the problems with my husband, for the problems with school due to the handling of the disease by the teachers, for me who felt increasingly tired. In the meantime, I began to find sacred images on the street, notes with phrases from the gospel, which I call messages from heaven. I did not understand why I always found these notes in the most difficult moments of my life, but now I know that I found them because the Lord wanted me to understand that I am not alone and that he is always there to comfort me. My son is not healed, I always ask Saint Rita for this grace, but over time the quarrels with my husband have eased and I have met doctors who have supported me in the effort of managing my son's illness. This is my humble testimony. I hope it can give comfort to those who are currently in difficulty. Thanks to Saint Rita, every day I manage to face the trials of life with a courage that I didn't think I had before, and I try always to smile". (Simona, Rome - Italy)

were sent to Pope Francis, as custodian of the Christian people in the world. Everyone thanked the Augustinians for the gift of the rose. The letters received from President Mattarella and Pope Francis were incredibly beautiful. In particular, the Holy Father, as a sign of his gratitude, sent a special blessing to the nuns, the Augustinian fathers and the Little Bees of the Beehive. The words sent by Head of State Mattarella to the nuns of Cascia were also important: in his personally written letter, he told the

nuns: "The celebration of the feast of the saint has significantly accompanied the reopening of Italy and I hope you will continue to accompany it with her protection".

That is why 22 May 2020 will go down in history. Not for the limitations and not even for the physical absences, but for the even stronger and universal presence of Saint Rita among her people. It was she who joined us and united us all. Clapsed together in her hands, we can now restart, return to life and look forward to tomorrow. ■



# Open Doors at the Beehive in live streaming

## Opening to the restart

For the 2020 edition, Open Doors at the Beehive – the event that allows friends and supporters of the Beehive of Saint Rita to enter its world every year and get to know it closely – took place exceptionally on June 16 via a 2-hour live streaming, broadcast on the *Beehive of Saint Rita Fa-*

cebook page, on the YouTube channel and on the monastery website [www.santarita-dacascia.org](http://www.santarita-dacascia.org).



## The Pope for the Little Bees

Shortly before the Open Doors event, the letter of Pope Francis reached the nuns, with his blessing for the community and the Little Bees. “We were touched by his blessing,” said the Prioress, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, “for our Little Bees, who are like daughters for us, to help grow up in love. They, together with every supporter and devotee of Saint Rita, are our great family”.





## The live broadcast

Open Doors celebrated the beauty and importance of the Beehive, capable of giving opportunities of life to many young people. Commentated by Alessia Nicoletti for the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation and Anna Simoni, Beehive educator, the live broadcast opened with greetings from supporters who testified to the value of the Beehive and sent their affection. Little Bees, Wild-flowers and former Little Bees intervened with entertaining videos of thanks and reflection, which excited everyone.

## The love of devotees

The live video today has 22 thousand views and many comments from all over Italy and beyond, including from Canada and Chile. "How nice to see all this love in action that is contagious," writes Enrico on Facebook. "Donating allows us to help the Beehive, receiving an immense love that gives us strength to face the difficulties we encounter," says Antonella, commenting on the live broadcast on YouTube.



## Support for the Beehive

Due to the pandemic, the Beehive has been closed for months to protect the health of the Little Bees. Even if they never lacked the support and closeness of the nuns and educators, for all of them the live broadcast of Open Doors marked the first step of a new path oriented towards the restart. A re-launch which many contributed to during the live broadcast, by ordering the Beehive Backpack to get back on the road together.



## THE BEEHIVE BACKPACK FOR RESTARTING TOGETHER

"People will fill it with the essentials for the journey of life that starts again". This was how Sister Giacomina Stuani, Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, talked about the Beehive backpack, the special gift launched during the Open Doors event. The backpack is designed for those who want to help the Beehive of Saint Rita on the path that looks with hope to the restart, as soon as it is possible to reopen the structure. Everyone can contribute with a donation. You can request the backpack online on the website [www.santaritadacascia.org/zainetto](http://www.santaritadacascia.org/zainetto) or by donating via postal account (number 1010759072 to: Fondazione Santa Rita da Cascia) or bank transfer (IBAN: IT 4010311103246000000000483 - BIC/SWIFT: BLOPIT22), indicating "Zainetto" [Backpack] as the reason. We can only ship in Italy.



# Berta Barban and her love for the Beehive

From devotee to instrument of charity

by Alessia Nicoletti

“For her, the Saint Rita Monastery was a point of reference and the Beehive was the place where she recharged herself with love”. Thus begins the recollection of Elide Barban (née Lovo), known by all as Berta, historical supporter of the Beehive of Saint Rita, told to me by Bernardetta Salciarini, director since 1974 and for 37 years of the structure of the Cascia monastery, which takes in and helps Little Bees grow up. The story of Berta from Noale, province of Venice, who died on 22 April 2020 at the age of 83, is that of a great devotee of Saint Rita. The strong and deep bond between her and the saint was born thanks to her family and

in particular to her mother Adele, who urged her to entrust herself to Rita for the evil that afflicted her: that is, breast cancer. In this way, starting in 1971, together with a group of fellow citizens and others, Berta began her pilgrimages of faith to Cascia for the feast of May 22, in order to feel closer to her saint. Then, in 1978, Berta took a parchment to the monastery (which is still affixed in the passage between the cloister and the Beehive) as a sign of gratitude to Saint Rita, who had healed her from that “unforgiving evil”, as she writes herself.

This grace received strengthens her devotion, which is destined to grow further. In the same year, in fact, Berta and Bernardetta ha-





## *Berta's story is that of a great devotee of Santa Rita*

ve a casual encounter in the square of Cascia, or rather, as Bernardetta tells me, “thanks to the hand of Providence”. In this way, Berta discovers the Beehive and falls in love with it, becoming, like Saint Rita and Blessed Mother Teresa Fasce, an instrument of love and charity. “In this mission,” Bernardetta tells me, “Berta involved many people, starting with her husband Marco and her daughter Renza in addition to her acquaintances from Noale and the surrounding area, but also from Bergamo, Treviso, Padua, Turin and Vercelli. Together with them, throughout the year, she dedicated herself to the collection of all kinds of gifts, offerings and packages that the group then brought to Saint Rita and its Little Bees every May 21. Furthermore, they also remembered us in their prayers, especially in the Wednesday rosary”.

“When May 22 approached, in addition

to looking forward to the feast, we also looked forward to Signora Berta,” I was told by Anna Simoni, who first met Berta as a Little Bee and then as an educator of the Beehive. “It is a beautiful memory of my childhood,” adds Anna, “because Berta was a significant and unfailing moment of celebration and mutual joy. I have in mind her bright gaze, her beautiful smile, because she expressed her love. She used to say, ‘here are my girls’ and would open her arms, embracing us all in one big hug. Once a year she brought us her love, but we felt it every day and it will always be like this”.

In 2013, after the death of her husband, Berta, advanced in age and burdened by the years, was forced to stop her pilgrimages of faith to Cascia, but she was always thinking about the Little Bees, whom she regarded as daughters. “When I learned from her daughter of her death,” concluded Bernardetta, “I was terribly upset. To remember her, on May 22 I came to Cascia to pray to Saint Rita, as she did every year, following the fire of faith that she had in her heart and that she spread in everyone who met her”.

# le ROSE di SANTA RITA

The scent of hope



Sibari di Cassano  
all'Ionio - Cosenza

Joy, spirit of initiative and devotion gave the right stimulus and great enthusiasm to the over 300 volunteers who, united in the love of Saint Rita, joined this special edition of the solidarity event to raise funds for the fourth consecutive year in favour of the Beehive and the Little Bees.



Saronno - Varese



Renazzo di Cento -  
Ferrara

The Roses of Saint Rita event was held in May in an unusual way, through online orders, given the conditions imposed by the pandemic. However, nothing stopped the volunteers who, despite not being able to go into the squares throughout Italy, created a true network of love which sowed hope, bringing the presence of Saint Rita into homes in time for the feast of May 22. All the photos illustrating the 2020 edition are on [www.rosedisantarita.org/gallery](http://www.rosedisantarita.org/gallery)

From northern to southern Italy, including the islands, volunteers were motivated by a strong sense of rebirth and gradual return to normal, in full compliance with safety regulations. Because, with love, everything is possible. They proved to be original and creative, setting up stalls with roses at home or in shops, in garages or through home deliveries, in order to be able to distribute them.



Lariano - Rome

The warmhearted involvement of family and friends made it possible to distribute the Roses of Saint Rita, which this year more than ever represented the symbol of hope and rebirth of the whole of Italy.



Cascia - Perugia

# *A bequest, a gift of love*

Remembering  
who is most vulnerable  
in your will can change someone's life  
for ever

Allocating even a small bequest to the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia means leaving a sign of your generosity in time.

Thanks to bequests, we can support the Beehive of Saint Rita, a hope for all Little Bees, the children who will inherit your love.

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



# Transforming pain into an act of love

The ever-current experience of Santa Rita

“**B**ecause of the example that Saint Rita offers to these parents we could not fail to come to Cascia”. This is how Father Antonio, priest of the Parish of Santa Lucia in Palermo, explains the reason for his pilgrimage to the land of Rita together with a group of parents of children who died prematurely. “We had decided to organise a pilgrimage to Rome to attend the Pope's audience and then to Assisi. For obvious reasons related to the experience of Saint Rita, it seemed almost natural to visit Cascia as well,” continued Father Antonio in his account of the day spent at the Sanctuary. It is above all in the Eucharistic celebration and in being together, or in sharing this pain among people who experi-



*Basilica of Saint Rita, G.B. Galizzi, Rita and her children in front of the crucifix (XX century)*

ence the same condition of suffering, that strength and energy are found for going forward. The atmosphere we found in the Sanctuary,

mainly the silence that welcomed us, also helped the parents find help in the example of Saint Rita. She, who has prayed so much for

## PRAYER

### Prayer for parents

Saint Rita, wife and mother, / who with passion imparted / a truly Christian / education to your children / in order to protect them from harm, / let God grant us light and strength / and that same love that guided you / to perform our duties as parents. Amen

her children, is undoubtedly a valid example for those who experience this condition”.

In her long earthly experience, Saint Rita went through several trials linked to the multiple stages of her life. In each of them, like each of us, she experienced moments of great joy and moments of deep sadness. With certainty, however, and that is what differentiates her from most of us, she lived them in close relationship with God, entrusting herself to his will without hesitation.

From a very young age she experienced the condition of impotence and disappointment in learning that her parents did not want her to become an Augustinian nun at the Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena and for this reason she agreed to marry the young Paolo di Ferdinando for them. Once a wife, she understood that married life was not always simple and indeed the character of her husband, a good man but deeply involved in the difficult reality of his time, imposed willpower and a close relationship with God to convert the man with whom she had decided to spend her whole life. While their marriage seemed to have found the right balance



The group of the Parish of Santa Lucia in Palermo.

and Paolo, following the example of his wife, had decided to embrace a new way of life, there came the first mourning in the life of Saint Rita. Paolo was killed and Rita had the painful experience of widowhood. But that was not the only pain she was to accept.

Left alone with her children, Rita did not know that once again she would face death. A few years after the murder of her husband, Rita experienced the most unnatural pain that a parent could survive: the loss of a child and she, in a very short time, lost them both, probably from illness. However, Saint Rita, who throughout her life, prayed a lot for the children to live fully on the way of the Lord, faced this trial with deep faith, transforming her pain into a pre-

cious gift to offer to God, ultimately in LOVE.

For this reason, Saint Rita today is a valid example for those parents who, due to different circumstances, live the painful experience of having a child in heaven. There are many parents who go to Cascia every year to seek in Rita's experience a sense to give that mourning which is so difficult to metabolise. Those parents for whom the pain is so enormous to manage and incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it, find a heartwarming example that gives them hope faced with the experience of Saint Rita. Many of them make sense of it while not giving up living their parenting but transforming their pain into an act of love. (MF)

## THE RITIAN MESSAGE FOR 2020

Thanks to these pages, we address those who have lost their loved ones in this difficult year and especially to parents who are experiencing the pain of the death of their children. May the message, closeness and example of Saint Rita be a light for you in suffering. The Nuns of Saint Rita of Cascia.

# The relics of Saint Rita in Egypt

by Rita Gentili

**T**he testimony of devotion to Saint Rita in Egypt comes to us from the words of Luciana Tironi, a woman originally from Bergamo, who has lived for 23 years in Egypt and is a member of the Committee of Italians Abroad. Together with her also Father William Faltas, a Franciscan devoted to the saint of the impossible from a young age, today parish priest of the Assumption of Mary church in Cairo, in the Musky district, who recently welcomed the two relics of Saint Rita from Cascia. Luciana's testimony helps us understand that devotion to the saints is a foundation of the life of the Egyptian faithful, a cornerstone that Luciana defines as "familiar". And Saint Rita is an exceptional representative, becoming a point of reference for the faithful, not only Christians but also Muslims. A devotion that passes from those knowledgeable about Saint Rita for historical-cultural reasons, to the latter, who learned its history and values from the former. A process whose protagonists are first and foremost women, mothers in particular, who tell other women, regardless of their belief, of the great magnanimity of Saint Rita, whom they can rely on in the most desperate moments seemingly without solution. And so, in Egypt, Saint Rita became the saint of all and for all, overcoming the limits and boundaries of all religious beliefs. This is confirmed by Father William: not only in different cities of Egypt such as Luxor, As-siut and Suez are there statues and chapels dedicated to the miracle worker, but the largest and most famous sanctuary dedicated to Saint Rita, in Alexandria, has become a destination for pilgrimages by Christian and non-Christian faithful. And some of the merit also goes to Fr. William:

during his service as superior of the convent and parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family in Luxor, at the beginning of the 2000s, he made the promise to spread

## RITA IS ALSO HERE



**Country:** Egypt

**City:** Cairo

**Worth knowing:** Country with one of the oldest, most complex and fascinating histories in the world, Egypt's pyramids are probably its most famous symbol. Belonging to Egypt, although geographically in Asia, is the Sinai Peninsula, crossed, according to the biblical story, for 40 years by the Jews who left Egypt before they entered the land of Canaan and where the mountain is located on which Moses received the divine law. Egypt has also been heavily affected by coronavirus and the country has recorded three thousand deaths out of a total of over 68 thousand patients. After the crisis following the 2011 revolution and the various attacks suffered, this is the most dramatic and difficult moment for Egypt in many respects.

devotion to Saint Rita wherever obedience intended it. The last act of this commitment took place in the church of which Father William is now parish priest, in Cairo. After having placed the statue of Saint Rita there, in March he also welcomed the two relics sent by the monastery of Cascia. For the occasion, a solemn Mass was celebrated presided over by Apostolic Nuncio Msgr. Nicola Thevenin, accompanied by the apostolic administrator of the Latin vicariate in Egypt, Fr. Elia Iskandar, and a group of 20 priests from various congregations. During the ceremony, the baptism of a girl named Rita was also celebrated. Among the large crowd of faithful who came to participate, there were many Italians residing in Egypt who, Luciana tells us, also promised to create a support group to help the parish spread the Ritian message. The Church of the Assumption, Luciana explains to us, is a place of great historical importance: since



1954 it has housed the library of the Franciscan Centre for Oriental Studies, a place of knowledge but also of meeting between Christians and Muslims, in which the deepening of life and the Ritian message, which embraces the faithful of both religions, can find fertile ground.



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



by Marta Ferraro

# From roses rises the PPU of Genazzano

**"S**aint Rita has always buzzed around me, but I never paid attention to her, I was always distracted. My grandmother and my mother are her devotees, not surprisingly I also bear the name of the saint. Then, I got married and I found out that my mother-in-law was also a devotee, so much so that she wanted my husband to receive first communion in Cascia. In short, Saint Rita has always been in my life, but I never gave her much space until, almost by chance, I came across her in this magazine advertising the

solidarity stall of the roses. Driven by the example of my mother who for years had been organising a collection of offerings to support the charity works of the monastery of Cascia in my native town, Casapulla, I

***It is precisely  
in difficulties  
that everyone  
needs  
someone***

said to myself: 'This year I will organise the stall and that's it - instead, that's where it all started'.

Thus begins the story of Maria Rita Monaco, one of the volunteers of the Roses of Saint Rita in the 2019 edition, which sanctioned the birth of a new prayer group of the Saint Rita Primary Pious Union in the town of Genazzano, province of Rome.

It is from participation in the solidarity stall for the distribution of roses, the funds from which support the activities of the Beehive, that the experience of the Genazzano PPU began, and it will soon make its official entry into the prayer group through affiliation.

"That 5 May 2019 there was bad weather all over Italy, the cold and rain did not spare Genazzano, where with my daughter and five other friends we were distributing roses in front of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Sanctuary. At a certain point Father Ludovico came out of the church with a statue of Saint Rita and, resting it on the stall, said: 'This we'll put here, it will protect you!'. At that moment I felt something move



inside me. The gaze of the statue on us, engaged in a concrete work of charity, gave me or rather gave us the courage and energy to enlarge and transform that small community, born by chance, into a reality open to all, in the name of Saint Rita: the Primary Pious Union. By the grace of God, I haven't had a difficult life, I don't have much to tell. I live a normal life with my

## SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

The new Saint Rita of Cascia website has a section dedicated entirely to the PPU ([santaritadacascia.org/piaunione](http://santaritadacascia.org/piaunione)). Send us the photos of your group by email to [redazione@santaritadacascia.org](mailto: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.

Saint Rita can do that? She who experienced any situation whatsoever in her existence, can guide us to find

prayer every 22nd of the month and we recite the 15 Thursdays of Saint Rita in preparation for the feast. We also have a WhatsApp group, through which we share the Word, prayers and reflections every day. It is a modern way of sharing faith, at a distance, with those who cannot be physically present, with those who are older, with those who are alone. It's a new way of praying and being together". But there is another great purpose that the Genazzano PPU has in store: "We would like to be of comfort and help to those who live, as Saint Rita lived, the pain of the premature loss of a spouse or child. The idea is to organise Eucharistic celebrations in memory of their loved ones, accompanied by testimonies and the intervention of experts. We are convinced that faith and community sharing are an enormously powerful weapon to allow them to be able to live with their pain". ■



## The Genazzano PPU already has 50 members

daily difficulties. It is precisely in difficulties, small or large, that everyone needs someone in whom they can identify themselves to feel deeply understood, and who better than

true peace, our God. Through this prayer group, I wish and hope that many others will also hear that buzz that I ignored for so long," said Maria Rita.

The Genazzano PPU has a very short history. It is preparing to make its affiliation and yet already has 50 members who, in belonging to the group, have found a way to feel closer, a real family united in the example of the saint of the impossible. "We meet for

## 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](mailto:piaunione@santaritadacascia.org)

Archivist Caterina Comino and Augustinian Father Rocco Ronzani accompany us in reading pages from the archives on the miracles of Saint Rita.

# The miracles of Saint Rita

*In the name of God on 10 October 1737 in Fabriano*

"I am writing it down for pure truth as on the fourth day of the past month of September of the current year 1737, on the occasion that I was coming from my homeland Macerata to this town of Fabriano; not far from Castel Raimondo di Camerino, I was asleep in my carriage and the coachman was leading me with two horses; I do not know for what cause that coachman was sleeping on horseback or apparently was so inattentive as to precipitate the carriage, me who was inside, the horses and also himself off a cliff of considerable height, in my opinion as high as a great palace, while I was at the end of it, without having left this carriage. I woke up and having noticed the death that hung over me, with the liveliest of heart I invoked the patronage of Blessed Rita of Cascia, mine and my protective house, by saying these precise words "Jesus Mary, blessed Rita help me". Having said these words and approached the end of the said cliff, I found myself free as healthy as I was before he caused me to precipitate and also today I find myself healthy and free of all evil, and likewise the horses and the coachman remained healthy [...], hence this success I attribute to a miracle interceded by Blessed Rita of Cascia. I, Cristofaro Morichi, by my own hand". (AAV, *Ord. Rel., Augustinians*, b. 11, ff. n. n.). (CC)

**D**eposing in the "beatification" process, many witnesses speak extensively about the ancient and new miracles of Saint Rita. Venanzia Cittadoni di Cascia states: "I know that in life and in death this blessed [Rita] performed many different miracles" (Process, ADS, E-20, f. 118v). Rita's intercession benefited first of all a relative of hers with her arm paralysed: embracing the body of the saint on her deathbed, the woman was completely healed "and this

was the first miracle she did" (A. Cavallucci, *Vita della beata Rita*, Foligno 1610, p. 102). The first miracle was followed by many others and already three days after the

torical document, reported above, is an unpublished miracle of 1737. The devoted Cristoforo Morichi of Macerata, his coachman and the horses of his carriage benefit-

## *Notaries began to write the code of miracles*

pious transit, on 25 May 1457, when Battista di Angelo da Collegiacone was cured of blindness, the notaries operating in Cascia began to write the well-known code of miracles. The one in the his-

ed from it! It was transcribed from the ancient papers wrenched by Napoleon from the Augustinians and then, returned from Paris after the fall of General Corso, kept in the Vatican Archive. (RR) ■

*We safeguard their future.  
With joy.*



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](mailto:alveare@santaritadacascia.org) • [www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare](http://www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare)

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# The courage of women to Love

Francesca Pedrazzini,  
Chiara Corbella  
and Mariacristina Cella

by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

One of the calendar events missed this year for the Feast of Saint Rita due to the effects of the pandemic was that of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award, given every year to a number of women who today, like Rita 600 years ago, live Christian values of faith, hope, charity, forgiveness and pacification. We call them the “Ritas of today, Women of Rita” who testify to the Beauty of Love lived to the fullest. In this part of the magazine dedicated to the Monastery, I want to talk to you about three women of Rita. A few years ago, I “met” three

women, young and beautiful, happy brides and mothers, in love with their families and life, courageous in faith and endowed with extraordinary inner strength. And, I hope, contagious in holiness. Just like our Holy Sister Rita ... I “met” them in their biographies, their writings, their stories of illness and death. But, be careful ... you will not hear sad, resigned, angry, defeated women ... but women who have transformed “their mourning into dancing; loosed their sackcloth and clothed themselves with gladness, that their heart may sing to the Lord and not be silent” (cf. Psalm 30, 12-

13). And helped by Grace and the Spirit, within the path of illness they embodied those whom St. Paul calls the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, benevolence, kindness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control (Galatians 5, 22). “The way they dealt with suffering and death has converted many and demonstrated that with Jesus even death can be a way to life”. Through a series of coincidences in a few days I had in my hand three books donated to the Monastery: “Io non ho paura - la storia di Francesca Pedrazzini” [I'm not afraid - the story of Francesca Pedrazzini] (ed.

San Paolo); "Siamo nati e non moriremo mai più - storia di Chiara Corbella Petrillo" [We were born and will never die again - story by Chiara Corbella Petrillo] (ed. Portiuncula); "Una vita donata - diario di Cristina" [A life given - Cristina's diary] (ed. San Paolo).

"I'm not afraid": this is the phrase that Francesca, 38, says to her husband a few days before dying after thirty months of fighting a tumour: "Look, you have to be calm, I'm happy. I am at peace. I am sure of Jesus. I am not afraid because there is Jesus". "But aren't you sad?" asks Vincenzo, and she replies: "No, I'm not sad. I am sure of Jesus. In fact, I am curious about what the Lord is preparing for me. I'm just sorry that

## ***They transformed their mourning into dancing***

your trial is greater than mine. The opposite would have been better ...". Francesca is serene, asks to see her three children, one by one, prepares a gift for them and says: "Look, I'm going to Heaven. It's a beautiful place, you don't have to worry. You'll miss me, I know. But I will see you and always take care of you. And please, when I go to Heaven you have to organise a big party". The doctor who cared for her said to her mother: "I

have never seen faith like that of your daughter". And a friend: "Francesca struck me for the emotional courage with which she embraced the cross, to be in Heaven. This is the stuff of Saints and we need Saints in this ordinary common life. Francesca suffered but also gambled on God. And in this lies her simple greatness, as a mother and as a bride. We are not alone. We will never be alone. For this reason, Francesca was not afraid". "The certainty that animated Francesca in every day of her young life was faith in Jesus. The fixed point, her constant prodding: knowing Jesus. Certain and in peace," says her sister: "Francesca went through all the moods: rebellion, anxiety, anguish ... But the first moment was a yes. She said: 'It's alright'. She didn't cry. I remember it well, because I was desperate, but I had someone in front of me who was not. And why? Because she was delivered to Jesus. Completely". "She had a clear intelligence instantly," says her mother. "Transparent. Without prejudices. The intelligence of the pure of heart". And the heart of Francesca's life was Christ.

"We were born and will never die again", the title of the book about Chiara Corbella is taken from the souvenir of her birth in Heaven. Chiara did not say it, but it is the good news that she and her husband Enrico wanted to deliver to everyone. Who was Chiara? A wife and a mum with deep faith. Wife after a

push/pull, on-again/off-again engagement ... that lasted six years ... This "desert of an engagement", she was to say on several occasions, is one of the most difficult and precious periods of her life.

## ***With Jesus even death can be a way to life***

Chiara learns that love is the opposite of possession, that if you say yes to God every day, every way becomes possible, but you must have trust. It is the logic of the "small steps possible". Mother of three children, the first two born already in Heaven half an hour after birth and which Chiara and Enrico accepted: "God was asking us to accompany another child to the gates of Heaven". "Many asked Chiara why such things happen and how she was able to bear such great pain," says sister Elisa. "But she said she had already reached the third step: for whom you live these things". When she is expecting her third child, here comes the "dragon", which was how she called the tumour ... The fight against that disease begins, but anti-cancer therapies are incompatible with pregnancy and she decides to postpone treatment so that the baby is not harmed. The doctors want to give birth to Francesco early: "The Lord gives me a cross and I put it on a newborn baby?!" writes Chiara. "But who is the king

## “THE SAINT OF THE THORN”, UNPUBLISHED HYMN TO SAINT RITA

A sign for paying homage to Saint Rita, born precisely from the impossibility of participating in the celebrations. This is the special gift that the “Corale Santa Rita” [Saint Rita Choir] of Cascia created in the form of a hymn, entitled “The Saint of the Thorn”, which the choir performed, in virtual format, in a video, published on its Facebook page. It is an unpublished piece, composed by Maestro Fulvio Chiara, who allowed it to be brought to the public, although not officially presented. “It was a project strongly desired by all the choristers,” says the President Cinzia Di Pasquale, “above all by the conductor Rita Narducci who, with great commitment and despite the difficulties, achieved the goal”. The Choir, born in 1994 with the support of the Municipality and the Augustinian Community of Cascia, is one of the liveliest associations in the area, made up of over 20 elements, united by the passion of singing. One of the verses of the hymn is particularly beautiful: *“Saint of forgiveness / when in need / your hand will be there”*.

of history?! But do you really believe that your hairs are counted? I am waiting for my son to go through a normal pregnancy, as the Lord wants, and I will have surgery immediately afterwards”. As soon as the baby was born, Chiara underwent operations and therapies, but the dragon had gone a long way and after less than a year she is already terminally ill at the age of 28. Chiara asks Our Lady “for the grace to live grace”. She is attached to life, but feels that she has to do God's will, even if it involves leaving her husband and son. But what does preparing for the encounter with the Lord mean? Preparing oneself for death? “As a husband worried about a thousand things, one day I asked Chiara: are you afraid of dying? ‘No’, she answered”. Chiara worsens; it is 12 June 2012. “The Gospel of that day seemed written for us: “You are the light of the world and the salt of the earth”. Chiara was incredibly beautiful. It was worth living all your life for

that moment,” says Enrico. “My yoke is sweet, my load light, says Jesus, but I don't see all this sweetness. So I ask Chiara: is this cross really sweet? She smiled at me: ‘yes, it is extremely sweet’. I understood that grace comes at the right moment”. After a few hours, Chiara dies. Chiara is Servant of God. Why is this 28-year-old girl on the path to holiness? “Many women have given their lives for their children. But Chiara dies happy. She let herself be loved by the Lord. She was happy because she knew where she was going. She was projected towards this eternity, an eternity already begun here”.

“A life given” is the diary book of Mariacristina Cella, of whom this year marks the 25th anniversary of her birth in Heaven. She too, happy wife and family mum. She too, like Chiara Corbella, when she is pregnant with her third child, is diagnosed with cancer. With her husband, she decides to undergo only medical treatments

that would not have endangered the life of the baby and, after giving birth, start stronger therapies. Carlo says: “She was tough, down-to-earth. A woman in love with Jesus and life. A splendid person because she was normal, who went to look for the essential. She was not satisfied with getting by”. “It's true that when you strip yourself and entrust everything to God, He dresses you not in ordinary clothes, but gifts; when you give everything to Him, you really receive a hundredfold right now, on this Earth. I feel that in our small way we are already enjoying Eternity which will be true and full joy,” Mariacristina writes in a letter three months before dying; she is 26 years old.

And in another letter: “I want everyone to know that I am serene, calm and confident because I offer to God the only sure custody of all the treasures, what I hold dearest, my life, as I have offered to Him my children, from the first moment of their

life, and how we - my husband and I - offered him our love". In every moment of her illness, Cristina always continued to trust God: "I believe that God would not allow pain if he did not want to obtain a secret and mysterious but real good. I believe that I could do nothing greater than say to the Lord: Your will be done. I

believe that one day I will understand the meaning of my suffering and thank God for it. I believe that without my pain endured with serenity and dignity, something would be missing in the harmony of the universe".

In the preface of the votive Mass of Saint Rita we read: "Her life force was love

and she was always guided by this in the various states of her life ...". Love guided our Saint and these three women, extraordinary because they are ordinary in their humanity welcomed and offered to God at all times, so that it could be He who transformed it into life and salvation for all of us. ■



Dal 1956

**HOTEL DELLE ROSE**

•Living Cascia•



## Mother Earth

RECIPES FROM THE GREEN  
UMBRIA OF SAINT RITA

### Marinated suckling pig with mixed salad, puffed spelt and Sagrantino nectar

#### Ingredients for 4 people

300 g suckling pig loin  
150 g mixed salad  
200 ml Sagrantino di Montefalco wine  
402 g puffed spelt  
½ lt water  
150 g sugar  
150 g salt  
Pinch of ground pepper  
10 g peppercorns  
1 sprig of rosemary  
1 garlic clove  
1 sprig of sage  
10 g juniper berry  
Extra virgin olive oil  
50 g chestnut honey



Bring the water to a boil, add the salt and sugar, peppercorns, juniper, rosemary, sage and garlic. Allow to cool and immerse the loin tied with kitchen string. Place in the fridge in a narrow steel container, making sure that the liquid covers the loin and leave for six days, then drain and dry with kitchen paper and put in the fridge for another three days. At this point slice the loin. In the meantime, blend the wine and the honey and reduce by 2/3. Leave to cool on a bowl with ice. Place the salad on the plate, finely slice the loin, add the puffed spelt, the reduction of Sagrantino, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and ground pepper.

# We embrace their hopes. Together.



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