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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

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TRACES OF RITA  
**Saint Rita, model  
of fraternal life**

THE RECTOR'S CORNER  
**Brotherhood is a daily miracle**

DIALOGUE WITH THE MONASTERY  
**Consoling and interceding,  
ways of fraternity**

## BE "ALL BROTHERS"

*Let's live together the message  
of Pope Francis' encyclical*



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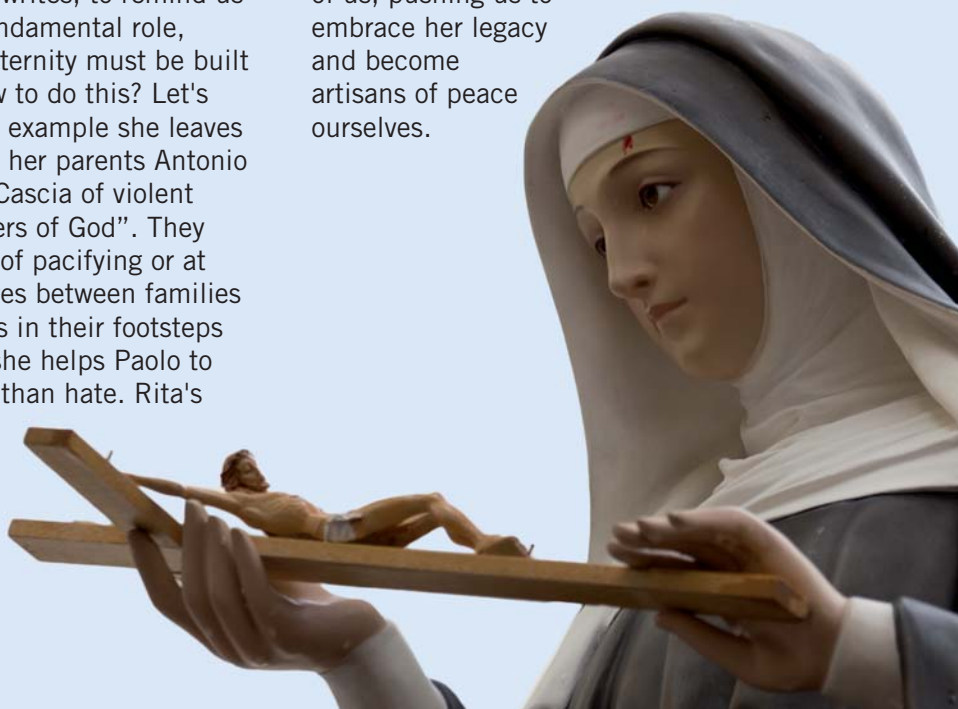
# Saint Rita, artisan of peace

**“B**lessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt 5:9). This short verse, one of the beatitudes pronounced by Jesus, marks the path we are called to take. Let's analyse the words: maker is whoever does, who performs actions. Jesus tells us that peace is not only a condition of being, but of doing, because peace is construction: the work in which we humans are collaborators of God.

This means that peace is our continuing responsibility because we must and can be peacemakers. Only in this way will we be children of God, sisters and brothers.

Peace, in fact, is a fundamental premise for fraternity. In the encyclical “All Brothers”, which you will find discussed in the following pages, Pope Francis also emphasises that peace is a work that involves everyone. “There is a need for artisans of peace,” he writes, to remind us that everyone has a fundamental role, because peace and fraternity must be built together in deeds. How to do this? Let's look to Saint Rita. The example she leaves us already comes from her parents Antonio and Amata, who, in a Cascia of violent times, are “peacemakers of God”. They have the difficult task of pacifying or at least avoiding massacres between families in conflict. Rita follows in their footsteps and even in marriage she helps Paolo to experience love rather than hate. Rita's greatest work of peace comes on the darkest day, the one in which Paolo is murdered:

she sees those responsible but chooses forgiveness and prays for them. Despite the pain and injustice, heightened by the resentment of her husband's family, Rita does not reveal their names. She does not forget, she does not close her eyes to evil, but embraces it, like Christ with the cross, beginning her work as a peacemaker, a work not done with her hands, but with the heart. In fact, Rita opens her heart, helping the murderers and the family waiting for revenge to change, and does not renounce justice, but the evil that destroys. With dialogue, love and encounter she obtains reconciliation. Her work of peace is so impressive that even today, through intercession, she is capable of achieving peace for those who want it, embracing their difficulties, taking responsibility for them, because her “workshop of peace” is always open. Rita works peace within each of us, pushing us to embrace her legacy and become artisans of peace ourselves.





by Alessia Nicoletti

# The universal right to fraternity

Dialogue on the “All Brothers” encyclical of Pope Francis with Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA, editor-in-chief of From the Bees to the Roses

The real  
'tool' for  
uniting  
humanity is  
the culture  
of fraternity

**T**he encyclical was issued before Covid-19. But its value must be read in the light of the health crisis, which has also become economic, political and social. “The pandemic has taken much away from the world, but it has also recreated the awareness of essential needs, such as the need for the other. In the words of Pope Francis, 'no one saves oneself'. Thus, we have looked for new tools to reach out to us. The telematic systems that connect us, however, are sometimes closed, in the sense that they are used only by certain categories: we are not all in them. So today, the real 'tool' for uniting humanity is the culture of solidarity

and fraternity, also collaborating in the telematic field, because only by being aware that we are all brothers and sisters, all part of one, can we mutually support each other. The encyclical touches precisely on the creation of a culture of fraternity in the political, economic and religious environment, all at the service of man.”

**The Pontiff invites us to open ourselves to the richness of the encounter. Saint Rita, with the example of her life, also still teaches us today the importance of dialogue and welcome. The pandemic, on the other hand, carries the danger of a crisis of brotherhood. "To defend our life," say various Prime**

Thanks to Stefano Dal Pozzolo for the photo.



Minister's decrees, 'we must isolate ourselves from others', and in this way, we save ourselves. This, however, even if it is true, can encourage even more the attitude that sees everyone living and thinking only of themselves. As Luigi Zoja writes, 'we live the death of our neighbour, after having sentenced the death of God'. There is a risk that there is no neighbour to approach. How to deal with this crisis of brotherhood and how to promote an all-round open world must be rethought”.

**Father, what are fraternity and social friendship, the paths indicated by Pope Francis?** “For us Christians, the term fraternity arises from the Eucharistic celebration in which all receive the same Body and Blood of the Lord. The ancient Christians also took part in the Eucharist standing up, to indicate that



no one was superior to another before the Father, even if back home there were those who were slaves and those who were masters. Fraternity means that the human being, as such, is called to live in communion, beyond all borders and diversity. Humanity is walking towards the same destiny, so we must walk as one, leaving no one behind. This

## CASCIA, OASIS OF HUMANITY

“Do you love me?”. Thus opens our meeting with Father Antonio Lombardi, an Augustinian born in Giuliano di Roma in 1931, guest of the Augustinian Fathers of Cascia. Father Antonio, who has been spiritual assistant to the Augustinians, ecclesiastical consultant of the Italian National Women's Centre, Provincial Superior of the Roman Augustinian Province and president of the Augustinian Cultural Centre, set foot in Cascia as a young man. For twenty years from 1963, he

supported the nuns in vocational courses held in the summer, at which several cloistered nuns who are in the monastery today were also trained. While he waits for my answer, he explains why he asks the question, which he asks everyone. “We are made to be in love with God and He is within us. His Word is an enormous roar of love, which tells us not only 'I am your Father', but also 'I am your brother'. That's why I like to love and here I felt loved”. Father Antonio speaks to me about the

importance of love, for God and therefore for us and for our neighbour. What he found in Cascia he describes as an oasis of humanity: “I saw the presence of God in people's faces. Saint Rita chose this path, which is the mission of each of us, discovering God in the eyes of those who suffer and rejoice”. Father Antonio is still waiting for my answer: Yes, I love you. The Lord tells us this all the time and we really should be saying this more often! (AN)

There is a  
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approach

The Church  
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souls in the  
totality of life

global culture is called on to promote social friendship, a bond that involves not only single individuals, but also societies, nations and peoples, nullifying the prevalence of wanting to dominate or seize the wealth of others through war and other injustices. This is the *libido dominandi et possidendi*, or 'lust for power and possession', which Saint Augustine denounces in *The City of God*.

We are the ones who create walls, but the time to generate divisions and inequalities is now a non-culture that we must leave behind. This is what Pope Francis tells us with the encyclical”.

**It is a cultural challenge that calls us to a universal engagement.**

**How to be “all brothers” in daily practice?**

*“Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying; but let us live well, and times shall be good. We are the times,”* St. Augustine teaches us (Sermon 81).

The primary responsibility certainly lies with the institutions, but also with each of us, in our own small way. We are all called on to come out of ourselves, truly opening each other to encounter and dialogue, stripping ourselves of congenital fears and prejudices. 'Life is the art of encounter,' says Pope Francis because it is from differences that we learn, enriching each other. We must overcome the interests of each, break every barrier and not turn away from pain. The awareness of a common fraternity makes it normal to carry the weight of the other on our shoulders, it makes us stop to take care of the weak, it makes us approach with respect. The Pope speaks of a 'miracle of kindness', because kindness frees us from cruelty,

## TAKE AND READ



**“Fratelli tutti” (All Brothers)**  
**Pope Francis**  
**Libreria Editrice Vaticana**  
**(edition in Italian)**

“Fratelli tutti” is the third encyclical of Pope Francis, signed on October 3, 2020, during his visit to the sanctuary of Assisi. Starting from his reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic, the Holy Father points to fraternity and social friendship as the paths to follow, to conquer the love that goes beyond all barriers and build a better world.

breaks indifference, opens us to dialogue and not confrontation, makes us see others not as obstacles to overcome but as an opportunity to grow in humanity. It is necessary to educate in the culture of fraternity, from school, to the family, to society, maturing for every man and woman the awareness of an inalienable right to fraternity”.

**Father, is there an example that can guide us?**

“In the second chapter of the encyclical, after having dedicated several pages to an analysis of all the shadows that make the world dark and closed, the Holy Father speaks of the Good Samaritan (Gospel according to Luke 10: 25-37), the parable narrated by Jesus. He does so by pre-

senting him as a model of light and hope, which is still relevant and above all can be embraced by everyone, beyond any religious belief. In the parable, the concept of 'making us close to each other' returns: *you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour like yourself; do this and you will live*. Who is my neighbour? This was the question posed to Jesus by the Doctor of Law. Jesus responds precisely with the concrete action of the Good Samaritan who, finding himself in front of a wounded man, stops, has compassion for him and takes care of him. Before him, two others, coming away from the temple, saw the dying man, but passed on. The real question, which is asked of each of us, is who am I? The one who passes by or the one who stops and becomes a neighbour? The Pope, with Jesus, invites us to follow the example of the Samaritan, who not only takes care of the person in difficulty, but sees in the other a brother to love".

**Let's move on to the institutional level. The Pope speaks of the need for the 'best politics'. What does that mean?** "This is the politics that is at the service of the common good, the one that, especially in times of crisis, has the duty to think in the interest of all, with real projects that look to the future and that does not stop only to buffer the problem of the present or worse to occasional patches. Furthermore, the politics Pope Francis speaks of and indicates as precious is one that knows well how important dialogue is with the real needs of the people, that people that must be listened to, therefore, and that must

not be considered as a group of people to be manipulated on the basis of personal interest or of the few. Finally, the Pope also speaks of the fundamental rights of the human being, which politics must protect, and the great theme of work. On this, in a particular way, he says that it is fundamental 'to ensure that everyone has the possibility of making sprout the seeds that God has placed in each one, his abilities, his initiative, his strengths'. In fact, work makes life worth living and is also the only real way to help those who are in a condition of poverty. The priority of work invoked by politicians is also the request and collaboration offered by the Church of God".

**Here, Father, what is the role of the Church?** "The Pope is clear: the Church does not engage in politics, but her mission does not only touch the spiritual and interior aspect of humanity, but also the public one. The Church fecundates souls in the totality of life, like a family among families. We must all commit ourselves, faithful, parish priests, parishes, bishops, dioceses, to realise a common project, with pastoral programmes for territories. Furthermore, there is a need for a cultural promotion of fraternity on a global level, together with politics and the economy, otherwise the encyclical will not lead to that universal pact of fraternity that the Pope asks us to dream of. The Holy Father writes that we are made for love, because the true measure of life is not profit, nor power, but love, the love we are capable of and of which we live. By loving each other and loving we will do what is best for us and for the other, we will not feel so 'other' from us".

## IN A WORD

curated by  
Fr. Vittorino Grossi *osa*

"Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord".

*From the Letter to Philemon [15-16] (Letters of St. Paul the Apostle).*

Onesimus, a slave of Philemon's family, takes refuge with Paul. In the letter he gives him for his master, the apostle dictates the way of relating as a Christian, the protocol of welcoming, even a slave, as man and brother. Onesimus today resembles migrants who ask for the dignity of men and brothers. Pope Francis calls them "the least" and asks the world to "identify with the least" thanks to a new culture, that of "thinking and generating an open world".





by Alessia Nicoletti

# The heart of donors for La Semente

## A great challenge won together

**T**he pandemic has given us concrete proof of a certainty which, once again, has been proven. I refer to the importance of helping those in need, because nothing is more important than taking care of those who suffer and those who are most fragile, especially in times of crisis. The Monastery of Saint Rita da Cascia knows this well and, when the virus appeared, it engaged in taking its help to oth-

part. Active since 2011, the Centre is run by Angsa Umbria Onlus, the national association for parents of autistic subjects, in collaboration with the Health Department of the Umbria Region. It is a state-of-the-art centre for young autistic adults. For them and their families, La Semente represents a concrete response, through which to continue the rehabilitation path performed in local health services also in adulthood, maintaining the skills and quality of life acquired, and also to start entering the world of work. In fact, La Semente means “real possibility” for the 12 young people with autism that it takes care of, who are each followed by an individual operator. Thus, each youngster has a “tailor-made” rehabilitation path: everyone can grow according to their needs, becoming more autonomous and perhaps discovering a professional skill. In fact, through many workshops (ceramics, paper, art, music, theatre, cooking, horticulture and pet therapy), the young people are encouraged not only in the development essential for life, but also dialogue with the world of work, thanks to the social farm and agritourism, which are two further souls of La Semente.

It is not difficult to imagine the extent to which the young people of the centre are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of Covid-19, which has overwhelmed everyone. Their sensitivity is very acute, so much so that even what may seem like a small change can create serious inconveniences or episodes of emergency. For this it



At the La Semente Centre in Spello, each autistic youngster is followed by an operator.

ers. It did it here in the heart of Umbria, land of the saint of the impossible, where it supported the La Semente Day-time Centre in Spello, about an hour from Cascia, which takes care of autistic children. Autism concerns a set of neurodevelopmental disorders, such as those of communication, social relationship and emotions are



is necessary to notify, explain and manage every change that occurs in their environment. The virus, however, did not ask for “permission” from anyone and neither did the La Semente Centre where it brought in a thousand changes. “Due to Covid-19, the Centre had to close, but it is we operators who go to them, to their homes and we try to guarantee the continuity of the educational project for every single young person: this is our great challenge!”. A challenge that was won, also due to the great heart of the donors, thanks to whom our nuns were able to support the centre with the sum of 50,000 euros. “With the service at home,” continued one of the operators, “we have become more creative, we have, for exam-

ple, invented a 'social story' to explain to the youngsters Covid and the forms of behaviour to be followed”. “I never imagined that my son would react like this to this huge change in his daily life, but he understood. Of course we are worried, but this does not mean we should miss the opportunity to do what is possible at home”. These are the words of a mother.

With the service at home, supported by the generosity of many devotees of Saint Rita, La Semente has therefore been able to keep doing its precious and essential human, before being social and medical, work, and continue to work to offer a different possibility of life to its autistic youngsters.

## THE SACRESTY OF THE SANCTUARY OF GENAZZANO RETURNS TO SHINE

It was a way of saying “thank you” to the Augustinian fathers and the community of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Sanctuary in Genazzano (Rome). We are talking about the restoration works supported by the contribution of the Saint Rita da Cascia Foundation, following the will of the president, the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis. On receiving the request for help, the Mother wanted to reach out to the heart of devotion and charity represented by the faithful of Genazzano, where the Pious Primary Union of Saint Rita is present. Furthermore, saving a

valuable work means handing down the artistic-historical heritage for which we are all responsible to the future. Under the supervision of the Superintendency of Lazio, the works involved the monumental 18th century sacristy, with interventions on the furnishings, paintings and the beautiful fresco on the vault. The latter depicts the *Coming of Our Lady of Good Counsel* (1777), the appearance of the image of Mary, which marked the birth of devotion and of the Sanctuary itself. Great joy for the community, which at the inauguration of October 17, 2020 admired the Sacristy in its newfound beauty.





by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

# Saint Rita, model of fraternal life

## From reconciliation to Augustinian communion

**I**n these times of pandemic, we hear urgent calls for the right measure of prudence.

Every man seems to be, rather than a brother, an “enemy” because he

can infect you: “*homo homini lupus*” (man is a wolf to man), as the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes said in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Somehow, we are reliving the times of Saint Rita and her example can, once again, show us the way. There were then periodic epidemics, especially of plague, with a very high mortality; tradition has it that Saint Rita's children also died of the plague. Moreover, violence was daily bread: the various political or family factions settled their accounts by eliminating their enemies. It was therefore normal to see death on the street and in every family there was grief that sparked other revenge. At that historical moment, the Church was also torn by the Western schism, that is, the long crisis of papal authority after the transfer of the apostolic see,



Saint Rita enters the monastery. Painting of the ancient choir.

### MAURO PAPALINI RECOUNTS THE MIRACLES THAT LED TO THE CANONISATION OF SAINT RITA

One of the four miracles that made Rita a saint is the perfume that her body emanates, a phenomenon that has always been affirmed up to today. This is how the biography prepared by the nuns in 1628 on the occasion of the beatification de-

scribes it: “[...] a very sweet smell exhaled and until today it exhales from that very pure body which is preserved uncorrupted in every part [...]. The divine omnipotence having honoured the holy woman with the virtue of miracles, as will be shown, every time

God works one through her, the fragrance of the holy relics is increased in a way that is perceived at a good distance away”. In the decree for canonisation, signed by Pope Leo XIII in 1900, it is said about the perfume that it is foolish to doubt it.

which led to the clash between two popes: one in Rome and the other in Avignon. This also caused a division between the consciences of great saints, some of whom obeyed the Roman pope and others the pope in Avignon. What brotherhood!

Saint Rita lived in this context. Yet, while not quite brotherhood, she nevertheless managed to achieve reconciliation between opposing factions. This is the first step towards brotherhood: there are no longer enemies and people live in peace ... for those times this was no small thing!

In the monastery, however, Saint Rita experienced Augustinian fraternity. In that community there were no differences between the various classes: Sister Rita was a widow, but she had the same rights as the virgins who had entered the monastery very young. The rule of St. Augustine directed the community towards the sharing of everything and mutual love. We know from a few documents that Sister Rita was a shining model of fraternal life.

## PRAYER

### To Madre Fasce, in times of pandemic

O' Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, although you lived locked up in a monastery, nevertheless you fully shared the many pains that afflicted humanity in your time. You had a tear and a prayer for all the suffering, especially during wars and epidemics like the Spanish flu. How many people have experienced your most ardent charity and compassion!

In this hour so dark for the whole world due to a very contagious disease that spares no one, we turn to you as a shining example of virtue in calamities. O that we could suffer with love like you did! At least teach us not to lose trust in God and to endure our sufferings abandoned to his divine Will, certain that he will not abandon us in this very hard trial. Protect us with your intercession, as you protected your nuns and the Little Bees in the sad days of war; make us feel the efficacy of your prayer, imploring from Jesus, our Redeemer, his eternal mercy for the many sick and for those who die completely alone. Help us, O crucified bride of Jesus crucified! Father, Hail and Glory. (*Mauro Papalini*)

## 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.*

Annamaria Sirianni (Canton Ticino - Switzerland)  
Argentina Polenta (Numana AN - Italy)  
Argia Pasciuti (Latina - Italy)  
Assunta Pellegrino (Portico of Caserta CE - Italy)  
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Giovanni Paolino (Modica RG - Italy)  
Giovanni Zaccaria (Modica RG - Italy)  
Giuliana Besana (Viadana MN - Italy)





by Marta Ferraro

# The town of Bisacquino, between faith and action

**T**he devotion to Saint Rita in Bisacquino, a small town of just over 4,000 souls located in the Palermo hinterland, is very ancient. However, any attempt to channel it into a common and unifying project always failed. Until certain concomitant events awakened the intention of some devotees to create something that could unite them in the name of the saint of Cascia.

Telling the story of the birth of the PPU in Bisacquino is Marilena Nicolosi,

who has been a great devotee of Saint Rita ever since she was able to feel her present in her life, when she had to make important decisions that would have indelible consequences for the rest of her life.

Expecting her third child, Marilena felt the closeness of Saint Rita in her daily life, also experiencing the concerns of her third pregnancy in just three and a half years. Someone, in fact, had tried to dissuade her from the idea of becoming a



mother once again because, for various reasons, the woman was not able to welcome that creature. In the meantime, Don Carmelo Colletti of the Maria SS. Del Rosario parish received the gift of a relic ex indumentis of the saint, a small fragment of her habit. Perhaps inspired by this “new” presence of Rita, the parish community thought of producing felt brooches in the shape of a rose, with the intention of donating the proceeds of the donations to the neediest, through shopping vouchers for the pharmacy. In those days, as well as the dedication of the group to this project, Marilena's devotion became more and more solid, despite the tiredness and the delicate situation she was facing, so much so that she decided to keep her third daughter. A choice that today she remembers as one of the wisest of her life, since “that little girl has done nothing but bring more joy into my life and that of those around her”. In the same period, the brooches initiative went beyond the borders of Bisacquino and reached Lilla Buggemi, head of the Saint Rita Primary Pious Union of Sicily. That was the first contact of Bisacquino with the PPU family, which the group officially joined immediately afterwards, thanks to the strength of numerous adhesions. Marilena says that in May 2018 there were 47 members and sympathisers of the Bisacquino PPU, but on 7 April 2019, the day of affiliation, there were 120 women, young people and the elderly.

Even today, the Bisacquino PPU is very varied and encompasses many age groups, carrying out various initiatives. Of

### 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.

these, worth noting is the participation in May at the banquet for the Roses of Saint Rita event: an initiative organised by the monastery of Cascia which, for the past four years and thanks to the many volunteers who join, has taken roses into the squares of Italy to raise funds for the Beehive of Saint Rita, where the Augustinian nuns welcome and raise many children from families in difficulty.

The members also often gather not only for moments of training and prayer but also to spend time together, above all to make their closeness felt to those parishioners who are most alone. “We live the parish of Maria SS. Del Rosario a lot,” says Marilena, “but we never forget to immerse ourselves in the actuality of things. For the recent health crisis, as a PPU we have given our contribution to buy respirators and help the whole of society that was suffering. At the moment, while we are planning the creation of a rose garden in honour of Saint Rita, we have purchased a reliquary with donations to house the relics donated to us by the monastery”.

### 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)



by Rita Gentili

# The “town of Rita” in Brazil

The  
Sanctuary  
houses a  
relic of Saint  
Rita

**W**hat is the “town of Rita”? The spontaneous answer to the question would appear to be Cascia, but actually you have to travel over 9,000 km to find the real “town of Rita”. We are in Brazil, in the state of Minas Gerais, in the south-east of the country, where the municipality of Ritópolis is located, a name that literally means “town of Rita”. We

discover it thanks to a faithful, Carlos Werneck Fiche, a great devotee of Santa Rita, who introduced us to his town. Here there is a parish named after the saint of Cascia, led by parish priest and rector Father Adriano Tercio Melo de Oliveira, established in 1854, but traces of which can be found back in 1726. A church which, Father Adriano and the Pastoral Communication team tell us, attracts thousands of faithful from all over the region: women, men, elderly, young people, children. A devotion that comes from recog-

## RITA IS ALSO HERE



**Country:** Brazil

**Town:** Ritópolis

**Good to know:** Even in Ritópolis, the feast of Saint Rita in 2020 suffered the effects of Covid-19. The Sanctuary dedicated to her remained closed and the faithful followed the celebrations via live web, not failing to celebrate Rita. Brazil is one of the countries which, since the beginning of the pandemic, has experienced the highest number of infections (more than 5 million) and deaths (more than 160 thousand).



nising Rita as a powerful intercessor of God: people recognise their insignificance before God and know they cannot achieve their goals alone, so they turn to Saint Rita. Among these are also the





## The feast of May 22 is called “Jubilee”

relatives of Gustavo Leandro Rezende Dutra, a boy who crashed into a wall in 2012, riding his bicycle, causing a head injury which, according to the doctor of the local hospital, did not leave him much chance, needing to be treated in the largest hospital in Belo Horizonte, almost 200 km away. A trip which, according to the neurologist who followed the boy, could not take place for 72 hours because the risks of a move were too high. During those long hours of waiting, Gustavo's mother turned to Saint Rita: she knelt in front of the image of the saint she kept at home entrusting her son to him and asked a family member, who had a relic of the miracle worker, to do the same. Friends and relatives gathered in prayer and their invocations were fruitful. On the fourth day of hospitalisation, with a mixture of great joy and astonishment, the neurologist told the family that Gustavo was

no longer in danger of life: no surgery would be necessary, nor were there any brain injuries. An image of the saint was then taken to the hospital, where it remained until the boy's final recovery. Once discharged, together with his family, Gustavo went to the Sanctuary of Ritópolis to tell his story and publicly give thanks for the miracle he had received. The Sanctuary, which also houses a relic of Saint Rita, is the fulcrum of a deeply felt devotion to the point that the feast of May 22 is commonly called the “Jubilee” to underline its greatness. The celebrations include visits to the communities, the Novena, masses, the sound of bells, a musical band, the night procession through the streets of Ritópolis, and, finally, on the arrival of the procession in the main square in front of the Sanctuary, the fireworks display that explodes together with the joy, hope and faith of the devotees present.



by Msgr. Giovanni Scanavino, OSA

# Double dedication, double joy

The death of Mother Fasce and consecration  
of the Basilica to the cult

Longed for  
and happy  
meeting  
with God

**T**he death of Mother Teresa Fasce, or her definitive dedication to the love and will of her Spouse, coincides with the dedication of the Basilica of Saint Rita, the consecration to the cult of the Temple, which she dreamed and built. In the same year, 1947, two reasons for great joy. Death, which does not allow Mother Fasce to attend the solemn ceremony, is however celebrated by her as the projection towards the full light, that

Sacred Heart which has given meaning of mercy to all life. Mother Teresa brings with her the certainty of having loved well and greatly.

**The dedication of life and death: January 18, 1947.** In recent months, all the accumulated ailments have been felt, but the strongest feeling is the joy of being able to die and go to the long-awaited wedding. The mission is now complete: the community is living in full communion, the new Sanctuary is visibly growing, the Little Bees are the consolation of all, confirming a choice inspired by God's charity. The body wears out, but the faith founded on the rock tells her that this is precisely the prelude to that "face to face" longed for for a lifetime. The testimony of Father Angelini is the faithful chronicle of a holy death: "The last months of 1946 were nothing but a very long agony. [...] She spoke of death. She said it was beautiful: not a painful event, but a longed-for and happy encounter with God. For her death she did not want sadness: she wanted to sing, she who was passionate about song" (from the book *Predestinata*).

**The dedication of the Temple: May 18, 1947.** The commemora-



1937, ground excavation works for construction of the Basilica of Saint Rita.

tion of that day was also entrusted to Father Angelini. "This temple is a triumph of faith. This temple is a triumph of love. Faith wanted it. Love built it: sumptuous, splendid, for the humble Saint". This is how Mother Fasce dreamed of it, which Father Angelini recalls. "O' Mother [...] our heart feels close to you, still: closer than ever, in the conquered freedom of your spirit. We still hear the echo of your serenating voice, we see your good smile still shining in the monastery. And the Temple calls you! This Temple which is yours, for the intrepid faith with which you dreamed it! This Temple which is yours, for the humble pride with which you wanted it! This Temple which is yours, for the soul that won every battle: beyond every pain; beyond all discouragement, beyond all difficulties of times and men! The Temple is calling you, and you are here! [...] You are here, with thousands of hearts that had a balm of hope from your voice. You are here, you are here, closer, more alive than ever, in the monastery and in the Temple! And as long as your work remains, you will remain alive! The shadow of oblivion will not veil your name! The flight of centuries will not veil your blessed memory" (From *The Bees to The Roses*, 1947).



Thousands of hearts  
had a balm of hope  
from your voice

#### T H O U G H T S   O F   A   M O T H E R

*"Every year I have been close to the cradle of the Child Jesus;  
now I am on the Cross with Him, but I am happy".*

BLESSED MOTHER MARIA TERESA FASCE

(FROM ANGELINI, A. OSA, *PREDESTINATA*, POLIGRAFICO ALTEROCCA, TERNI, 1968)





Marta Ferraro meets the pilgrims  
of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia

# On honeymoon in Cascia

“Our marriage under the protection  
of Saint Rita”

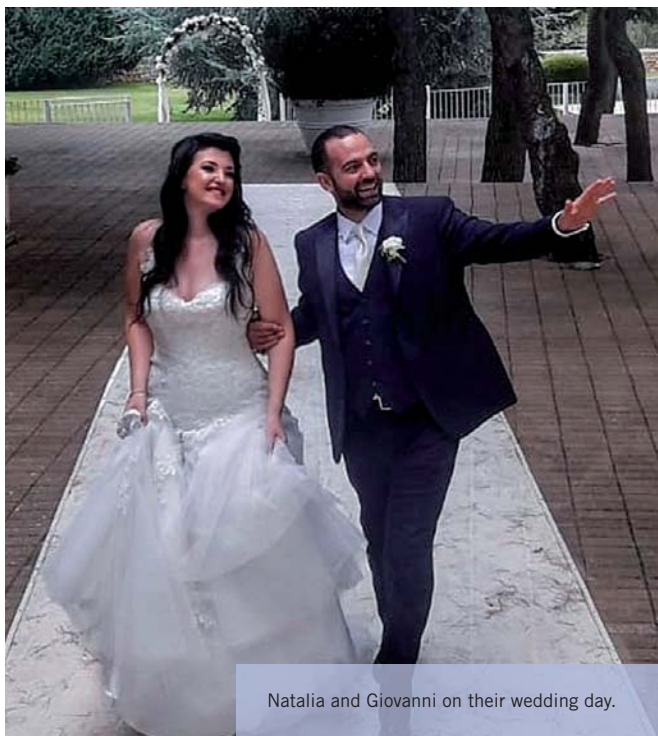
Since I was  
a child,  
I have heard  
about  
Saint Rita

**G**iovanni Lefemine, 35, and Natalia Ressa, 32, got married on May 30, 2020 in Bari in the parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The rite was celebrated by Fra Ruggero Doronzo, while the whole of Italy was still experiencing the difficult weeks of the lockdown due to the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The two lovers then re-

newed their marriage vows on August 5 and celebrated the happy event in the presence of relatives and friends, in compliance with the rules.

The couple, who are practising and have a firm faith also thanks to the path they carry out with the Catechumenal Way, chose the town of Saint Rita as a destination for their honeymoon.

“Given the historical moment, not being able to go far away, my husband and I decided to come to Cascia for our honeymoon. And it was, beyond all expectations, a choice that we would gladly make again. Since I was a child, I have heard about Saint Rita from the stories of my mother who is a fervent devotee of hers, but I had never been to the Basilica,” said Natalia. “Coming to the saint was really very exciting. My emotion ran high in front of her remains,” continued the young bride. “My ambition in life has always been to be a wife and mother. And what better example can I draw inspiration from if not from her? Giovanni and I have placed our marriage under her protection



Natalia and Giovanni on their wedding day.



There are many couples who entrust their love to Saint Rita.

and I hope, perhaps next year, to be able to return with a daughter I have promised to call Rita, which is also my mother-in-law's name".

Natalia recalls her honeymoon, describing carefree and magical days, although this is also a time of trial for her, due to the illness of her mother Anna, who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. "Cascia is a special, truly magical place. The People of Cascia are a very welcoming and friendly people. We felt embraced in a comforting and strengthening silence. Even for those who are not believers, it is worth spending a few days there. I went back home different, changed. I feel closer to Saint Rita and I can read her presence in the difficulties of

everyday life: even in the greyest days she finds a way to be close to me". Speaking of her mother's illness, Natalia added "I met a nun who gave me much comfort and consolation. She listened to my pain and I felt understood. She assured me of her prayers and this calm made me live the moment of Holy Mass with a new spirit. It was beautiful, enlightening. I am sure we will return again and again to Cascia. The nun then told me to address my prayers not only to Saint Rita, but also to Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, the protector of cancer patients. Giovanni and I went to venerate her in the lower Basilica".

In short, Natalia and Giovanni's honeymoon was truly special. A dialogue between heaven and earth, a combination of joy and pain, a moment of personal growth and of the couple. To these young spouses in love, we wish a happy marriage union. Quoting the Holy Father Augustine: "... side by side join those who walk together and who together look to the same goal". Love each other with the measure of Love, that is, excessively. (MF)

A nun gave me so much comfort and consolation

I hope to return with a daughter I have promised to call Rita

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR PILGRIMAGE

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



Through the testimonies of the canonisation process of Saint Rita in 1626, archivist Caterina Comino and Augustinian scholar Father Rocco Ronzani accompany us to the places linked to the daily life of the saint.

# The holiness of Rita in the house of Roccaporena

Rita is a  
model for  
those who  
want to  
live as  
Christians

We report the deposition of October 29, 1626 by Diamante di Giacomo Santo:

*“My name is Diamante, wife of Pier Vincenzo, my father was called Giaco Santo and my mother Alegrezza and I'm about sixty or sixty-three years old. I know by having heard my elders say that blessed Rita was alive, and she was on this side of the Rocca Porena and who lived in the house, in which I live at the present and which this morning your lordship together with some others went to see the image of said blessed Rita which is depicted at the entry of the door. The hand is always missing and from all times I remember it in that place where it is at the present time and that opening that your lordship has seen together with the others in the roof of said house in the first room. My mother who was old when she died, she was close to eighty, always told me that the angel entered through that opening to visit the blessed Rita and that said blessed Rita prayed in that place because you can already see the sky very well and that all the time of the life of said my mother said opening had always been in that way and that so too she had heard from her elders and in my life since I have known good and evil it has always been in that way that your lordship has seen. Indeed, having made it roll up, said opening was covered and in the morning when I got up, I saw said opening in the way it was before and this happened to me the times when, having been covered, said opening was then miraculously opened in the way your Lordship saw and this I consider by a miracle of the blessed Rita being of this also public voice and fame. The fame of said blessed Rita and her holiness has always lasted and continuously has been growing and of this there is public voice and fame”.*

(Spoleto, AD, E-20, *Processus 1626*, ff. 104-105r.). (CC)

The canonisation process, from the years in which the civil and ecclesiastical authorities were interested in the promotion of the cult of the saint of Cascia, had been reformed by Pope Urban VIII Barberini, to make the criteria for selecting candidates for the altars more objective, guaranteeing authenticity of their exemplarity for the faithful and, above all, avoiding manipulation. In many ways, Pope Barberini's approach still constitutes today the underlying plot of the study and evaluation of candidates for the altars. The most important acquisition of the last century has been the rediscovery and enhancement of the *common vocation to holiness of all the Christian faithful*, a not extraordinary but daily holiness, which is lived in "everyday" places, as it was for Rita. In this regard, in the dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* (chapter V 39-42), the Second Vatican Council reminds us: "The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy. Indeed Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as 'uniquely holy', loved the Church as His bride, delivering Himself up for her. He did this that He might sanctify her. He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. Therefore, in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctifica-

tion" (I Thes. 4:3; cfr. Eph 1,4)". Saint Rita, as a woman, wife, mother and finally, for about forty years, as an Augustinian nun, lived her only way of sanctification in stages. All were animated by the gift of charity and the other theological, cardinal virtues and other gifts received in abundance from God: prayer and humility, among others. Donna Diamante's text, in fact, on the holiness of her humble fellow citizen venerated as an example and for powerful intercession, recalls her incessant prayer, intimate and continuous dialogue with God and boundless trust in him, especially in the darkest moments of her life, when she had the gift of the confrontation of an Angel: like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. A clear example of Rita's "Christification", that is, of her total confirmation to the incarnate Son of God, obedient to the will of the Father and confident in his goodness, in his paternal love which was the powerful force of the resurrection. Rita is therefore a model for those who want to live as Christians, not only in name, but who want to be found such because they truly belong to Christ. She is a model, in particular, for Christian spouses and parents who support each other in the fidelity of love and instruct their children in faith and the virtues; she is a model for those who want to follow Christ more closely by living the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. For all, Saint Rita was and remains, even after centuries, a strong incentive to advance towards a holiness that is greater every day. (RR)



A holiness  
that is lived in  
"everyday"  
places





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

## Let's train ourselves for amazement

*My name is Angela, I was born in 1934 in Lupia, Calabria. I have been devoted to Saint Rita since 1947, when my aunt Maria Cristina became a nun in the Cascia Monastery. My happy childhood is followed by great pain: shortly before our wedding, my fiancé dies in an accident at work. After this tragic event, I address my prayer to the saint even more. I meet Mario, we get married and after two years he leaves for Canada to work on the railways. For 20 years, I remain in Italy with the girls and my in-laws. Only in 1974 did the family reunite: the fourth daughter was born in Canada. Our life flows with the certainty that Saint Rita is by our side. In March, I fell and broke my femur. They operated on me and I stayed in the hospital for six weeks, without receiving visits, due to coronavirus. But I didn't feel alone because I always had the saint close to me. I prayed every day. Now I am with my family. I walk slowly, slowly and I sincerely thank the saint. I have five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Everyone is devoted to her. For every need I turn to Saint Rita, even for everyday things. I recommend all my loved ones to turn to her because she is the saint of impossible cases.*

(Angela - Canada)

**O**h yes! We are at the beginning of a new year and I want to ask you and myself to make a promise: let ourselves be “struck” by amazement. At Christmas, we read in Luke's Gospel: “... all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them” (Luke 2:18). In a night, like many others, the shepherds become witnesses, live the birth of Jesus, which they narrate with sweetness, cre-



ating amazement in those who listen to them. Speaking on the phone with Angela, I think of her on the other side of the ocean. In her voice, I listen clearly to her amazement, she makes it reach me ... once again her saint has heard her, and her contentment is boundless. Amazement, wonder are emotions that take us back to childhood. As children, we are constantly looking for something that will surprise us. As adults, with commitments, habits, absorbed in thoughts and worries, we hear but do not listen, we see but do not observe, we gradually close the “gym” of amazement in our hearts. So, let's undertake to get back into training. Let's shake away our lethargy, let's take an example from Angela, who in her honourable maturity has not stopped being “stunned”. Thus, any day will turn into a special one and, like the shepherds, we could bring a little joy and light into this dark world and this sadness that we are often forced to live. (MDC)

*We support their dreams.  
With love.*



**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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by Father Luciano De Michieli,  
Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia

# Brotherhood is a daily miracle

People  
come to  
Cascia to  
meet  
Saint Rita

A sanctuary is a meeting place where people come with their heavy load. People come to Cascia to meet Saint Rita and, in her, the Lord: they seek healing for their lives or loved ones, they ask for light, hope, comfort, guidance. This humble and needy attitude opens up to the encounter, places a new trust in the sisters and brothers that welcome them, be they nuns, friars, volunteers, shopkeepers or hoteliers. “Whoever is thirsty, come to me and drink,” says the Lord. The

Augustine would say. We all have a great responsibility of hospitality here in Cascia, where this “miracle of brotherhood”, openness and welcome are daily. Even in times of Covid, there are countless phone calls, emails asking for prayers, listening and remembrance. People open their hearts and confidently entrust their burden of joys or sorrows to us, and ask us to bring it to Rita's feet, to the heart of God. This is the fraternity that emerges from our experience, a miracle of unity and sharing, a feeling that the other can understand me and put themselves by my side to accompany me for a stretch of the road or to carry together what alone seems unbearable. It is the unexpected gift that the Lord makes grow to teach us that we are deeply united. We are brothers and sisters on the way, seekers of God at the school of saints who show us the way. Whoever goes to the sanctuary or asks for help by telephoning and writing, breaks their isolation, because prayer tears open the heavens, and the Spirit that the good Father gives, makes you part of a people, in communion with Him and among us, sweeping away every virus, especially that of indifference.



afflicted here experience how true that promise of Christ is. Yes, because the consolation of the Spirit descends abundantly in this mysterious encounter between our poverty and his Love, between “misery and mercy”, Holy Father



# *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.







by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

# Consoling and interceding, ways of fraternity

It is the  
essential  
language of  
free love ...

**L**iving, praying and working together. Approaching every brother and sister in the visiting rooms, on the phone, by post, through social media. Whoever and wherever they are, with the simplicity and humility of recognising that, in the face of their need, our response is always inadequate, but with the tenderness of a heart that wishes to be a reflection of the infinite Mercy of the Father for each of his sons and daughters: this is the ministry of consolation that we exercise every day in the community.

Each of us, according to the teachings of Holy Father Augustine, is called on to walk in the

footsteps of our Holy Sisters Rita and Mother Teresa Fasce, following Jesus Christ in His total and loving adherence to the Father and to His plan of salvation for all brothers. Women in love with the Lord, let us live “to the greater glory of God”, praying, following and serving the many neighbours who surround us, in the Church, for the Church and with the Church. It is the essential language of free love ... In our hearts as contemplatives are deposited the joys and tribulations of so many who feel heard, loved, welcomed. “We incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor when we are deeply moved by the suf-



The nuns also carry out the ministry of consolation on the telephone, listening to anyone who needs a friendly and close voice.

fering of others,” Pope Francis exhorts us in *Evangelii Gaudium* (193). Consolation ... encompasses the sense of our being close to those who suffer, to those who are fragile, to those who are alone. To console is to share with someone what we are, what we have, so that relief is born from that solidarity, even when times get difficult. The “consolation” is exclusive to God, manifested in the history of salvation and above all in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The outpouring of his Spirit, the “Paraclete” (Comforter) assures us that humanity is not abandoned to itself, a slave to the fear of death, but participates in the life of God, enjoys his consolation, which is not a vague emotional, fleeting feeling, but an action which, in a situation of desolation, generates hope, serenity and peace. “Man is worth so much to God that he himself became man in order to suffer with man in an utterly real way – in flesh and blood – as is revealed to us in the account of Jesus’s Passion. Hence in all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering with us; hence consolation is present in all suffering, the consolation of God’s compassionate love –and so the star of hope rises (Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, 35). It is the same dynamic of love: loved by God, we become capable of loving with the love we receive from God; comforted by God, we become able to console, through the consolation we receive. In consoling, the meaning and value of intercessory prayer is

posed. Intercession is not just praying to God but turning to God in favour of another. Intercession shows that in our hearts there is love and trust towards the Lord and that there dwells attention, compassion and love towards the people, towards the friend, towards the one who suffers. Consoling and interceding means learning to “stay in the middle” within a not simple reality! Intercession is therefore a dialogue of love and the intercessor is a man, a woman of prayer who has approached the deepest sentiments of God and who appeals to his love to make humanity fall back into a sea of graces and benefits.

How important is the ministry of consolation and intercession, especially in our days ... Precisely in this situation of difficulty and loss of society, it is necessary that we place ourselves between God and the people, that we place our hand on the tired shoulders of many, to make us feel that God is near, that he loves us and that he too suffers with us, willing to walk and support us!

Thus, we understand how consolation and intercession are inseparable, the one penetrating and referring to the other. If on the one hand we feel sent by the Lord and his Word to bring His Love to everyone, on the other we feel that we are between God and humanity, that we are “in the middle”. It is being there, without fuss or desire to change anything, trusting only in the power of prayer. Consolation and intercession are two sisters with a double great love: love for God and love for humanity.

The joys and tribulations of many are deposited in our hearts

It is necessary that we place ourselves between God and the people

# We embrace their hopes. Together.



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