

NO. 2 MAR-APR 2021

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

EDITORIAL

The strength of fragility

FEATURED

Easter is the presence of God

The light amid the pandemic

A photograph of a person wearing blue scrubs and blue gloves, holding a small, ornate cross. The background is blurred, showing the person's face and hands. The text 'EASTER, BACK TO THE LIGHT OF LIFE' is overlaid in large white letters at the bottom.

**EASTER, BACK
TO THE LIGHT OF LIFE**

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The strength of fragility

In his homily at the beginning of 2021, Pope Francis said: “Together with a vaccine for our bodies, we need a vaccine for our hearts. That vaccine is care.” I believe the Holy Father wanted to call us to an awareness which we often ignore and waste. I'm speaking about our fragility. In this respect, COVID has made our vision, clouded by power and perfection, clear again about the vulnerability of everyone as human beings. Fragility, in fact, is part of our life, but it is not a condemnation, rather it is a treasure, a virtue. This is true only if we think of fragility as sensitivity and courage. Yes, because fragility, if we value it, can become an opportunity for strength, for us and for others. Basically, being fragile is essential to desire and feel the need for the other and for the infinite, or rather for God.

In the second letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes “for when I am weak, then I am strong” and “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me” (2 Cor 12: 9-10). Symbolically, fragility is a source from which to quench our thirst for life, washing away from body and soul the pain that often accompanies fragility itself. In its place, the light of hope will burn, that of God, which is reborn from despair. It will be a real resurrection!

In this regard, Easter this year invites us to find that vaccine of the heart, which is Christ.

Indeed, Jesus goes through the suffering of many and in the end he offers his suffering for us. But it is not suffering that wins. What wins is life, love,

what is born, flourishes and spreads, only in a fragile and strong heart. Embracing our fragility, with the example of Saint Rita, means embracing the cross like Rita, not with resignation but rather with hope, with a thirst for life, with love. Because the last word is always love, never death.

*Happy Easter of true resurrection,
from the Augustinian Family of Cascia,
the Beehive of Saint Rita,
the Saint Rita of Cascia
Foundation and
the editorial staff of
From the Bees to the Roses!*



Risen Christ, (A. Marrocco), Penitentiary of the Basilica of Saint Rita



by Alessia Nicoletti

Easter is the presence of God

“We hope to overcome the virus, by welcoming the Gospel to change our lives”

Interview with Father Giustino Casciano,
Prior Provincial of the Augustinians of Italy



Saint Rita
enters
people's
hearts,
opening
them to
hope

What does Easter tell us, in these days that bear the cross of the pandemic?

“For us Christians, Jesus is the centre of life, because we are no longer alone with him. Easter tells us that God's presence is powerful, full of love, spirit of light and strength, to support us along our journey on Earth. Jesus was never alone. Even when they nailed his hands and feet, the Father was with him. The more we have faith, the more the strength of God's faith sustains us. Close to the dead of the pandemic, as in the face of pain, there is always the presence of Jesus, the Risen One, the Saviour of our life. Easter returns to remind us that this strength of God is with us always, even if we do not believe it. It is like the sun; it is there even if there are clouds.”

Father Giustino, what can we do to transform pain into the light of resurrection? “The first thing is prayer. We must give ourselves time to pray every day. We can use

the psalms, the Word of God or say the rosary, even feed ourselves on art. The second thing is to be aware of who is next to us and give help, a smile. Not surprisingly, Holy Week begins with Jesus washing his disciples' feet, as a sign of love. Finally, if we have someone to whom offer forgiveness, let us try to do so and do not allow ourselves to be destroyed by evil.”

Saint Rita suffered much pain, which in her hands became the fruit of love, faith and charity. What is your example in deciding to embrace the cross? “Saint Rita enters people's hearts, opening them to hope, because she lived by putting the Gospel into practice. In the years I was Rector of the Basilica of Cascia, I liked the image of Rita painted on the Solemn Case that welcomed the body immediately after death: there she is with her face full of light and a thorn in her hand, one of those from the crown of Jesus, which she offers to the Lord who rises. Saint Rita brought the light

of Jesus' resurrection into the human story. Another image stuck with me, the one painted in the urn in the Basilica, where she embraces her sons and points to the crucifix, as if to say, 'Look at Jesus, do like him.' This is still her message."

In the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, many people come to find the light of the risen Christ and bring it into their lives. What role do Sanctuaries play? "Sanctuaries are the clinics of the spirit, for those who are wounded by the vicissitudes of life and need a place to find a cure. They find it in the priest who welcomes and listens to their story. Through the liturgy, then, the medicine of the Word of God is offered, such as the sacraments of forgiveness and communion."

Father, have you met someone who has 'risen', overcoming his suffering? "The life of a priest is full of these miracles. I cite, for example, the women who receive the 'Saint Rita of Cascia International Recognition Award' in Cascia which, every year the day be-

fore May 22, is given to those who imitate the values of Rita. Theirs are stories of light and salvation, where through forgiveness, peace and dedication to one's neighbour, these women experience the light of the risen Christ. In the everyday world, it often happens that in the confessional, people realise they have made a mistake and change their lives. We hope to overcome the virus and the evils of the world, by welcoming the Gospel to change our lives. This is the passage that Jesus and the saints teach us. This is Easter. I wish those who are part of the family of Saint Rita, that the light of the risen Christ may reach them, as a great blessing."

Saint Rita brought the light of Jesus' resurrection into the human story



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The light amid the pandemic

“If you have someone carrying the cross with you, it's a completely different story”



Arianna Coppari

They have only our eyes to cling to

Arianna Coppari is thirty years old and comes from Treia, a town in the province of Macerata, in the Marche region. She is a nurse and has been since 2014. I write “is” because certain professions are lived. I understood this because she opened her heart to me, which has been “beating” for months for those who are hospitalised in intensive care at the COVID Hospital in Civitanova Marche that she takes care of. It was life that made her realise she wanted to “be” a nurse. In high school she studied accounting, but Arianna was not made for numbers and PCs. By volunteering, she finds her way. After university, her professional career began in some retirement homes, and continued at the hospital in Macerata, then in Camerino. Since November 2020 she has been at the former Civitanova Marche Fair, transformed into a COVID facility. In short, Arianna is young, but she has experience. Still, there is a before and an after in her life as a nurse, marked by Coronavirus. “Now,” she tells me, “patients are far from their families

and find their whole world in us. They have only us, or rather only our eyes to cling to, because they only know those.” Arianna finds strength in the eyes of patients, in positive moments and in faith, which she rediscovered a few years ago, emerging from a personal abyss. Now, faith grows in her, even in the hospital wards. “A patient who shakes your hand is a victory because you understand that there is life and that faith is fundamental, because many pray when they regain consciousness. When I am at work I pray too: when a patient gets worse, when I feel lost, and this way I don't feel alone. I also pray to thank God, who allows me to work positively, although sometimes I would like to run away.”

For Arianna it is not a burden to be the only point of reference, but the responsibility she feels is great. “In the intensive care unit, out of 14 beds, most of the patients are intubated. If the patient is alert but unable to speak, we are the go-between with the families. We can understand what they mean by reading their lips. It's not easy, but when you build a certain relationship, you understand that person because you know them. Seeing emotion, joy, hope, love is priceless.” Arianna sees life, but there is also fear in that burden. “When I was in Camerino, we were overwhelmed and worked in terror. Once, while intubating a patient, I saw his eyes filled with fear. I still see them. We were unable to see the light after so much suffering, which we were alone in accompanying.” But, one morning, Arianna found that light. “It was the period of Easter last



Arianna is a nurse in the intensive care unit of the COVID Hospital in Civitanova Marche.

FEATURED

IN A WORD

curated by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi osa

“Christ, in the days of his earthly life, offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears and ... although he was the Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered and, made perfect, became the cause of eternal salvation for all.”

From the Letter to the Hebrews 5: 7-9.

Christ is the mediator of salvation between the Father and men, he is the high priest who, in his earthly life, does not accuse anyone before God, not even those who condemned him to death on the cross. He offered the Father only prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to save humanity. Christians learn from Christ to grow in humanity and to communicate it always, whatever the adversities of life. It is their Easter journey sustained by faith in the risen Christ.

year, when Bruna, a patient who had been sedated for a long time, made me understand that she wanted to call the family. It was the first time for me, and it was disturbing. We cried together. Since that day, she has made a great recovery, returning home on her own after two months. We still talk and I've been to her house, because COVID is also this. Unexpected relationships are created which are profound, because they come from the soul. If

you have someone who accompanies you, who carries the cross with you, it is a completely different story.” Arianna has understood that the light that allows us to see life, at the end of so much pain, is inside us. She, who has carried and carries many crosses, helps me see that perhaps it is the virus that shows us how to save ourselves, together. “With Bruna I discovered that the human side in my work is an added value. Hers was really a resurrection.” I only touched the surface of Arianna's life, but it was enough to see her strength. In fact, several times, speaking of the emotions she has accumulated for months, she told me that she would then think about processing them. Not now, because now for her there are only her patients. (AN)

REHABILITATION TO LIFE AFTER COVID

At the hospital in Cascia, whoever has beaten COVID comes back to life, says Dr Giancarlo Martini, head of Intensive Rehabilitation, who tells me about the work on those who have faced the virus and bear the signs of it, on body and soul. “I develop individual rehabilitation projects for patients, which begin in Cascia, as soon as they test negative to the virus. In addition to respiratory after-effects, many have muscular and neurological problems.” They need to reactivate the body, learn to breathe and move. “Often, we also rehabilitate the cognitive and psychological part, because after a long intubation there are significant implications, such as depressive syndrome. And then there is the detachment from loved ones, another dimension we take care of.” The Cascia hospital, with rehabilitation and the Extended Care Unit, was brought back to life after the 2016 earthquake. Housed since 2018 in the former Spiritual Exercises House of the Saint Rita Monastery, it is the result of collaboration with the Umbria Region, the Municipality of Cascia and USL Umbria 2. Everything was possible thanks to the solidarity of the benefactors of the monastery and the partnership of the Francesca Rava Foundation - NPH Italia Onlus, which supported the project with the contribution of the Vodafone Italia Foundation. (AN)



by Alessia Nicoletti

Waiting for the Roses of Saint Rita

The revolution of love and charity

As Leopardi wrote, joy is in the waiting. It is also true for the Roses of Saint Rita, the initiative of the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation which is ready to be repeated throughout Italy, on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 May. Now in its fifth edition, the mission of the event is to raise funds for the charitable works of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, thanks to which the Augustinians bring support and hope to many people in need. Valentina Fabbri, a member of the Foundation team, is the soul of the Roses of Saint Rita initiative, which she takes care of. Together with her, there are hundreds of volunteers representing the heart of the event, in an increasingly united and large family which has worked and still performs real miracles in the name of Saint Ri-

ta. Edition after edition, the initiative started in 2017 has witnessed an evolution that has never stopped, not even with the pandemic. "In 2020," says Valentina, "the volunteers gave us a wonderful lesson in life.

Faced with the strong desire to be present and the great strength of each of them, their fears became null and void and were swept away. It happened just like in a family: we united hearts even more and we let ourselves be guided by hope and the desire to succeed. The result, in all respects, was truly incredible. The vol-

unteers led a real revolution throughout Italy, made of love and charity. This gives us absolute certainty that this is the right road and that for this coming May we will carry out the 2021 edition in the streets or by word of mouth with the same enthusiasm as always. There are the yeses of the volunteers to give us strength, volunteers who have arrived in even greater numbers than usual. Already at the end of 2020 we have received many confirmations of participation and now (January 2021) there are 350 volunteers. Normally a number that we reach in March." From Valentina's words, I understand that the new edition is destined to leave its mark, so much so that even at this stage there is also a very special record. "Many volunteers have already received many bookings for the rose plants that they asked for and that we will send them for the event in May. Some have even doubled the number of roses originally

le **ROSE**
di **SANTA**
RITA



Melina Greco and the group of volunteers from Enna (Sicily)



Volunteer Anna Danese from Montecchia di Crosara - Verona (Veneto)

SAINT RITA FOUNDATION

requested! This means that nothing can hold back the volunteers, who indeed feel more motivated than ever." Valentina knows what's in their heads, indeed in their hearts. "I feel their enthusiasm and the strong desire to do it again this year. They have the determined will, especially in this time when so many are in difficulty, to help those in need. 'For Saint Rita, this and more', they tell me. She is always the example of the family." A family in which fundraising is as central as human relationships that are alive and have intensified over the years. "I never get tired of talking with the volunteers. Sometimes, a text message, a photo, a "good morning" is enough to know how they are and what they are doing." A mutual relationship, also on the part of the

volunteers, which for Valentina is the norm, but makes her emotional every time. "I continue to be amazed by the relationships that have been created with the volunteers, by the confidence that has been created, in telling me something that is happening to them, whether good or not. I reply by saying, thanks for the trust. Because I feel grateful that they trust me, opening their hearts and letting me into their lives. I represent one of the many petals that make up the rose of the Foundation and of the Saint Rita Monastery, which for them is always a point of reference." The Roses of Saint Rita initiative, in fact, does not start or end in May. It is a continuous cycle, which goes on throughout the year. Thus, the expectation arises in the volunteers themselves, the desire to be there and to remind the people around them of it. "Volunteers think about it all year round and await the event every day, as a moment in which to make their presence and closeness to those who are more fragile concrete."



Feast of Saint Rita 2021

We are waiting for you in Cascia from May 20 to 22

For real-time updates on the programme, visit the santaritadacascia.org website



by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

The thorn of the resurrection



Image of Saint Rita on the Solemn Case, kept at the monastery of Cascia.

The most common image in which Saint Rita is depicted is with the thorn on her forehead. Let us look into this episode. In the inscription on the Solemn Case, which contained the body of the saint after her death, we read: *"Che acti sopra ongne donna fo donata / Che una delle spine de Christu recepesti ... Et non te parve ancor esser ben monda / Che XV anni la spina patisti / Per andare alla vita più iocunda 1457"* (Paraphrasing the original text: *"Privileged above every other woman / you were granted receiving one of Christ's thorns ... And it did not seem to you that you were ready yet / you who for fifteen years suffered the thorn / to go on to a more joyful life 1457"*). The episode, therefore, is very well documented. It is said that, after a

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

One of the four miracles that made Rita a saint is her body moving on different occasions. The most famous episode took place on May 21, 1628, the first feast after Rita's beatification. Everything was set for the feast when a quarrel broke out over who had the right to preside over the celebration: the secular clergy wanted to preside be-

cause it was a municipal feast, but the Augustinian friars claimed that it was up to them. Heated words and insults began to fly. The frightened nuns ran around the body of their sister and begged her to make peace. And the Blessed Rita moved her head and a hand towards the people, just as priests and friars began to fight. Hun-

dreds of people, gathered around the urn, saw that the body of the blessed had clearly moved: the clergy, frightened and afflicted, calmed down. The phenomenon was documented several times. Even after the canonisation, Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce attested that the body of Saint Rita moved in 1918, at the end of the First World War.

sermon on the crown of thorns, once back in the monastery, in front of the crucifix Saint Rita asked for one of its thorns to share to a small extent the pains of Christ. Yet she was already suffering and if she just wanted more pain it would have been a case study for top psychiatrists. But in reality, what Sister Rita wanted was to suffer as Jesus had suffered, that is, with love. So, she asked the Lord to participate with love in the sufferings of Christ and thus to live hers. Well, this was granted. The inscription tells us that for 15 years Sister Rita bore this sore on her forehead, which was not only a source of unspeakable pain for her, but also caused her isolation due to the bad smell it emanated. But she was granted the real reason for the sufferings of Christ and of anyone who wants to follow him: love. We know that Jesus suffered for our love, but it is not enough. He has also risen for love of us! If Christ had not risen, our faith would be in vain, as St. Paul writes. So, we must see in the

PRAYER

Jesus Our Easter
"[...] Oh divine expansion in all things and everywhere! Oh, crucifixion that extends across the whole world! Oh, divine Easter ... Oh solemnity of the whole cosmos, Oh joy of the universe! For you, Life has spread to all beings. O Easter, light of the new procession of lights, virginal splendour, for you the lamps of souls no longer go out. Therefore, we call upon you, Oh Christ, sovereign God, eternal King. Extend your immense hands over your Church and over your eternally holy people." From the Quartodeciman homily on Easter

thorn of Saint Rita not only the pains of the Passion of Christ, but also the light of the resurrection for love. Biographies abound with details, some fantastic, about how the event occurred. A very beautiful one says that a ray of light in the shape of a thorn broke off from the crucifix and pierced Sister Rita's forehead. The light of love, the light of life, because where there is love there is life.

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.

Achille Pea (Verolavecchia BS - Italy)
 Anna Flora Mannoni (Latina - Italy)
 Antonio Papa (Pomezia RM - Italy)
 Carlina Perussato (Volpago del Montello TV - Italy)
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by Marta Ferraro

Samantha: devotion and work



Volunteer Samantha of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita in Torremaggiore (Foggia)

Samantha Lamedica is a 26-year-old girl from Torremaggiore (Foggia), who has been a member of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita for about a year. In fact, you can join the association both as a group and individually. Samantha's bond with Saint Rita, which has always been in her family, existed even before she was born. Indeed, it dates back to before the birth of her mother Teresa, when her grandmother Lina, close to giving birth, received a statue of Saint Rita as a gift from a nun.

Years later, little Samantha, who had been told about this special woman who became a saint since she was a child, found that statue in a drawer, from which she now rarely separates. Whenever she has to face a test or simply run an errand, she carries it with her, as a sign of protection. "Today that statue is 52 years old," Samantha says proudly. For some years now, the young woman's devotion to the saint of Cascia has been transformed into concrete acts. So, looking for information, she came across the official website of the monastery - santaritadacascia.org - where she came across the Primary Pious Union. Immediately after she joined, she experienced the reality of the association in a

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

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

The young woman's devotion has been transformed into concrete acts

I feel I haven't done much yet for this big family

certainly particular and very difficult year like 2020, when the pandemic also forced the organisation to cancel the annual meeting. "I feel I haven't done much yet for this big family that I have joined. But the moment in time didn't help me." In fact, Samantha does a lot.

In addition to donating the proceeds of what she does with her volunteer group, in collaboration with others organised by Matteo Costantino, to the Monastery of Cascia, she organises the solidarity stall of the Roses of Saint Rita, an initiative that the Monastery has been carrying out for several years and which sees thousands of volunteers engaged in many squares of Italy in the first weekend of May. Samantha does not stop at charity, but also spreads the message of Saint Rita.

After having been in Cascia and present during the days of the Ritian celebrations at the evening of the presentation of the International Recognition Award

to the women of Saint Rita, Samantha wanted to replicate the initiative, albeit in a small way, at a local level, together with other people, including her inseparable friend Rossella.

In this way, even at her local level, a woman is periodically chosen whose attitude has imitated one of the virtues of the saint of the impossible.

"Thanks also to the support of Sr. Carolina Iavazzo, who was one of the women awarded in one of the recent editions, I thought I'd do it too. And then, from this initiative the idea was born of being part of Father Pino Puglisi's 'Red Agenda Movement', which fights illegality and the mafia. This is why we have created a space dedicated to Saint Rita that bears the name of *Saint Rita for violence against women*". We hope that the example, tenacity and various ideas of Samantha can also give rise to a large group of the Saint Rita Primary Pious Union in her town of Torremaggiore.

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



by Rita Gentili

Italian soldiers and Saint Rita in Eritrea

The journey to discover the devotion to Saint Rita in the world takes us far, not only

RITA IS ALSO HERE



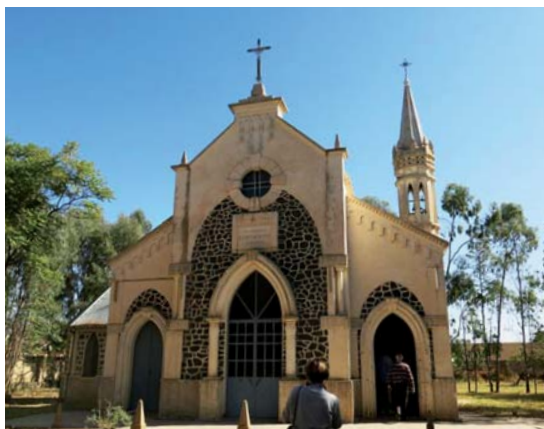
Country: Eritrea

Town: Adi Quala

Good to know: The name Eritrea derives from a Greek word that means red, exactly like the name of the sea which the country overlooks. Land of continuous domination since the time of the Egyptians, it was an Italian colony from 1889 to 1941, then occupied by the British until 1952. Then it was annexed by the United Nations to Ethiopia, from which it broke away and was at war for over thirty years. Today, the country's situation is still precarious. In Eritrea there is a dictatorship, from which those who can escape, in search of freedom, prospects and a future. During 2019, the regime closed several health facilities and schools run by the Catholic Church and other religious orders, putting patients and students on the street. It is one of the countries with the lowest levels of medical and educational assistance in the world.

in space, but also in time. The year is 1936, and we are in Eritrea. At that time, the African country had already been an Italian colony for some years and many of our compatriots were present in the area: state officials, some entrepreneurs, missionaries and soldiers. And it is through the work of the latter that a small church, dedicated to Saint Rita, is built in the town of Adi Quala. Inside, a monument to the memory of the victims of a very dramatic historical event dating back to 1942. The Second World War is underway and in the waters of the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Mozambique, a tragedy involves over 700 Italian soldiers. It is November 28: the British ship Nova Scotia has been sailing towards South Africa for a few days, with a load of over 1200 people, including Italian

navenovascotia.it





A small church dedicated to Saint Rita was built in the town of Adi Quala

and German military and civilian prisoners, rounded up in Eritrea and Ethiopia, headed for South African concentration camps. A theatre of war, those waters are also navigated at the same time by German submarines. One of these, sighting the Nova Scotia and probably mistaking it for a merchant freighter, strikes it with two torpedoes.

The ship is torn apart, sinks in a few minutes, and many people find themselves in the sea, some covered in oil, the most fortunate clinging to rafts and makeshift supports. Many will be swept away by the waves and many will die torn apart by sharks. Only on November 30, two days later, will a Portuguese destroyer begin recovery of the survivors: only 181 people are saved. 650 Italians lost their lives in that tragedy. An event of which little is talked about but a trace of which can be found in the church of Saint Rita in Adi Quala. Inside, in fact, on dark tombstones, the names of all the Italian victims of the Nova Scotia are engraved. Unfortunate-

ly, due to the difficulties in communicating with the local parish priest, a father of the Lazarist community who has responsibility for the church, and the situation made even more complicated by the pandemic, we are unable to know how devotion to Saint Rita is lived in that church today. So, we limit ourselves, for now, to sharing the information we have been able to collect with you. We know that, when the military moved out, the church was entrusted to a native priest, later replaced by a Lombard Capuchin missionary, who in 1951 arranged the military pavilions to be used as a school for natives. In the 1970s, then, the church was completely restored, and the old mission rooms replaced by a modern and large building that housed the school and orphanage for children. In those same years, we learn from an Italian living in Eritrea, the church was the destination of annual pilgrimages in honour of Saint Rita, during which (guess what?) they brought roses to be blessed.

The names of all the Italian victims of the *Nova Scotia* are engraved



by Msgr.
Giovanni Scanavino, OSA **MOTHER FASCE**

Maria Teresa's dream

Blessed Mother Teresa Fasce's vocation to the consecrated life sees the light in the parish of Our Lady of Consolation run by the Augustinians in Genoa. It is here

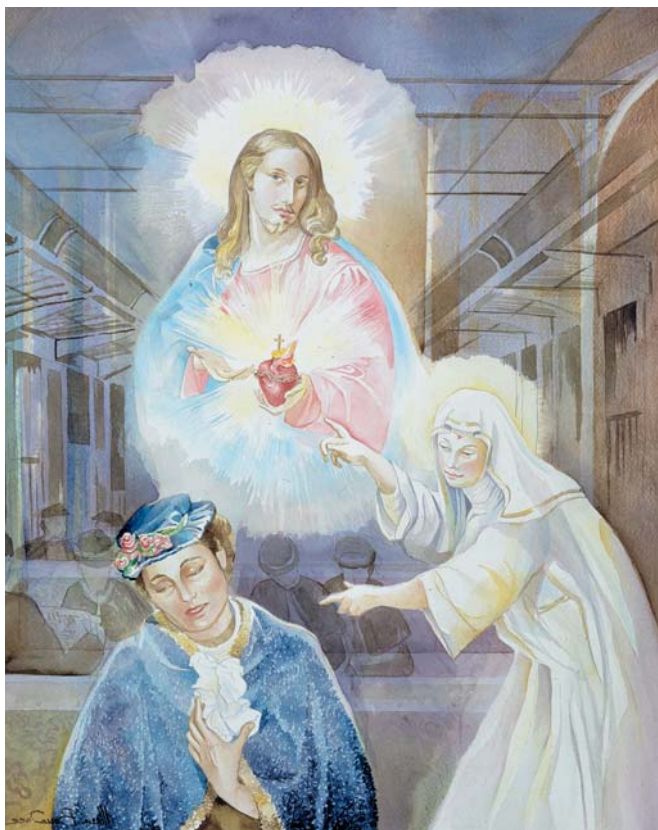
her heart and Saint Rita, her teacher, draws Maria strongly towards her and towards Cascia.

It is a dream that shakes her soul, as Maria confides to Sr. M. Caterina Santoni: "One morning, during the period in which I was struggling with the choice between state and monastery, I went to confession with Fr. Ferriello, an Augustinian.

The Father asked me what dream I had had. Great was my surprise because in reality I had dreamed of finding myself at the grate of a convent in front of so many nuns dressed in white (in those days, the nuns of Cascia dressed in white in summer).

They looked at me with joyful expectation and there were also some little girls (in 1938, Fasce will found the Beehive of Saint Rita, which still welcomes minors in difficulty). Next to me in the room were two nuns, one of them with a wound on the forehead, and a Father of venerable appearance. The nun with the wound on her forehead told me 'this is the doctor'. I woke up with immense joy, without having understood the meaning of the dream. It was the Father Confessor who told me that it was Saint Rita, Saint Monica and St. Augustine. There was no doubt: I was convinced of Cascia." It is Jesus who calls her to make the Monastery of Saint Rita flourish again, to raise a new Church for it. And in 1906, at the age of twenty-five, she will go to Cascia.

Work by Bonaduce, XX cen.



Saint Rita
draws Maria
towards her
and towards
Cascia

that the Fasce family from Torriglia lives in winter. The Augustinian spirit that Maria breathes grows at the Canonisation of Saint Rita (24 May 1900), when solemn celebrations were organised in Genoa.

Maria rushes to them, above all in piety and attention. She is 19 years old, the love for God burns in



by Fr. Josef Sciberras,
Augustinian
General Postulation

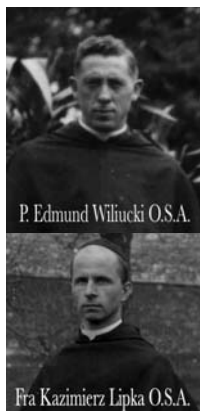
AUGUSTINIANS

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

Witnesses of faith in the death camps



They never
stopped
looking
towards
heaven



On November 9, 2020, the diocesan process for the cause of beatification of four Augustinian friars killed during the Second World War – Wilhelm Gaczek (1881-1941), Krzysztof Oszewski (1907-1942) Edmund Wilucki (1913-1941) and Kazimierz Lipka (1891-1942) – was closed. Members of the Augustinian community of the convent of St. Catherine in Krakow (where there is devotion to St. Rita), were arrested in August 1941.

Their fate was marked by deportation to the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau, where they were killed. In a situation of terrible persecution, suffering and despondency, sustained by faith, all four gave great witness of strength and hope, inspiring, as far as they could, those who were with them. They had not forgotten their Christian vocation and religious mission, and like Saint Rita, in the midst of so much pain, they embraced the cross making it a haven of salvation. Like her, they crossed the threshold of the love of full self-giving. Dying from starvation, beatings or lethal injection of phe-

nol, they never stopped looking towards heaven, the last destiny of the children of God, where they hoped to receive the crown of glory, after they had borne on their heads the crown of thorns of earthly suffering and the persecution of the enemy. These Augustinian confreres, like Rita of Cascia, learned from obedience to the Father's will what it means to die in Christ in order to be able to rise again with him. The fame of their martyrdom reached us, and for this reason the Augustinian Order decided to open the cause of their beatification, in the hope that their example will help the Church of today to fully live vocation even in the midst of so many persecutions.

ACCORDING TO
AVGVSTINE

“The resurrection of the dead distinguishes the life of faith from the faithless dead” (Serm. 215, 6)



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

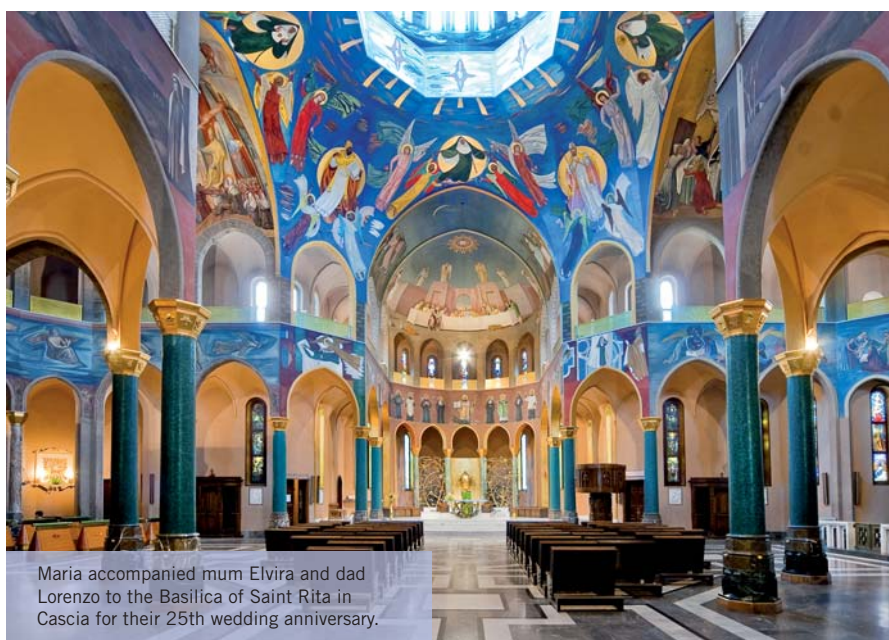
Happiness based on faith and hope

The story of Elvira, Lorenzo and Maria

I became
pregnant
and Saint
Rita came
to me in
a dream

Elvira Catavotello is an energetic and nice woman. She lives in Nettuno, in the province of Rome. Her positivity and her spontaneity involve you to the point that you feel like her friend even if you've only had a chat with her. When she tells her story she is unstoppable, she leaves out no details, but despite everything her story becomes neither sad nor heavy. Elvira is one of those women whose happiness, which today she enjoys together with her husband Lorenzo Sibilia, has been won through prayers,

hopes, disappointments, falls and recoveries. "I was in Cascia for the first time about fifteen years ago. I came with my mother, my sister with her still small child, who is now a boy, while I had no children." Elvira tells her story, not without suffering and disappointments, but with a strength and determination that not even five abortions and an extrauterine pregnancy have ever quashed. "What do you think?" she says, "it has not been a piece of cake. I wanted a son. And I prayed a lot. Every time I lost a child, they took



Maria accompanied mum Elvira and dad Lorenzo to the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia for their 25th wedding anniversary.



Elvira, Lorenzo
and Maria in
the Basilica.

me to the labour room and there I always found the Crucifix and I prayed! I prayed for this shattered life and for the gift of motherhood. I have always believed in it and I have always prayed, alone. I found myself alone in the bedroom praying and hoping. Then there was a time when my husband and I argued because he didn't understand me anymore. It seemed that I was being stubborn. I went to all the doctors who advised me. After a long time, at 45 I became pregnant and Saint Rita came to me in a dream." Elvira and her husband are very attached to the saint of impossible cases, given that her example of faith has often comforted and encouraged them in recent years. "Saint Rita, whom I love so much and whom I have often come to Cascia to pray to and honour, came to me in a dream. Do you understand? To me! She was as she is now in her urn, but not in the church but on a beautiful green meadow and I said to her 'Please, this time let me give birth'. And she said 'Yes, this time yes'." And in fact a little girl, Maria, finally arrived. "When I was pregnant," Elvira goes on, "the doctor told me that I should have done all the tests to see if she was healthy, but I refused. I

would have kept her no matter the disease.

Maria is not just a consolation prize. Maria is a grace. Maria was the fuse that brought my husband Lorenzo and me closer to the faith. I have never let suffering make me angry ... In fact, I had the example of Saint Rita clear in my mind. How much did Saint Rita suffer?". Today Maria is 7 years old and it was she who chose to accompany mum Elvira and dad Lorenzo to the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

Maria is a beautiful and smart little girl. Finding herself after the Eucharistic celebration with a priest, answering the friar's question "Do you like Cascia?" she confidently replied: "Of course. I have to come here for my wedding!". Following the example of her mother and father, even little Maria feels tied to Cascia and Saint Rita and often asks her to return, especially in winter to see the snow. Elvira and Lorenzo's family is complete with the arrival of little Maria and they live their life united and happy in the faith. Whenever they can, they leave their daily commitments to return to visit their friend Saint Rita. (MF)

Maria was
the fuse that
brought my
husband
Lorenzo and
me closer to
the faith

They live
their life
united and
happy in the
faith

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.

Rita's cloak and the garden of the miracle

She raised
her eyes to
heaven in
gratitude to
God

From the declarations made on 29 October 1626 by Giovanni Spirito and Giustino Bonaccorsi of Roccaporena, we learn that, after about two centuries from the death of Rita, in the hamlet of Cascia there were two testimonies related to the history of the saint: a fig tree and a cloak called “fur coat”.

“... I have seen very well the garden which is spoken of with reference to the blessed Rita and situated in the locality of “la Piaggia”, having been called as testimony by your lordship together with Giovanni di Spirito where I saw a fig tree from which I heard from my elders that, being ill, the blessed Rita had fresh figs plucked in said tree in the month of January and of all this is publicly known.” Giustino Bonaccorsi

“Here in our place, Don Attilio de Santi, our compatriot and who was in charge of this place for many years, devotedly preserves a robe or fur coat of the Blessed Rita known as “Pelliccione” was given by Don Attilio to your lordship in my presence and that of Giustino known as Benacurso which, all seen and considered, your lordship ordered be returned to Don Attilio as in effect it was returned and said fur coat of said Blessed Rita has always been kept and is held with veneration and serves in particular to parturient women for a happy childbirth and also to other sick people and in conclusion we have always seen and continually see very great miracles, as I have understood also from the elders who in their time received particular graces and miracles.” Giovanni Spirito (Spoleto, AD, E-20, *Processus* 1626, ff. 99v.-102r.) (CC)

The testimonies lead us to Roccaporena, where the saint was born around 1381. Six kilometres from Cascia, the village

is located at the end of a small gorge crossed by a steep stream. Under the rocky walls of the mountains, the vivid green of the luxuri-

ant vegetation predominates in the summer. Suddenly, towards the end of the gorge, the rocks and the vegetation open up like an inverted funnel towards an intense space of sky, blue when the weather is fine, which opens the pilgrim's heart to God. This must have been Rita's daily experience, each time she raised her eyes to heaven in gratitude to God for the beauty of creation and the gifts and benefits of her beautiful soul.

Among the various places of Ritian memory which, from time immemorial, have been guarded by her fellow citizens of Roccaporena, the Rock stands out, also for its size, the solitary place where tradition has it that Rita would gladly retire to contemplate the Lord. No less important, and attested in the process, the relic of the so-called "fur coat", a large cloak of skin and fur, like the one that herdsmen once used – to which, as is known, miraculous powers are attributed – is still preserved. Giovanni Spirito recalls that the fur coat was placed on parturient women for the successful outcome of childbirth – which involved enormous risks for the health and life of the pregnant woman and the unborn child – but also to cure many other forms of infirmity. Another memory of Saint Rita is the "Garden of the Miracle", where in the winter of 1457, a few months before Rita's pious transit, the rose blossomed and two figs ripened, which the saint had asked for in her most recent illness from a relative visiting her bedside. The woman, as well as



the nuns, certainly thought that Rita was delirious because of the disease, but returning to Roccaporena the woman found exactly what she had been asked for. Those who know the harsh winters of Cascia, and those of the times in which the saint lived were even more severe – there are those who speak of a "minor ice age" from 1300 to 1870 – can well understand that Rita's request really bordered on the impossible. This is the last lesson of Rita who, even in the face of the freezing cold, and above all of violence and suffering, reminds us how the love of God can warm everything and can make possible what seems impossible. Nothing is impossible for God. (RR)

Ancient Choir of the Monastery, *The figs ripened in winter*, (unknown artist, XVII cen.)

God's love
can make
possible
what seems
impossible



by Father Vittorino Grossi OSA,
editor-in-chief of From the Bees to the Roses

“Abandon us not to temptation”

The innovations of the new Roman Missal

The Missal
preserves
the richness
of the living
tradition of
the Church

The new Roman Missal, already introduced in Italian churches on the first Sunday of Advent, will officially come into force with Easter and will become part of the daily liturgical life of priests and the faithful. This is the third edition in Italian of the Missal of Paul VI, published in the name of the Italian Episcopal Conference, which comes after 18 years of work, aimed at arriving at a text that is as faithful as possible to the original writings and to the Second Vatican Council. As you may already know, no major changes have been made, but the

new translation has introduced many small innovations. To understand them, let us start from the foundations, that is, from the liturgical reform desired by the Second Vatican Council. As we read in the 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, this concerned not only the reform of rites, but their celebration in a new vision that highlighted the primacy of Christ's presence: “By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a priest baptises it is really Christ Himself who baptises. He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy



AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18: 20) (SC 7 and 21)."

The second axis is placed in the subject of the celebrations which is the entire people of God, each one with its ministry, therefore not only the clergy. For this reason, other principles were the use of clear, short and understandable expressions, so that everyone can feel part of the Mass. The New Missal, with its linguistic adjustments, therefore, is part of the Church's ongoing journey of renewal of the liturgy, according to today's cultural sensibilities. It is in this sense that the two central characteristics of the new edition are framed, compared with the previous one of 1983 which it replaces. The first is the will to adapt the words while remaining faithful to the evangelical message. The second characteristic, of great sensitivity, is the use of a language that makes all the faithful feel increasingly included: this is why, the penitential act becomes "confessed to almighty God and to you brothers and sisters". The latter is one of the innovations introduced by the New Missal in the rite of the Mass. Among others, there

are some more significant ones. We begin with the Our Father, the prayer par excellence, which was taught to us precisely by Jesus. Immediately after the addition of "also" in the line "as we [also] forgive those who trespass against us", there is the modification of the petition "lead us not into temptation", which Pope Francis wanted very much.

The new formula reads "abandon us not to temptation". This much discussed change has the value of reminding us of the reality of a God who is Father and who is beside us in temptation. A reality that is also restored in the renewal of the Gloria, where the expression "people of good will" is replaced by "people beloved by the Lord", to emphasise that God's love reaches all people, not just those of good will. In conclusion, the Missal is not only a liturgical instrument, but a timely and normative reference that preserves the richness of the living tradition of the Church, its desire to enter the Paschal mystery, to implement it in the celebration and to translate it into life. The restoration of the Missal is a precious opportunity of formation for the baptised, invited to rediscover the grace and strength of celebrating, its language – made up of gestures and words – and its nourishment for a full conversion of the heart.

SMILING AT LIFE

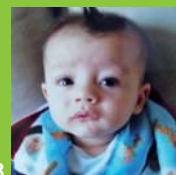
Send photos of your children to monastero@saintfrancescascia.org with the consent of both parents for publication. Incomplete or illegible authorisations will not be taken into consideration.



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3



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5



6

1. Anastasia and Maria Francesca Taras (Alà dei Sardi SS - Italy)

2. Angelo and Francesca Rita Amoroso (Marcianise CE - Italy)

3. Christian Zecca (Magenta MI - Italy)

4. Giuseppe Rita Durante (Catanzaro - Italy)

5. Linda Cosentino (Rome - Italy)

6. Pierpaolo Di Pietro (Noto SR - Italy)



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

Let us start again from relationships

Over this last year I have frequently had a fixed thought for Saint Rita. She has left a fundamental imprint on my life. I was 7 when I was hit by a car: I suffered a trauma to my leg, but without serious consequences. My mother had dreamed of a nun dressed in black, then she realised that it was Saint Rita. So, she had a dressmaker sew the same dress as hers and put it on me for many months. When I wore it, I felt special and feared nothing. My mother had lost her mother as a child and she poured out all the love she had not received on us three children. She suffered with various health problems, until she was diagnosed in 2006 what I call 'the black hole': Alzheimer's disease. I left my job, financial security, because I decided to stay with my mother, to carry the cross with her and the office was no longer my place. We returned with my husband to Cosenza, our land of origin, leaving behind us the cages of idols that close us and isolate us from ourselves and from others, making us slaves. A complex, hard reality opened up, to be lived in the best way, however, in order to give dignity to my mother who could do nothing, only suffer. (Rosa Francesca - Cosenza)

Rosa has no doubts, she lives her Christianity positively. She knows how to obey reality. It's true, we are forced to live apart, but from this difficulty we must reflect in order to start again from the quality of our relationships. Through them we can lay hands on our faith. Rosa knows that the first thing we need for changing is compas-



sion. We must allow the other to wound us, not hurt us, but upset us and not stay at a safe distance to protect our peace. Then you have to see, open your eyes wide, notice what the other is experiencing, touch, get your hands dirty: a hand on someone's shoulders says more than many words. And then, listen to the cry of the other and decide to be there, to love. Rosa stops, leaves what was the routine of her life and lets herself be questioned, questions everything. She decides to live the parable of the good Samaritan: *"He felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds [...] he took care of him"* (Luke 10: 33-34). A few days ago, Rosa's mother met the embrace of the Father. The pain in her heart is great, she doesn't know what will be of her tomorrow, but she continues to take care of her father. She prays, asking for help on her journey, which one day will lead her to meet her mother again. (MDC)



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

Seekers of God, beggars of light

Seeking
God is the
beginning
of healing

Let Jesus
help us
carry our
cross

For the pilgrim, delivering over one's pain and hopes to Saint Rita, living the sacrament of confession and the Eucharist, and praying at the urn mean putting oneself courageously and humbly in search of God. It is like opening a glimmer of hope in the balance of life and allowing us to believe in a new "possible". When everything and everyone says that we have an impassable wall in front of us, it means seeking a breach of light. This is what pilgrims do when they come to the Sanctuary, sometimes with unbearable burdens of suffering and fear. In that humble gesture of trusting request, our land is irrigated by a new spring that whispers in the ear of the heart: "Do not be afraid to throw yourself on the Lord! He will not draw back and let you fall! Put your worries aside and throw yourself on him; He will welcome you and heal you." These are the words of Saint Augustine, who from the death of despair returned to live in Christ, helping many, like Saint Rita, like us, if we want. The Gospel of Mark tells us that in Capernaum, after having healed those suffering from diseases, Jesus "went out to an isolated place to pray". When the apostles found him, they said to him: "Everyone is looking for you!". He replied: "For this I have

come!". He even asked Andrew and John: "What are you looking for?". He asked the same question to Magdalene when she met him in front of the empty tomb: Woman, who are you looking for? Yes, seeking God is the beginning of healing! It is opening up to a new understanding of what is happening to us. To seek God is to open oneself to the eternal, to Him for whom nothing is impossible. Discovering that he loves us and is the meaning and goal of our wandering.



It is letting Jesus help us carry our cross and be beside us, with his light, his consolation, his faithful promise of Life. All this was experienced by Saint Rita, who continues to suggest to us, in the silence of her heart, the path to become seekers of God, beggars of light.



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

“Let us resurrect Jesus in our hearts”

It is up to us to build gestures and occasions for resurrection every day

Celebrating the Passover of the Lord, remembering and reliving his actions and words, is to confess faith in the resurrection of Christ, to believe that the story of that man, Jesus of Nazareth, as he lived, died and returned to life, has great significance for each of us and for the history of humanity. Christ's Passover, in fact, is still salvation today if we adhere to it with our entire existence. The whole history of salvation is illuminated by the suffering, dying and rising of Jesus, and therefore by his entire life given so that all may be saved. To confess that “Christ has risen from the dead” means to cry out that “love is stronger than

death”. Here is the key word of the Paschal mystery: love. On Good Friday we worship the cross, not as gallows of death, helpless acceptance of suffering or worship of pain, not because we are heroes or masochists. But because in it we have the certainty of the victory over death and over the deaths that oppress the heart and make it sterile. “The cross is a temporary arrangement,” said Don Tonino Bello. The Risen Christ lives at the centre of our life, of our doubts and frailties. Following him is the true path of life, it is the vocation to which we are called when everything seems lost, stationary, immobile, failed; not for a simple dose of good humour, but for the certainty that that resurrection, the strongest life of every night, already lives in us by grace and wants to be recognised, welcomed, lived by us. Let us resurrect Jesus in our hearts! It will spread and do great and beautiful things. Let us ask the Lord, this Easter, for the grace to believe in the resurrection, not only that of Jesus, but of man. We are one body and Jesus wishes to take us into his resurrection. It is up to us, together with him and among us, to build gestures and occasions for resurrection every day without letting ourselves be stopped by anything, like the women on Easter morning: stronger than fear, together on a journey to gain courage,



“Let us make our life good and fragrant bread to satisfy the hunger for joy that is in the world”.

supported by love. We who have welcomed the gift of faith let us not extinguish His light, let us not reduce it to a few hasty expected gestures: let us make our life good and fragrant bread to satisfy the hunger for joy that is in the world. Over the last year, referring to the pandemic, we have seen “everything will be fine” written in many places. Many of us have perhaps thought that it is not so true, but we can believe, in the light of the Resurrection, that “everything contributes to good for those who love God”, contributes to our salvation. There is no evil from which God does not know how to draw a greater good. The wish is to rise again and sow the seeds of resurrection. Seeds that God will multi-

ply because ours is the God of surprises, who works wonders, with our poverty, beyond all expectations. May the Virgin Mary help us believe it. *“Holy Mary, repeat to us that there is no cross that does not have its testimonies. There is no human bitterness that does not dissolve into a smile. There is no sin that does not find redemption. There is no tomb with a stone on its opening that is not temporary ... Lead us by the hand to the threshold of light, of which Easter is the supreme source ... Most sweet mother, prepare us too for the appointment with Him. Arouse the impatience of his Sunday return. Adorn us with wedding garments”* (Tonino Bello). Holy Easter! Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Hallelujah!

There is no evil from which God does not know how to draw a greater good

LIKE A MOSAIC

“Unlike the puzzle, the pieces of the mosaic do not have a predefined position: this is also the case with vocation, because vocation is a story with God who – from the beginning – shapes life through encounters, facts and people, because his Word is “everywhere” ...

In the great body of Christ which is the Church, each cell has its mission (Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 273) and its task, its place, its particularity that makes it different from all the others, unique, just as each person, each tile as in a mosaic, is unique.”

We offer you a few days at the school of Jesus and of prayer ...

FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE

from 16 (dinner) to 21 (breakfast) August 2021

For information: Monastery of Saint Rita
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*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 • www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare

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