

NO. 3 MAY-JUN 2021

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

Saint Rita, our teacher and guide

The women of the historical parade

DIALOGUE WITH THE MONASTERY

"Saint Rita was Gospel"

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THE FEAST OF EVERYONE

Let us celebrate peace in the family

CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial**
A night of light
- 4 Feast of Saint Rita**
Saint Rita, our teacher and guide
- The women of the historical parade**
- 8 Saint Rita Foundation**
Living together on May 22
- 10 Traces of Rita**
Rita, Queen of May
- 12 Primary Pious Union**
From Sicily, 8 new groups
- 14 Around the world**
The harmony of heart of Tom and Amanda
- 16 Mother Fasce**
At the school of holiness
- 18 Stories from the Sanctuary**
The family as a strength
- 20 The Archivist**
The ancient Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena



On the cover:
The feast of everyone
Photo: Detail of the historical
procession of Saint Rita on May 22.

- 22 At the heart of the Church**
On pilgrimage "at Saint Rita"
- 24 Testimonies of Grace**
The power of prayer
- 25 The Rector's Corner**
Feast, together
- 26 Dialogue with the Monastery**
"Saint Rita was Gospel"

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A night of light

It was the night of 22 May 1457, when Sister Rita died. Tradition has it that the bells rang by themselves, announcing her rebirth in Heaven. Their sound woke up the people of Cascia and surrounding towns and villages. Guided by the light lit in their hearts, everyone left their homes. For them, in fact, Rita was already a saint, and no one failed to honour her and thank the Lord. In the Monastery we still keep the ancient painting you see here, in which a multitude of people are depicted at Rita's bedside. There were so many people it was not possible to bury her uncorrupted body, which has thus come down to us today. After five and a half centuries, that devoted pilgrimage has never ended and all of you, who today and in so many different ways come to her from the four corners of the world, are living testimony to it.

That night was the first big feast of Saint Rita. No one had decreed it, no one had established the programme, yet everyone sang their joy and gratitude to the Lord, everyone welcomed in their hearts the gift of Grace emanating from Rita: saint of the people, yesterday and today. The Augustinians, Atanasio Angelini, Provincial of Umbria, and Giovanni Benedetti recalled that night with the traditional torchlight procession, which illuminates Cascia every year on the eve of the feast. In 1958, that light and burning faith took the symbolic form of the "Torch of Peace". Since then, its fire has been fuelled by the devotion of many people, of Italy and of the world. She is a messenger of peace, brotherhood, dialogue, love. The values that made Saint Rita go against the tide and that, on a daily basis, can make us rediscover a little of our history in her. That night was the night in which the light of Rita, reflected by God, created our family. Our wish is to relive together that same fire of faith, joy and communion, bringing the light of Rita within us.

Have a Happy Feast!





by Alessia Nicoletti

Saint Rita, our teacher and guide

Interview with Father Alejandro Moral Antón,
Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine



Saint Rita is
still working
today,
sowing
peace in our
hearts

Father Moral, you are one of the Ritian ambassadors. What message will you bring to the Feast of Saint Rita this year? “In light of the current situation, two very important issues. The first is peace, because the saint of peace tells us that we must commit ourselves to bringing about peace not only in the world where there are so many conflicts, but also within families to resolve all the 'wars' that take place in homes. The statistics show, in fact, that these have increased.

The pandemic is certainly an accomplice, but the responsibility is ours. Even more so at this moment, in families it is necessary to cultivate listening and dialogue, which are children of peace. This is essential to avoid the destruction of the world because the family is the first cell of society and the building of peace starts from there. Saint Rita worked hard to bring peace to her family, poisoned by the thirst for power and revenge. In the same way, she is also working today, sowing peace in our hearts. The second tool that Rita gives us to overcome these times is unity, walking with respect for and attention to others: only together can we escape the

pandemic and its consequences”. **In the feast there is a moment of profound reflection, represented on May 21 by the Transit of Saint Rita. But what does this mean?** “It is special because it creates a climate of true encounter with God. Retracing Rita's passage from earthly life to eternal life, we stop to think about our existence and open ourselves to the communication with God that Saint Rita proposes to us. In the passage from death to Rita's 'new life' we are all inside and looking out on her eternal life, we come closer to God and we see him suffering with us and always beside us. Symbolically, this reminds us that the Lord is also suffering the pain we are experiencing today and is not leaving us alone”.

How can we experience the Feast of Saint Rita to the fullest? “By welcoming Rita's message into our lives and taking advantage of all possible means to do so, because prayer unites and overcomes all limits. This was demonstrated by the beautiful live marathon last year, through which the monastery brought the celebration to all devotees. An important service, which will be repeated not only this year, but also in the future,



The Feast of Saint Rita is an opportunity for many families to breathe the peace that Rita teaches us and bring it into their lives

because there are many people who, for many reasons, will never be able to come to Cascia, to Rita's house. And therefore, Saint Rita makes home and has an important place in our hearts, in all of the world's devotees. It is precisely feeling Rita in us that makes us celebrate her feast on May 22, together, wherever we are. So, it is essential to make Ri-

ta's presence strong in us, following in her footsteps, imitating her virtues in our days. This is the best gift we can give her and ourselves!"

Father, how do we understand that we are doing good? "We all have a path ahead of us. To understand what your path is, you have to enter inside yourself, inside your heart. The feast of Saint Rita helps you to enter your heart, to see where you are on your journey and to understand where you want to go and how to do it. St. Augustine speaks of the 'Inner Master' who is God: by entering within ourselves we can see our path and be aware of it, because we often live more outside ourselves. In this sense, Saint Rita is our Teacher, she leads us to our inner path and guides us, through the hand of God. Always feeling accompanied by her gives us relief and helps us to live".

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IN A WORD

curated by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi *osa*

"[...] light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light [...]. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light [...]. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God" (John 3, 21).

"Doing the truth" means working in life moved by the love of the Holy Spirit living in Christ (the Truth). In the heart, everyone experiences the crisis of conscience opened by the divine light. St. Augustine explains: "You do the truth, and come to the light. He that does truth accuses his evil works in himself ... for that which he desires God to forgive, he himself acknowledges, and he comes to the light ..." (Homilies on the Gospel of John 12: 13-14). "Who knows the truth? Charity (love) knows it" (Confessions VII: 10,16).



by Rita Gentili

The women of the historical parade

Behind the scenes of the re-enactment of Rita's life

Women who dedicate their time to taking care of over 130 garments

For the anniversary of the death of Saint Rita, a spontaneous movement of people who flocked to Cascia from all over the countryside and neighbouring villages to pay homage to her emerged immediately. This procession was so rooted that, in 1562, the Municipality of Cascia decided to formalise it: neighbouring towns were invited to participate, accompanied by their own banners. Over the centuries, however, this tradition faded more and more, proba-

bly also due to the earthquake which struck the area in 1703. Today, and for decades now, on the day of the Feast of Saint Rita, the procession comes only from the hamlet of Roccaporena, Rita's birthplace, and, when it arrives in Cascia, it joins the historical parade. The latter is a costumed re-enactment of the life of the saint, of the key moments and figures in her existence, and the representatives of the institutions and citizens of her time. The historical parade, started in 1957 on the occasion of the seventh centenary of Rita's death with only a few characters, was enriched at the beginning of the 1980s with characters portraying the population of the time.

This development was also made possible by archival research aimed at creating costumes in line with the customs of that period. For many years, the driving force behind the parade was a woman, Teresa Teloni, who took care of the smallest details, also providing information on the accessories and hairstyles that were allowed and those to be avoided at all costs. Fortunately, Teresa's teachings were handed down to those who, for a long time, supported her in this meticulous work and today still allow the parade to be held. Women who dedicate their time to taking care of over 130 garments, repairing them where needed, and ensuring their proper maintenance. On May 22, then, they take care of the accommodation of the participants before the start of the parade and their constant surveillance along the entire route, so that they maintain an adequate bearing, not get-



The historical parade brings to life the moments of the life of Saint Rita. Here we see the relative who brought the rose and the two figs born amid the snow

ting too close to each other nor being interrupted. They mix, in some way, with the multitude of pilgrims that line the parade along the streets of Cascia, but remain ready to intervene when the unexpected happens. Not just shoelaces to be re-tied or umbrellas to carry when it rains, but also children asking for water or who must be carried because they are tired or reassured when their heartbeat rises when they find themselves at the head of the parade. A task carried out with love, dedication and devotion, which fills them with emotions - they tell us - that are difficult to explain in words: "when we pass through all the happy faithful, who

would like to touch the clothes, who ask us for explanations about the characters who not only applaud but pray as the parade passes, their joy becomes ours". The work of these women contributes to making it possible to repeat that appointment every year, the value of which lies in its universal significance: anyone, from whatever part of the world they come, can know and understand the life of Saint Rita within her historical context, simply by observing the parade. A parade that is almost identical year after year, but which finds its communicative strength in reminding all the faithful that Rita's message is her own life.



Saint Rita is represented here with the nun's habit, the crucifix and the thorn on the forehead

TWO QUESTIONS FOR THE PRIORESS, SISTER MARIA ROSA BERNARDINIS

How are you nuns preparing for the Feast of Saint Rita? What precedes May 22 is a time of prayer and exercise. The prayer is expressed during the 15 Thursdays of Saint Rita that we live every year together with the devotees, like a family preparing to meet Rita. The exercise, on the other hand, concerns our journey in seeking to follow Rita's example more and more, bringing the Grace that the Spirit emanates from her inside us and making her presence concrete, alive and relevant to today. In this way we encourage everyone to live according

to the love of the Lord, which Rita treasured and is still a treasure for humanity. Every day we practise opening our hearts, like Rita. This is the promise I also make to devotees for the feast of May 22, for which we will use all the means of reception and communication we have to bring Rita's presence and embrace into all homes, with no one feeling its absence.

In February you were confirmed Prioress of the Saint Rita Monastery, which you will lead for another 4 years. What do you see for the future? Vocation, hospitality and chari-

ty are and will be the pillars on which to build the future. The commitment continues by encouraging meetings or conversations to open the hearts of other women to the Augustinian charism in which Rita lived, so that they can hear the voice of the Lord and be part of our community. At the centre of our life, then, there is and will be the relationship with devotees and those in need, whom we aim to welcome, listen to and support, in order to help as many people as possible redeem their lives with strength renewed by the gift of love received. (AM)



by Alessia Nicoletti

Living together on May 22

Take part live in the feast of Saint Rita and support the Beehive

May 22 is not a date like any other. This day, in fact, is a day of celebration for many places and for many people around the world. One might think that what I have just written is not only not true but is not even possible. But that's not the case, it's a reality. And it is by no means impossible, precisely because I am talking about the day on which the Feast of Saint Rita of Cascia, the saint of the impossible, is celebrated. She who, with the power of God's love reminds us that everything is possible, made May 22 a global festivity, awaited, loved and felt



Behind the scenes of the marathon in live streaming for the feast of 22 May 2020

by millions of devotees in every corner of the Earth. Every year, everyone wants to be present to celebrate Rita in Cascia, where her body is kept and where they feel even more like a family. But for many devotees this remains just a dream. How-



Again in 2020, the blessing of the roses was one of the most beautiful moments of the Feast of Saint Rita

ever, it is dreams that make us enter an inner world, that place where the impossible becomes possible. I'm talking about the heart. The heart is our true home, the place where we can overcome every border, reach deep communion while being at a great distance, share faith, joy and life even if we speak different languages, because the language of the heart is that of love which everyone understands. Here is the “secret” of the Feast of Saint Rita, which takes place in the hearts of devotees from all over the world. And it is precisely to make the dream of all those devotees who cannot be present in Cascia come true that we have found a virtual way to bring the feast into everyone's homes. Last year we did it through the “Saint Rita Feast Marathon”, the live streaming event that went online on all channels of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia. Today, the video of May 22, 2020 has made history with more than 260

thousand views. The goal for the future, which we hope to reach soon, is to recount the feast for each of you in your own language. For now, like last year, we can ensure the commentary in English on the main Eucharistic celebrations (for real-time updates on how to follow the celebrations: santaritadacascia.org/en). We're ready, the screens are already on and the hearts of all of us ready to welcome you. During the live broadcast, we will offer our support to the most fragile, the Little Bees of the Beehive of Saint Rita and all of you can help us by extending your hand to them and accompanying them towards a future of hope, with love and charity, just like Saint Rita does with us in time of need. Because this means being a family!

Donate now to support the Beehive and help the Little Bees grow up, thanks to your love.

Go to

fondazione.santaritadacascia.org/en/donate-now



by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

Rita, Queen of May

The origins of the Feast of Saint Rita

Saint Rita (Bertelli)



Saint Rita died on May 22, 1457, in a great concept of holiness, because of both her virtuous life and the thorn she received. Immediately, therefore, people began to pray and venerate her as a miracle worker and patroness. The municipality of Cascia promoted this cult and Rita was thus felt as the patroness of all the people of Cascia. Some notaries were commissioned to write down the miracles worked by God through her intercession and to catalogue the ex-votos that testified to them. May 22 fell in a period of festivities in Cascia: in fact, the feasts of May and Pentecost were celebrated at that time. The latter, in particular, was very solemn and consisted of processions and games with jousting tournaments. But the figure of Rita gradually became central in these holidays, assuming the role of Queen of May. A fundamental step was in the early 1500s, when Cascia was hit by the plague which lasted until 1525: many healings took place through Rita's intercession, so her feast, already placed among those of Pentecost, became very important. Until, in 1545, it was included among the most important feasts. In 1562 it was established that the cycle of Pentecostal feasts would close with a grandiose event in honour of the Blessed Rita: on the Wednesday following Pentecost the clergy gath-

PRAYER

Prayer for newlyweds

[...] May our house prosper, Oh Saint Rita; may the angels of peace assist you, abandon all malignant discord, let charity reign supreme and never diminish that love that unites two hearts, which binds two souls redeemed by the most pure Blood of Jesus. Amen

ered in the collegiate church of Santa Maria and from here proceeded in procession to the church of the Blessed where a solemn mass was celebrated. The celebration is also attested to in the beatification process of Rita: *"Magistrate and governor go to mass to the sound of trumpets, drums, fifes ... Processions of men, women and children on baskets ... every year from Roccaporena, Ocosce, Atri, Palmaoli, Sciedi, Onelli, Maltignano, Fogliano, Logna, Poggioprimesano, Giappiedi (fractions of the municipality of Cascia) ... so it has been from 1570 onwards".* After Rita's beatification (1627), her feast began to look more like that of today.

REQUEST A HOLY MASS

If you would like to have one or more Holy Masses celebrated, entrusting your intentions to the intercession of Saint Rita

- go to: santaritadacascia.org/mass
- write to: monastero@santaritadacascia.org
- call: +39 0743.76221

IN MEMORY OF CARLO POZZI

"His kindness, discretion, goodness in his words, care in every gesture and attention were for us the 'open arms' of a sincere and solid friendship". Thus begins the message that Violanda Lleshaj, director of the Beehive of Saint Rita, the welcoming project of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, wrote for the funeral of Carlo Pozzi, a great supporter of the Beehive.

"He confided in us," she continues, "that he felt he was in heaven when he came to visit us from Milan. He had only kind and loving words for our children, our Little Bees, our work. Despite the distances, he never failed to convey his generosity to us in a phone call, an email or a letter, and he encouraged us to carry on our projects. We have always had the feeling of being close to Carlo, who was able to build a precious asset such as friendship. We will always be grateful to the Lord, as Carlo was, for having put him in our path. We know that he has reached heavenly paradise and we join in the prayer for his soul with one more certainty: we have a good friend who watches over the Beehive from above".



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.

Angela Giannangeli (Cascia PG - Italy)
 Anna and Ruggero Penza (Rome - Italy)
 Carlo Pozzi (Milan - Italy)
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by Marta Ferraro

From Sicily, 8 new groups

When speaking of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, I usually describe a group in each issue, to allow members to exchange views, drawing on their examples. The PPU is constantly growing: there are many devotees who, individually or in groups, ask to be part of it. This year, the region of Sicily has more fully accepted the invitation. In fact, eight new groups are preparing to join. We introduce them to you together, giving them a warm welcome to the large PPU family.



The group from **Pietraperzia (Enna)** is particularly numerous: it has 120 members and many sympathisers. All are engaged in voluntary activities, such as the Christmas bingo, the proceeds of which are donated to support many people in need.



The PPU of **Casteltermini (Agrigento)** was set up a year ago, but already has over 40 members. Together with praying to Saint Rita, in the future of the group there is the desire to organise moments of training and to carry out works of charity and service.



With its 23 members, the group from **Sortino (Syracuse)** has channelled strong devotion to Saint Rita into a common project, based on prayer and training, so as to become a place and instrument of solidarity and closeness for others.



The **Gela (Caltanissetta)** group, made up of 70 members, meets every 22nd of the month to venerate the saint of Cascia. During these moments, the life of Rita is studied in order to obtain concrete lessons from her example and her spirituality.



Eight years ago, devotees of Saint Rita in **Aragona (Agrigento)** began the journey to enter the great family of the PPU and feel closer to Cascia. Some of the devotees do embroidery and sewing work, to offer a contribution to small works of charity.



The PPU of **Randazzo (Catania)** has about 40 members, but several devotees aspire to join the group. They enthusiastically participate in city processions and do voluntary work, such as caring for the elderly and families in difficulty.



The PPU group of **Ravanusa (Agrigento)** is made up of 33 women, between 20 and 80 years old, who focus on prayer. They dress in a particular way for the 15 Thursdays of Saint Rita: black dress and the typical Augustinian belt.



In **Valverde (Catania)** the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita was born from the desire to go deeper into Augustinian spirituality. It is a young group, which still has to grow in faith and charity, but the group is already fervent and united, like a family.

PPU GENERAL MEETING: 3 AND 4 JULY 2021

We invite all family groups of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita to take part in the general meeting to be held in Cascia on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 July 2021. To find out about the programme, which is still being defined, and for any information, you can contact the information office of the Sanctuary: tel. +39 0743.75091 email infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org



by Rita Gentili

The harmony of heart of Tom and Amanda

Tom
composed a
song in
honour of
Saint Rita

It is a very sweet melody, with simple but effective verses, that paints what Saint Rita represents for Tom Conroy and Amanda Buzzi. He is a 35-year-old Irish musician and composer. She is a 29-year-old Brazilian woman with Italian origins, who lives in Dublin. Tom and Amanda are engaged, they love to pray and go to mass together. Tom composed a piece in honour of

from the moment I first read about her, also for the way in which she came to me: that rosary made me feel that she had chosen me as a friend. I admire her every virtue shown in marriage, her patience, her praying for her husband and children. At the same time, I really like her example during her life in the monastery, her obedience; everything about her inspires me. On the day of the feast of Saint Rita," writes Amanda, "nice things always happen to me, small details confirming that Saint Rita is watching over me". Then when Amanda met Tom, she told him about Saint Rita and expressed her desire to go to Cascia, which the couple visited two years ago. In front of the body of Saint Rita and in the places where Rita lived, Tom also feels her presence next to him. "The most important lessons I have learned from Saint Rita," says Tom, "are patience and tolerance. The people we meet in our life, whether they are familiar to us close to us or strangers who pass us by, are all trying to do their best and we must have patience and tolerance towards everyone, to the best of our abilities". After the trip to Cascia, Amanda began to receive the *From the Bees to the Roses* magazine and Tom thought of writing a song in honour of the



Tom and Amanda at St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral in Armagh, Northern Ireland

The couple
visited
Cascia two
years ago

Saint Rita, sent it to the nuns of Cascia and gave them the freedom to share it with the faithful. The merit for this song, however, is also a little that of Amanda, who introduced Saint Rita to Tom, who then drew inspiration from her. But first things first. A few years ago, while still in Brazil, Amanda received a rosary with the image of Saint Rita from a seminarian friend and wanted to know more. "I loved Saint Rita

After having told you about the song written by Tom (whose stage name is *Piano Man Tom*), here is some more information to be able to listen to it. The piece, of which the author has also made the musical score as well as the text available, is in Irish and titled “*O Come, Saint Rita*”.

This is the invocation that the author addresses to the saint in the refrain of the song: “*O Come, Saint Rita, come to my aid, O come, Saint Rita and help me*”. To the mind, the rest of the text sounds like a prayer. “*Comfort me, I trust in you; pray to God on my behalf; may your example encourage me, inspire me to carry my cross; bring me to a deeper love of God and my neighbour, lovely Saint Rita, so humble, so pure; I promise to bless and sing thy praises forever; comfort me, open doors and grant thou favour*”. The song can be listened to, via computer or smartphone, on the news section of the website of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, at santaritadacascia.org/news-eventi/comesaintrita



miracle worker. “*May your example encourage me; inspire me to carry my cross,*” goes a verse of the track: for Tom and Amanda, Saint Rita is a model to follow. And it will be even more so from



Amanda very much wanted to visit the Basilica of Saint Rita

this coming May, when the two young people get married. They should have been married in September last year, but the pandemic prevented it. So, they tried to propose May 22 and with immense joy came up against no obstacles. “Even though we were sorry to have to postpone the wedding,” Amanda tells us, “we feel that this is a sign of God and of Rita's intercession in our marriage”. “Saint Rita,” adds Tom, “is an example of patience towards one's partner in the adversities of life. Her faith in God is something we would like to continue to inspire us. We would like to welcome people into our life and be tolerant of everyone, as Saint Rita was. Whenever we feel that things are too difficult or impossible, we can pray to Saint Rita to be with us and guide us”.

For Tom and Amanda, Saint Rita is a model to follow



by Msgr.
Giovanni Scanavino, OSA MOTHER FASCE

At the school of holiness

Maria Teresa
prays for
light from
the Lord

The vocation of Maria Teresa blossoms in Genoa when the Church discovers the holiness of Saint Rita, a mother who learns forgiveness and finds the joy of total self-giving in the Cross of Christ. In her, Maria Teresa discovers the secret of the holiness of every Christian family and glimpses a new possibility of sanctifying the family, by embracing the Cross of Rita of Cascia. The same Augustinian confreres, whom Maria Teresa had met in the parish of the Consolation of Genoa, she now meets again in Cascia as Rectors of the Sanctuary and as Confessors of the Saint Rita

Monastery. Not only had they contributed to making Maria Teresa fall in love, in her heart, with Saint Rita, but they were also guided by the Spirit to cultivate that small plant, which Jesus had chosen for himself, with great care. Saint Rita had carried out her intercessory intervention in bringing Maria Teresa to Cascia, but now an apostolic collaboration was needed. At that time, the monastery of Cascia was not experiencing a flourishing period. Maria Teresa feels a certain division in the community, but she is the first to hope for a change: "If there were not these occasions," she said, "something would be missing for being holy". But when the situation worsens, she picks up courage: she informs the superiors and asks her parish priest, Father Butti, who has become Procurator General of the Order, for a time of reflection outside the monastery, before consecrating herself with the solemn profession. Having obtained permission, Maria Teresa prays to reach the light from the Lord. She feels supported by her confreres in understanding the steps and choices to be made, the measures to be taken. The first two months that she was granted to stay in secret in Torriglia, her hometown, soon become a year, but they are providential for opening Maria Teresa's heart and mind to the work of sanctification that awaited her and which she then completed.



Mother Fasce, work by Bonaduce, 20th cen.

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 and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.





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

The family as a strength

The story of Giuseppe Campaniello

I sought
comfort and
strength in
the family
and in the
example of
the saints

For decades sociologists have denounced the crisis of institutions, including that of the first and most important cell of society, the family. That irreplaceable pillar, point of reference and mirror of the character and behaviour of its members is in free fall. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the promulgation of his apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis announced that this year will be a year of reflection on this delicate topic. The Pontiff himself emphasised: “We are called to rediscover the educational value of the family unit: it requires to be founded on the love that always regenerates relationships, opening up horizons of hope. Within the family, one can

experience sincere communion when it is a house of prayer, when the affections are serious, profound and pure”.

The story of Giuseppe Campaniello and that of his loved ones allows us to discover the importance of the family, as Pope Francis understands it. Giuseppe is 22 years old and lives in Villa di Briano in the province of Caserta, with his father Luigi, his mother Giuseppina Falcone and his 20-year-old sister Loreta. When he introduced himself, Giuseppe told me: “I was born into a Catholic and practising family and this was my salvation. As a child, I felt different and outcast, and the family was my strength. When I felt excluded, I sought comfort and strength in the family and in the example of the saints, especially in Saint Rita”. From an early age, in fact, Giuseppe has had a close relationship with the saint of Cascia. The mother remembers that the date set for his birth was May 22, even though it later slipped to June 5. The first time that Giuseppe went on pilgrimage to the places of Rita, it was with an organised trip: he was 12 years old and since then every year with his family he has always experienced a few days in the land of



Giuseppe and his family in Cascia, at the foot
of the statue of Blessed Mother Fasce



The miraculous vine and the well greatly impressed Giuseppe during his visit to the cloister of the monastery

Saint Rita. "I go back with mum and dad every year, and every time it is a great emotion, because I always discover something different and deeper. The pilgrimage I remember with the greatest participation is the one I experienced in 2015 when, inside the Monastery, during the visit guided by the Augustinian fathers, I saw the well and a few metres away the prodigious vine. That corner brought my mind back to the Samaritan, to the thirst for God of that woman and of Rita, symbols of humility and obedience". Another touching moment of his frequent trips to Cascia was when "I wore my back brace in the Basilica.

I suffered from scoliosis and for this reason I wore a back brace. Several times I have felt put in a corner, laughed at. Yet, I have always referred to my family and to the saints. There has never been a lack of dialogue and sharing between us. The example of Saint Rita and that of the Blessed Fasce have been a model for me to follow. I see both of them as mothers, but at the same time as strong women, which the world needs so much today. They have

often helped me and given me much consolation". Saint Rita is an anchor in the life of Giuseppe and his family. So much so that, when his father was out of work for a period, he prayed a lot and one night he dreamed of the saint of Cascia, together with two children. The saint told him: "Within ten days something will happen to you". Well, after 10 days, his father Luigi found a job and since then he has become a benefactor of the Beehive of Saint Rita, the welcoming project of the Cascia monastery for minors in difficulty. His generosity was not only a sign of gratitude towards the saint, but also a way to teach his children, by example, the value of solidarity. (MF)

From an early age Giuseppe has had a close relationship with the saint of Cascia

TELL US YOUR PILGRIMAGE STORY

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 ancient Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena



One day,
she heard a
mysterious
voice calling
her

The witnesses, called to tell the facts, circumstances and miracles relating to the Blessed Rita, were asked 29 questions. Among these, the second was: “Do you know that she was a nun in the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in Cascia and how do you know?” The answer of Restoro Cesi, a citizen of Cascia, gives us information on the monastery where Saint Rita lived, and which today bears her name.

“I have always heard it being said and it is well known in this land of ours that in the world there was the blessed Rita who was a nun of the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in Cascia, which today is called of the blessed Rita, who was adorned with Christian virtue and indicated in the Catholic faith; she had the virtue of hope and charity, loving God and neighbour and lived in a holy way and who died being considered a saint and the aforementioned things are publicly known [...]. I have seen it in writings and also heard that the monastery that today is called “of the blessed Rita” was called “the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena” before that blessed died, and of this is also well known among the people of our towns and your lordship will be able to see it from the ancient writings”. [Restoro Cesi]

(Spoleto, AD, E-20, *Processus* 1626, ff. 82v.-83r., f. 86v., f. 119r.) (CC)

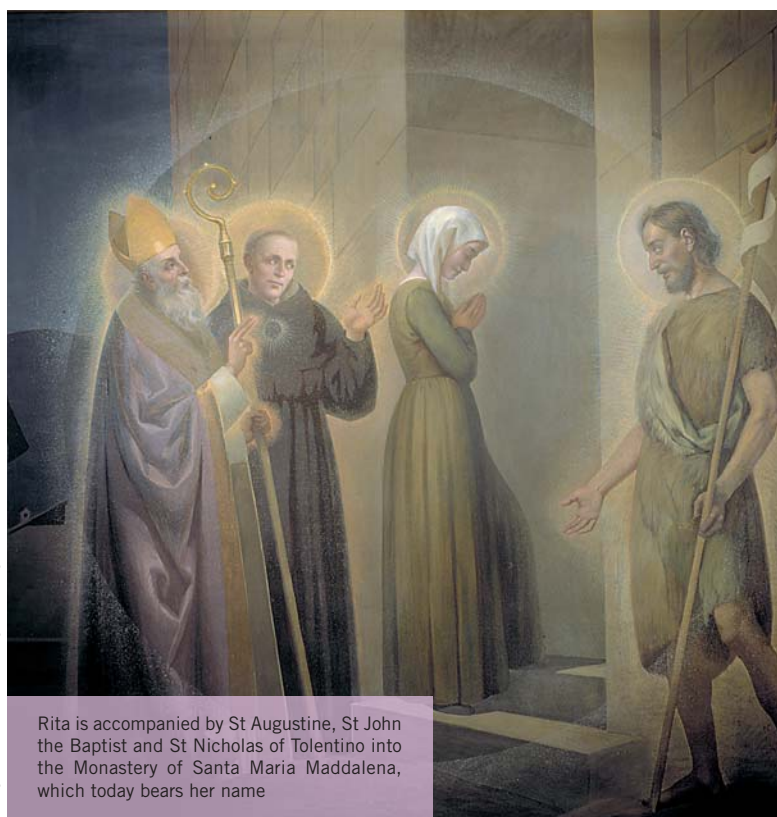
Rita had married Paolo di Ferdinando Mancini, a man with a discreet social position, but involved in the tumultuous life of the Cascia of his time. Rita gave Paolo two children who were soon orphaned because of the murder of their father. Meditating

on the pardon granted on Calvary by Jesus to his crucifiers, Rita remained faithful to the gospel values of forgiveness and mercy, praying for the murderer of her husband and that, in growing up, her children would never try to avenge their father. The two boys did not even

One of the places most dear to pilgrims

have time to harbour feelings of revenge because, while Rita was still in mourning for her husband, they both died. At this point Rita had no choice but to seek peace, which is a gift from God, and to dedicate the rest of her life to him. Three times she knocked on the door of the Augustinian monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in Cascia and was turned away, perhaps because of the close relationships that the monastery had with the Mancini family clan which, because of Rita's evangelical choices, were prevented from grasping the poisonous fruits of revenge. One day, gathered in prayer as usual, she heard a mysterious voice calling her, then "as if rapt in ecstasy," writes the seventeenth-century biographer Cavallucci, "she saw three saints that the Lord had sent to help her ... she heard a voice: *'Come, my dear Rita, now it is time ... to enter the monastery, from which you have been turned away several times.'* Once again looking out of her small window, and illuminated by God, she saw and knew that it was St. John the Baptist". Leaving the house, she followed the saint up to the big rock called Schioppo di Roccaporena, but since she was very frightened the holy prophet-hermit began to console her and, immediately, other saints appeared whom Rita venerated as her special protectors, Saint Augustine and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The three "accompanying Rita, led her to Cassia to the monastery and [...] with all the doors and windows were locked, they placed her inside that same night; then they immediately disappeared from Rita's

eyes". With the three saints gone, Rita remained curled up in prayer in the centre of the ancient monastic choir, where the nuns found her the next day. Rita told them about the miraculous event and so she was accepted into the monastery where she lived for about forty years, in the contemplation of God's goodness, until her death in 1457. In the ancient monastery of



Rita is accompanied by St Augustine, St John the Baptist and St Nicholas of Tolentino into the Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena, which today bears her name

Santa Maria Maddalena, now dedicated to Saint Rita, the Augustinian nuns still live their existence consecrated to God, guarding one of the places most dear to pilgrims and welcoming all those who turn to Saint Rita from all over the world. (RR)



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

On pilgrimage “at Saint Rita”

On the path of the heart and of hope

Saint Rita is
in the hearts
of the
faithful

Since she was proclaimed 'saint' by Pope Leo XIII in 1900, Saint Rita has entered the hearts of the faithful and families all over the world. Everyone, in particular, feels her as a person “of the household” because, during her life, she faced their same problems. I think of the reality of the families to which Rita shows, with the example of her story, how to educate their children, helping them to grow up healthy in body and values. Or how to manage every bad mood or difficulty at home, just as Rita was able to convert the soul of her difficult husband, due to his complicated social relationships. And then again, the strength of the heart and that of forgiveness, which Rita showed in the relationship with her family, when she became a widow and never wanted to reveal to them the name of her husband's killer so as not to unleash revenge but generate peace and reconciliation. For these and other profound desires, such as having the gift of a child, or crying and asking for grace and protection for a sudden illness, people set out on their way to Saint Rita and do so by going to her lands in Cascia, in Umbria, the green heart of Italy. The pilgrim of Saint Rita, in the car with their

family or in the bus of an organised pilgrimage, with heart full of prayer and hope, cannot wait to be next to her. Kneeling speechless in her Sanctuary, in front of her body which is kept there, he/she prays as Saint Augustine did on his pilgrimage in search of God: “My sighs to you in my pilgrimage” (*Confessions XII, 15:21*). In fact, in front of Saint Rita, the pilgrim does not speak, but confesses their whole heart soaked with tears and



Many pilgrims cannot wait to be next to the body of Saint Rita



Roses, the symbol of Saint Rita, always accompany pilgrims

AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

knows well that the saint has listened to them, they are sure of that. Then he/she gets up, goes to confession, listens to Holy Mass, participates in the Eucharist and in this way returns home and to their life full of confident hope. The pilgrimage led him/her to go down the path of their own heart, which loves others according to Christ, prays for them, sees them

already healed, because Saint Rita took care of them. If in ancient times pilgrimage meant going to a foreign land, a land that is not yours, a land of exile, going to Saint Rita is going to your home: there Rita, one of your family, the dearest, the holiest, awaits you. Going on a pilgrimage “at Saint Rita” means returning regain your heart, no longer distracted and not even concentrated solely on your subjective self, but rather projected onto the bridge that transports you towards God, just as the prodigal son returned to his father, as the Holy Scripture narrates. Returning home, the pilgrim of Saint Rita feels that he/she has rediscovered the love of God and neighbour at the feet of the saint. All this baggage of emotions and values has the great power to make them return to attending Church, where Christ is present: in the Eucharistic celebration, as he/she did in front of Saint Rita, they abandon themselves serenely in the ecclesial space of the saints to which they belong. In fact, having arrived at the Sanctuary of Saint Rita, the pilgrim is invited by their heart to welcome the presence of God, to offer themselves as a space for his Providence in their own life. Arriving “at Saint Rita”, in fact, you find yourself at the crossroads where the roads of life cross: the heart opens its secret room where the soul meets God, in a silent dialogue made of prayer and rediscovers the hope of starting again. God now lives in the folds of the pilgrim's heart, hidden with Saint Rita in the secret of the face of Christ.

Invited by
their heart to
welcome the
presence of
God





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

The power of prayer

My name is Annarita, and my name encapsulates devotion to the saint of the impossible. At 17 I fell in love with Gianluca, my first love. When he broke our relationship, my faith in our beloved Rita was born. Several years passed, Gianluca returned and we got married. We had no children; I had many spontaneous abortions. After 11 years of attempts and checkups, nothing: unexplained infertility, the most difficult to accept, an enemy you can't fight against. The prayers and pilgrimages to Cascia intensified, until in 2009 when Alessia, our angel, was born. Then, on May 19, 2019 Gianluca had tremendous pains in the stomach and was rushed to hospital. The diagnosis was pancreatic cancer. I was destroyed, I wanted to die, but I stopped to think: it was May 22, it was a sign. Surgery followed, a difficult convalescence, long and heavy therapies. Now we are looking ahead, with the hope that Saint Rita will continue to watch over us in the years to come. We trust in her, because the faith and hope of our hearts always touch her heart, which has ex-

perienced the suffering we carry like a cross. To people who suffer, I say: pray with faith to Saint Rita, open your heart to her. Time will pass, maybe a long time, but She will listen. (Annarita - Rome)

“He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mc 1,35). Jesus, son of God, withdraws in prayer. What does it mean to pray? Without prayer our Christianity is useless, it is like living without breathing. With prayer we recover the whole picture, which makes us understand life, stepping back a little. Up close, we stare at the detail, only at the negative experiences, we go into depression and forget the meaning of life. Prayer shows us that we must follow Someone: it is an achievement that is learned over time, it transfigures our faces, our eyes shine, we feel loved. This experience helps us to live life, gives us courage to face difficulties, changing the way we are in the world. If you change, the world changes. Prayer does not save us from everyday life, it saves us in everyday life. We do not go to mass or pray to escape from monotony, from reality, but to make us shake up our mentality, the way we look at life. We are the meeting place between heaven and earth, let us be loved by Him and He will change us. Annarita knows the power of prayer: she is a normal woman, but her eyes and face shine, because she lets herself be loved. If at times it is difficult for us to pray, let us sing: *“This world passes, the centuries pass, only those who love will never pass”*. Saint Augustine used to say: *“He who sings, prays twice”*. (MDC)





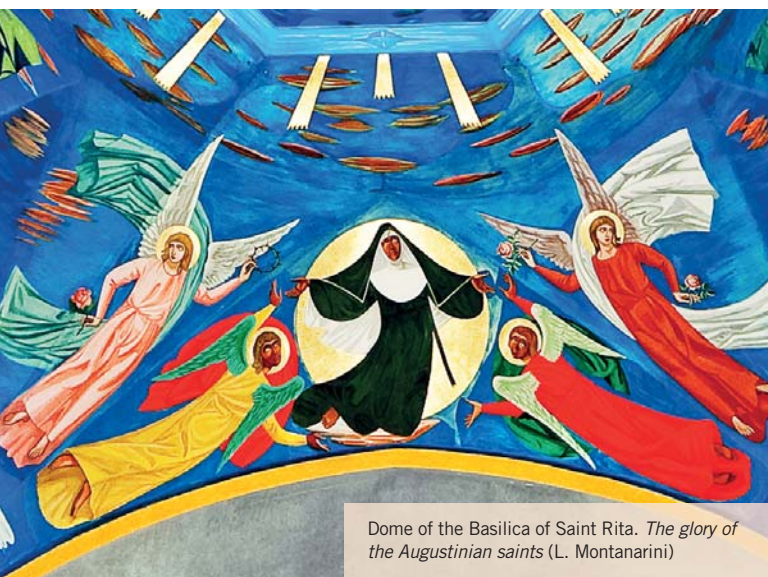
by Father Luciano De Michieli,
Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia

Feast, together

Cascia is
perfumed
with the joy
and faith of
many
devotees

Here we are at the feast of Saint Rita! The day of her birth in heaven. As every year, on the eve of the feast we will experience the arrival of the torch from the twinned town and the evocative moment of the celebration of the Transit. After listening to the ancient narration of that holy and luminous death, we will hear the sound of the bells in silence. That May 22 many centuries ago the bells rang by themselves, to call the inhabitants of Cascia to the

profound peace that only God can give. In fact, all the immense pain of the pilgrims who present to Saint Rita the “experiences now of death and now of hope” that they face in their lives find space in this celebration. And then, the beautiful stories of the women, recipients of the Saint Rita International Recognition Award, who today embody the same values lived by Rita. The picturesque historical parade, which takes us back to the times of Rita with the faces of today's people of Cascia, the songs and prayers, the urn surrounded by flowers and wishes, the voices and dialects from everywhere. Again, the Word that resounds every year: “Overcome evil with good”; the Eucharist that makes us one, the carpet of roses in the solemn blessing of midday. The whole of Cascia is perfumed with the joy and faith of many devotees, “the good perfume of Christ” for the world! A dream in this time of pandemic? No, we have organised the timings and ways to be able to live the event in safety. To allow those who wish to take part, to live their devoted pilgrimage, full of faith and hope. And anyone who does not have the good fortune to be in Cascia can participate in the feast through live images, interviews and videos, to be united and blessed by the tender embrace of our beloved Saint Rita. Happy feast, in any case, together!



Dome of the Basilica of Saint Rita. *The glory of the Augustinian saints* (L. Montanarini)

monastery. Rita had entered heaven ... and the echoes of the feast of heaven could be heard on earth! I love this re-enactment very much, because it unites the joy of heaven and the sadness of departure in the



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

“Saint Rita was Gospel”

“See, I set before you to-day life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him ... so that you live” (Dt 30: 15-16). This passage from the Scriptures describes well one of the teachings of Saint Rita: love for Life. It may seem obvious to choose

through the difficult times that life was asking of her. How? Let's listen to Augustine: “Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying; but let us live well, and times shall be good. We are the times: such as we are, such are the times” (Sermon 80, 8). The first call we receive is that of life ... none of us choose to be born, but receive life from the hands of God, as His Gift. Rita accepted this call and lived every day mirroring herself in the true Life, in Jesus. Saint Rita did not speak of the Gospel, but she was Gospel, with her Eucharistic and spiritual life, projected towards Eternity. Rita is the saint of impossible cases because, as the branch bears fruit if grafted onto the vine, she welcomed in her heart, with courageous, lively and loving faith, the One for whom everything is possible. This is why “God, Love, made roses bloom in winter for you, forgiveness in hearts for you, a twig in the vine for you, the Thorn, his gift, for you”. Rita would also have embraced these words of an Augustinian who lived at the beginning of the 14th century, Blessed Simone Fidati: *“The right way to seek the Lord is solicitude in the morning, because lukewarmness has never found it ... Seeking Christ in the morning means preferring him to all thoughts and reasoning”* (De Gestis Domini Salvatoris, Book VI, Chap. VII). Saint Rita is loved and prayed



So that no one feels alone but, with Rita, united with God

life and prosperity, rather than death and destruction, but that it is not always the case ... Rita's times were difficult, violence was very common, with political and family factions fighting and avenging each other, everything was legitimate ... She chose the “narrow way” indicated by Jesus: forgiving, embracing the other who is different from her, being a peacemaker. Loving with the heart of God! She lived

to all over the world and when the pandemic in March 2020 closed everyone within their domestic confines, the imagination of the Spirit prompted us to reach everyone right “inside their home”. Thus, the social adventure of the Monastery has grown. First with the #isolatedbutnotalone campaign, and the motto: “Coronavirus forced us to close the doors of our homes, but the doors of our hearts are always open for you”. And then with the other motto “In the love of Saint Rita we will never be alone”, which addresses the family of devout Ritians, a family isolated by the virus, but which is united in the prayer of the heart, asking for the intercession of Saint Rita. Moments of recollection and

prayer, which we nuns lead online, on YouTube and Facebook, through the Holy Mass in streaming, the 15-minute live stream with Saint Rita on Wednesday at 21:00 and the video message on Saturday morning ... so that no one feels alone but, with Rita, united with God. Every day, we introduce you to the “Lord of life and of history, of your life and of your history”, so that as a Friend he takes you by the hand, as a Doctor he heals you, as a Master he instructs you, as Food he nourishes you, as Light he illuminates you, as Fire he warms you, as Water he quenches your thirst, as Father he blesses you, as Mother he protects you, as Love he embraces you.

Moments of meditation and prayer, which we nuns lead online

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 embrace their hopes. Together.



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EMBRACE THE BEEHIVE

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In both methods specify "Alveare" (Beehive) as the reason

