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MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

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A blessed day

**Cascia and Tolentino
united in hope**

DIALOGUE WITH THE MONASTERY
Where there is love there is always celebration

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An account of the Feast of Saint Rita

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Recharging with hope

There is an action that most people now have in common. Maybe you do it too. I am referring to when, at the end of the day, you charge your mobile phone so that it will be ready the next day. The simplicity of this gesture leads me to the question: when and how do we recharge ourselves? We might think that an adequate number of hours of sleep are sufficient, along with a healthy diet and some sport. It's a perfect recipe for the body, but what about the soul? We are also made up of a spiritual dimension and it is therefore necessary to recharge both the body and the soul, to be truly ready for life. Thus, like a battery that needs a good dose of electricity, we can count on the strength of prayer, the Word of God and the example and intercession of the saints.

In this sense, 15 long months after the beginning of the pandemic, which separated us, sowed death and brought society, economies and governments to

their knees, upending families and everyday life, after a race to the finish that seemed to never arrive, it cannot be a coincidence that the Feast of Saint Rita arrived at the moment in which the light of recovery began to slowly shine for everyone. 22 May 2021 must have been a gift of the Lord's mercy for the whole world, because the energy that came from His hands in celebrating Rita was one of the most powerful... recharging us with infinite hope! I hope that you too have felt it and that it has pushed you to look to tomorrow with new energy. This is the vital awareness that Rita teaches us by being by our side, believing in us, loving us, inspiring us and supporting us with the food of the soul that is Jesus. Like her, spread this energy to those who need it. And if you think it's run out, when the day ends, leave the door of your heart open and Rita will turn on a light... it will mean that you are being recharged with love!



by Alessia Nicoletti

A blessed day

Hope lives again with Saint Rita



A feast
without
borders was
the joint
dream of the
Monastery
and the
Saint Rita
Foundation

Last year, in these same pages, speaking of the recent Feast of Saint Rita, I wrote that I had the feeling of having experienced a historic day that would leave its mark for a long, long time. I said this because, in an empty Cascia, the nuns had been determined to bring all of you devotees, from Italy and the world, to Rita's feet virtually. Thanks to new technologies, they never left you during the months of lockdown and they certainly would not have done so on the most important day, the one in which reuniting the family

was essential. With all possible energies in the field and together with the Saint Rita of Cascia Non-Profit Foundation, they succeeded with an 8-hour international live broadcast, which I had the honour of hosting. As soon as that marathon ended, after having been watched by thousands of you, we knew that we would never leave that path, which must be strengthened further, to bring the feast into everyone's homes, everywhere. A feast without borders, without barriers, without limits, in which everyone can actively participate: this was the

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joint dream of the Monastery and the Saint Rita Foundation. And, as we know, dreams come true step by step and by working together. This is why we relaunched the live streaming formula for the 2021 celebrations, which also included 21 May and which saw

the creation of two days of full communion and sharing, beyond any physical distance.

On the day of the vigil, the live broadcast took you to the Basilica of Saint Rita so you could experience the Eucharistic Celebration of the Augustinians together,



The Urn of Saint Rita adorned with hundreds of coloured roses for the feast



One of the moments of the Solemn Transit of Saint Rita on 21 May

The presence of Saint Rita was perceived to be as strong as ever

presided over by Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, and the ceremony of the 2021 Saint Rita International Award (*which we will tell you about in the next pages*). It then came to a close with the message from the Prioreess, Mother Maria Rosa Bernardinis, and, finally, the Solemn Transit of Saint Rita. On 22 May, then, you literally entered the Feast of Saint Rita in Cascia, participating in the worldwide broadcast from 10:00 to 20:00.

This year, the streaming links were not limited to showing the celebrations. A commentary was provided in English for non-Italian devotees and the day was narrated with interviews, links and videos. Both on 21 and 22 May, in fact, during the live streams you devotees also wrote and shared your prayer intentions to Saint Rita and downloaded the

virtual Rose, which blossomed in 2020 and returned in 2021 with a new graphic design to be personalised with your name or to give to loved ones, as the symbol of the saint's nearness, which has once again united her family. These actions were conceived precisely to take that extra step, with the will to give you the feeling of being in Cascia, close to Rita... talking to her in front of her body and holding a rose to bless in your hands.

Finally, you devotees also supported the nuns and their Beehive, the shelter project of the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery, where young people from families in economic and social difficulty have grown with love for over 80 years. This was the monastery's first charitable work, and the faithful have always stood by the Augustinians to ensure support for this and other projects.

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The live broadcast on 22 May opened with a message of good wishes from the nuns, who said to you devotees: "The feast of Saint Rita of Cascia holds us all in her embrace and in her heart.



Rita the widow is one of the characters of the historical parade on 22 May

We are one family. Now more than ever, our Rita asks us to become true imitators of her holiness, which is composed of faith, hope, charity, forgiveness and peace. We hope you bring these teachings into your lives, every day, in a concrete and active way. She will make you feel her presence!"

I can personally testify that the presence of Saint Rita was felt as strongly as ever, both by the hundreds of thousands of virtual pilgrims and those who were able to reach Cascia physically, in compliance with anti-Covid regulations. In fact, while the word I chose to sum up 22 May 2020 was history, the one that evokes 22 May 2021 is, without a doubt, hope. Yes, because this year the Feast of Saint Rita was not only able to eliminate its natural borders to an even greater extent, at the same time it was the first religious event to take place in the Umbria region, and one of the first in all of Italy, after the long period of closures and limitations.

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.

Anna Maria Trivellato (Padua - Italy)
Carlo Volpini (Rome - Italy)
Giacomo Bruno Marelli (Bruno di Collebeato BS - Italy)
Giulia Danesi (Bergamo - Italy)
Giuseppina Sangiorgio (Pogno NO - Italy)
Leonello Corsetti (Ocosce di Cascia PG - Italy)

Lidia Farneti Presciutti (Perugia - Italy)
Louise Killias (Bern - Switzerland)
Maria Cortese (Sottomarina VE - Italy)
Mario Della Sabina (Abbiategrosso MI - Italy)
Osvaldo Catalano (Guardalfiera CB - Italy)
Paola Rita Scipioni (Canale Monterano RM - Italy)
Raffaella Raggiusti (Mantua - Italy)
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Rita Tucci Vitiello (Nola NA - Italy)
Silvia Allevi (Novedrate CO - Italy)
Sergio Varrone (San Mauro Torinese TO - Italy)
Teresina Squillaci (Cirò Marina KR - Italy)
Vanna Longhi (Legnano MI - Italy)

We shared the events
and emotions of the
feast on the live
broadcast on 22 May

Thanks to
your hearts
and your
eyes, I have
seen hope



While experiencing the feast, I not only felt hope, but I also saw it. How? First, during the broadcast, through the 7,000 messages that you devotees sent and shared with everyone. With thanks and prayer intentions, you opened your hearts to Saint Rita and freed them completely, allowing us to enter the most fragile but also the truest, most beautiful and profound part of you and of ourselves at the same time. Unfortunately, I

couldn't look into the eyes of the many of you who were connected but, after the live stream, I did. And, maybe it's because, with half of our faces still hidden behind masks, perhaps we focus more on the eyes of those we meet than before, but I really sought out those eyes to see everything I had felt in the previous hours inside us. And that's how it was.

In a nutshell, throughout the whole day and in the days that fol-

The
certainty of
not being
alone



Many people have
returned to Rita's feet
to find hope

FEAST OF SAINT RITA SPECIAL

lowed, thanks to your hearts and your eyes, I saw hope, the hope of those who suffered because of their distance from Cascia and Rita, exactly the same way we miss our homes and families. There was the hope of those who, in every

return found a fruitful gift, that seed of love that is renewed every time and always increases our strength to go forward. This is the hope of those who experienced the celebration as a blessing from all over the world!



The Nuns gave out thousands of blessed rose petals at the Urn of Saint Rita

form, brought heavy baggage to Rita's feet, made up of many, many requests accumulated in this year and a half of enormous difficulties and pain. These requests for support and protection were not only personal, but also concerned social situations and general suffering. I also saw the hope of those who absorbed every single moment and all the emotions of the time they spent in these places for the occasion, whether in person or online. Then there was that of those who, after the feast, left behind the burdens that they believed impossible to carry, let alone shake off, and in

And then, from all this, I finally understood what true hope is. It is not a question of a blind vision, an emotional path or a useful illusion for consoling ourselves. The hope that the Lord wanted to give us as a virtue and which, thanks to Saint Rita, we felt with full force, particularly on 22 May, is the certainty of not being alone and that, precisely because of this, our life has meaning. However things go, we are the ones who can make them better, while counting on a hand that is always close to us with total faith.





From the homily of Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, for the Eucharistic Celebration of the Augustinians, on 21 May in the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia

Let's interpret the present with Saint Rita

Saint Rita
helps us to
better
understand
our
existence
today

Today, we gather around the altar of the Lord, on this feast of Saint Rita, in the circumstances caused by this pandemic, which are still strange and particular. When it comes to faith, one of the ways we can interpret the situation caused by Coronavirus is this: suffering and helplessness allow us to understand life in another way, to see and feel our fragility, our weaknesses and our small existence with more humility. We could recite the following Psalm: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and

the son of man that you care for him?" In this period, we have often felt abandoned, without support, because we have seen our frailties, our limitations and even death up close. Lord, what do you think of me? This is the recurring question. Finiteness and limits are signs that people carry within themselves and that remind us of our dependence of the Other, on the Absolute.

A second interpretation is that the pandemic has made us see the need for God's love. So many sick people! So many deceased! So many struck by infirmity, by sadness, by the precarious economy! With this lack of human re-

sources to respond to evil, many of us affected by human poverty have felt the need for God's love more strongly. When we experience pain, it is then that we feel the greatest need for Christ's redemp-



tion, that is, God's immense love.

The third interpretation is that Saint Rita undoubtedly helps us to better understand our existence today and to find an answer to the deepest problems of human beings, because only those who realise their poverty and human misery will feel the need for someone else to help them overcome their precariousness. This other is GOD. Through pain, Saint Rita helps us to experience serenity, patience and Peace: let us ask the Consoling Spirit for true Peace. This Peace that Saint Rita was able to transmit is the Peace of God, a gift from the Holy Spirit, who gives us serenity with ourselves and with others. Let us learn from Saint Rita the words of the Gospel of John, which will help us to feel part of God's being: "God is love; whoever lives with Love abides in God and God abides in him." Amen!

THE prioress's MESSAGE

The Women of Rita who were granted the International Saint Rita Award are examples of how to live Rita's teachings in the present.

"The stories of the award-winning women show us the value of the Feast of Saint Rita. It is truly a special day which, as we relive her experience and her teachings, invites us to be on this day witnesses to her holiness. This means that it is our job to make sure that Rita's

message is powerful and alive, through us. In our daily actions, let us be tangibly accompanied by the love, forgiveness, dialogue, hope and humility that our Rita has sown over the centuries until today. She asks us to collect these seeds and continue to spread them in

the name of God. Because the true miracle of Rita lies in bringing this blessing into our lives and, through us, into the lives of those close to us. And then her feast will be our feast!" *Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia.*



by Rita Gentili

Here are the stories of Geltrude Garrisi, known as Gina, Anna Lorenza Gorla in Ambrosoli, known as Annalori, and Monika Kornecka, who were awarded with the **International Saint Rita Award** on 21 May, which is given every year to women who live according to Rita's values. We call them **"Women of Rita"** because, like her, they walk the path of that everyday yet extraordinary holiness of which Rita is a great teacher.

Love is my mission

Gina dedicates her award to all mothers

The tone of her voice is mild but gives off energy: this is Geltrude Garrisi, known by everyone as Gina, the courageous mother from Caltabellotta, in the province of Agrigento. "Courage is

Saint Rita. "I promised her that if I became a mother, I would wear the Augustinian habit as a sign of devotion." Gina became pregnant and she was filled with joy when Maria was born. However, the child was diagnosed with a genetic disease. Gina accepted this news with faith, which gave her the strength to face life with a smile. "If you don't have faith, if you get discouraged, everything becomes hard. I believe in Saint Rita so much: she underwent many difficulties, but I only have one and therefore I say thank you." And she certainly doesn't like to think that God gave her a cross to bear: "Mine is not a cross, only Jesus was able to carry that; mine is a mission that I carry out with my head held high, together with my husband and other children, Stefania and Pino. When there is a united family, we become strong." While in prayer at Lourdes, faith led Gina to invoke Our Lady not for her daughter but for those in worse conditions. "It was the first trip I made and I went alone with Maria; our baggage was heavy. When I saw those children, I fainted, then I cried and I said to myself: what am I doing here? I'm



Gina and her daughter Maria in Cascia during one of the general meetings of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita

such a big word," she comments. "I'm just carrying on the mission that God has given me." But first things first. In 1984 Gina was a young bride with the dream of starting a family. However, no children came and Gina turned to



Gina during the award ceremony with Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine

WOMAN OF RITA 2021

Geltrude, known as Gina, received the International Saint Rita Recognition for having lovingly welcomed and accepted the birth of a much-longed for daughter who suffers from a serious genetic disease. Gina's great devotion to Saint Rita taught her to find the strength to carry out her mission, above all through prayer and closeness to the Lord. She thus continues to be an example of comfort and hope for the many mothers who grapple with their children's suffering on a daily basis.

selfish, what's wrong with Maria? So, I asked Our Lady to help others." This is Gina, the woman with a heart open to love for others, so much so that one of her great wishes is "to spend months in Cascia and help out in the Beehive (the shelter project for minors in difficulty run by the Saint Rita Monastery, ed)." And, speaking of the award, she says: "I don't deserve it, there are those who do much more than me. I dedicate it to all mothers and families who are facing worse situations. My testimony must serve to give courage. I pray to Saint Rita that she will give them the grace to go on, as she

does with me: from her I have learned the patience and strength to face difficulties and I pray that she will never let me lose faith." Gina's great devotion to Saint Rita led her to start the feast of 22 May in her town and, more recently, to support the Pious Union created by a great devotee, Mario Cusumano. Her only regret is not living in a situation in which Maria can develop her potential. "There are few cases of disability in the village and we have to fend for ourselves. But we will manage. Saint Rita has listened to me many times and she knows what she has to do, for me and for others."



Have you ever felt hate?

Annalori answers Rita Gentili's questions

Life has put many adversities before you, like Saint Rita, who found the strength to face them in faith. What did you find it in? "From great pain, faith comes to meet us and the family teachings we had played their part. Then, my children, who were 11, 10 and not yet 8 years old (when their father was killed, ed), gave me strength. They had to draw their trust, strength and serenity from me."

Like Saint Rita, you forgave the person who killed your husband. "I don't know if I have forgiven in the absolute way in which forgiveness is understood. I experienced becoming a civil party in the murder trial as an opportunity for those who ordered Giorgio's death to become aware of the evil they had done. It was an opportunity to undertake a path of redemption, with punishment, that would lead him (them) to a much greater forgiveness, that of God. I have certainly never felt hatred: I realised that for some people, power, ambition and money are worth more than life."

And your children, have they ever shown feelings of revenge? "Revenge is a kind of feeling that has never entered our house. The pain was tremendous for all three of them and manifested in different ways. Francesca and Filippo internalised it by trying not to understand the causes immediately, at least apparently: the suffering was

so much bigger than them that they needed time to absorb the blow. Despite being the youngest, Umberto understood that his father was doing a job that could involve 'danger'. Unfortunately, one night, while Giorgio was making me listen to one of the threatening calls, Umberto heard everything. Since that day, he was very anxious and immediately understood who had ordered his father's death."

Your husband has been called "a bourgeois hero", a definition you don't like... "Living your life with a sense of duty, commitment and righteousness is not a heroic act, but one that involves sacrifice. It is to love that great gift which is life."

When you were contacted for the award, you did not know Saint Rita, but then it was like going towards her... "I did not know the saint fully, but then I learned more about her life and I was fascinated by her. I was struck by the absolute love that Saint Rita had despite the painful vicissitudes she endured: love for her family, love for life, total dedication to God. Her pain did not cause her to lose her confidence. On the contrary it led her to devote herself to much higher goods. The loss of her children struck me a lot, because Filippo also left us unexpectedly 11 years ago. Once again it was a very painful trial; once again I feel that all my loved ones are with me." (RG)

Revenge is a
kind of
feeling that
has never
entered our
house



Annalori with the mayor of Cascia, Mario De Carolis, at the ceremony for planting the roses in the city's municipal rose garden, which took place at the end of the presentation of the three Women of Rita

WOMAN OF RITA 2021

Anna Lorenza Gorla from Milan, known to one and all as Annalori, received the International Saint Rita Award because, like the saint, she was able to turn her painful personal and family experience into an active commitment to build a common good. The murder of her husband, a loyal statesman and a shy, incorruptible professional, has thus become the seed of good for the construction of an Italy founded on the values of justice and social equity, passing on the moral legacy not only to her children but also to the new generations, which she has encountered in over 40 years of tireless social activity.

GIORGIO AMBROSOLI: A MAN, AN EXAMPLE

The story of Annalori and her husband Giorgio is also that of Italy in the “years of lead”, which were characterised by political instability, corruption, crisis and extremism. In this cross-section, the lawyer Ambrosoli was appointed liquidator of the Italian Private Bank of Michele Sindona in Milan: it was 1974, the bank was facing bankruptcy and light had to be shed on the accounts, because the savers risked losing everything. This was Ambrosoli's assignment, a mission for which he was ready to do anything. Sindona claimed he didn't commit any crimes. However, the investigation revealed irregularities and an intricate system involving politics, finance and the mafia. The lawyer was subject to bribery attempts and threats on several occasions: he was aware of the danger, but with a sense of continuous justice. In 1975, he wrote to his wife: [...] *I will pay a very high price for the job [...] you will have to raise the children and raise them to respect those values in which we have believed [...] you will do your duty, whatever the cost.* Everything fell apart when Ambrosoli was ready to sign the declaration of Sindona's guilt. He would never do it: the night before, on 11 July 1979, a hitman killed him with a pistol. Justice came posthumously: when Sindona was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1986; when the creditors were repaid; and when, today, remembering his value, many choose to act with duty, whatever the cost, just as he did.





by Marta Ferraro

Forgiveness that saves lives

Monika, from pain to rebirth

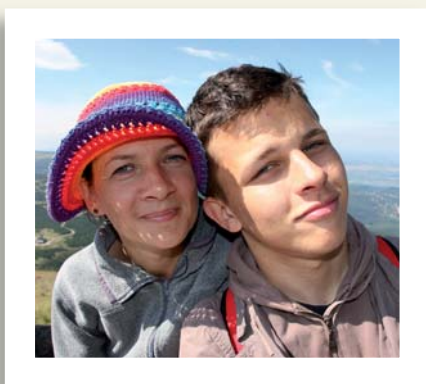
She turned
the murder of
her son into
an opportunity
for conversion

I didn't know
the saint
before my
son died

No parent should outlive their child, but when it happens, what is seen as a tragedy with the eyes of rationality is transformed into the seed that “if it dies, bears much fruit” (John 12,24-26) with the eyes of faith. Dawid is that seed and Monika Kornecka is his mother, a woman who turned the murder of her son into the occasion of her conversion and that of her family. It was in Krakow, Poland, on 7 September 2013, when Dawid, who turned 23 years old two days before, was returning home in the company of his girlfriend and a friend, after celebrating his birthday and asking his beloved to marry him. At that moment, a drunk approached and bothered one of the girls. The young man defended her, but was shot in

the back and died shortly after in the hospital. Everything changed in an instant. Dawid was gone.

Monika's life could have stopped there or, worse still, could have become trapped in the tangles of hatred. Instead, she forgave. “For me, forgiveness was essential. It helped me get over the situation, it was the only way to save myself. When I learned of my son's death, I lacked the strength to live. Then I realised that in order to move forward I would have to forgive and find a new purpose. Every day I had to wake up and have a new goal. I resumed my job as an accountant, thinking that would be able to fill the days. Shortly after I realised that it was not enough for me and I started to be a nurse again. It is in humanity that I find the meaning of life, first with sick children and now in the Covid ward in Krakow.” Dawid's death also sparked reactions in the local community. But, while everyone was calling for revenge, Monika looked into her heart and she found a lot of pain but never any hate. However, while it was instinctive for her to forgive, it was not so for her husband Krzysztof. “My husband was filled with hatred. He



Monika and her son
Dawid

FEAST OF SAINT RITA SPECIAL



Monika during the presentation of the three
"Women of Rita"

WOMAN OF RITA 2021

Monika received the International Saint Rita Award because, following Rita's example, she forgave her son's killer without hesitation by immediately refusing the requests for revenge and hatred that were spreading through the web around her family. Hers was a forgiveness made flesh in a prayer for the murderer's conversion and in tangible signs of closeness, even in prison. All this was accompanied by the decision to devote herself to the care of suffering and dying children, to make her motherhood even more fruitful.

thought about taking revenge. But then, while we were in the hospital waiting to see Dawid's body, he uttered words of forgiveness. Suddenly, he began to say that the killer was also a child of God. I think that was a real miracle for my family." It wasn't easy for Dawid's grandmother either.

However, it was the woman's reticence that allowed Monika to meet Saint Rita. "I didn't know the saint before my son died. It was my mother Barbara who introduced her to me. Initially she did not have the strength to forgive and distanced herself from faith, as she had so many doubts. Then, a friend of hers told her that there were Masses on the 22nd of each month, in which they prayed for Saint Rita. And when she took part for the first time she told me the story of this saint and, little by little, she returned to the road to conversion." Monika's forgiveness is a purposeful forgiveness, dictated by the desire to go beyond the evil she received, in an attempt to create communion with everyone, even with the murderer of her son. She said about him: "During the first Christmas without Dawid, my husband and I sent him a package with sweets, the Bible and a letter, in which we told him of our forgiveness. He answered us twice, asking for forgiveness. I am sure that he is in need of prayer and therefore I pray for his conversion." Monika does so much good in her daily life that Dawid really was that good seed and never fails to protect and intercede for her family. "He is with me at all times, he helps me. He is not dead, he is alive in heaven and I am waiting for the moment when we will meet in our Father's house." Thus ends the story of Monika, who offered her "forgiveness" and received a new meaning for her life as a "gift".



Cascia and Tolentino united in hope

The twinning recounted by Marta Ferraro

Both Cascia and Tolentino were hit by the earthquake in central Italy in 2016

One of the highlights of Rita's festivities is undoubtedly the Twinning of Faith and Peace. For 63 editions, together with the municipal administration, the Augustinian nuns and friars of Cascia have identified a city where devotion to Saint Rita is particularly strong, to forge a closer relationship with it based on fraternity and sharing. This year the choice fell on To-

there is the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Augustinian Province of Italy, which is celebrated this year, whose patron saints are none other than Saint Nicholas and Saint Rita. Furthermore, both Cascia and Tolentino were hit by the earthquake in central Italy in 2016 and are still experiencing post-earthquake difficulties, to which those of the pandemic have now been added. For this reason, they are two municipalities in need of the message of comfort and hope brought by the twinning. Last but not least was the desire to pay homage to the presence of the Teresian Carmelite nuns of Tolentino in Cascia. Due to the earthquake, they lost their convent and while waiting to return home they are being housed in the Augustinian nuns' facilities.

The examples given by the lives of Saint Rita and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino touch on two key topics for this edition: family, as we are now in the *Amoris Laetitia* Family year called for by Pope Francis, and healing. Starting from these themes, the path laid out is that of Rita and Nicholas, who spent most of their lives honouring the



The lighting of the Votive Tripod in the churchyard of the Basilica inaugurated the celebrations

lentino, a city in the province of Macerata, in the Marche region, for several reasons. First of all Saint Rita's great devotion to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, the first Augustinian saint who rose to the honours of the altars. Then



On the right, Sister Maria Rosa, Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, with Mother Chiara, Prioress of the Teresian Carmelites of Tolentino. In their hands they hold the vial of oil donated by the city from Le Marche and placed in the Urn of Saint Rita

family as the most important institution to create a better society, based on justice and peace. In an age like ours, which is so heavily marked by the pandemic, the two miracle working saints, Nicholas and Rita, are signs of God's mercy and his victory against all evil.

The twinning officially began on 9 May, when a delegation from Cascia went to Tolentino, where the Torch of Peace and Forgiveness of Saint Rita was lit, as the symbol central to the whole initiative. The light of the torch is intended to recall all the lights lit in that distant night between 21 and 22 May 1457, around which all the families of Cascia and the neighbouring districts gathered. Upon hearing of the death of their beloved Rita, they set out to give a final farewell to their cherished compatriot, whom they already considered a saint. Over time, that light has transformed into a symbol of hope for those who turn to Saint Rita in times of difficulty. After being lit in Tolentino with a lamp, the torch moved symboli-

cally to various municipalities affected by the 2016 earthquake: Sant'Angelo in Pontano, the birthplace of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, Amandola, Visso, Preci, Norcia and Roccaporena, the birthplace of Saint Rita, before arriving in Cascia on the evening of 21 May. Here, the mayors Mario De Carolis, of Cascia, and Giuseppe Pezzanesi, of Tolentino, lit the Torch of Peace and Forgiveness and with it the Votive Tripod in the churchyard of the Basilica, inaugurating the solemn celebrations. The Special Commissioner for the 2016 Earthquake Reconstruction, Giovanni Legnini, also participated in the event, giving words of hope to the two cities affected by the earthquake.

The presence of the devotees from Tolentino will continue to make itself felt through a vial of oil that was donated by the city from Le Marche and which the Mother Prioress, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, together with Mother Chiara, Prioress of the Teresian Carmelites, placed next to the Urn of Saint Rita. (MF)



The true
models of
life are the
Saints



From the homily of Cardinal Angelo Comastri, former Vicar General of His Holiness for the Vatican City and Archpriest of the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter, pronounced in the Solemn Pontifical of 22 May 2021 on the avenue of the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia.

The Saints serve as signs to follow

Mitigate
small or
big acts of
wickedness
with a
word of
forgiveness

In the lives of people (and also of peoples), role models are decisive. We look to models for inspiration for our choices and behaviours. Today the most popular models are overpaid footballers, actors, actresses, singers, show business characters, etc. who often lead a morally squalid and depraved life. Yet they are applauded. All this is very dangerous and produces great disorientation. The true life models are the Saints: the Saints serve as a sign to follow.

At this point, let's look at Saint Rita of Cascia. Saint Rita had a singular life: she was a wife, mother, widow and finally totally consecrated to the Lord. She was a bride! And she lived a true, faithful, sincere love with her husband, which was even capable of transforming and correcting the irritable aspects of her spouse. True love is capable of this. The same thing happened with Saint Monica in relation to her spouse. And, here, a reflection is immediately called for: to-

FEAST OF SAINT RITA SPECIAL

day, true love is disappearing in the world and is being replaced by fickle, dangerous and empty whims, a source of unhappiness. Saint Rita knew what love is and her testimony as a faithful and caring spouse reminds us of this wonderfully.

Saint Rita was a real mother, a mother worried about the true good of her two children. The killing of their father (Saint Rita's husband) provoked a desire for revenge in the children. One tragedy could have been added to another, and thus hatred would have multiplied. Saint Rita was well acquainted with the Commandment of Jesus, the Commandment that distinguishes us from everyone else: "Love one another as I have loved you. Love also your enemies and forgive those who offend you." With the power of prayer a mother is capable of, Saint Rita obtained the grace from the Lord to take her children to Heaven before they were guilty of the sin of murder. And so the chain of hatred and violence stopped. A recent example: on 13 May 1981, a young Muslim, Ali Agca, fired two gunshots at John Paul II in Saint Peter's Square, with the intention of killing him. The Pope was hit and the bullet went through his abdomen, entering the front and exiting from the back, making a curved path inside to avoid his kidneys and liver! Evidently the hand of the Virgin Mary was at work. While being taken to Gemelli Hospital, John Paul II, covered in blood, clearly said: "I forgive the brother who hit me."

This is heroism! This is the victory of good over evil! This is Christianity! Try to think how many times we too could mitigate small or big acts of wickedness just with a gesture of goodness or a word of forgiveness.

Finally, Saint Rita totally consecrated herself to the Lord and lived her final years in intense prayer. Today we have little faith and we no longer understand the importance of prayer. Saint Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of the missions, wrote the following in her notebook without ever having left the cloister:

"A wise man said 'give me a lever and a place to stand and I shall move the world'. Archimedes could not achieve this, because his request was not addressed to God and was only expressed from a material point of view, but the saints achieved it fully. As a place to stand, the Almighty has given them himself and himself alone; and as a lever, he gave them prayer, which inflames with a fire of love, and thus they raised the world with prayer. And, thus the saints of the militant Church raise it, and the future saints will continue to raise it until the end of the world.' If we prayed more and with more faith we would be different and our families and our communities would have more peace and more serenity, and we Christians would have more strength to transform the world. For this reason, prayer is indispensable in order to truly help any kind of poverty. Saint Rita reminds us of this! We truly need to follow her example! Saint Rita, pray for us!



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.





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

A legacy of love

I received a great inheritance from my mother Maria: faith, the most beautiful thing that she could ever leave me. But when we were told by the doctors that she just had a few days to live, I got angry with our Lord. Why her? She had dedicated her life to others and to her family. When they told her that she had an incurable disease, she looked at me, smiled and said: "Thanks to the treatment I no longer feel pain, which is already a blessing." I spent an intense year with my mum, staying close to her at all times. On 14 August, I asked her: "Are we going to Mass at Saint Rita's tomorrow?" She immediately answered yes. As we went to mass we smelled the scent of roses. What great happiness! I thank the Lord for giving us this year. I have learned so much from her, with few words and many deeds. I want to follow in her footsteps, which is why I asked to join the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita. I will continue in her place. (Ivan - Calcinatello BS - Italy)

“Be careful and do not let yourself be fooled by anyone. Because many will come and will try to deceive many people.” This passage of the Gospel encapsulates the inheritance left to Ivan by Maria, a wordless recommendation with a life of examples and deeds. Sometimes we are presented with shortcuts, paths without obstacles and different paths that make us believe we have the solution for our happiness. They trick us with the certainty of success, making it look easy. They deceive us into taking paths that can often become our undoing. No! We must commemo-

rate and follow the way of love that has been taught to us by our loved ones. We must remember to honour our roots and be able to live our tomorrow from here. We follow their route by taking their place in a prayer group, like Ivan, or by continuing whatever testimo-



ny of love they have taught us in relation to the Mother Church. We learn to grow through knowledge of Scripture and the lives of the saints. The more we “spend time” with a person, the better we can interpret the passages of their love, as this also happens in a human way. When we meet, a sign is enough to say it's him, it's her, it's his Love for me. (MDC)

We embrace their hopes. Together.



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

Starting over with Rita

The Lord
sends Rita
to many
hearts

Each
suffering will
bring an
even greater
good

This year, the Feast of Saint Rita, which came for Italy and the whole world after this difficult time of the pandemic, was enriched with a very special joy: that of being able to finally start over; to start seeing your faces, your smiles and your tears again. It's a new beginning for everyone, to get back to building a climate of prayer, grace and communion together.

After all, the bond with all of you devotees was never broken, because we never stopped carrying everyone in our hearts, listening and consoling: this is the great service we do together with the nuns here in Cascia, following Rita's example. We only provide humble assistance, because it is the Lord who sends Rita to so many needy hearts, to so many homes, especially to people who suffer and are ill. There are many beautiful testimonies of Rita's support, which never fails. There are people who had been in a coma or in intensive care and remember this nun who stroked their head and held them by the hand. It is the maternal soul of Saint Rita who accomplishes the Lord's will, by always staying beside each one of us in this extraordinary way. It is true that most of the time she does not



remove life's thorns for us, as it was for Rita herself, who suffered greatly, but she certainly loves us and does not leave us alone. And Rita reminds us of this, making herself a living expression of God's motherhood. This is why she is so loved, she who was a woman, wife, mother, widow and then nun. She lived through many seasons of her life, all with passion, faith, love and many sacrifices and hard moments. We seem to hear her repeat to us: "Trust in the Lord, do not fear, do not be afraid. The Lord is with you; you will see that every suffering will bring an even greater good." This is the message that we are all called on to carry in our hearts, especially now that we are starting again. We look ahead, patiently, praying for one another, opening ourselves to the world, in the certainty of the love of God and his servant Rita.

Where there is love there is always celebration

22 May is always a day of special grace in which we feel the living presence of our beloved sister more strongly. What gave greater joy to the feast this year, a joy that we can still feel, was sharing the day here

prayer marathon, which arrives into and departs from the heart, continues even now after the feast, through welcoming, listening and consoling those who need the face and voice of Saint Rita and who reach us in a thousand ways: in the visitor's room, on the phone, by email, by post and through social media.

In the last year and a half, which has not been easy for anyone, we have taken on many problems. Coronavirus has also disrupted our community's daily life, as although we are cloistered nuns we are not outside of this world. Our first thought went to you devotees and those who are most fragile. Thus, we felt even more like family to all of you, entering the joys and sufferings of your lives with intimacy. This profound sharing does not mean being sad or fatigued. On the contrary, it is precisely the joy of giving and serving that makes love transform even the heaviest of pains and the greatest of labours into so much happiness.

The feast has reaffirmed the powerful, current and universal message of Saint Rita. She left us nothing in writing, yet she is able to speak to everyone, men and women of every generation, even those who are of a different creed, and she

Rita is a
beautiful fruit
of the Holy
Spirit

in Cascia with you devotees, in compliance with the regulations. But we didn't stop there, because Rita's hope and love have no limits and therefore we wanted her feast to continue, to become everybody's feast, of one big family. This is why we re-launched what we started last year, creating a live marathon to bring the feast and Saint Rita into everyone's homes. We thank God for this 22 May that we spent together. The feast isn't over, however. Our



does so through the strength of the example of her life, through the concreteness of the values to which she herself bore witness. This is why everyone feels her to be as alive and close as a friend, one to whom they can open their hearts and then find it filled with so much grace. Saint Rita invites us to put the values that were immense gifts for her into practice every day: charity, love, faith, hope, humility and forgiveness. These are the bricks on which her holiness is built and, perhaps like never before, we can all make these teachings our own and become living witnesses of this special holiness, which leads us to love our neighbour and draw us closer to God. Let us join voices to bring

hope and peace, especially to societies and families. Like Rita, who lived above all of life's thorns, we seek the scent of the rose, the scent of Christ which is the scent of love.

Immediately after the solemnity of 22 May, we experienced Pentecost: it was no coincidence, because Rita is a beautiful fruit of the Holy Spirit, a true gift of God, who is a traveling companion for us during times of difficulty, as well as in moments of beauty. Saint Rita is our teacher: she leads us to open our hearts in order to receive the Holy Spirit. We hope that you too, like all of us, can really feel it, because the Spirit is the source of love, and where there is love there is always a celebration!

The feast has reaffirmed the powerful, current and universal message of Saint Rita

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 safeguard their future.
With joy.*



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