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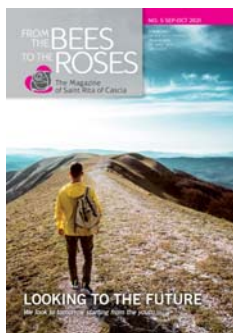
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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We look to tomorrow starting from the youth

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Looking to the future



see a renewed glow in the eyes of those whom we have begun to welcome and meet once again here in the monastery.

After more than a year and a half in which everything was clouded with fear, now we can finally dream again. This means that after having only thought about how to get through the present day, we are all slowly going back to looking to tomorrow. And who is able to speak to us, indeed even transport us directly into the future, more than anyone else? I believe that it is the young people, the girls and the boys of today, who will be the women and men in tomorrow's world. We all have a great responsibility towards them.

Honouring this the best we can is the challenge that awaits us!

I sense that, more than ever, young people today are hungry for change and want to have useful and effective tools in their hands that allow them to seek and create new meaning in life. As such, it is essential that they receive all the necessary support to guide them in this quest to

discover themselves, to find new and visionary goals, stimuli and uplifting values. In short, it is our task to create that solid foundation on which we can rebuild the future together.

To do this, in the following pages we have found two ways to invest our energies: training and volunteering. Let's start again, that is, from the roots, from education understood as complete preparation for life, with knowledge that creates thinking and working skills while also welcoming and helping others, to teach openness and generate a sense of fraternity. Both are essential and cannot be delayed.

If this is the mission, it is easy to understand just how fundamental the role of families, schools and societies is, because we are all decisive in determining the true growth of our young people. In short, my wish is for everyone to act as a guide, support and example in the eyes of young people, those eyes in which we can already see the future of us all.



by Nicoletta Di Benedetto

The school of tomorrow

Rosella Tonti, head teacher of the De Gasperi - Battaglia Comprehensive Institute in Norcia (Perugia), answers our questions



The school
has become
an open
space, even
in the
afternoons

With the epidemic now under control thanks to the rules that have been adopted and the global vaccination campaign, everyone's gaze has turned to the future. The term we keep hearing that is giving us hope, but which is also at the centre of heated debates, is recovery. Thinking of the children, a generation penalised by distance learning, which has caused so much discussion, and by not being able to meet up, I spoke to Rosella Tonti, head teacher of the De Gasperi - Battaglia Comprehensive Institute in Norcia (Perugia), the symbolic head of the battle she has been fighting since the 2016 earthquake in Central Italy, who has also been guiding the schools of Cascia for some time. I asked her some questions.

What does it mean to recover?

For us, the recovery began five years ago. The critical issues that we faced with certain strategies also allowed us to become aware of the resources that we thought we didn't have. Since the earthquake occurred, in small communities like ours, schools have become cultural centres, social centres. Therefore, recovering meant keeping the school open.

So for you, looking to the future is a process that has already start-

ed? Of course. The school is not just an environment for study, it's a place for gathering that offers experiences that give strength. The children weren't very affected by the isolation or inconvenience of distance learning. We were technologically prepared thanks to the donations that allowed us to keep going after the earthquake, albeit in containers. Thanks to our colleagues who agreed to adopt a shift-working system, the school was always open, and a strong sense of belonging was created. As such, everyone forms a group and contributes to the same goal. The school has been transformed into an open space, even in the afternoons, with a series of activities not only for school but also for play and socialising, which all contribute to education.

Is the recovery that we are all looking at as a renaissance just another test for you?

Yes, after partially overcoming the critical conditions caused by the earthquake, Covid found us unprepared, but in terms of organisation we already had experience of critical and emergency situations. However, we are expecting to complete our path of growth, in the sense that the children will go their own way, they will have the tools to do so, and

therefore above all they will contribute to the reconstruction effectively and concretely, at least to that of our territory. They are the protagonists of the recovery project, because they acted as driving forces for the families and for the whole social fabric around them.

What does it mean to be teachers of tomorrow and how can we put children in a position so that they themselves are the interpreters of the future? The relational aspect is fundamental. Building relevant relationships within the school means facilitating learning paths. The school of tomorrow must be centred on technology, on planning, but above all on human relationships. The added value is the relationship between teachers, pupils and families.

With your experience, what would you say to your students in such a delicate moment? I want to



The human relationship between teachers, pupils and families is the added value to invest in for the school of tomorrow

thank them, both as a head teacher and as a person. While we have overcome this crisis by trying to give our best to them, they have saved us. Thanks to the commitment they have showered us with and their desire to act, they have given us the strength to go on and not give up. And so I thank them.

OCTOBER MISSIONARY MONTH 2021

MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

“Witnesses and Prophets” is the theme of World Mission Day 2021 on Sunday 24 October, the peak of the month dedicated to strengthening fraternity and communion in the Church, when people come together to nourish the strength of their missions. Being witnesses and prophets of the Kingdom of God today, in this unusual time, of what will come but also what has already germinated among us, means

recognising that we are called on to be missionaries of hope, as Pope Francis wrote. “Anointed by the Lord, we can provide a prophetic reminder that no one is saved by himself. [...] The first Christians, far from yielding to the temptation to become an elite group, were inspired by the Lord and his offer of new life to go out among the nations and to bear witness to what they had seen and heard: the good news that

the Kingdom of God is at hand. They did so with the generosity, gratitude and nobility typical of those who sow seeds in the knowledge that others will enjoy the fruit of their efforts and sacrifice.” With these words, the Pontiff told us that everyone, even the most fragile, can be missionaries and disciples of good, because anyone who feels the power of God’s love can’t help but announce and share it.



by Rita Gentili

Teaching young people about volunteering

Interview with Massimo Gargiulo, university lecturer and teacher of Latin and Greek in Rome, who grew up as a volunteer and now educates young people about activism and awareness



Professor, how did your experience in volunteering start? I joined the La Primula voluntary association, which carries out activities with people with mental disabilities, when I was a secondary school student. The association asked the school for spaces to carry out the activities and the head teacher granted them and asked for some students to get involved. I have never left since I joined in 1993 and now I am the chairman.

Involving young people is one of the greatest problems of volunteering. In your opinion, what could be

done? We should introduce young people to this possibility. Sometimes the judgments we make about young people are too thoughtless, as if they were layabouts or something. When children have the opportunity to know certain things, an interest arises. As a society, we have to ask ourselves a question about the models we offer to these young people, about what we are letting them know about: if the only model they see is that of consumption, of influencers, it's a disaster because active civic engagement will decline,

Consuming isn't the only way to spend time together



Some youths from the La Primula association, which Gargiulo was once involved in as a volunteer and now leads as chairman

TAKE AND READ



La trattoria del cardinale.
(The cardinal's restaurant)
Sabrina Vecchi
Paoline Editoriale Libri

The stories told about the relationship between food and spirituality, nourishment for the body and the spirit, include the “pastarelle delle monache” (nun’s pastries) of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia. The cloistered nuns also carry out their works of charity towards the neediest with these aromatic biscuits, created using a centuries-old recipe. Because pastarelle made with love are especially good for the heart.

and when that happens society as a whole can only get worse.

Is it a problem that has always existed? I believe it has gotten worse. I’m seeing a tendency towards a decline in sociability. When I was at school, I was surrounded by spaces where socialising could take place: in addition to school, there were sports, parishes and political party groups. There was a much larger fabric within which it was easier to come into contact with these types of structures. Now, however, I see a sort of push towards isolation on the one hand, and to forms of socialisation that must

be sold at all costs on the other.

For many students, coming out of lockdown only meant the opportunity to go and consume, which is fine, but it’s not the only way for us to be together. I have the impression that the capitalist system wants that, and it makes it more complicated for young people to get in touch with realities that don’t offer consumption but, on the contrary, require commitment, time and engaging in complex contexts.

What can a young person learn by volunteering? From my experience, they improve their knowledge. They come into contact with realities that young people who go to school generally don’t encounter in their daily lives. And in theory this is an enrichment that should give them a bit more awareness about themselves and the world in which they live. The result is that they become more active and aware as citizens within their communities.

As a teacher, do you encourage your pupils to volunteer? Of course. Within the extent to which we can intervene in students’ lives, I try to do this by talking about what I do and telling them that these organisations exist. When you are a teacher, if you do your job with even a small amount of conscience, what you try to teach, beyond the subjects, is that we are all part of a community, perhaps with the hope that the students will take an active part in it. But a school cannot be everywhere: all the stakeholders involved should be able to work to involve young people in volunteering, starting with local institutions.

FEATURED

IN A WORD

curated by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi osa

“I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

From the First Letter of John (1John - 2.14).

The first letter of John the Apostle was probably written in Ephesus around the year 100. It is aimed at children, fathers and young people, three Christian groups of different educational levels. However, tradition has preserved John the Apostle’s story of “the young bandit”, which describes a young man neglected by his Bishop after his baptism who then became a bandit. The apostle asks the Bishop to account for him, as if that young man were a treasure deposited with him. This indicates the care for young people in the first Christian communities, a commitment passed on by the Apostles themselves.



by Alessia Nicoletti

Charity Ambassadors

Saint Rita's Roses for the future of young people

The nuns of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia know full well the value of the shared commitment to placing young people first, so as to build a better future for the benefit of the whole of humanity. Inspired by Rita's charity, 83 years ago the then Abbess Maria Teresa Fasce, now beatified, welcomed a child in need, making it possible for her life to be a fruitful gift for her and for others. This was the spark that gave rise to the Beehive of Saint Rita, the project in which the Augustinians have raised girls, known as the Little Bees, from families in difficulty since 1938. They do so thanks to the indispensable support of the many who have embraced their mission. Since 2012, the cloistered nuns have been supported by the Saint Rita of Cascia non-profit Foundation, which created the solidarity ini-

tiative of the Roses of Saint Rita five years ago to raise funds to support the Beehive.

Every year, the plants of the flower that symbolises the saint cause the perfume of charity to flourish all over Italy and spread it further and further, thanks to the hundreds of volunteers who are the heart of the event's success. So it was once again this year, when, on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 May, many stands with rose plants flourished in cities and towns, sowing love and hope. Together with their devotion, the volunteers are motivated by the desire to concretely guarantee the Little Bees can be architects of their future. Each one dedicates their time with infinite joy and becomes an ambassador of charity towards anyone they meet.

This is testified by Maria Rita Monaco, from Genazzano (Rome), who has been a vol-

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



Maria Rita Monaco with the group of volunteers from Genazzano (Rome) at the stand organised in May 2021

unteer since 2019. She inherited the desire to do good and today she is passing it on to her children and those who know her. “My grandmother was very devoted to Saint Rita and every year, in my home town in the province of Caserta, she made a local collection that she sent to the nuns. I wrote the letters for the Abbess while my grandmother dictated. Then, after her death, my mother continued the tradition.” Growing up in this “fertile ground”, Maria Rita, whose name bears the sign of faith and love that her family passed on to her,



The Roses of Saint Rita support the girls and boys of the Hive

found a way to follow the example of her grandmother and mother in the Roses of Saint Rita. “It seemed like a good opportunity to attract others to this important gesture of solidarity, which can be made with just a small contribution. The buzz then also spread to a good group of people, which is continuing to grow. In fact, the Roses also led to the foundation of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita here in Genazzano, which brings us even closer to you and to Cascia.” When I ask her what they felt at the stand this year, she tells me: “We noticed an even stronger desire to help than ever, and in fact we sold all the plants in a few hours. The goal is to involve the youngsters and I am confident that we will reap great benefits. We want to encourage them so that, through work, they understand what they



Volunteers are the heart of the event's success

can receive by giving: that's where growth lies.” For Maria Rita, solidarity is a rebirth, because “the Little Bees are our future and what we give for them makes me feel alive.”

NEW IBAN FOR YOUR DONATION

The Saint Rita of Cascia Non-Profit Foundation supports the charitable works of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia thanks to the offers of people like you, who make their generosity tangible. Become a petal in our flower of charity too!

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by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

The education of Saint Rita

From an early age she walked the path of love

Young people used to be empty vessels waiting to be filled

In the Middle Ages, the concepts of childhood, adolescence and youth were profoundly different from today. A child was a miniature adult who had to be physically and morally shaped with a strict education so as to direct their life from the very beginning according to what their father decided. Young people were empty vessels waiting to be filled, they did not have their own personalities. One important aspect was social class. The children of the nobles were educated according to the values of honour linked to their lineage and heroism. They knew how to read and write and were home-schooled by a tutor. Those destined for an ecclesiastical career lived as small monks and the girls pledged themselves to virgini-

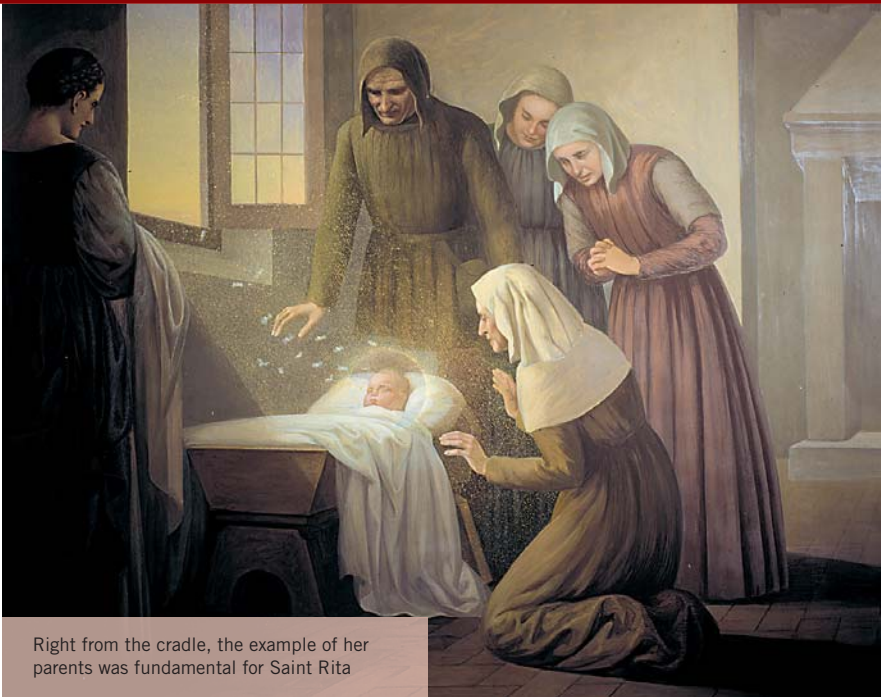
ty. In the poorer classes, however, boys were immediately trained to work, almost always doing the same job as their fathers, while girls learned by playing to be good wives and mothers, with due fear and respect for their future husbands. Religion had a fundamental role: often the dolls the children played with looked like Jesus or the Virgin Mary, but it depended on how religious the families were. The families decided everything about the future of young people, who had no choice, and this was especially true for girls. It is said that Saint Rita was forced into marriage: which girl wasn't?

Rita's family was made up of very devoted and sincere believers, so it's not hard to imagine how she was brought up as a child. Her mother and father were "peacemakers of Christ", committed to reconciling family feuds, and that proved significant. Rita certainly learned prayers very young. She played with dolls depicting the Baby Jesus. From an early age she helped her mother in the kitchen and in running the house. Like a good wife and mother, she quickly learned to respect and fear her father, and then do the same with her future

PRAYER

Prayer for parents

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



Right from the cradle, the example of her parents was fundamental for Saint Rita

Her mother and father were “peacemakers of Christ”

husband. In her everyday life, she will have heard her parents talk about the struggles between various people or families in Cascia, and from them she learned about peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. In the long term, this greatly affected the girl’s mentality. Then, she became a wife and mother, and she tried to educate her children with

the teachings of her parents. One day it was her turn to put them into practice: when her husband was killed she was faced with the abyss of hatred and violence, but she reacted as a true woman of peace. Her children may not have understood her and mourned his early death, but despite this she continued on the path of love.

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.

Angelo Seminatore (Switzerland)
Anna Amoroso (Casteltermini AG - Italy)
Anna Barrile (Ischia NA - Italy)
Antonio Ambrosini (Monteferrante CH - Italy)
Bartolotta Croci (Elmont - USA)
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Rosa De Giorgi (Lecce - Italy)



by Marta Ferraro

600 hearts together for Rita

The story of the general meeting in Cascia

When I write about the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, the only prayer group dedicated to the miracle worker from Cascia recognised by the Augustinian nuns, I am thinking and talking about a large family. With this in mind, the general meeting that was held in Cascia on 3 and 4 July was a great family celebration, a sort of Sunday lunch where everyone is happy and works hard for the day to become a success. The meeting was held after many months spent in isolation and in fear of contagion. Indeed, the annual appointment was cancelled last year precisely because of the restrictions. This meant the joy

of getting together was double this time! Thirty groups participated for a total of over 600 devotees. "I saw a lot of emotion in their eyes, in their greetings," said Alessandra Paoloni, PPU general secretary. "Many of them have had Covid-19 and came to thank the saint for being able to overcome it. I felt the joy of seeing each other again and praying together." "It was a moment of true celebration in which we rediscovered one another," echoed the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis. "There was a wonderful delegation that kept the family together. I saw a great deal of engagement,



After a year off, the joy of being together was doubled

especially in the prayer vigil with all the groups. Many of them told us about their plans and entrusted them to our prayers. It was a wonderful moment for us nuns. It's a way to grow with them."

At the end of the prayer vigil, which was held on the 3rd evening, the PPU welcomed six new groups: Casteltermini, Gela,



The Prioress during the prayer vigil with the affiliation of the six new groups

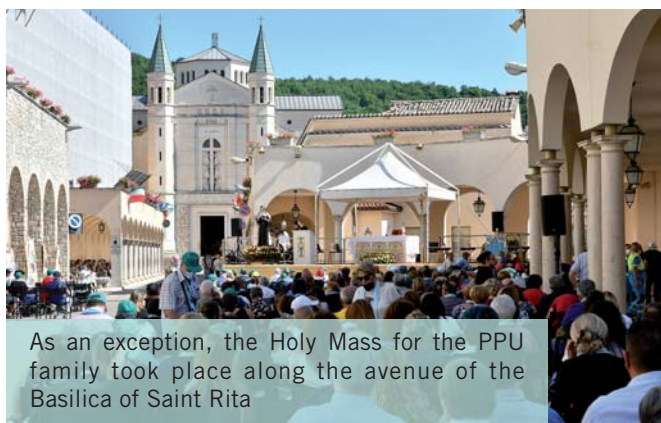
Pietraperzia, Randazzo, Sortino from Sicily and Genazzano from Lazio, each accompanied by their godfather or godmother, chosen as a guide to this new experience of devotion to the saint.

Then, on Sunday 4, the meeting culminated with the Holy Mass presided over by the Augustinian Mgr. Luis Marín de San Martín, Undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, which, as an exception, was held along the avenue of the Sanctuary. On this occasion, Father Ludovico Maria Centra, ecclesiastical assistant of the Pious Union, thanked the Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita, Father Luciano De Michieli: "I express my gratitude for the dedication to decorating the avenue for the PPU. We started quietly and we went through a lot. For us, the diehard fans of devotion to Saint Rita, receiving this welcome has great significance." Regarding the work carried out at the local level by the individual groups, Father Ludovico added: "I also want to thank



The passage of the Urn of Saint Rita is always one of the most eagerly awaited moments

all the parish priests and those accompanying them, who really do a lot." "They do so much good in their areas with prayer and charity," reiterated the Father Rector, who was happy to have met these special devotees of Saint Rita. Fr. Luciano also thanked the community of the Cascia Fathers and the many volunteers.



As an exception, the Holy Mass for the PPU family took place along the avenue of the Basilica of Saint Rita

"With God, everything is possible" read the title chosen for the meeting. The faith and charity that the groups showed by donating 4,000 euros to the monastery's charitable works once again testified to their being tangible and precious messengers of the Word of God.

The next General Meeting is scheduled for 2 and 3 April 2022!

Alessandra is a secular Oblate

The first lay woman to offer her life to serving the
Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia

Alessandra
lived in
close
contact with
the nuns

On Monday 26 April 2021, Alessandra Paoloni, general secretary of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, marked a historic date in the long-lived tradition of the Augustinian Family of Cascia and of the world through her life choice. On that date she formalised her desire to become a secular oblate of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, in a Basilica packed with relatives, friends and villagers and with the members of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita connected via a streaming link. The Mother Prioress, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, presided over the rite of the oath. Thus, Alessandra became the first laywoman to be united with the cloistered nuns and also the first

woman in the world recognised as a secular oblate at a monastery of the Order of St. Augustine.

Oblation is a particular form of consecration that, after some instances in the Middle Ages, is no longer provided for in the constitutions of the Augustinian monastic communities. Now, it has been established as an exception for Alessandra, with the confirmation of the Prior General of the Order, Father Alejandro Moral Antón.

But what does it actually mean to become an Oblate? Oblate means offering or gift, and Alessandra has decided to offer her life, her days and the meaning of her existence to the Monastery of Saint Rita, with which she has had a very strong bond since childhood, because it has given her a lot.

“We ask You, we seek in You, we knock on Your doors. Thus we will receive, thus we will discover, thus it will be opened to us,” making these words of the Holy Father Augustine her own, Alessandra told of her close relationship with the Augustinian communities of Cascia and in particular with the nuns, first as a Little Bee at the Saint Rita Beehive (the shelter project for minors in difficulty, founded in 1938 by Blessed



Alessandra and the Prioress during the rite of the oath, which took place in the Basilica



As an oblate, Alessandra is now an integral part of the community of nuns and actively participates in the life of the monastery

This family
allowed me
to grow and
become who
I am today

Maria Teresa Fasce), and then as an employee of the monastery. In fact, since she was just 9 years old, Alessandra lived in close contact with the nuns in the Beehive who, with their special dedication and delicate natures, helped to make her the woman she is today. And now, after having received so much goodness, she herself has decided to make it available to the community that has always supported her.


Not surprisingly, in her testimony Alessandra quoted Sister Teresa, a pillar of the Hive: "Always do good, Ale, and only good things will come back to you." This is exactly what Alessandra wants and she has chosen to continue doing good after having seen and lived in an environment that tends towards Goodness. Those who know her and have the opportunity to spend time with her certainly know her attitudes, the kindness with which she welcomes pilgrims and also the frankness with which she manages to express her opinion, without mincing words. Indeed, Alessandra has always dedi-

cated herself completely to the monastery and its activities. She coordinates the volunteers with discretion and experience, she is always available for the needs of the nuns and others, and since 2005 she has been the general secretary of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, the only prayer group recognised by the monastery dedicated to the saint of Cascia. It is an ever-growing organisation that now has more than 6000 members in Italy and throughout the world.

Alessandra has chosen goodness. She first volunteered at the age of 14 for the Basilica of Saint Rita, then in Loreto and Lourdes to help the sick, passing through an experience in India and another in Peru. In short, Alessandra's is a full life centred on being available to others, which she summarised as follows: "I feel deeply attached spiritually and emotionally to this Augustinian-Ritian family, which allowed me to grow and become what I am today. I would like to thank the nuns who have granted me this privilege."

25 YEARS BEATIFICATION OF MOTHER FASCE

On 12 October 2021, the feast of Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce will be held in Cascia to mark the beginning of the 25th anniversary year of her beatification, which will culminate on 22 October 2022. For updates on the event, follow us on santaritadacascia.org



God, from whom comes all paternity in heaven and on earth,
Father, you who are love and life,
make every human family on earth become,
through your Son, Jesus Christ, “born of woman”,
and through the Holy Spirit, source of divine charity,
a true sanctuary of life and love
for the generations that are always renewed.

Let your grace guide the thoughts
and works of the spouses towards the good of their families
and of all the families of the world.

Let the younger generation
find strong support in the family
for their humanity and their growth
in truth and love.

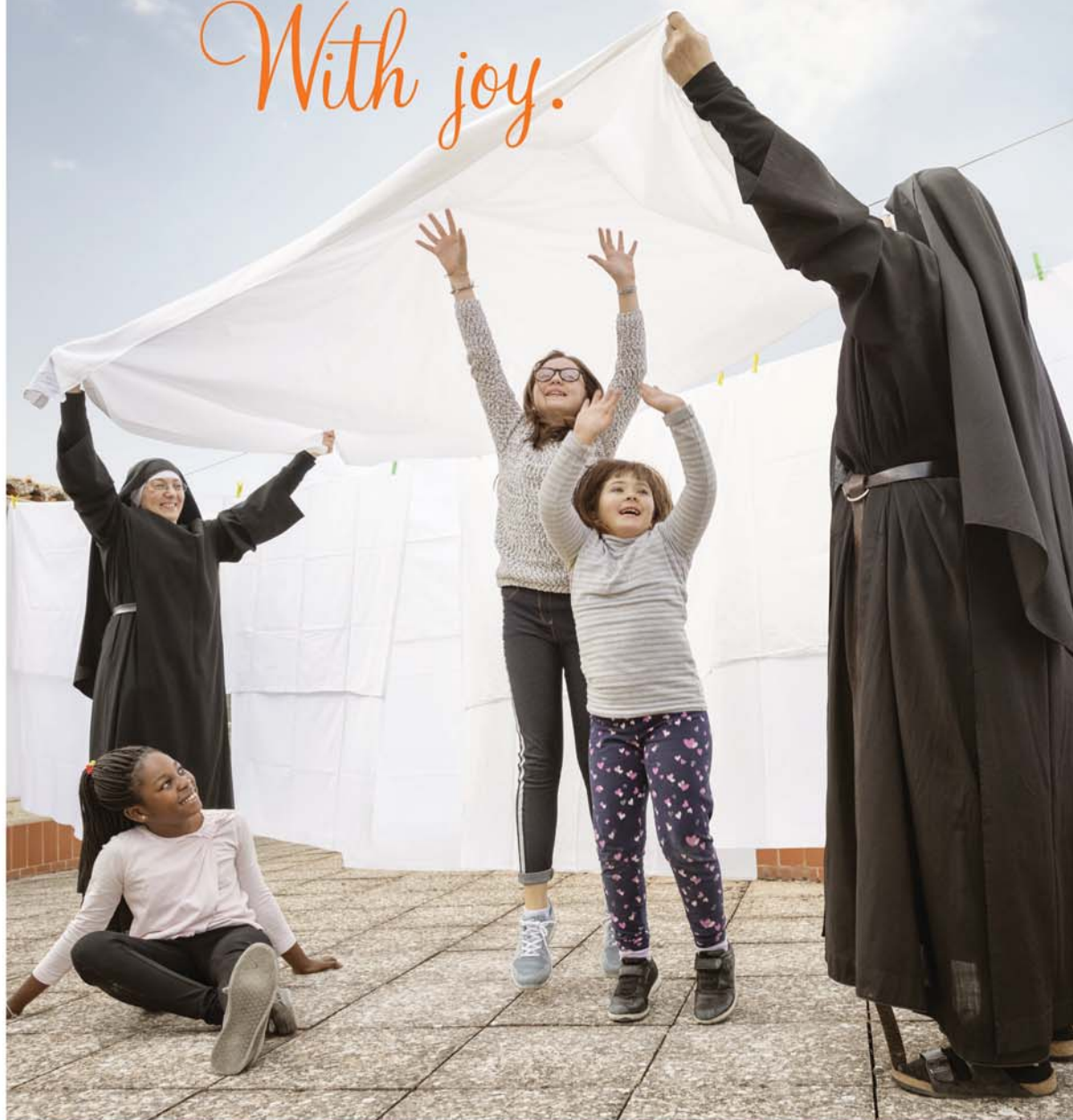
Grant that love, strengthened by the grace
of the sacrament of marriage,
proves to be stronger than any weakness and any crisis,
through which, at times, our families pass.

Finally, we ask you through the intercession
of the holy family of Nazareth,
so that the Church in the midst of all the nations of the earth
can fruitfully fulfil its mission
in the family and through the family.

You, who are life, truth and love,
in the unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

*Prayer by John Paul II
composed on the occasion of the synod of bishops of 1980
dedicated to the tasks of the Christian family*

*We safeguard their future.
With joy.*



THE BEEHIVE OF SAINT RITA IS A FAMILY WHERE HOPES ALSO FEED ON LOVE. Founded by Blessed Mother Fasce in 1938, the Beehive of Saint Rita has become home, school and assistance for many young girls. A real family that includes all our supporters who, with their help, continue to give a future to thousands of young people in difficulty. Stay close to us, your love is the most solid foundation on which to build new hopes. alveare@santaritadacascia.org • www.santaritadacascia.org/alveare

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**FONDAZIONE
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Fiore di carità





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

Mother Teresa and her disease

Let's learn to live with it in the company of the Lord

At the school of Saint Rita, Mother Fasce interpreted the surprise of her tumour as a gift from God: she received stigmata too!

by whom she had just been named Abbess. Right from the start, she did not call the tumour a misfortune but “my treasure”. From this interpretation, a new way of seeing her disease arose in her. This illness would accompany her until her death: 27 years of cancer, 27 years of very special love.

Understanding where Blessed Fasce's vision comes from can also help us as so many cancers and diseases are spreading among us. It comes from faith, first and foremost: in the face of all evil and in this time of the pandemic, God guarantees us his protection and has a sure plan for us. Exercising our trust in him is already an initial cure. Living with sickness in the company of the Lord means not being afraid: He knows and is the Almighty.

We follow the directives of the doctor, but we are also in the hands of the Lord, the “omnipotent doctor” – as St. Augustine calls him – who carries on his project, to live with love and for love, taking advantage of the time he leaves us for giving everything we can. Mother Fasce, despite her tumour and other ailments, did everything that charity asked of her with full trust in the Lord and the fruits of this still continue today.



Devotees at the foot of the statue of Mother Fasce, at the gates of the avenue of the Basilica of Santa Rita. Photo taken before the pandemic

She called
her tumour
“my treasure”

For Rita, it was on her forehead, following the thorn of Jesus' crown. For her it was on her breast, as a seal of the new “motherhood” towards the sisters



by Fr. Josef Sciberras,
Augustinian
General Postulation

AUGUSTINIANS

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

The friar with God's smile

Like Rita,
Friar Mario
always had a
good word

Mario Gentili was born in Colmurano (Macerata) on 30 May 1928 into a family of farmers, where Christian values were very present. After primary school he decided to join the Augustinians of Tolentino, in the Marche region, taking his solemn vows in 1951. He lived almost his entire life in the service of pilgrims visiting St. Nicholas, to whom he was greatly devoted. He was equally devoted to Saint Rita: he was very enthusiastic when speaking of her, citing her as an example, especially for mothers. Like Rita, Friar Mario always had a good word to share, sowing peace in everyone's hearts. Many people attest that he was a warm person, a joyful friend, a welcoming brother and attentive to people's needs. He was a quiet man, but had a restless heart that sought God.



The smile never disappeared from his face, not even in the harsh trials towards the end of his life. Like Rita, he embraced the cross, which he saw as an instrument of love. His pleasure was that of being close to the people that Providence presented to him: evangelical closeness in the name of joy, hospitality, cordiality, sharing and faith. He was an exemplary Augustinian and a lover of prayer, shared living and the Order. He died on 2 May 2006 with a reputation for holiness, great but within everyone's reach. The diocesan phase of the case for his beatification began on 9 May 2021.

25 YEARS OF THE AUGUSTINIAN PROVINCE OF ITALY

From 9 to 12 October 2021 in Cascia, the triduum for the feast of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, joins the 25th anniversary of the Augustinian Province of Italy. For the occasion, the twinning with Tolentino (Marche), which began on the Feast of Saint Rita, will close with a Eucharistic celebration, broadcast via live stream from the Basilica of the saint of the impossible. More info on santaritadacascia.org



Archivist Caterina Comino accompanies us in reading the pages of the canonisation process of Saint Rita in 1626, offering us a documentary testimony of the saint, together with a comment by Augustinian Father Rocco Ronzani.

The fragrance of Rita's body

Her scent
evokes her
memory

Neither the cloister nor the solid sepulchral chest are insurmountable obstacles between Rita and her devotees: according to the testimony of the reverend Girolamo Belmonte, canon of the collegiate church of Cascia, the presence of the saint is manifested through a sweet fragrance that pervades the town's streets.

"I live in a house near the monastery of Blessed Rita and I can truthfully state that over and over again I was in my home and I detected a very sweet smell that comforted the spirit. Two or three days later I heard the nuns of Blessed Rita sound the miracle bells, because the people came to thank Blessed Rita for the miracles received and while they told the nuns they sounded a miracle, and so it is considered certain in our neighbourhood that every time a pleasant and miraculous odour is smelt we can wait in the certainty that in a few days we will hear news that the saint has performed a miracle, which indeed happens. In fact, I remember very well that, upon smelling such a sweet smell, when I went out of the house to see where it really came from, I found that the closer I got to the church and the body of the saint, the greater the smell grew". (Spoleto, AD, E-20, Processus 1626, ff. 80v.- 81) (CC)

A fragrance announces the presence of someone even before they are there, or it is the trace that remains even when the person is gone. And their fragrance evokes the memory of them. An aroma therefore ensures a form of persistence linked to the body but different from it, which a contemporary

writer defines as a sort of "extended body". The Holy Scripture also presents itself to the reader as a feast of aromas. The essences, balms and scented resins constitute a world of extraordinary charm that can be found throughout the entire biblical text, from the poetic and evocative descriptions of the Old Testament



At the moment when Saint Rita died, the sisters detected a sweet scent of roses coming from her body

The Holy Scripture presents itself to the reader as a feast of aromas

Saint Rita was a vessel of praise

up to the devout and sad offering of the women at the tomb on Easter morning. The Gospels open with the myrrh that the holy magi give to the baby Jesus and end with the nard and other perfumes used to anoint his body after it is taken down from the cross. In their interpretations, each evangelist reports at least one scene imbued with perfume in telling the mystery of the Son of God made man. When Mary poured the pure nard on Jesus' feet in Bethany, Judas valued that perfume as worth 300 denarii: a denarius was the wages of a day's work. When he handed over Jesus, Judas got no more than 30 pieces of silver, which equate to much less. Mary's perfume is beyond any value, it is a sign of great gratitude towards the one who welcomed and loved her. Even the last book of the Bible, the great Revelation, emanates fragrant essences: the "golden vials full of perfumes, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5.8). The saints are imbued with the "perfume of Christ" par excellence, the

aroma of the Bridegroom and, at times, also with the smell of the wood of the cross, soaked in his blood. Saint Rita was a precious and fragrant vessel of praise before God and today she continues to shower grace on all her devotees. The secret of her life is found in a passage from Augustine's Rule that she followed in the monastery for 40 years: "May the Lord grant you the ability to observe these rules with love, as those in love with spiritual beauty and exhaling the good perfume of Christ from your holy coexistence, not as servants under the law, but as free men under grace" (chap. 8). The great bishop of Hippo reminds his monks of an expression by St. Paul, which is the sublime summary of the whole life and testimony of believers: "For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved." (2 Cor 2.15). May the Lord grant us, through the intercession of our Saint Rita, the chance to circulate her pleasing aroma throughout the world. (RR)

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

How to live with suffering

On 24 January I was rushed to hospital with a brain aneurysm... My life was in danger. Before I passed out, I called out and implored Saint Rita not to let me die, to help me heal and go home to my two children, who had already lost their father due to an accident in the mountains. Saint Rita spared me and almost two months later I returned home to my loved ones. The doctor who operated on my brain said there was divine intervention at work. I came to know Saint Rita as a girl through my aunt. I lost my mum at the age of 18. At the time of the birth of my first son, Pietro, who had problems with his throat, a lady in the hospital gave me an image of the saint and advised me to pray to her. My son recovered and was protected even when he had a tumour a few years later. I will never stop thanking you for the graces I received and I will always be close to you with much faith in my heart. (Mariangela - Switzerland)

“Abide in me, as I also abide in you.” (John 15.4). To abide is a decisive verb, it is synonymous with dwelling. “Abide in me” is not an obligatory imperative. It does not block the autonomous impulses, passions and creativity that distinguish humanity and its evolutionary nature.

“Abiding” is like saying wait here before me, I’m making you more beautiful. I’m shaping you for your own good, for your happiness. In life we can be sure that we will have to go through setbacks. There are



experiences and situations that cut us off abruptly. We must not ask ourselves how to avoid them, but what to do to make them fruitful. Faith is not a way to avoid negative life experiences in a superstitious way, rather it is the way through which those experiences can be decisive for an even deeper life. Like a sculptor, the Lord removes something with decisive blows of the chisel. He does it because he sees the sculpture behind the block of marble. He sees the wonderful creatures that we are within the humanity with which we have been moulded. This is why he tells us: “abide in my Love.” Like the shoots of a vine, Mariangela knows that she needs sap, just as the vine needs its fruits, the testimony. And this is a mutual way of abiding... (MDC)



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

Welcoming is a team effort

The energy and enthusiasm of the young volunteers who donate their time for our Sanctuary give us great satisfaction. Young people are often stigmatised as being frivolous or superficial, but we meet so many generous boys and girls!



now feel like an active part of a plan, which they consider a good fortune. It takes very little: a smile, a hint, taking a photograph and the day changes, both for the volunteers and pilgrims. The words that come to my mind when thinking about this exchange are attention and reciprocity. “My kids” feel useful and enriched and the pilgrims take home a beautiful memory of the Sanctuary. It’s a team effort. There is no one protagonist. Everyone has a role and the opportunity to grow and improve. When the most timid one finds the courage to ask an elderly woman to help her climb a few steps, this represents a victory that moves us and gives us hope.

The pilgrims who arrive in Cascia must be comforted and welcomed, and the care shown by these young people is a source of pride. “It has helped me a lot over the years. The Lord gives me beautiful experiences that work does not. I feel the riverbed where the water flows, but I am not the water. I feel the electric cable that carries the current, but I am not the current, and in moments of volunteer work the Lord becomes water and electricity.” Luca told me this and I think it is the greatest teaching that a young person can give us: there is no greater joy than serving the Lord!

The care
shown by
these young
people is a
source of
pride

Here, many young people offer their time to welcome the devotees, direct them, listen to them and make their pilgrimage a full experience. Time best spent is that given to others, and the volunteers have understood this well, each one attracting the next. From the service of one, Luca, the circle has expanded and now there are others: Siro, Irene, Simone... They have entered our Ritian-Augustinian family and



by Mother Maria Rosa
Bernardinis

I BRING YOU JESUS

Get to know Jesus and learn to love Him
with the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia

Let's strengthen our faith

A living and
personal
relationship
with the
Lord

I read a book about Jesus that thrilled me because of the way the writer talks about him. Some might think that this is normal given the choice I made, but it isn't always the case. We "professionals of the spirit" can also become accustomed to holy things out of habit. Only a living and personal relationship with the Lord makes us convinced and convincing.

In this column, I would like to try to make Jesus known; not as a theologian or biblical scholar, but as a "lover", as someone who received a gift from the Lord and does not want to keep it to herself, being

aware that it is a source of joy and peace, drawing on the Word of God, the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium. Forgive me for not quoting the sources. When a biblical sentence strikes me and helps increase my faith, hope and charity, I make it mine and, whoever uttered it, I am sure it was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

"We love what we know." To love a person means to know them; it is necessary to dialogue and interact with them. We need to "rekindle the faith we receive".

We believe in Jesus, we believe that he always loves with infinite patience and only wants true good for us. He, who proclaims himself Son of God and Son of man, revealed a face of God to us, surprising the listeners of yesterday and today; he presented him as a merciful Father, slow to anger and rich in benevolence towards the little ones, the poor, the weak, the excluded, the marginalised, towards sinners; he destroyed sin and death in himself, with his death on the cross and his resurrection. You too can enter this love. Nobody is excluded! There is one condition, however: that you are humble and recognise that without Him you can do nothing. He "knows us and knows what is in our heart".

The saints understood this and our beloved Saint Rita continually demonstrates it: everything is possible for those who believe and love.

Do we want young people to grow strong in faith? Let's strengthen ours: we are authentic witnesses.



Everything is
possible for
those who
believe and
love

Guided by Love

The desire to
become a
nun was born
in her heart

Sister
Melania was
a “mother” to
the Little
Bees

Often when we are young we tend to be afraid of growing up and looking to the future. Perhaps we might feel alone in the world and are tempted to run away from our responsibilities, duties and decisions. This was not so for our Sister Melania. Yes, she fled from her home on foot, but it was to take the step that changed her life. And it wasn't only her life, because in fleeing, Sister Melania chose Love, for the Lord and for her neighbour, in her consecrated life. It happened in 1958 and on 24 June we celebrated the 60th anniversary of her religious profession.

It has been a long time since Maria (this is her first name) left her home in the Marche at the age of 22 and reached the Monastery

of Saint Rita of Cascia, truly “eloping” with the Lord. She did not let herself be discouraged by anything: not her mother who was against it, nor the distance, nor her lack of money for the trip. It was an inexplicable determination, but Maria was not alone: even prior to that, the Lord had planted a seed of love in her heart, where the desire to become a nun took root. This seed had grown together with Maria, giving her the desire to share and spread it with a life dedicated to Love. This explains the courage and the strength of her will. Because having a good guide to help us see and travel the road is essential.

The hands of the Lord, which led Sister Melania to discover and realise the meaning of her existence, did not leave her in these 50 years. Thus, in the monastery, she worked to make that seed of divine love become a wonderful fruit of welcome. This fruit has seen her serve and love her Spouse in the faces of many little girls, the Little Bees of Saint Rita, who grow in the Beehive of our monastery in Cascia, an organisation for minors from families in difficulty, founded in 1938 by Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. For over 40 years, in fact, Sister Melania was a “mother” to the Little Bees and, together with the directors and educators, she left an indelible mark on their lives, with the love she received from God. A love made of under-



Sister Melania was *Suormi* to the Little Bees, who never stop showing her their affection



Sister Melania, at the centre of the community, for the feast celebrating 60 years of her religious profession

standing, listening, concern, joy, hope and encouragement. This bond is so enduring that even the former Little Bees, now women, know they can always count on their Sister Melania.

Together with us nuns, the Little Bees of past and present cele-

brated *Suormi*, as they call her, with immense affection. They demonstrated it with many messages. One in particular struck us: "I just need to think of you to feel your love."

I owe everything I am to you.
Best wishes Sister Melania!"

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 ...

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We embrace their hopes. Together.



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