

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

NO. 1 JAN-FEB 2022

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

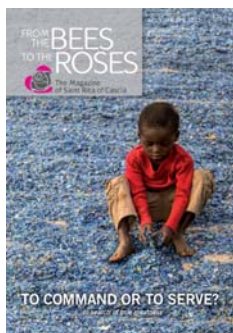


TO COMMAND OR TO SERVE?

In search of true greatness

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On the cover: Burkina Faso (Africa).
A child plays among plastic scraps in a recycling platform.
Photo by Stefano Dal Pozzolo

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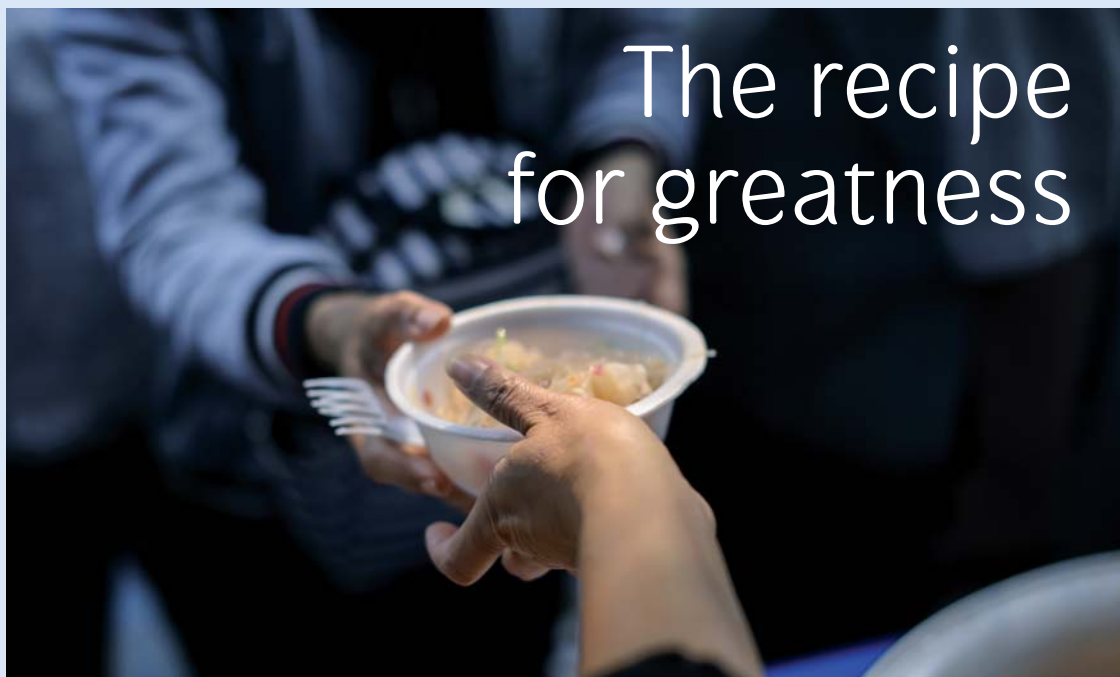
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The recipe for greatness



As am I writing to you, the Pope's words at the Angelus of 17 October 2021, on God's way of doing things, come to mind: "He did not remain above in heaven to look down on us from up there, but he lowered himself to wash our feet. God is love and love is humble, it does not exalt itself, but comes down like the rain that falls to earth and brings life." I am thinking, therefore, about our way of acting. The people we usually follow as models of greatness are those whom society identifies as *number one*. It is a title that is established almost solely on the logic of profit, success and power. But are we sure that this is the only view we can and want to have of people, of us? Personally, I say no and, as a Christian, I feel the desire to shift the balance of judgment from "how much" to "what" we and our actions produce. Because it is the "what" that makes the difference in terms of the kind of world we want to build. How, then, can we change direction and follow that of God? The Holy Father says to go from emerging to immersing ourselves,

from commanding to serving... this is the recipe for the Lord's greatness, which we too can master. The Pope encourages us, by saying: "It is the strength of Baptism, of that immersion in Jesus that all of us have already received through grace that directs us, moving us to follow him. It is a grace, a fire that the Spirit has kindled in us that needs to be nurtured." Jesus himself not only tells us to look to the last, he made himself little among the little people. And, with this issue of the magazine, we want to act like him, taking you with us.

His Holiness reflects on aspiring to the greatness of God. Our Rita shows it: she did not stay in the pulpit, but rather she went among the needy. There she found Christ and the path to holiness, "in the field". The saying goes: new year, new life. I wish you a wonderful life for 2022, in the continuous search for greatness in holiness, among and for others. Because holiness is not a privileged position or a title, but a mission directed towards others, with gratitude, compassion and love, just like the Lord.



by Rita Gentili

Lives hanging by a thread



We are like
animals
fighting over
food here

The word of the Gospel is turned into action in the church of Santa Lucia al Gonfalone, in Rome, a stone's throw from Piazza Navona, with the service that Father Franco Incampo, together with numerous volunteers and benefactors, has been offering for over 20 years to those in need. These include immigrants, homeless people, desperate people without a home or family, people who have lost their jobs or who are just looking for help not to give up and are trying to start over. They are mostly foreigners, but also many Italians. When I met them, it was Sunday, the day of the meal: a bag with a first course, second course, side

dish, fruit, bread and water. "I live on a social pension," a lady told me, "but it's hard to make it to the end of the month between rent, bills and food." "I go back and forth between a dormitory and the hospital," added another 45-year-old woman from Tuscany. "I have health problems and I can't work." We listened to a grey-haired man with sunglasses and sportswear, who didn't seem to need this kind of help. Yet, with resigned irony, he began: "We always fall downwards. I raised two children like flowers, everyone envied them, then something unspeakable happened that led to this situation, which I hope is only temporary." The volunteers were about to

serve lunch and the people in line were starting to cheer. “After we have lost everything,” continues the gentleman, “they also take away our dignity. We are like animals fighting over food here.” At these words, the young woman intervened to say: “No, I’m not losing my dignity by having a meal. If I were to steal, if I were to prostitute myself, then I would lose it.” Then, a voice came from outside the group, that of a man who had heard that I am from the city of Saint Rita: “I was in Cascia in August 1990, to play at the piano bar.” I tried to ask what happened to that musician, but he put up an insurmountable barrier. I turned to another gentleman with a Roman accent: “I’ll take my meal home, at least I eat something good on Sundays.” Another man, also Roman, echoed him: “Blessed is he who has a house”, and then, addressing me alone, he added: “I wouldn’t give this meal to someone who has a home. They can cook, I live under the arcades.” Family problems is the vague answer he gave me when I asked what happened to him. People didn’t have much desire to tell their stories. On Monday I was among them again because Father Franco gives out a croissant and a cappuccino after the

morning Mass and then starts his listening service. There I found Rosa (fictional name), who didn’t hesitate to give me some answers as she showed me photos of her children and grandchildren on her mobile phone. Rosa came to Santa Lucia with her brother’s gas bill: “47 euros, or they’ll cut him off. He’s not working, he’s hurt his foot. My husband has his pension, but he’s tired of paying for him too. I bring the bill here, they pay it and then I go back to get the receipt.” She left at 5.30 in the morning to be among the first to get in line. With her, there are those who came to ask for phone credit, those looking for clothing or a hygiene product. Marta (another fictional name) also arrived by bike. A very young girl, of Sardinian origins and a seamstress by profession, she lost her job due to Covid and, since she decided not to get vaccinated, she is struggling to re-establish herself on the market. A phone top-up and some clothes are what she needs to be able to once again unpack the two suitcases that temporarily contain her whole life. Thus ended my encounter with these lives hanging on a thread, dependent on a gesture of humanity, namely that carried out tirelessly by Father Franco because, he says, “this is what the Gospel tells us to do.”

IN A WORD

*edited by
Fr. Vittorino Grossi OSA*

“And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

*(Gospel of Luke
13:30)*

With this sentence, the Holy Scripture reminds us that for the Lord there is no first and last, we are all equally beloved children. Our poor discriminatory categories are doomed to failure. It is therefore necessary to align ourselves with the motherhood of God common to all and with the brotherhood of Jesus, which encompasses everyone. Saint Rita understood this when she did not want to create any more family feuds following the killing of her husband. We, her devotees, want to follow her in this mental shift.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Rita

Oh omnipotent and eternal God, who in Saint Rita of Cascia gave us a shining example of union with you in prayer and of service and love for our brothers and sisters, allow us, by overcoming our selfishness and laziness through her intercession, to imitate her by experiencing your merciful love and her brotherly protection through trial. Amen.



by Marta Ferraro

A priest at the service of the needy

“I have chosen the lifestyle of Jesus”:
Marta Ferraro interviews Don Luciano Locatelli,
agent of the Caritas Diocesana of Bergamo



The best
way to live
out my role
as a priest

The Pope asks for a Church that goes towards the other, like a field hospital. Don Luciano, with your work, you are close to all the most marginal groups: the elderly, the sick, children, the homeless, asylum seekers, drug addicts. How did this desire to serve the other arise?

“Before joining the diocesan clergy of Bergamo, I was part of the congregation of the fathers of the Santissimo Sacramento (Blessed Sacrament), better known as the “Sacramentini”. I became a priest with them in 1988 and I left for a mission in Congo, where I remained for 10 years. This experience marked me deeply and, when I was called back to Italy, I continued with this commitment to the weakest and poorest groups, because it seemed to me the best way to live out my role as a priest. After leaving the congregation, I asked to be able to continue my activity in Caritas, where I still deal with services to support people, such as listening, welcoming and managing the dormitory.”

So, you chose to live out your role as a priest in Caritas? “Yes,

this is my way of embodying the message of Jesus. He always favoured people who have no voice, who don’t count. That’s why I chose his lifestyle. Of course, as well as the heavy burden of suffering that I come into contact with every day, there is also the beauty of discovering unexpected corners of life. My bishop wrote a significant pastoral letter last year, the title of which was ‘Serve life, where life happens’. So that’s what I decided to do.”

Why should we all volunteer?

“First: someone deciding to volunteer shouldn’t do it to solve their personal problems. Volunteering is not a cure. Second: when faced with failure, we must always start over. I often work with drug addicts and the cycle always repeats, but I have to keep the perspective that I am not the solution. I can accompany them and help them find an open door, but it is the others who must take their lives in their hands. I believe that volunteering simply means choosing Jesus’ lifestyle, because to believe in Jesus is not to adhere to a doctrinal system, but to



I like Saint Rita because she is a normal saint, but she left her mark

undertake his way of doing in one's own flesh, which is completely oriented towards the happiness of the other."

In your experience, have you ever turned to Saint Rita? "A curious thing happened to me. I knew Saint Rita superficially. Then, while I was studying in Brussels, I went to the church of Saint Mary Magdalene, which was frequented by sex workers. Inside there is a chapel dedicated to the saint and I was amazed because the church

is bare, but the statue of Rita was always full of flowers. Then I said to myself: 'It is really true that she is the saint of impossible cases'. When I came to Cascia, I understood. I like Saint Rita because she is a normal saint, a woman of her time who illuminated her era as best she could, but she left her mark precisely because of that. I like her normality, because hers is not a light that blinds, it is rather a soft light that reaches everywhere."

IN CASCIA, FOR THE FRIENDS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE CONFERENCE

Don Luciano Locatelli was the speaker at the "Friends of Saint Augustine" conference, which took place in Cascia from 30 October to 1 November 2021. The title was: "Jesus of Nazareth: from reli-

gion to faith". Don Locatelli led the meetings, discussions, meditation and dialogue. "We started from the post-pandemic times, sharing the image of the Church that each of us carries within and discussing

the difficulties that this Church is experiencing. Together, we reflected on how to start afresh by following the figure of Jesus, his message, his lifestyle and the idea of God that he himself puts forward."



by Father Rocco Ronzani OSA

Reflection of God's mercy

From the “Lazaretto” to the suffering of the world

There is a wounded humanity that needs to touch Jesus' mantle and heal

In Rita's time, there was a place of hospitality for pilgrims, travellers and the sick in Roccaporena, the saint's home village. It was a historic and venerable institution, a manifestation of the charity of the Christian people who always took care of the sick, the weakest and the despised over the centuries. Today this place is known as the “Lazaretto” (Field Hospital) and is placed under the protection of Our Lady of Conception (Annunciation) represented in a simple, rustic, very beautiful fresco dating back to the sixteenth century. The name “Lazaretto” suggests that, over time, it was also used to handle the plague epidemics that hounded Umbria

throughout its long history.

According to historical tradition, Saint Rita often went to assist the sick and the pilgrims hospitalised there. Rita knew well the meaning of suffering and pain, and by touching Jesus' “mantle of mercy” (his divine Word, the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, and many other graces) she was healed, in the depths of her heart, and she healed many from the evil of hatred. Still today “there is a wounded humanity that needs to touch the cloak of Jesus and heal” and for this reason it seeks and finds Saint Rita on its path. We can look at her as a mirror reflecting the goodness and mercy of the Lord Jesus towards sick people in

Still today, many people turn to the saint.
Rita is always ready to help and welcome them



TRACES OF RITA

body and spirit. “Her greatness,” said a good bishop, “does not lie in the number of graces she manages to obtain, but in having touched the mantle of Jesus: in fact, she does not keep the devotees for herself but sends them back to him, acting as ferry to let them touch his cloak. Thus Rita helps heal the wounds that each of us carries within. And we too are called on to become Jesus’ mantle, re-

peating his gestures and seasoning our days with his attitudes and those testified to us by the Gospel. We all recognise ourselves as sick and beggars: Rita leads us to touch this cloak and ensure that each of us becomes its fringe.” Let us also ask Saint Rita, and our saints, to touch the “mantle” of Jesus and to know how to share “our mantles” with everyone every day, spiritually and materially.

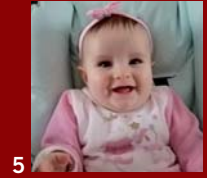
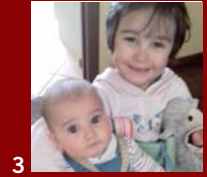
THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

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 Lamontanara (Conversano BA - Italy)
 Armando Giovanetti (Schio VI - Italy)
 Artemio Rodoni (Biasca - Switzerland)
 Carmine Anania (Ciro Marina KR - Italy)
 Costantina Scarafile (Cesano Boscone MI - Italy)
 Ermes Romagnoli (Cavallirio NO - Italy)
 Giorgio Mancini (Arcinazzo RM - Italy)
 Letizia Bricca (Collecchio PR - Italy)
 Lidia Paglino (Novara - Italy)
 Lina Mastropietro (Canada)
 Maria Felici (Cascia PG - Italy)
 Maria Assunta Rosa (Nocera Umbra PG - Italy)
 Maria Teresa Di Porzio (Cascia PG - Italy)
 Marina Morazzoni (Cardano al Campo VA - Italy)
 Mario Maisto (Pontecagnano SA - Italy)
 Norma Volpato Trombetta (Toronto - Canada)
 Pasqua Verginella (Grado GO - Italy)
 Pasquale Rita Lombardi (Cervinara AV - Italy)
 Quinto Di Felice (Sezze Scalo LT - Italy)
 Renato Lorenzi (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)
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 Rita Perego Sardi (Cologno Monzese MI - Italy)
 Rita Pinciaroli (Tolentino MC - Italy)
 Rita Ruatti (Bolzano - Italy)
 Rosanna Massari (Collegiacone di Cascia PG - Italy)
 Trudy Venetz (Switzerland)
 Vincenzo Sarnari (Rome)
 Virgilio Lupi (Norcia PG - Italy)

SMILING AT LIFE

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



1. Greta Anna Gassi (Italy)

2. Leonardo Sinigaglia (Rome - Italy)

3. Marta and Emma Rastello (Modena - Italy)

4. Melissa Rita Fresi (Arzachena SS - Italy)

5. Rachele Rita Bergomi (Tornata CR - Italy)

6. Thomas and Asia Fai (Cugliate Fabiasco VA - Italy)



la Casa di Santa Rita

Quando la famiglia si allarga

Help us to carry out the nuns'
new housing project

“If it were already possible to stay in the Home of Saint Rita (La Casa di Santa Rita) with my daughter Maria, I would go tomorrow! I hope that it will happen soon and that many generous people will help with the renovations.” This is how Geltrude Garrisi, known to everyone as Gina, answered us when she learned about the new project by the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia. It is called **“The Home of Saint Rita”** (La Casa di Santa Rita) and it will host families who cannot pay for rent or a hotel, guaranteeing their presence to the patients hospitalised in the hospital in Cascia. Gina is from the province of Agrigento and Maria, who is 33, suffers from Williams syndrome, a genetic disease: she has a speech delay and needs a wheelchair to go long distances. Her parents did everything they could to guarantee her the treatments she needed and to follow her at all times, even though the centre closest to their home is a good two-hour drive away. “For years,” says Gina, “I commuted alone, because my husband worked. Then I couldn’t

take it anymore and now we go once a year. My biggest regret is that if we could have reached other facilities, maybe Maria would be more independent by now.” This is why we want to make the Home of Saint Rita (La Casa di Santa Rita) a reality as soon as possible, as a **240 sqm apartment on the 2nd floor of the Cascia Hospital**, which is a national rehabilitation centre of excellence. Patients with neurodegenerative diseases, who come from many Italian cities, are hospitalised here. The **Saint Rita of Cascia non-profit Foundation is raising funds** to support the nuns’ project to start and complete the renovations, which will make the apartment safe and welcoming for many families. The **first goal is to raise € 130,000** to bring the systems up to standard and install heating. Then, we will build the entrance staircase and finish the rooms and furnishings. It is an ambitious project, but we know that we will make it thanks to every contribution, even the smallest. Help us and together it will be wonderful to tell Gina and Maria that they really can go tomorrow!



with
60
euros

with
35
euros

with
25
euros



PRAYER TO BLESSED MARIA TERESA FASCE

Secretary of Saint Rita of Cascia

Blessed Mother Teresa,
there is an irrepressible need for love in everyone's heart.
However, people often follow the wrong teacher of love
and become unable to love. There are so many of them!
You understood that God is the only
true teacher of Love, because God is love!
In the footsteps of St. Augustine, you repeated: "Late have I loved you,
O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you."
Following Saint Rita, you discovered that the Cross
is the home of God's Love among us.
Pray for us so that we will not be deceived
by the false teachers of love!
Pray for us so that we hear the cry of love
that comes from the wounds of Crucified Jesus!
Help us to respond with our lives
to become mirrors and echoes of God's love
for all those who approach us. Amen

Cardinal Angelo Comastri

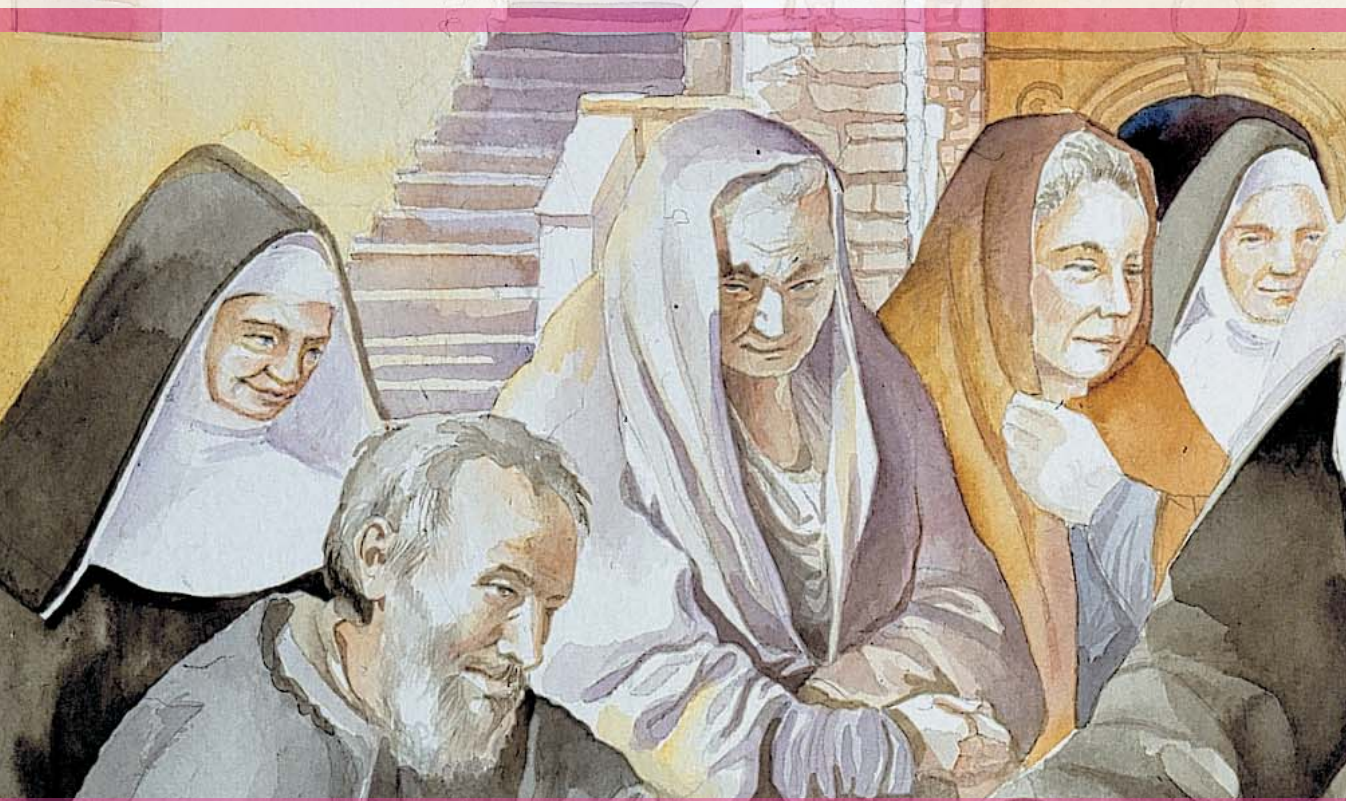




Blessed Teresa Fasce, portrait of a 20th century woman

“I want it even though it costs,
I want it because it costs,
I want it at any cost”

Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce



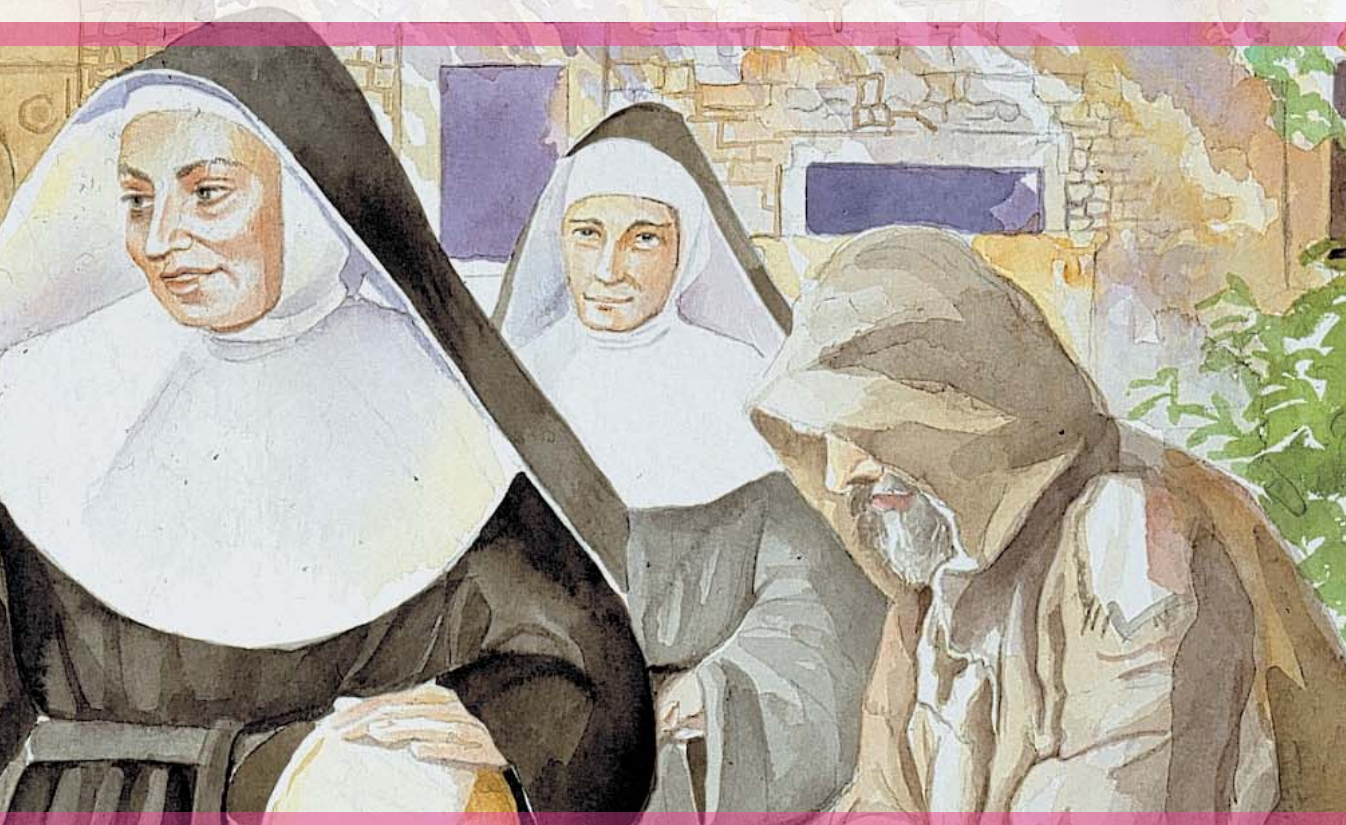
Heart in the sky and feet on the ground

The Abbess and politics

by Mauro Papalini,
Augustinian historian

Politics always more or less directly influenced the life of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. When she was elected abbess for the first time (12 August 1920), the free state was dying and the advent of fascism was near. Because of the role she held, the beatified woman dealt with political, local

and national authorities on a daily basis. Apart from a few exceptions, she always found friendly people in Cascia who supported her in her initiatives. On a national level, Mother Fasce had continuous and non-formal relations with the House of Savoy, and especially with Queen Elena and Princess Giovanna, who



later became Queen of Bulgaria; Queen Elena visited Cascia and the monastery. She also wrote notes to Mussolini and his wife Rachele about important events. On the occasion of the feast of Saint Rita, the Mother sent the saint's roses to the Pope, to Queens Elena and Giovanna and to other authorities, while in November she sent them the grapes produced by the prodigious vine.

They all responded with messages of gratitude. Was this opportunism? No, rather practicality: Blessed Maria Teresa was a woman of great contemplation, with her heart in heaven, but she was extremely practical and concrete, with her feet on the ground.

In 1925 in particular, when de-

signs for the new temple of Saint Rita began, it was important to have good relations with the political authorities given the extreme difficulty of the undertaking.

This tactic of hers bore good results: the monastery of Cascia became increasingly famous and its abbess was highly appreciated. Her attitude was one of great respect towards the authorities, never of flattery, and there is no evidence that she supported fascism. We know that she did not agree with Italy's entry into the war on 10 June 1940: although she did not say it openly, it is clear from the heartfelt tones with which she spoke of the terrible effects of the war.

The
 monastery
 became
 famous and
 its abbess
 highly
 appreciated

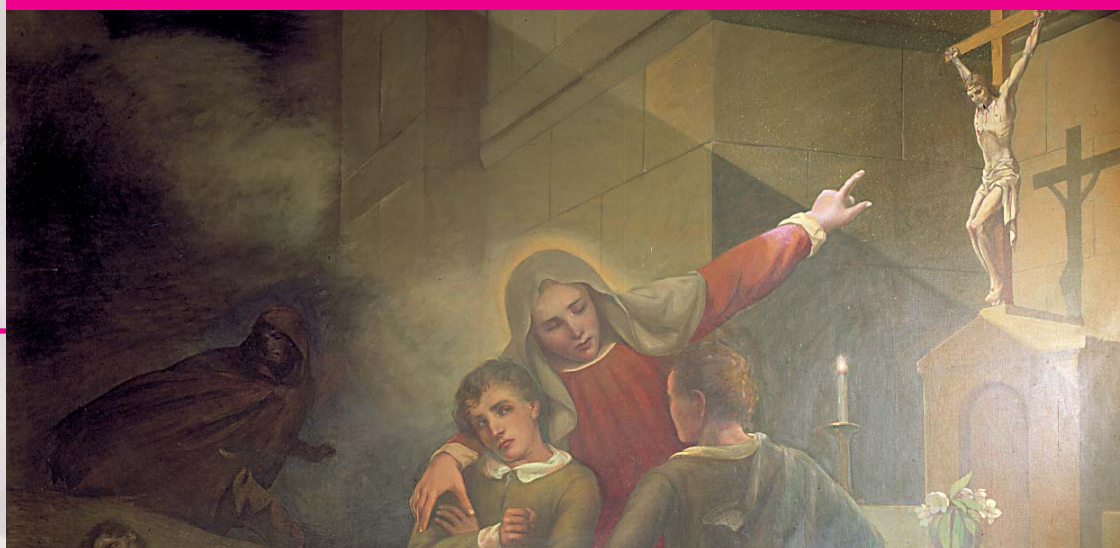
THE WORKS OF BLESSED MOTHER FASCE

She built the Basilica but never entered it

As abbess, Maria Teresa Fasce strove for the construction of the Basilica of Saint Rita to better accommodate pilgrims, but it was not easy. From 1925 to her death (18 January 1947) the Mother found herself at the centre of a series of occasionally dishonest interests, which she unmasked without mercy. She behaved like a true leader, managing the very complex phases that led to the construction of the “new temple of Saint Rita” with ease but also great effort. She had to

negotiate the bureaucratic quarrels and she fought hard not to be overwhelmed by those who wanted to influence the progress of the work. Finally, she was touched by the same fate as Moses: he saw the promised land from a distance, but did not enter it (Deuteronomy 32, 48-52). Thus Mother Fasce had time to see the cross on the roof of the new temple but not the inauguration, which took place on 18 May 1947, precisely four months after her death. (MP)

RITA AND TERESA



By firmly practicing Christ's love, peace and forgiveness, in a time when hatred and revenge were normal, Saint Rita managed to subvert and change the society of the time. She reconciled many hearts, including those of her husband's family, who lived in resentment after his murder. Rita also led them to forgiveness.

The tenacity and courage of Blessed Maria Teresa emerged in her relations with political institutions during the complex construction of the Basilica. Trusting in God, the Mother made her voice heard, with patience and determination, overcoming many bureaucratic and diplomatic obstacles. She handled many pressures, without abandoning her virtues.



by Father Giustino Casciano OSA,
Prior Provincial of the
Augustinians of Italy

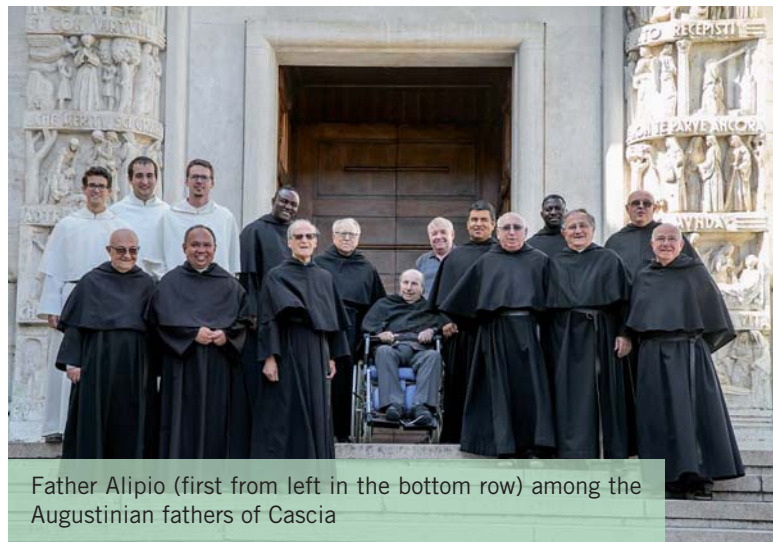
AUGUSTINIANS

Thank you Lord for the gift of Father Alipio

A whole life given to Jesus and to Saint Rita

On 7 October in the Basilica of Saint Rita we bid farewell to Father Alipio Vincenti, an Augustinian born in Capodacqua di Foligno on 13 March 1935. After training in the Augustinian Order he was ordained a priest at the age of 24. In reality, his baptismal name was Angelo, but before the Second Vatican Council it was customary to change it upon becoming a friar: at the time he first professed his vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on 28 September 1952, the superiors gave him the name Alipio, after the inseparable friend of St. Augustine. Father Alipio was an excellent devotee and priest and, as a man of culture with a degree in history and philosophy, he taught in the schools of Terni for years, helping many students to mature in their studies and lives. He was demanding, precise and prepared, and he shone in his mission as a teacher thanks to his balance and strong sense of justice and impartiality. In Cascia, the signs of his work are indelible. He was involved in the design and negotiations to build the new presbytery of the Basilica with the artist Giacomo Manzù. It was inaugurated in 1981, on the sixth centenary of the birth of Saint Rita. Given his competence and passion, he was also involved in the works in the Peni-

tentiary and in the Lower Basilica. His work as a collaborator in the postulation for the cause of today's Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce was great and precious. Having retired from teaching, in Cascia Father Alipio held the office of treasurer,



Father Alipio (first from left in the bottom row) among the Augustinian fathers of Cascia

head of the House of Spiritual Exercises and of the Sanctuary library, and ordinary confessor of the Monastery of Saint Rita. We thank the Lord for the gift of Father Alipio to the Augustinian Family of Italy. Let us pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to tell him: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness" (Gospel of Matthew 25, 21. 23).

In Cascia,
the signs of
his work are
indelible

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.



Will you be at the 2022 General Meeting?

We will be waiting for you in Cascia from 1 to 3 April

We invite the members of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita and all those who want to know more to participate in the general meeting to be held in Cascia from Friday 1 to Sunday 3 April.

The meeting will be organised by groups from the Sicily region and its theme will be "One heart and one soul, reaching out to God".

FRIDAY 1 APRIL

21:30 *Hall of Peace*: meeting for religious assistants and group leaders

SATURDAY 2 APRIL

09:00 *Sanctuary Avenue*: welcome for groups

09:30 "Via della spina" (Way of the Thorn) prayer along the avenue

14:30 Entrance to the Sanctuary for the visit and personal prayer at the Urn of Saint Rita

16:30 *Hall of Peace*: Conference "One heart and one soul, reaching out to God"

With Father Felipe Suárez Izquierdo, OSA.

21:00 *Hall of Peace*: Eucharistic Adoration and new affiliations

SUNDAY 3 APRIL

09:30 *Hall of Peace*: Gathering of groups with banners and uniforms

Prayer of the rosary to Saint Rita

10:00 Eucharistic Concelebration

11:00 Procession with the statue of Saint Rita



For information: tel. +39 (0)743 76221
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by Rita Gentili

Lorette's story from Canada

Little Rita introduced the figure of the miracle worker to her aunt

Stories of devotion to Saint Rita even reach us from as far away as Canada. In particular, this beautiful testimony brings together Italy, Lebanon, Syria and Canada. It was told to us by Lorette Hathout Kibrité, a woman whose personal story embraces all four of these countries, the last of which has been her home for 33 years now. Lorette, in fact, lives in Montreal with her children and it is here, in the Saint Sauveur Melkite Cathedral, that she participates in the activities of a group of Saint Rita devotees who meet every Thursday to honour the saint and arrange celebrations in her honour. Lorette's devotion to the saint from Cascia has a very specific starting date: 1986. It was in that year that Lorette hosted her niece Rita in her home in Damascus, Syria, where she was then living. She was

a nine-year-old Lebanese girl bearing the trauma and pain of those who experience the drama of civil war in their own country, which killed her brother and kept her father poised between life and death. Little Rita introduced her aunt to the figure of the miracle worker, to whom Lorette addressed her invocations every evening, together with her niece and her three children. Six months later, little Rita's father returned home from the hospital and the child returned to her country. "Saint Rita had listened to our prayers," Lorette tells us. Since that day, she has never stopped turning to Saint Rita. Thus, once in Canada, she began to go to the Saint Sauveur Melkite Cathedral every week to attend the Holy Mass in honour of the miracle worker, who became an example for her, a model to draw inspiration from, especially in her roles as a wife, mother and widow. Lorette lost her 38-year-old husband in an accident when she was only 34.

"I was expecting him at home for a party with friends. He called me and said 'I won't be late; I'll be back soon'. But he never came back and his friends came to our house to say goodbye to him." The young woman was left alone with three children to raise: a 9-year-old boy and two girls, aged 6 and 1. Lorette went from the greatest happiness to the deepest pain, but she



Lorette with her nieces Tania and Lea Rita



A moment from the feast of Saint Rita in 2019 in the church of Saint Sauveur in Montreal

She lost her husband in an accident when she was only 34 years old

went on by trusting in the saint. Twenty years ago, she was diagnosed with leukaemia, which the doctors only discussed in terms of palliative care. “In those days I found myself praying incessantly to Saint Rita, who listened to me once again; despite what the doctors told me, I was cured.” It was with this awareness that Lorette commented: “How could I not be devoted to Saint Rita? I learned to pray, to meditate in silence, to suffer, to

bow my forehead patiently and to thank the Lord, to tell him your will be done.” As well as the prayers recited in her corner of devotion at home, Lorette also attends the prayer group dedicated to Saint Rita that was established in the cathedral of Saint Sauveur Melkite Cathedral in her city in 2008. Initially comprising just 4-5 people, today the group fills the church on the occasion of celebrations in honour of the saint.

THE DEVOTED RITIANS IN MONTREAL

The prayer group in the church of Saint Sauveur was created by Houda Moussallier, a woman who met Saint Rita in 2007, when she was diagnosed with cancer and received a holy card of the miracle worker from her sister-in-law, a devotee of the saint, with an invitation to entrust herself to her intercession. On the Sunday before the surgery, returning from communion, Houda noticed a depiction of Saint Rita in the church that she had never seen before. “It was like she was alive and telling me ‘go ahead, don’t be afraid, I’ll be with you.’” Once healed, Houda went to Cascia and then formed the prayer group together with her friends Dalai Haffar, Sonia Sultan, Samia Sayegh and Denise Elian, author of the Byzantine-style icon venerated in the parish of San Salvatore. The faithful get to know the saint by word of mouth or by following the examples of their families. Like Samia, who learned entrust herself to Saint Rita by imitating her mother and who has now passed on this love to her grandchildren as well. Since 2010, the church has also kept a relic of the saint, which has further strengthened the devotion of the faithful.



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

The heart before appearances

My brothers, your faith is immune against personal favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for

expectations must be met with kindness and understanding, because we want everyone to feel welcomed in the house of the Lord and of Rita. Despite our good intentions, we are not always able to do this and we trust in your patience.

However, it is an important exercise, because we are the welcoming embrace of the Father, called on to facilitate personal encounters with the Lord through Saint Rita, so that she can whisper into your heart the words of life you need. It is Rita, in fact, who leads her devotees by the hand to Jesus, whose signs of passion and mercy she herself bears! We pay particular attention to those who suffer most and those who have great responsibilities, before God and people. Therefore, in the celebrations or in entering the Urn of Saint Rita, we try to give the first places or permission to those who suffer most, or to those who bear the weight of an institutional office, hoping that the closeness with Rita will illuminate their hearts with the Love of God. "Famous" people also come who influence public opinion: showing faith and devotion with courage can help many people who trust and admire them. For us, what matters is to bring everyone to Christ, considering the heart more than appearances, service more than glory, communion more than excelling.



Such diverse
humanity
must be met
with
kindness

you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there", have you not discriminated among yourselves? (Epistle of James 2: 2-5). James's invitation to avoid favouritism is a delicate topic in a Sanctuary such as ours, where, thanks be to God, people come from all over the world, with different sensitivities and cultures and from every social class. Furthermore, many have experience of faith, while others, such as tourists and onlookers, do not yet know the Lord. A humanity so diverse in terms of experience and



by Mother Maria Rosa
Bernardinis OSA

I BRING YOU JESUS

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

Today I am bringing you to an encounter with Jesus at a moment when he was “uncomfortable” for the men of his time, for those of ours and also for those to come. I’m speaking of Jesus as a servant to love, meek and humble. Let us enter the logic of service to understand the “good news” that he communicated to us with his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. We will never stop getting to know Jesus and his mystery of love! He is an inexhaustible gold mine, a source that does not dry up. Knowing him, we know ourselves better, and let ourselves be guided by his Spirit.

Jesus manifested his identity as a Servant from the very beginning. In the synagogue of Nazareth, he said: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”* His mission as a Servant of Jew and Gentile is progressive and ranges from vocation to service, from difficulties to opposition, from rejection to violent death. Yet, Isaiah writes, *“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied... Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”* So, Jesus lived by obeying his Father not out of duty, but out of love, making His will his own.

The mission was clear to Jesus, but not so clear to the disciples. In fact, on their way to Jerusalem,

To serve is to reign

they argued about who was the greatest among them! Jesus said: *“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”*

And then at the Last Supper he gave a lesson to all the disciples of past and present. *“...he began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with a towel... Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”* To serve is to reign. We have a lot to ponder and work on, right?



*If anyone
wants to be
first, let him
be the last
of all*



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

That rose, a gift from Mother Fasce

The story of Maria and her life
marked by devotion

She was in
Cascia for
her first
communion
in 1946

Since I have been narrating the pilgrimages of the devotees of Saint Rita, I have listened to many stories, but this was a real gift for me. Some time ago I received a letter from Mrs Maria Di Schino, 86, written by hand. I read it in one go and shortly after I was on the phone with Maria, who described her meeting with Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. As a great admirer and

devotee of the beatified woman, I could not miss the opportunity to speak with someone who actually met her.

Maria told me that her first time in Cascia was for her first communion, back in 1946. She went to Cascia with her mother Rosina and an aunt. Her father stayed at home, in Fontana Liri, in the province of Frosinone, to work in the fields. "It was right after the war, there was hunger and a lot of poverty. We went on an old bus. I remember that once we arrived near Cascia, in order to cross a bridge, the few passengers who were on it got off and we walked to the other side to get back on the bus." It was a completely different journey from those we are used to today, which shows just how stubborn Mother Rosina was in wanting little Maria's first communion to be in Cascia.

Once the rite in the church was finished, her mother expressed a desire to go and greet the Mother Abbess, who at the time was none other than Blessed Mother Fasce. "I was so disappointed at that moment," Maria recalled upset. "Children only want to receive a toy or a sweet.



Maria's devotion was sparked thanks to her mother. Here they are in Cascia, on one of the many pilgrimages

In all that poverty, I hoped the nun would give me something like that and instead she gave me the rose of Saint Rita. How many times, then, have I regretted not having been able to appreciate that gesture, not having realised my luck right away.”

Maria's devotion to Saint Rita came about thanks to her mother who one day, saw a picture of the saint hanging on the wall in a friend's house by chance. Rosina didn't actually know the saint's story, but she liked that painting and decided to propose an exchange to her friend. She said to her: “Will you give me this picture and I'll give you one of Our Lady?” The friend accepted the barter and since then Saint Rita has been a part of Maria's family and life.

Over time, when Italy came out of the difficult post-war period, her mother Rosina became a point of reference for the community of Fontana Liri through her devotion to Saint Rita, and she organised pilgrimages to Cascia for decades. Maria recalled, “The same devotees signed up every year and then new ones were added. And for a few years, Mum took up to four buses full of pilgrims to Cascia. There was such satisfaction in seeing people who had not confessed for years arrive in Cascia and find themselves once again in silence and in prayer before the saint!”

“I always went back,” Maria continued. “Even when I married, I went with my husband and children. At least once a year. And my children, Lorella and Stefano, also had their first communion in



Still today, the nuns give out rose petals to the devotees of Rita

Cascia, in 1971. Now I don't feel like traveling that far anymore and so I tell my daughter: ‘You go to Saint Rita and give her a kiss from me’. In Cascia, I became very fond of Father Luigi Giuliani, in whom I confided in until shortly before his death. He always guided people at the entrance to the monastery and when I met him it was always a moment of jubilation.”

Now Maria turns to Saint Rita and Blessed Mother Fasce from afar, happy to have had the great privilege of knowing the woman, Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, who gave her that rose that did so much good to her and her family all these years. (MF)

I regretted not having realised my luck right away

TELL US YOUR PILGRIMAGE STORY

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



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

At the school of charity with Rita and Mother Teresa

C*aritas Christi urget nos.* In other words, Christ's charity urges us (second letter to the Corinthians 5:14). Saint Rita and the Blessed Mother Fasce took up and accepted this appeal by Saint Paul. What pushed them towards the last, the poor, the needy, the afflicted? Charity... learned at the school of the inner Master, Christ, and at the school of the

no charity. "A faith without giving, a faith without gratuitousness is an incomplete faith. It is a weak faith, a faith that is ill. We could compare it to rich and nourishing food that nonetheless lacks flavour, or a more or less well-played game, but without a goal. A faith without works of charity makes us sad." (Pope Francis, Angelus 10/10/2021). Rita and Mother Teresa lived and implemented a courageous, lively and loving faith in their lives, which pushed them to perceive the new, good and beautiful life that comes from the Gospel. Charity is not a performance. It is not possible without the ongoing action of Grace in us. Thérèse of Lisieux affirmed this: "When I am charitable it is only Jesus acting in me." He acts, embracing us with His "tenderness of love that sets us free".

Saint Rita and Mother Fasce embodied this dynamic of grace with their whole being and in their original way of being Augustinian nuns. Their giving was not heroism, workaholicism or idealistic tenacity. "In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone," St. John of the Cross reminds us. In a very personal way, inspired by their 'feminine genius' (a term dear to St. John Paul II), Rita and Mother Teresa bore witness to that charity that loves to 'break' the rules and, in their case, the Rule... because everything starts from the heart of God...



Charity is the
grace of God
visible in
gestures and
works

spiritual Master, Holy Father Augustine! From the former they learned compassion for their hungry, weary neighbours, for the straggling sheep without a shepherd; from the latter, the fully Augustinian passion for God and for people understood as something other than me, a neighbour. Charity is the grace of God that is visible in gestures and works: it is a certainty of faith that without grace there is

After entering the Monastery, Rita continued to walk the streets of Cascia and Roccaporena, (thanks in part to the fact that cloister was of a type that did not yet have the tight meshes brought about by the Council of Trent in the mid-1500s) to weave together relationships of peace, mercy, benevolence and consolation. In 1938 Mother Teresa Fasce accomplished a masterpiece of charity and motherhood by providing a shelter for orphaned girls (who were known as the Little Bees, however, to avoid adding pain to pain) in a cloistered monastery.

St. Augustine wrote: "Listen then from where you can do good. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Exposition on Psalm 144, 10).

Be humble and supportive. Solidarity tries, with difficulty, to make its way through today's throwaway culture. It forces us to look to the other and to give ourselves to the other with love. Humility is Jesus (Augustine was in love with the humble Jesus), it is the choice to be small, to be with the little ones, with the excluded, to be among us, wounded and sinful humanity. Rita and Mother Teresa were all this, they bore witness to charity and they ask us to imitate them, to be holy and perfect, as Holy and Perfect is our Father who is in Heaven.

They bore witness to charity and they ask us to imitate them

"Doing is a word that indicates practicality, dexterity, creativity, involvement. It asks us not to stand by, to take part, to take sides, not to remain neutral. The vocation will not come down from heaven already fully completed, like a ready-made project packaged down to every detail by the hands of God. Vocational research and its discernment requires responsibility, that ability to respond that involves our freedom, our hands, our acts. The vocation arises from a personal encounter with the Lord and his Word recognised as a promise; vocation is never just 'for me' but always 'for someone else' in service. It is life spent for the love of someone."
(All brothers, 116)

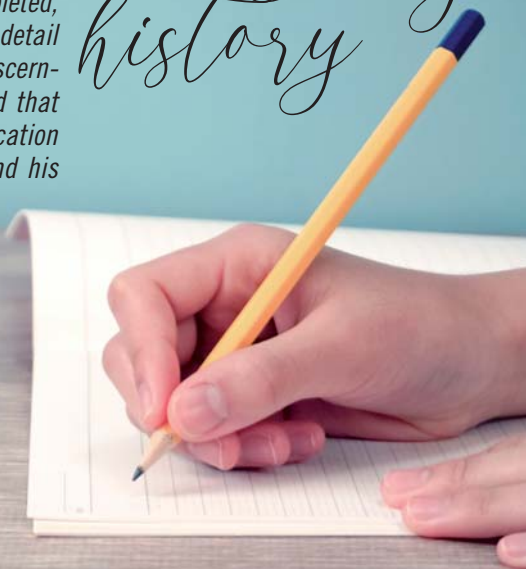
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from 8 (dinner) to 13 (breakfast) August 2022

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