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FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

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MESSENGERS OF RESURRECTION

Let us experience Easter through the proclamation of the women

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On the cover: Messengers of Resurrection
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Women are the key to Easter

In the first Easter, Jesus entrusted women with an essential task: the proclamation of the Resurrection. That morning, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas were at the tomb. It was to them that he delivered the message on which our faith is

founded, and that cry of joy, love and life spread around the world. Since then, the “good news” of those women has been repeated and has reached even the hardest of hearts. Without them, there would be no Easter and not even the Church, which is both daughter and mother of that proclamation, made possible by the courage and faith of women who always believed and followed Jesus, from his birth to his death on the cross, and to the new life! Therefore, like God, we are going into Easter through women, who are still the key to it. In times when female figures were subordinated to men, God surprised us by choosing women. His decision was not hierarchical. On the contrary, it shows us the right way, that of collaboration between male and female so that the presence of each is truly fruitful. Today,

women, who were protagonists of the Resurrection, are on the margins and are often forced to stop at the “Passion”, to be victims of men. Yet their voices still speak of joy, love and life, as they face the darkness anticipating the dawn and the beauty of a new day.

Let us learn the path of respect and equality from God. From the women, let us learn the ability to look ahead and be open to the incredible. Because Christ lives. Let us cry it out again and again, women and men together!



Happy Easter from the Augustinian Family of Cascia, from the Beehive of Saint Rita, from the Saint Rita of Cascia non-profit Foundation and from the editorial staff of the magazine From the Bees to the Roses!



by Rita Gentili

The courage to choose Life

Biblical scholar Rosanna Virgili on the role of women past and present



In the Gospels, the crucial moments of Easter see women centre stage. What did the Evangelists bring to light? “The Easter story, preceded by that of the passion and death of Jesus, presents women carrying out a function that was not typical for the time. It is true that, in that period, women had a certain leading role in the burial and anointing of people, but normally it was the men who accompanied the dead and took care of burying the deceased. The Evangelists emphasise the fact that it was women who had the courage to be with Jesus

until the end and to remain faithful to him, highlighting the absence of the disciples, who barricaded themselves in their houses for fear of being recognised as followers of Jesus. The faith of women is also highlighted in the account of the Resurrection, as the first and only witnesses of what happened. And it was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus gave the task of announcing his Resurrection. This role entrusted to women is not comparable to any other.”

The organisation of the Church did not follow the same path, however. Why was that so, in your opinion? “The explanation I give is linked to history. Christianity

comes from the Jewish religion, whose priests were men, and the clergy was not born from the Gospels but as an evolution of Roman institutional offices, which were held by men. In the first churches – communities that were formed at home – the eccle-



sial title holders were, in fact, women.”

Would the Church exist without women? “No, definitely not. First, because without Mary there would have been no Jesus. However, we must recognise that women have been overshadowed. The Church is very clerical. Women do not have access to ordained ministries and therefore do not have the same authority as men. However, they have a leading role in the Church's fundamental work, which is charity. Then there are women in theology, in study and in research, but they struggle. Finally, women are indispensable in the life of the Church: let's think about what would happen if they no longer went to mass. Numerically, the people of God are made up of women above all.”

What teaching can we draw from the sacrifice associated with the women of Scripture, but also with figures like Saint Rita? “I believe the theme of the woman's sacrifice for the good of others is linked to motherhood itself, also

anthropologically. In giving her life, the woman suffers and this has become a merit and a moral duty. This sense of suffering, of self-denial, however, is not typical of the Bible. The suffering is there but it is will. Let's think about Mary. She says yes to an angel without asking Joseph's permission, when no woman, at that time, had ownership of her own body, which was considered to be her father's and then her husband's. Both Mary and Saint Rita insisted on giving their lives to an extremely high cause; they were not mere tools in the hands of another. Rita wanted to break the tradition of revenge and in this she was very courageous. It's a very topical message if we think about how many girls within Mafia families are rejected by their mothers, who hold a grudge, because they choose to collaborate with the state. These saints and these biblical women suffer, risk and go without to defend life: this is a current notion that should be translated into today's culture.”

It was women who had the courage to be with Jesus until the end

SISTER NATHALIE, “FIRST WOMAN” AT THE SYNOD

Sister Nathalie Becquart is the first woman in history with the right to vote in the current Synod of Bishops, the world assembly convened by the Pope to form advice on the governance of the Church. We asked her about her post as undersecretary of the Synod. “I receive this call with faith, as a call from the Church and

therefore from God. I feel very small and limited in relation to this mission. It is a human and spiritual adventure. I try to give my best in a spirit of humility and service. I feel very attached to all the people of God and in particular to all the women who have served the Church and are committed to serving oth-

ers. The last two Synods have talked a lot about women in the Church, with strong calls to involve them more in the decision-making process, giving them more responsibility. The current Synod calls on the whole Church to walk together and women are invited to make their voices heard.” (RG)



by Nicoletta Di Benedetto

A woman who fights

You can't save yourself alone:
interview with Nicoletta Cosentino

She set up a
social
enterprise to
help other
women

At Easter, we learn just how present women were at the passion and resurrection of Christ. So I asked myself, why not tell the story of suffering and 're-birth' of a woman today? This is one of the many that the news brings to the attention of the general public, unfortunately not all of which have a happy ending like this one, or rather, the path of 'passion and resurrection' undertaken by the protagonist in question. I'm talking about Nicoletta

Cosentino, a 50-year-old woman living in Palermo, one of the many wives and mothers who are unwilling victims of the torture prison that the walls of a house can turn into when a couple's relationship becomes violent. What may first start out as psychological violence or subjugation then leads to continuous quarrelling and very often the woman only escapes from this through death. Fortunately, this was not the case with Nicoletta who, after years of mistreatment in which she suffered first psychological abuse and then heavier pressure and torture from her husband, managed to walk out the front door with her two children, who are now 11 and 14 years old. Like Saint Rita, Nicoletta had the strength and courage to look beyond the pain and start a new life. She managed to undertake a path of recovery from 2015 to 2019 in the "Le Onde Onlus di Palermo" anti-violence centre. Her 'rebirth' was not easy, she explained: "At a certain point I realised that this was not a vision of a relationship that could be used as a model for raising children. But it takes someone who is able to reveal the mechanisms of violence to you, who stands by you and takes you by the hand. The biggest problem



Nicoletta in the workshop of her social enterprise "Cuoche combattenti", which she runs with other women who have been victims of violence

TAKE AND READ



**Mulieres. Un viaggio alla scoperta
dell'universo femminile**
by Rosanna Bertini Conidi
Editore Prometheus

Speaking of women and rediscovering their presence throughout history, the book aims to help answer three questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? "Dealing with female situations has long been considered inappropriate or unimportant," writes the author. It was thought that women didn't have a story to tell. It's only in the past few decades that there has been a great flourishing of studies on women and there are now various research positions and attitudes being taken on this topic."

is fear." Although she can now be described as a woman 'reborn', our protagonist continues to attend the centre, first and foremost to help other women overcome their 'ordeals'. Indeed, she went much further by setting up a social enterprise called "Cuoche combattenti" (Fighting Cooks): an artisanal workshop carried out with other women who have been victims of violence, where they make baked goods, pastries and above all seasonal fruit jams and marm-

FEATURED

lades. "When I decided to fight, I felt a desire to involve as many women as possible. It was important not only to save myself but also others. I would not be saving them, but I wanted to help them save themselves." In addition to being authentic, because they are made with local raw ingredients, their products have another special feature: anti-violence labels. Each product carries a phrase that strives to "combat violence against women, strengthen self-esteem and personal freedom". Thus, the 'Cuoche combattenti' are a tool to combat abuse and reaffirm the value of women.

"With this in mind," says Nicoletta, "we thought of talking labels because these products pass through the hands of many women. This project gives some of them the opportunity to learn more and get information." Thanks to her initiative, Nicoletta was also awarded the title of Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic by the Head of State. It is an honour that she herself describes as "a recognition and a merit that also goes to the many anti-violence centres present in Italy".

It was
important
not only to
save myself
but also the
others

1522 SAVES LIVES

Nicoletta's story tells us that it is crucial for women to turn immediately to those who can help them out of the nightmare. In order to stand alongside women, the Italian Ministry for Equal Opportunities has set up the national anti-violence and stalking telephone number 1522: it is free and active 24 hours a day. There is also the 1522 app that can be downloaded to smartphones to chat with the operators and ask for help.



la Casa di
Santa Rita

Quando la famiglia si allarga

**LET'S LOOK TO
TOMORROW
TOGETHER**

We ended 2021 by starting to build a dream together. This is the Home of Saint Rita (La Casa di Santa Rita), the new project by the nuns, who want to create a place for hosting the families of the sick who are hospitalised in the Cascia hospital and are far from home. Now they are alone, but with a donation you can change things and help us make our dream come true.

Support the project in the name of Saint Rita and this year her feast will be even more wonderful for everyone!

These are some examples of how your help
can become a **brick, a home, a family,**
an expression of love.

• ♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ •



with
120
euros

You help us to create shared spaces and bring the warmth of family into the house



with
60
euros

You buy safety switches in one room and make those far away from home feel safe



with
35
euros

You contribute to the purchase of a radiator that warms the room and the hearts of those caring for a sick person



with
25
euros

You provide electric current to a room and bring a ray of light into the life of a patient

Here's how to support the **"Home of Saint Rita"** project

- **Bank transfer** IBAN IT64T0306905245100000003558
- **Post office** account no. 1010759072 made out to Fondazione Santa Rita da Cascia
For both methods, specify "The Home of Saint Rita" in the description
- **Credit card** and **paypal** on fondazione.santaritadacascia.org/donate-now
- **Qr Code** alternatively, you can scan the QR Code here to make your donation directly from your mobile phone





by Father Rocco Ronzani OSA

Woman of the thorn and of the Resurrection

Meditate
on the
mysteries of
the Passion
of Lord
Jesus

For the passion and the cross to the glory of the Resurrection! This is how we all pray in the oration that follows the recitation of the Angelus in the morning, at noon and in the evening, when we are invited to meditate with Mary on the central mysteries of our salvation. Even Saint Rita, listening to the words of the Franciscan preacher San Giacomo della Marca, was invited to meditate more diligently on the mysteries of the Passion of Lord Je-

sus and the meaning of the words of Saint Paul, who says: *I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.* (Letter to the Colossians 1, 24). For Rita, the preacher's words were like "burning coals that ignited her heart in the love of crucified Christ and, upon returning to the monastery, she immediately threw herself at the foot of a crucifix, praying there, meditating with heartfelt affection; this crucifix can still be seen today in the old oratory of the said monastery. Positioned at the foot of this crucifix in this way, she prayed to him with abundant tears that came out of her inflamed heart, and asked Jesus Christ to grant her the grace to feel and experience in her body what he had felt with one of the thorns of his most holy crown. These orations of hers were so fast, these prayers of our blessed Rita, that they deserved to be heard, since in the middle of her forehead... she felt not only the pain of stinging thorns, but there was one that remained, which made a wound, and it turned into a lesion that lasted for the rest of her life" (from A. Cavallucci, *Life of Blessed Rita of Cassia*, p. 90). Remaining faithful to the Gospel of suffering, even in the most dramatic moments of her existence, Rita

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Rita from 1923

My dear and beloved protector Saint Rita [...] the last but most secure refuge of your devotees is in you, in your tender heart. When the last hope fades, when the most terrible pain overflows, when death itself overwhelms relentlessly, it is enough for you to address a single word to Jesus, a single word of compassionate love, and He will immediately arbitrate any grace that works for any miracle. Not without reason have I placed all my confidence in you, my unlimited trust. Therefore, O most powerful Saint Rita, pray for me today as I ask you for a miracle. You can achieve it; you can grant it to me.

Extract of a prayer written by Argia Calvi - grandmother of Angela Guerzoni from Ravarino (MO)



For 15 years Saint Rita bore the stigmata of one of the thorns of Christ's crown on her forehead, a sign of love that gives life

Rita was a sign of God's love that transformed human history

was for Cascia – and still is for the whole world – a sign of the love of God who transforms human history with his grace, even at its darkest, and through pain he opens it to the joyful mystery of the Resurrection. In the Preface of the votive Mass of Saint Rita we read: “Her vital force was love!” This is Rita's secret: the love of Christ, according to the log-

ic of the Gospel, which brings us close in the intangible mystery of the man who suffers, which gives meaning to our pain and transforms everything. May the intercession of Saint Rita obtain the strength of love for us so that the Lord, through redemptive pain, makes us truly experience the joy of the Easter of Resurrection.

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.

Amelio Giust (Sicily - Italy)
Antonina Mileti (Cordoba - Argentina)
Artemio Campaci (Rovigo - Italy)
Fortunata Pirrotta (Venice - Italy)
Francesca Sabbadini Mossenta (Pasian di Prato UD - Italy)
Luisa Maria Napolano (Calvizzano NA - Italy)

Marcella Spadoni and Franco Rolla (La Spezia - Italy)
Maria Didio (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
Maria Domenica Giovinazzi (Palagiano TA - Italy)
Maria Teresa Mastrodomenico (Salerno - Italy)
Marisa Gernone in Schirone (Perugia - Italy)
Martha De Laurentiis (Los Angeles - United States of America)
Nonna Fausta (Potenza - Italy)
Pina Torchia (Cosenza - Italy)
Raffaele Salfi (Mangone CS - Italy)
Rosetta Rosanna Zublena (Vercelli - Italy)
Teresa Tschabold (Sacrofano RM - Italy)
Vanna Lagi and Silvano Margheri (Florence - Italy)
Vera Donati widow of Vincenzoni (Rome - Italy)

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.





Blessed Teresa Fasce, portrait of a twentieth century woman

“Our emblem is the cross and we are
happy to embrace it, especially when
it is imprinted on us”

Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce



The Abbess who gave voice to women

She laid claim to her dignity and that of the nuns

by Mauro Papalini,
Augustinian historian

If we think of the figure of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, the first thing that comes to mind is her strength, her determination. It is not just a question of character, but of a very precise conception that she had of people, especially women, including religious ones. She wanted her nuns to be hard-

working and strong women. She used to say “Jesus does not love dolls”, so she was very demanding when training novices. In the 27 years in which she was abbess she very often dealt with men of various backgrounds: Augustinian superiors, monsignors, architects, politicians, etc. While retaining the ut-



most respect for authority at all times, she nevertheless always laid a strong claim to her prerogatives and to those of the nuns when others would have liked her to stay quiet or to accept decisions meekly. She spoke to everyone with frankness and courage, even reprimanding men when necessary. In times when women had no say, her charisma earned her great respect from everyone. This behaviour of hers was never intended as political. She was certainly not a feminist, rather she put the word of God into practice: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). If God created them male and fe-

male it means that they all have the same dignity. On 2 June 1946, elections took place for the Constituent Assembly and the institutional referendum between the monarchy and the republic. Most significantly, it was the first time that Italian women voted. Mother Fasce also wanted to go there: after 40 years of seclusion, on that occasion she left the monastery, carried in triumph to the polling station by the Cascians, to exercise her right to vote. Although she was very attached to the House of Savoy, we nevertheless believe that this gesture should be interpreted as her convinced affirmation of the dignity of women and not for political reasons.

She left the monastery to exercise her right to vote

THE WORKS OF BLESSED MOTHER FASCE

The magazine brings Saint Rita to the world

22 May 1923 saw the creation of the bulletin “From the Bees to the Roses” by the Saint Rita Monastery, a formidable tool for spreading devotion to the great saint from Cascia everywhere. Mother Fasce was inspired by the “Messenger of the Child Jesus” of the sanctuary of same name in Arenzano, which she knew. During the long years in which the new temple was being built, this bulletin was the main link with the devotees, not only to raise awareness about

events by the monastic community but to receive the requests of those who could contact Rita directly, even from a distance. The magazine still reaches every home today: everyone can read it, from the simplest people to the most learned, because its style is simple and clear but always dignified. Undoubtedly, Mother Fasce had a great intuition: to create an active communion between Saint Rita and the crowd of devotees all over the world through the bulletin. (MP)

RITA AND TERESA



In a time when women had no power over their lives, Rita knew how to choose her own path. Guided by Love, she fearlessly went against the tide and asserted her vision, affirming herself as a woman of peace and forgiveness. The path she has traced is still followed by many women who look to her as a model.

Teresa fully embraced this mission she inherited from Rita. Looking at her courage, she put all her energy into bringing what mattered most to her heart to the attention of those who made the decisions. Believing in equality and dignity between women and men, she also encouraged her sisters to make their voices heard.



by Father Josef Sciberras OSA,
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

Fidelity and service in everyday life

Son of Mariano and Isabel, the Servant of God Agustín Liébana Del Blanco was born on 28 May 1923 in Guardo, Palencia, Spain. A few days after his birth, he was baptised. At the age of 12, he entered the Apostolic School of Valencia de Don Juan (León), run by the Augustinians. In 1935, during the first flames of the civil war, Agustín enlisted to defend his homeland. This adventure only lasted a few hours, however. Later, with the mediation of an Augustinian uncle, Agustín continued his studies in the Monastery of Saint Maria of La Vid (Burgos), Augustinian Province of Spain. He arrived at the novitiate in Calahorra, where he took his simple vows on 3 November 1940 and his solemn vows in 1944. He received priestly ordination on 19 March 1947. Thanks to his talents, he was sent to the University of Comillas and graduated with a degree in Philosophy with full marks. Obedience led him to various communities: his main ministries were the formation of young Augustinians and accompaniment on spiritual exercises. Like Saint Rita, his life was a testimony

of the great things that God can do with his servants through small, daily gestures. He died on 31 January 1998, aged 74, of oesophageal cancer. He bore the cross of ill-



His life was a testimony of the great things God can do with his servants

ness with great faith and, like Rita, he treasured it. A man of great pastoral service, he was an inspiration to many. The petition for his beatification is currently underway in Rome.



by Marta Ferraro

“Faith is a way of life”

In the Pious Union, Letizia understood that she was not alone

“I did not want to join the Pious Primary Union just because I am the daughter of the person in charge. I have participated in the group's activities since I was a child, but it seemed pointless to become part of it because my mother and

closer to the saint of Cascia. “I have always been very active in the parish. I contribute to the celebrations by playing the organ and I have always helped my mother to organise and carry out the Bisceglie branch of PPU's activities, of which she is the leader. But it was when I stopped relying only on my abilities and began to trust Saint Rita more that things got better and I decided to join the association. I discovered this opportunity when I enrolled in university. I came from a Secondary School specialised in Human Sciences and, given my background in humanities, it was impossible for me to pass the entrance tests, despite having earned a diploma with the highest marks.” In fact, despite her many hours of study, Letizia took the test but did not pass it. The second attempt was scheduled for 23 May, the day after the feast of Saint Rita. “It was impossible for me to pass it. I would have been very busy playing for the Novena of Saint Rita and collaborating in the PPU's activities. However, I continued to study and 23 May came. I wasn't sure I wanted to take the test that morning. I had a lot of doubts. I kept thinking about it. Then I went there. My boyfriend, who also attends the parish but who is certainly not a zealot, so to say, said to me: 'bring the petals' (the blessed roses that the monastery of Cascia distributes year round to devotees who request them). So I took



Letizia joined the PPU group in Bisceglie

my sister are members. I was sure that Saint Rita would sooner or later give me an extra reason to join with greater conviction.”

Thus begins the story of Letizia Cosmai, a young student of Medical Systems Engineering living in Bisceglie. It was her university experience that brought her even

them, put them in my pocket and as I sat in the classroom staring at the paper, every time I had doubts about a question I touched them and with my thoughts I turned to Saint Rita.” The test went well and Letizia began preparing for the first



Letizia and her mother in Cascia

exam. She studied a lot but failed the test. “I was very down. I couldn't understand why. The associates and our parish priest Don Paolo Bassi, who kept me in their prayers, were very close to me. Then, after a few days of introspection, I realised that I shouldn't just trust my strength but I had to find a higher meaning. From that moment I trusted and entrusted myself to Saint Rita and I promised her that I would

GENERAL MEETING IN CASCIA: FROM 1 TO 3 APRIL

We invite members of the Pious Primary Union of Saint Rita and all those who want to know more to participate in the general meeting to be held in Cascia, from 1 to 3 April. The meeting will be organised by groups from the Sicily region and the theme will be “One heart and one soul, reaching out to God”. For more information and for the programme: piaunione.santaritadacascia.org

bring the laurel wreath for my degree to Cascia when I graduated. On that occasion I decided that my time had come: I was ready to officially join the PPU. My mum, who had always encouraged me to join, actually didn't want it to happen at that time. We were in the middle of the Covid crisis and the membership ceremonies would take place via live stream, effectively meaning I would miss out on the gestures that are usually made. But I didn't care, I had decided and so I did it.” Letizia completed her three-year degree brilliantly and is now attending a post-graduate course.

“Faith is a way of life; either you believe or you die”, this is what Letizia told me, who gave me a great lesson in life at the tender age of 22. No one can be self-sufficient and it is so wonderful to know that if we are in difficulty we can reach out and meet a Father in the Tabernacle who loves us and will speak to us. We are Christians and this is our greatest joy: we are never alone.

JOIN THE PPU

Whether you are an individual or member of a group, join the PPU! You will thus participate in our meetings, encountering people who, like you, are devoted to the beloved Saint Rita. For information, contact the Secretary General, Alessandra Paoloni: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org



by Rita Gentili

“Saint Rita was a woman like us”

The story of a mother and daughter from Colombia

RITA IS ALSO HERE

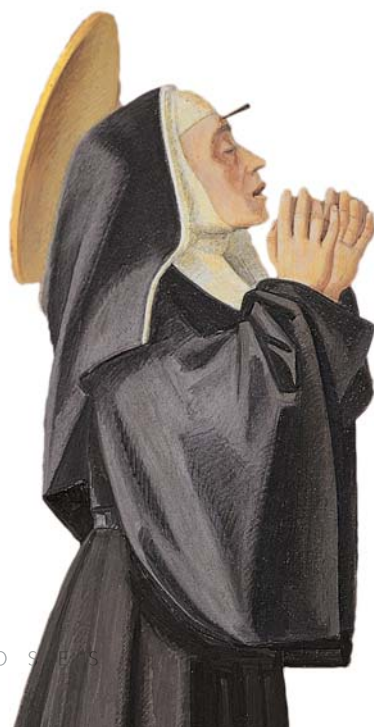


Country: Colombia

City: Bucaramanga

Good to know: An interesting initiative in Colombia linked to Saint Rita is the Proyecto Union Foundation, which, according to their website, was created by a woman, Gabriela Peláez, as an educational project for less fortunate children. Gabriela was the eldest daughter of a couple of entrepreneurs working in the field of coffee. As great devotees of Saint Rita, they did their utmost to spread the worship of her in Colombia starting from the mid-1900s. We can read on the foundation's website that the couple, who were very influential politically, even obtained the right to keep a relic of the saint, which was given to the Archdiocese of Bogotá to take care of upon Gabriela's death in 2000. Today Proyecto Union offers social assistance services to less fortunate people, including children with severe disabilities and those who have been abandoned by their families.

Ruth, how did you meet Saint Rita? “It was the year 2000; the mother of a colleague invited me to turn to Saint Rita while I was hospitalised because of the severe form of asthma that I have been suffering from for over 30 years. I did not know this saint. I looked for information about her and I started to pray to her. Then, after writing to the monastery of Cascia, I received a novena in Spanish, which I followed with great devotion. Three years ago, moreover, I met a priest who had been in Cascia. He was very devoted to Saint Rita, and together we



began to spread the worship of her in part of my city: every 2/3 months we distribute over 100 novena booklets, I gave away 5 statues of the saint to the same number of parishes and on 22 May I send a bouquet of roses to the churches that keep them for their celebration of her. I gave away some images of Rita and I distribute the medallions that they send me from Cascia to those who need them. I also had stickers made to put on cars.”

What led you to entrust yourself to the saint of the impossible? “My despair at not finding relief from my illness. After many years I was able to become stabilised and reduce my hospitalisations while still taking drugs. When I got pregnant, however, I stopped taking them in order not to harm the foetus. The doctors had said that I could not have children and yet I got pregnant at 40. When I found out, I started a novena to Saint Rita: every day I asked for the saint's intercession with God so that she would have mercy on my life and that of my child. It was a difficult pregnancy, with bleeding and threats of miscarriage for the first three months. In the seventh month I had an inflammation of the gallbladder, which I could not treat with drugs, and in the eighth month my water broke and I had to have a caesarean. On that occasion I had one of the heaviest asthma attacks of my life. I entered the operating room asking God to be able to see my daughter grow up and I prayed to Saint Rita to intercede with him. My daughter was ok when she was born but after a few days her bilirubin levels skyrocket-



Ruth with her daughter Rita Ana Maria

ed. The doctor told us that the little girl was in God's hands. I knelt down and prayed to Saint Rita. I promised her that I would name my daughter after her if she helped her. Rita Ana Maria is now a 12-year-old girl in good health.”

Do you talk about Saint Rita to your daughter? “Of course. I tell her that Saint Rita was a woman like us, the daughter of elderly parents, like her, that she lost her children and suffered a lot but she never lost her faith or her love for God, and she always kept her love for her neighbour in particular. I tell her that we must follow her example by serving and helping others, accepting the 'cross' without turning away from God. My daughter is very devoted to the saint. She always carries a medallion that the nuns sent her with her. Together, we come together on Facebook every Wednesday at 2.40 pm to pray in front of her remains in the live broadcast from the Sanctuary of Cascia (*ed. the live broadcast is at 9.40 pm in Italy*).”

I promised her that I would name my daughter after her if she helped her



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

The “Ritas” of our times

One of the most exciting and significant moments of 22 May is meeting the women awarded the Saint Rita International Recognition. It was established by the fathers, nuns and the Municipality of Cascia in 1988, to show the world that women like Rita still live today and amaze us with their great hearts and courage.

hood, the poor, the sick and refugees.” So says the Statute of Recognition, which consists of a precious parchment but above all in sharing the days of the feast. The women awarded are hosted by the friars and get to know the places associated with the saint and those who do their utmost to make her beauty known today. Friendships and harmonies often arise that do not fade over time.

Before the feast, in the Hall of Peace, the awarded women are invited to recount their human and spiritual events, their choices, the darkness and the light: it is a real moment of grace, in which the young people of the schools also participate, drawing inspiration and courage from it. Therefore, we try to bring their testimonies of peace, forgiveness, solidarity, faith and heroic resilience to everyone by all means, including of course this magazine. How much suffering and how much love there is in their stories. Truly, as Mother Fasce said, “those who do not suffer do not love!” But how powerful is Love! Saint Rita lived by generously and fully giving herself despite adversity, and it is wonderful to recognise her in these women, who resemble her so much with their “stigmata” and continue to make our days better with the generous actions that embellish their lives.



The women awarded with the International Recognition of Saint Rita in 2019

Women like
Rita still live
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amaze us

The award is aimed at “women of any age, condition, nation or religion, who have made it their mission to protect the dignity of human beings, and defend their rights and duties. These women, like Rita, have espoused the cause of justice, forgiveness, peace, solidarity, family, child-



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

The theme is wonderful and demanding at the same time and comes to me from this question: what is the relationship between Jesus and women that emerges from the canonical Gospels, i.e., those recognised by the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore the Word of the Lord? I will not be exhaustive: I therefore invite you to explore further by reading the Holy Scriptures.

In my opinion, Jesus refers to the woman “in the beginning”, when God creates her so that, being similar to man, she can offer him help, friendship and a complementary partner. Growing up in a serene family environment, I imagine how many times he must have observed his Mother kneading bread, cooking, sewing and weaving. Then he went so far as to apply what he had seen in the metaphors of his parables!

The beautiful relationship between him and Mary, which is captured in the Gospel of John at the wedding at Cana, causes us to reflect on and demonstrate the “feminine genius” of the mother, who anticipated the hour of Jesus’ manifestation. She was blessed not so much because she gave birth to him, but because she believed in him and always did God’s will! This is how we become His “brothers, sisters and mothers!” Mary became a model disciple and

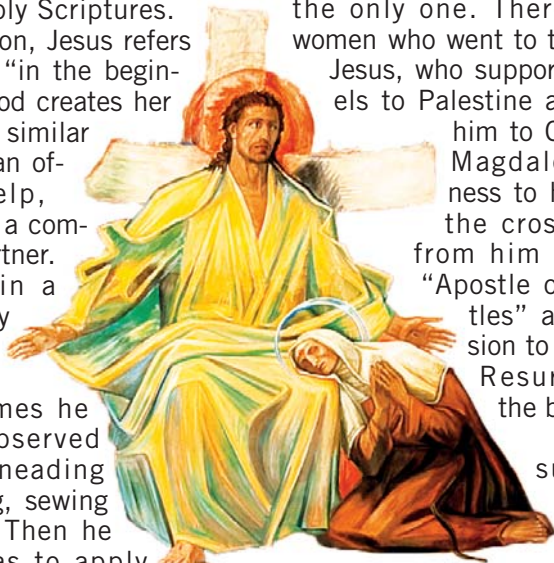
The Saviour close to women

believer. She was the first, but not the only one. There are other women who went to the school of Jesus, who supported his travels to Palestine and followed him to Calvary. Mary Magdalene, a witness to his death on the cross, received from him the title of “Apostle of the Apostles” and the mission to proclaim his Resurrection to the brothers!

Finally, Jesus exalted the faith of so many women

who turned to him for personal illnesses or those of their children, healing and saving them. He also had a beautiful friendship with Lazarus’s sisters Martha and Mary and willingly went to their home. He knew how to dialogue with women who experienced difficulty due to the prejudices of moralists and right-thinking people, defending them and helping them to get out of their miserable condition, without condemning them, as he did with the Samaritan woman and the adulteress. In short, Jesus, you really are a great Lord!

His beautiful
relationship
with Mary
causes us to
reflect





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

Desire in Silvana's heart

These last
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Silvana

This is story of a surprise, or rather two surprises. Silvana Polo is 91 years old and she long cherished in her heart the desire to pilgrimage to Cascia once again together with her family, after having been there in 2012. Finally, this day arrived and her heart was filled with joy and emotion when she reached the land of Saint Rita again. "It was very exciting to visit the historic monastery where Saint Rita was an Augustinian nun and also to pray in the crypt in front of the body of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, for people dear to our family who were ill at that time. There, we felt very close to the little bees (ed. the girls that the nuns help in Cascia) that grandmother Silvana helps every year with small donations," said Silvana's daughter-in-law, Mrs Marina Mario, planner of the surprise trip together with her sister-in-law Patrizia.

Since she married in 1955, Silvana has lived in Manerba del Garda in the province of Brescia. Her devotion to Saint Rita began within her family, thanks to the example of her grandmother Amalia. When she was a child, Silvana had to endure great pain: the illness of her little brother Gastone. It was then that the saint from Cascia entered her life. Little Silvana saw her grandmother

Amalia spend a lot of time in prayer for her grandson, who was bedridden due to nephritis. Eventually, things began to improve for the little one of the house and it was then that Silvana realised



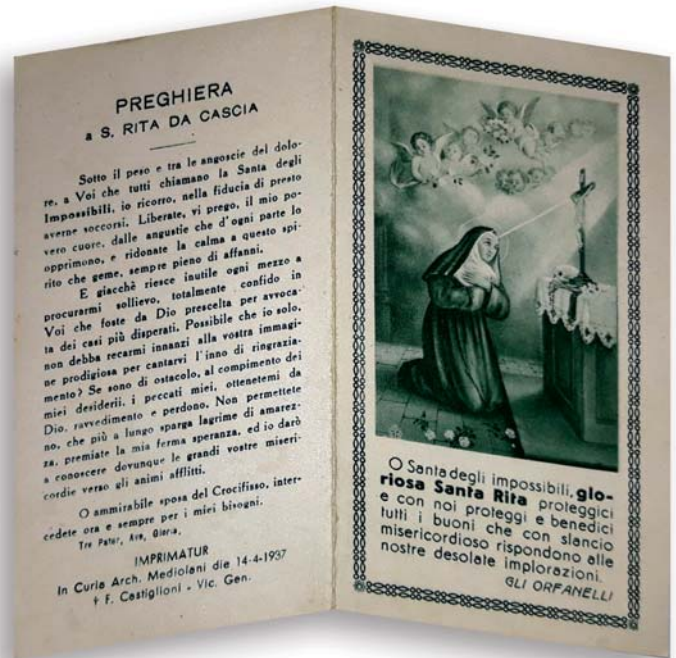
Silvana, in the middle between her daughter-in-law Marina and her daughter Patrizia, lived out her dream of returning to Saint Rita

that whatever happened in her life she would always have a fixed point to turn to: Saint Rita. There was no shortage of prayers when, in 1941, on her eleventh birthday, her father fell ill, becoming disabled for life. Silvana always turned to the saint and she never denied her comfort, not even when she became a widow, after the untimely death of her hus-

band Dario due to a brain tumour.

Today grandmother Silvana continues to feel that Saint Rita is close and on this last visit to Cascia she wanted to buy her wedding ring, the ring made up of two intertwined hands, to feel her even more present in her daily life. These last two years have been very difficult for grandmother Silvana. She suffered so much from not being able to work in the family delicatessen, since for precautionary reasons her family had asked her to stay at home due to the risk of infection. Despite her age, Silvana is a tireless woman and still takes part in the activities they have always carried out. Every day she puts on her uniform, apron and mask to serve customers and mid-morning she allows herself a regenerating break in the parish church of Manerba, from which she returns happy and invigorated.

Upon returning from their pilgrimage, Silvana wanted to give her daughter-in-law a gift that she in turn had received from her mother, and which her mother had received from her grandmother Amalia on the occasion of her wedding: a prayer book entitled "The Christian Bride", printed in 1911. A holy card of Saint Rita, which arrived from Cascia, has been kept in the pages of this publication since 1937. It is likely that it was sent by Blessed Mother Fasce – who was Abbess of the Monastery at the time – to grandmother Amalia as she was praying for little Gastone. Still today, that holy card is handed down from generation to genera-



tion in the family, making itself a tangible sign of true and sincere devotion.

I send warm greetings to grandmother Silvana who, after being amazed by this other surprise, will read her story in our magazine thanks to the collaboration of her family. In addition, an affectionate thought also goes out to all the grandmothers and grandparents who wish to spend a day in Cascia with their saint, in the hope that their wish will soon come true. (MF)

Her devotion began within her family

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

Alongside the cross, to give life

A few years ago Father Cantalamessa, cardinal and preacher of the Papal Household, wrote: "We must ask ourselves: why did women withstand the scandal of the cross? Why did they stay close to him when everything seemed over and even his closest disciples had abandoned him and were organising their re-

spirit of the gospel in the footsteps of Jesus: hospitality, forgiveness, mercy, love, closeness, friendship and brotherhood... As such, to be credible witnesses of the Resurrection is to give life as Christ gave it, it is to love as he loved, it is to give full conformation of our existence to the life and person of Christ, to his feelings as a Son who made himself similar to men while being God, to remove them from the yoke of sin and death. In his earthly life, Jesus continually strove to reach Jerusalem because he had to do the will of the Father there, that is, to suffer, languish and be put to death, to then rise again and gather all the children scattered in darkness and in the shadow of death within His Resurrection. With his whole life and above all with his death and resurrection, he revealed to us the face of God-love. He entrusts his path towards death to the Father, who has the power to re-open this existence to life.

We strongly feel this inner restlessness, which the Holy Father Augustine described so well in one of the most famous phrases of the Confessions: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Each of us carries within us expectation, hope and desire, that is, the passionate search for the Essential, to encounter God. In this time of waiting the interior gaze is always



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turn home? Jesus gave the answer in advance, when answering Simon in regard to the sinner who had washed and kissed his feet: 'He loved so much!' (Gospel of Luke 7, 47). The women had followed Jesus for him himself, out of gratitude for the good they had received from him."

I like to think that the 'Women of Rita', whom we choose for International Recognition each year on the occasion of 22 May, are women of resurrection because, like Saint Rita, they have assimilated the

directed towards fulfilment: the endless life of Heaven, the face-to-face encounter with God.

Our cloister is populated by many presences, souls near and far who make us feel that we are always in contact with the universal Church and which rely on us not to despair, to be helped to rise from the abyss of sin, to find the courage of Christian devotion. We nuns must also renew our hope every day, to avoid discouragement in the face of a mission that at times appears to us as immeasurable, knowing above all that the Lord is at work with us, He entrusts these souls to us and completes them in them miracles of grace. Charity pushes us to “worry” about them, to take everyone

in our hearts, to lose ourselves in them for some time in order to be able to understand them and make them experience God's acceptance. It is really not possible not to feel involved if we want our daily Eucharist to mean something for us and for them, if we want to take on their cross. We see this cross not as pain, suffering or death, but as the highest gesture: giving life. The pain is not diminished, but seen from the perspective of victory over death, evil and sin. The cross is an obligatory Easter for everyone and there is no Easter without Good Friday, but it takes place in the hope of the light of the Resurrection.

Holy Easter of Resurrection to all of you!

We nuns
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“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)

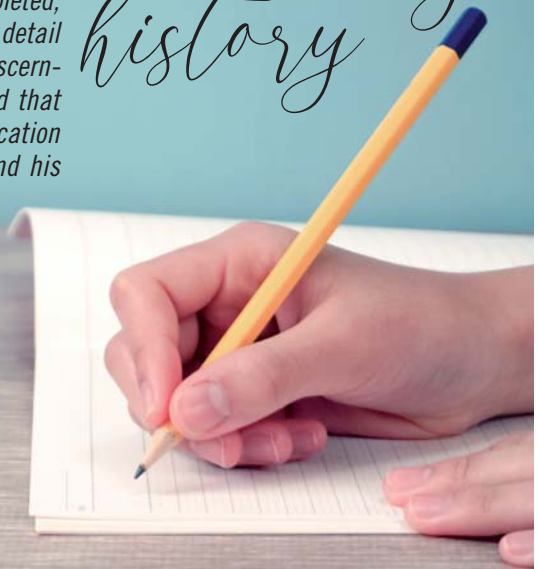
We offer you a few days for listening, praying, discerning, living at the school of Jesus, the inner Master...

**FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE
from 8 (dinner) to 13 (breakfast) August 2022**

For information: Monastery of Saint Rita

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Making
history



We embrace their hopes. Together.



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