

N. 5 SEPT-OCT 2022

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

Poste Italiane S.p.A. - Postal subscription - Leg. Decree 363/2003 (subsequently Law 46 of 27 Feb 2004), Art. 1, Para 1, Auth. GIPAC/UPG/06/2012

WE ARE ALL WITNESSES OF GOD

*Let us celebrate the 25th anniversary
of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce's beatification*



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FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES

Bimonthly of the Augustinian Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia No. 5 sept-oct 2022

Auth. Court of Spoleto No. 9 of 26.06.1954. ROC Registry No. 29665
Italian edition: Year XCIX. English edition: Year LXI.
French edition: Year LX. Spanish edition: Year L.
German edition: Year L. Portuguese edition: Year IX.

Editorial Director

Sr. M. Giacomina Stuani

Editor-in-chief

Pasquale Grossi

Editorial Committee

Alessia Nicoletti (coordinator)

Fr. Luciano De Michieli, Fr. Giuseppe Caruso, Roger Bergonzoli, Monica Guarriello

Registered Office

Saint Rita Monastery, viale Santa Rita 13 - 06043 Cascia (PG)
tel. + 39 0743 76221 - fax + 39 0743 76786

Operational headquarters

Via Francesco Massi 12/D - 00152 Rome
tel. + 39 06 39674099 - fax + 39 06 39637399
www.santaritadacascia.org/dalleapiallero
redazione@santaritadacascia.org

In collaboration with

Sr. Maria Rosa Bernardinis OSA, Sr. M. Natalina Todeschini OSA, Marta Ferraro, Rita Gentili, Carmela Mascio, Mauro Papalini, Augustinian General Postulation, P. Rocco Ronzani OSA, Alessandra Paoloni

Photos

Giovanni Galardini, Massimo Chiappini, Stefano Dal Pozzolo.
Stock.adobe.com © Kana Design Image

Graphic design and layout

Bruno Apostoli graphic designer - www.brunoapostoli.it



monastero@santaritadacascia.org
www.santaritadacascia.org

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FOR SWITZERLAND

Post office: a/c 69-8517-0

payable to: Augustinian Monastery of Saint Rita

06043 Cascia PG - Italy

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FOR GERMANY

Post office: a/c 14421706

Payable to: Superior of the Monastery of Saint Rita

06043 Cascia PG - Italy

IBAN DE11600100700014421706

Printed in September 2022 by Industria Grafica Umbra srl
Via Umbria 148, 06059 Todi (PG).



The *From the Bees to the Roses* magazine is printed on paper certified with the FSC mark



We are God's hope

“You will be witnesses of me”. With these words Jesus reveals to us that we are called on to be his witnesses through our lives. This call is a commitment and, at the same time, a gift that is addressed to everyone, now more than ever. That

is why we chose this theme, which the Pope selected as the topic for Mission Sunday, 23 October, as the common thread of our magazine.

In an increasingly opaque world there is a need for witnesses, people who know how to bring the light of truth through their own choices. For us Christians, whether lay people or religious by profession, it means that our mission is not to communicate ourselves, but to proclaim Christ and make him come to life, in communion with the Church. We can do it every day through words and deeds, describing what we experience and experiencing what we describe!

Our burden and honour is to transmit the precious elements that have been entrusted to us by God. And, to be witnesses means to live and spread His hope. It is no coincidence that Pope Francis marked 2025 as

the Jubilee of Hope, which will be a true blessing. As we are going through the pandemic, the war and great crises, it is impossible for those who have no hope to overcome fear, pain and instability. There is no tomorrow without hope, because hope means knowing how to look and go beyond. Be the hope of God today and accompany those who do not know the love of the Lord, which is not abstract and distant but is incarnated in you. Together, let's dream of that tomorrow which we still do not see but which we know can happen, walking together so that we can all get to see it!





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LEONARDUS



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Blessed for 25 years

The celebrations in Cascia for the anniversary of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce's beatification

It's important to celebrate life. It is about stopping the passing of the days to remember and be thankful. 12 October was a day of celebration for the entire Augustinian family of Cascia, and therefore also for all those who feel a special bond with it in Italy and around the world. Indeed, 25 years have passed since the beatification of Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, which took place on 12 October 1997.

The Augustinian family remembers and gives thanks for Mother Maria Teresa Fasce's life. It was a full and generative life spent tirelessly dedicating love to young people and many others besides. This love was capable not only of great things and forward-thinking projects, such as the construction of the Basilica or the Beehive, but also many small gestures in everyday life, because, as she said, *"holiness lies in the small things that occur every minute, more than in the big things that happen rarely."*

She knew it: love is tangible and those big and small gestures can happen wherever we are, in a house, a school or a hospital. Even when we face fatigue and suffering, they require more exertion but are also worth more be-

cause of this. Mother Maria Teresa Fasce's life was not easy. She grappled with many difficulties, obstacles, suffering and even serious illnesses. But despite all this, she went on providing an extraordinary demonstration of her strength of mind and faith, facing everything without complaining or getting discouraged. Instead, she managed to give meaning and value to the suffering that accompanied her for so many years of her life. She experienced everything with her gaze turned towards the sky and her feet on the ground, always relying on Providence and at the same time doing everything within her power, with determination and passion.

The celebrations for her anniversary took place in Cascia from 8 to 12 October, with a calendar of liturgical initiatives (the start of the triduum, the vigil, the Holy Mass), as well as a musical and a concert, which also marked the inauguration of the Basilica's organ.

With her gestures and with her testimony guided by prayer and action, Mother Fasce invites us to make our daily lives active and tangible in the name of humility, humanity and charity. Each of us, in our own small way, can become a witness to God.

Mother Fasce, a full and generative life

FESTIVITIES IN CASCIA FOR BLESSED MOTHER FASCE

In Saint Rita's city, October means festivities celebrating the Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, the monastery's historical abbess who is ingrained in the history of Cascia and in the heart of the devotees. This year, on the 25th anniversary of her beatification, the celebrations began on Saturday 8 October with the musical "Everything is Possible with Love", produced by the Parish of San Pietro in Terni. The following day, the triduum in honour of the Blessed Mother took place in the Lower Basilica, with the prayer vigil that involved many faithful on 11 October.

The Solemnity of Blessed Mother Fasce took place on the

morning of 12 October, in which the young students of the local high schools were the protagonists of the conference "The figure of Blessed Teresa Fasce: from woman to Mother", moderated by Lucia Ascione, the host of TV2000, with the local historian Omero Sabatini, the Augustinian Monsignor Giovanni Scanavino and the director of the Beehive of Saint Rita, Violanda Lleshaj. The celebration reached its climax at 18:00, with the Holy Mass celebrated in the Basilica by Mons. Renato Boccardo, Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia. The day ended with the inaugural evening concert of the Basilica's organ, with Maestro Stefano Mahanna.

THE PILGRIM'S BOX: TOWARDS THE 2025 JUBILEE

edited by
Fr. Vittorino
Grossi OSA

"What the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world [...] The soul though itself immortal dwelleth in a mortal tabernacle; so Christians sojourn amidst perishable things, while they look for the imperishability which is in the heavens."

From the Epistle to Diognetus (chapter 6)

This Christian text from the second to third centuries outlines the awareness regarding the presence of Jesus' disciples in the daily life of society, which was exposed to many difficulties. Diognetus is a name symbolic of the Christian: he knows God and therefore his presence in the world, despite its pilgrimaging nature, is like the soul in the body. It makes him live.

YOUNG AUGUSTINIANS IN CASCIA REMIND US THAT GOD WANTS US TO BE HAPPY

One hundred and eighty youths of all genders, aged 12 to 18, from all over Italy and also from Malta, gathered at Saint Rita's feet in Cascia from 24 to 30 July for the meeting of young people connected to the Augustinian world. Based on the theme "do not deprive yourself of a happy day", the event – which has been one of the most important organised by the Augustinian Province of Italy for over 30 years – involved young people, together with entertainers, nuns and the Augustinian fathers of Cascia in activities and moments of reflection. The meeting encouraged the young people to open their hearts to Christ, so that he may complete the transformation experienced in renewing that desire for true happiness, which must be received and then given.





by Alessia Nicoletti

The Home of Saint Rita is not a project, it's a reason to live

“By donating, everyone can do something really great”

“**W**hen I discovered the Home of Saint Rita project, I immediately felt compelled to make a donation. I don't have a salary, but I gave what I could.” This is how the conversation began between me and Maria Cusani, a young woman approaching 40, who lives in San Benedetto del Tronto, in the Marche. Meeting her, even if only through her voice, was undoubtedly a gift for the entire team of the Saint Rita of Cascia Non-Profit Foundation, because her testimony gave us new energy. About seven months after the start of fundraising for the Home of Saint Rita – the project by the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia to house families of in-patients in the city hospital, for which the nuns asked us for help – the words that Maria shared with us, and also with you showed us that, together, we can really change the lives of many people who are now waiting to find the strength to move forward!

Maria believes that she has done nothing in relation to what she would have liked to do, because she knows how important it is to have a point of reference for those who are ill and for their relatives.

“We support each other. I am also sick, I've had multiple sclerosis since 2013. Thanks to my treatments I have now improved, and my time in a wheelchair is only a bad memory. However, during the most difficult period, I was hospitalised in another region, far away from my loved ones. The doctors told me that I might not walk again and it was hard to face everything

alone. I burst into tears around a stranger, but she didn't know what to do with me. That week seemed endless to me and I realised that you need someone to give you strength or just take you by the hand!” This is the reason that led Maria to support the Home of Saint Rita project, which she considers necessary and also



la Casa di
Santa Rita

Quando la famiglia si allarga

SAINT RITA FOUNDATION

feels relates to her. “By donating, each of us according to their own means, everyone can have the opportunity to do something really great: it's a project that makes you feel valuable, gives you love and even a reason to live.”

Her will was so determined that Maria did not stop here. Not only will she continue to support the Home of Saint Rita, but she talks about the project to all the people she meets. “Because,” she says, “I am also



Maria Cusani, from San Benedetto del Tronto, embraced the Home of Saint Rita project right away

one of the sick people who need comfort, love and protection. Saint Rita gave me all this, even though I didn't know her, and her help came just when I had given up. She taught me the recipe of happiness, which lies in giving, and now my life is really a life. Therefore, I would like all the sick, especially those who no longer have the will to fight, to find strength in the Home of Saint Rita. How beautiful it would be! Together, I'm sure we can accomplish all this. As Saint Rita teaches us, with love everything is possible and there is never enough love!”

Maria speaks from the heart and also speaks to you, because every donation, no matter how great, is a gesture of love towards those who need to receive it. Are you with us on this mission?



WORK BEGINS ON THE HOME OF SAINT RITA

Thanks to the donations received thus far, the first works have started, which will allow the construction of the entrance staircase to the Home of Saint Rita. In the coming months we will also tell you more about the renovation of the interiors, which will soon go into full swing.

This very important milestone tells us that we have done a lot together, but we still need your help to complete all the necessary work and open the Home of Saint Rita as soon as possible.

Your support is more valuable than ever now. Don't deprive us of it! Maria tells us that it really only takes a little to bring this shared dream to life, while there is never enough love for those who suffer alone in hospital beds. Help us to keep bringing more love to the sick! **DONATE NOW!**

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by Father Rocco Ronzani OSA

She gave herself to God fully

“Rita is an authentic and ever timely witness of Christ”

Rita extends
the embrace
that she
herself
received
from the
Lord to
humanity

When you enter the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia you are welcomed by an embrace full of tenderness and love. This is Rita's embrace, which is an extension of the embrace that she herself received from the Lord Jesus to the pilgrims. Rita is an authentic witness of Christ and an ever timely witness, with her example and her intercession. She let herself be tenderly loved by the Lord and like Mary, Martha's sister,

she lived at Jesus' feet for 40 years, listening to him and resting her head on his knees, just as, with unsurpassed effectiveness, a contemporary painter depicted her on the dome of the apse of the transept of the Basilica of Cascia, just above the chapel of Saint Rita.

Even from her fragile mortal remains, venerated by millions of pilgrims, Rita continues to discreetly whisper the words of Saint Paul: “...When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.” The testament of Christ, in fact, is not about wise discourse, but a life inseparably united to him with intense, tender and strong love.

The authentic narration of the union of Saint Rita with Christ is given in the 15 verses (15 also being the number of years in which she carried the thorn of Jesus in

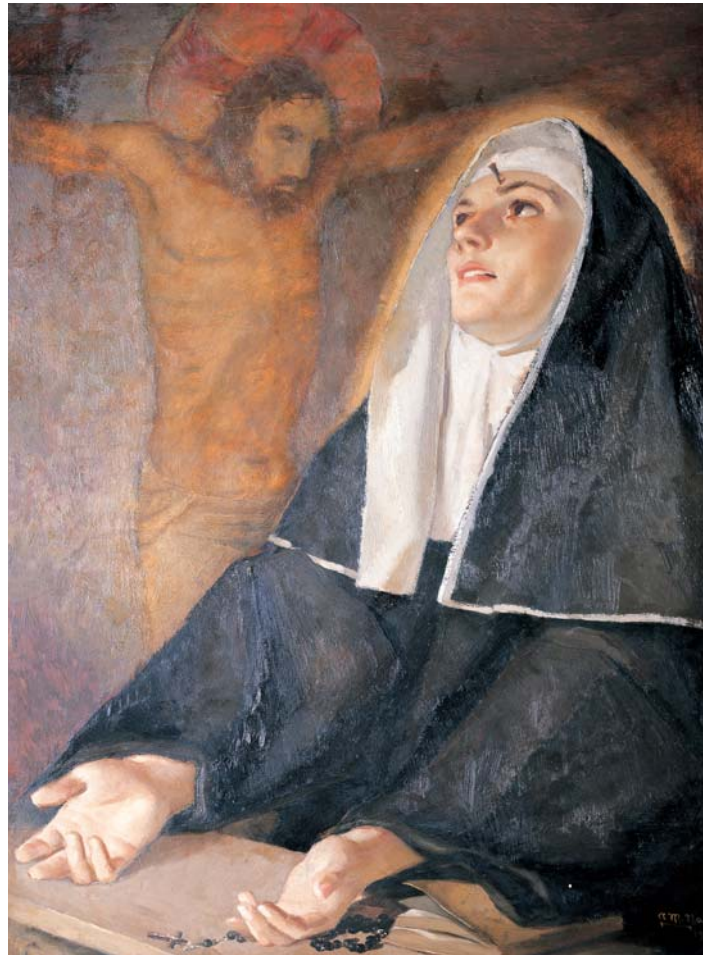
PRAYER

Prayer to Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce

Blessed Maria Teresa, there is an irrepressible need for love in all our hearts. Many, however, choose the wrong teacher of love and become incapable of loving. There are so many people who do this! You understood that God is the one true teacher of Love, because God is love! In keeping with Saint Augustine, you repeated: “Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you.” Following Saint Rita, you discovered that the Cross is the home of God's Love in our midst. Pray for us so that we will not be deceived by false teachers of love! Pray for us to hear the cry of love coming 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 come close to you. Amen

Cardinal Angelo Comastri

her flesh), transcribed on the epitaph of the saint's "solemn case" (the first reliquary) dated to 1457, the year of her death, which we interpret as follows: *O Rita, you are blessed for the firmness of your virtue! / You are shining on the Cross / where you have had acute sufferings. / You have left the sadness and distress of the world / to find comfort for your painful and dark misfortunes. / Yet, what great value you have attributed / to so much suffering! / Privileged above all other women, you were granted / one of Christ's thorns! / It was not in a worldly reward / that Rita believed she had found her treasure / but only in the Lord Jesus to whom she gave all of herself. / And so many pains were not enough for you, Rita / but for 15 years you also suffered the thorn / to pass on to more joyful life".*



Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, Stigmatisation of Saint Rita (Antonio Maria Nardi, 1947)

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.

Alessio Gennaretti (Rome - Italy)
 Antonio Renzo Rastelli (Rimini - Italy)
 Armando Pecorari (Castel Goffredo MN - Italy)
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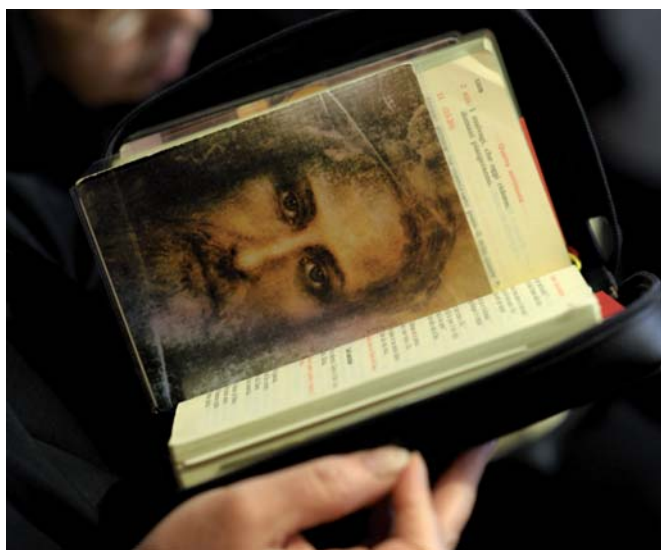


by Mother Maria Rosa
Bernardinis OSA

I BRING YOU JESUS

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

Let us proclaim love with him



After receiving baptism in Jordan from John the Baptist, he proclaimed: "The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" He did it first and devoted himself entirely to fulfilling his Father's will, finding his life's strength and that of his relationship with his Father in personal prayer, in solitary places, and in public prayer, in the temple. Supported by the Holy Spirit, during his earthly pilgrimage he chose several men to be with him, to instruct them so that they might have direct experience of his love. Then, after Pentecost, he sent them to proclaim salvation to all peoples, with the assistance of the same Spirit. "I came to bring fire to the earth!" he said. He died on the cross and after three days he rose again, thus revealing an unlimited love, right until the end. Now he sits at the right hand of the Father as a priest, to intercede on behalf of the Church and of all humanity. "Whoever sees me sees my Father."

Jesus entrusted the Church with the task of continuing the mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all peoples, and every baptised person is called on to spread it wherever they live and work. For whoever experiences the love of God, who feels in their heart the duty of proclaiming the Gospel, cannot keep it to themselves; they feel the urgency of sharing it, as Jesus did, and become a servant out of love by giving their life to serving the mission in the Church.

A missionary is a person moved by the Holy Spirit who proclaims the great works of God. Jesus is the authentic missionary of God the Father! And his proclamation is wonderful: God loves all people and wants to make communion with them. He revealed the face of the Father with truth and love through signs and wonders, without prejudice, with tenderness and care. For example, with the Samaritan woman, with Zacchaeus, with the blind Bartimaeus, with the adulteress, with the hungry and exhausted crowds that followed him. To carry out his Father's plan, he donned our mortal flesh, in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

He revealed
the face of
his Father
without
prejudice,
with
tenderness
and care



Blessed Teresa Fasce, portrait of a twentieth-century woman

“I’m a mum!”

Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce

by Mauro Papalini,
Augustinian historian

A mother to everyone

Motherhood was Maria Teresa Fasce's special vocation

When we think of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, the first word that comes to mind is “mother”: this was the term of affection most pronounced throughout her life. She was a mother to her nuns, a mother to the orphans (the “Little Bees” of the Beehive of Saint Rita, where the nuns welcome children from families in difficulty, ed.) and a mother to the people of Cascia.

The nuns appointed her abbess in very delicate moments, yet she managed to earn not only their trust but their love; she responded with the same level of love and total dedication. She was always willing to listen to all of them and wanted all the nuns to feel free to tell her about their problems. When she made decisions, she first heard from all of them before making up her mind, and the nuns



obeyed her not out of fear but out of love. Her spiritual motherhood was so strong that it transformed that community, making it shine with a light that still illuminates us today. She was then a mother to orphans: the poor children born in difficult circumstances of great disadvantage. She did not hesitate to accept them and prepare a warm and safe environment for them. She was a mother to the people of Cascia. Indeed, they were the ones who simply called her “mother”, and she really was! Her initiatives brought work and economic improvements to Cascia. In fact, in the long phases of the Basilica's construction, she demanded that locals from Cascia

work there first, and the arrival of the pilgrimages allowed them to undertake hospitality activities with hotels and new facilities. The locals expressed their gratitude to Mother Fasce on 2 June 1946, when she was taken to the polling station in triumph with a spontaneous expression of affection. She was also the mother of those pilgrims who came to talk to her about their problems, who always received moral or financial support from her. She was also a mother from afar to those who wrote to the monastery to ask for prayers and help, with whom she had a very deep correspondence. In short, she was a “mother” to everyone, inside and outside the monastery.

THE WORKS OF BLESSED MOTHER FASCE

Beehive of Saint Rita: born of love

On 24 September 1938, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, a woman with a child she could not raise because of her extreme poverty presented herself at the monastery, then left her to Mother Fasce. The financial situation was difficult: the expenses for the Basilica represented no small burden, but the Mother did not doubt God's help. She accepted the child. In fact she even welcomed others, thus creating what she called the Beehive of Saint Rita. This led to the

name of "Little Bees" that is still used to refer to the girls welcomed by the nuns, who come from families in economic or social difficulty. Maria Teresa Fasce was a loving mother to those little girls who found love, education and spiritual formation in the monastery. Not only did she continually tend to their growth, but according to the testimonies, when she was among them during play time, "she became a child with them". (*Mauro Papalini*)

RITA AND TERESA



Talking about motherhood in reference to a nun may seem like a paradox. But for Saint Rita, being a mother, and not only to her biological children, gave meaning to everything, because she was always capable of giving life. Even today, like a mother, she gives herself to all of us children, listens to us and loves us, making sure that no one feels alone.

Every woman is a mother, because she knows how to welcome others in her body or spirit. Maria Teresa Fasce, who was and is a "Mother" to everyone, learned this from Rita. In fact, she was able to bring the gift of God that lies in the instinct for love to fruition, in relation to the nuns, in relation to the citizens of Cascia and the Little Bees, the girls to whom she gave all of herself.



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

Called to the service of others

Servant of God Maria Luisa Godeau Leal

On 30 March 1956, the earthly journey of the Servant of God Maria Luisa Godeau Leal, foundress of the Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Salvation, came to an end. Hers was a life of love and service to those around her, especially the elderly and the sick, in whom she saw the presence of God.

Born in Mexico City in 1874, the only daughter of a French father and a Mexican mother, as a child she showed pronounced intelligence and an attitude of openness towards the world. After being well educated, she worked as a primary school teacher for 28 years, teaching the little ones to be good citizens and true Christians. After experiencing illness, she better understood empathy towards the sick. As such, she joined the Mexican Red Cross as a volunteer. But her authentic spirit of Christian service made her want more. Then, led by some Augustinians, she founded a congregation under the patronage of Our Lady of Salvation, to be of tangible help to the needy, especially girls and the elderly. On 25 April 1943, the first group of

nuns made their vows on the Rule of St. Augustine. Ms Godeau Leal took the name of Mary of the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit and ran the institute for several years.

As a free woman who was strong and tenacious, rooted in a simple and active faith, she contemplated Christ in the needy.

Like Saint Rita, she united her will with that of the Lord, embracing religious life as a response to God's call at a mature age. Her inner strength attracted her to the contemplation of the Cross. Filled with Augustinian spirituality, she responded to God's love through sincere love for her neighbours. Having died with a reputation for holiness, the process of beatification began in 2006, and is currently being studied in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.



She responded to God's love through sincere love for her neighbours



by Carmela Mascio

Witness of fraternity and charity

With Brother Massimo Monacelli, an account of Father Mario Di Quinzio's 60 years of priesthood

“At the end of our existence we will not be asked if we have been believers but if we have been believable.” With this phrase, Blessed Rosario Livatino responded to those who asked him about the importance of a Catholic person bearing witness in everyday life. If that Catholic is also a priest, then the discussion becomes really important! For this reason, with the fraternal collaboration of Brother Massimo Monacelli, an Augustinian of the community of Cascia of which he is an economist and sacrist in the Basilica, we want to tell you a

marvellously true story that combines loyalty, consistency, openness, simplicity and spirituality. It is the story of Father Mario Di Quinzio, an Augustinian of Cascia, who was born in Caprafico, in the municipality of Teramo in Abruzzo, on 28 October 1934, and who celebrated 60 years in the priesthood on 29 June. Father Mario's life journey was one that changed many lives. After his studies and novitiate in San Gimignano (Tuscany), he arrived in Umbria, in Gubbio, to take care of youth ministry. He did this by drawing on the passion of a young heart that knows that it must

A story that combines loyalty, consistency, openness and spirituality



The Little Bees of the Beehive of Saint Rita, who Father Mario cared for during his years as Chaplain, did not fail to share their embrace with him

direct those souls in search of themselves and God, and he did so with such intensity as to “leave his heart there”, as he himself says. Brother Massimo met Father Mario in the parish of Sant'Agostino in Gubbio. Brother Massimo was little more than a child but he remembers well how that small fraternity became light and salt for the whole city. The Second Vatican Council had just ended and Father Mario was already putting the words of Pope St. John XXIII into practice: “throw open the windows of the church and let the fresh air of the spirit blow through.” With the young people of the parish (and not only), he gave rise to social activities that started a veritable daily experiential catechesis. He picked up groups in the countryside and took them to visit the elderly in nursing homes. With the consent of the brothers, the cloister of the convent became a basketball and volleyball court. The basement of the parish became a games room! Brother Massimo tenderly says: “The parish was a second home for me and for many, and when, at the age of 35, I chose to be consecrated, it was clear which example to follow!”

Obedience, then, led Father Mario around Umbria and twice to Cascia where he was Rector of the Sanctuary and Chaplain of the Beehive of Saint Rita (a fostering project by the monastery for minors from families in financial and social difficulty, ed.). In the lands of Rita, Father Mario has made openness his habit. For him, it is an honour and a privilege to serve for the love of Christ.

Wherever Father Mario has been, fraternity lives and has been able to



make a difference by having an impact on actions, people and situations: his is a vocation centred on people, the greatest treasure to be kept in the eyes of God! After 60 years nothing has changed. Some memories may have faded in his mind by now, but none of the souls he has met, educated, listened to and guided are missing from his recollection. How is it possible? If you learn to look beyond right from the beginning, if the light in your steps has been the Word of God, if your guide is the saint of the impossible, then the choice to be a priest, forever, according to the Augustinian charisma, is possible because it is not a man at work but the love of God that generates that which must be.

We give thanks for Father Mario, for what he has been able to do and embody, but above all the Augustinian Community and the Church thank him for the tangible example of his being as a priest.

Thank you Father Mario, because you are a proof of the fact that, out of love, you can be “a priest forever in the manner of Melchizedek (Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 7)”.

He was
Rector of the
Sanctuary
and Chaplain
of the
Beehive of
Saint Rita in
Cascia

It is not a
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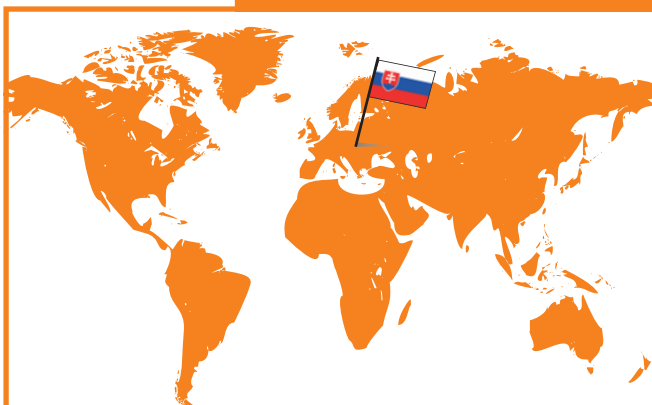


by Rita Gentili

A new friend from Heaven

Alena brought Saint Rita to Sered'

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Slovakia

City: Sered'

Good to know: Father Juraj Pigula welcomed the relic of Saint Rita in the church of St. John the Baptist in Sered' to celebrate the Holy Mass. The arrival of a statue of the saint to this church is also due to this Prior of the Augustinian community of Košice. It was Father Juraj who told us that for many years Sered' was a city known for the high circulation of drugs in its alleys and squares. In the last two years, however, thanks to a much more rigid government, the city has changed its face and is becoming famous for the relic of Saint Rita.

It was on 8 December 2020 that the relic of Saint Rita reached the parish of Saint John the Baptist in Sered', in the western part of Slovakia. In this country, devotion to Saint Rita is starting to take hold from the city of Košice, in the east, where a shrine dedicated to the miracle worker was inaugurated just four years ago. The city was also twinned with Cascia in 2018. The Augustinian community of Košice is very active and is spreading awareness of the saint throughout the country. The relic's arrival in Sered' was helped by Alena Kurilova, who discovered the existence of Saint Rita almost by chance. Having been involved in a car accident, Alena started searching the internet for a prayer for impossible causes and she came across an image of Saint Rita. Alena began to turn to the saint to ask for her interces-





Alena, in the centre, was the heart and driving force behind the committee that organised the celebration

I didn't know what God's plans were for me, but I knew he had sent her to me

Thanks to Saint Rita I know what it means to have peace in your heart

sion for the health of the other two people involved in the accident, and to give her the strength to face the difficulties arising from being held responsible for the incident. It was a force that inspired love, care, understanding and forgiveness towards others. "Thanks to Saint Rita I learned not to be bitter, not to keep resentment and anger in my heart and to love those who reject me. Thanks to Saint Rita I can feel affection, love and embrace people with my heart, when I cannot do it with my hands. Thanks to Saint Rita I know what it means to have peace in my heart, even if I wonder why from a human perspective." After that first accidental encounter on the web, Alena began to expand her knowledge of Saint Rita, her life, her virtues, and her prayer to this "new friend in heaven" – as Alena calls her – became a daily ritual. "I started to bring Saint Rita's prayer cards with me everywhere," she added. "I give them to anyone who tells me that they are in difficulty; I did not know what God had planned for me,

but I knew that he had sent her to me and that he wanted Saint Rita to be in our parish too." Thanks to a collaboration with the Augustinian community of Košice, Alena was able to welcome the relic of Saint Rita in her parish after it was sent by the monastery from Cascia. Due to the restrictions imposed to address Covid-19, however, the parish had to wait six months before they could celebrate it. "I didn't know there were already so many devotees of Saint Rita in my community," said Alena in amazement. "It was amazing to see how many people were willing to help. I sensed that Saint Rita was sending me to meet the people I needed." This enthusiasm did not end with the celebration of the relic's arrival but rather is still growing day by day: "We meet regularly every 22nd of the month," says Alena. "People also come from neighbouring towns and devotion to Saint Rita is spreading in many nearby parishes. Not only among women and mothers, but increasingly often also among men and fathers."



by Marta Ferraro

When devotion lives

Don Francesco brought the PPU to his parish

Saints are the friends that the Lord places beside us, family figures to whom we turn when we are in need. They are that glimmer of hope to which we cling in difficult moments, but also that safe haven to which we return to thank for sharing a joy that has touched our hearts. In



Don Francesco prayed a lot to Saint Rita for his family. In particular, he prayed for the birth of his nephew Enrico Francesco (right)

was soon extended to the whole community, involving many parishioners with the creation of a group of the Saint Rita Pious Primary Union.

"In all the parishes where I have been, I have always found a statue, a painting or an image of Saint Rita for veneration. Even before that, in the seminary, I found a statue of the saint of Cascia in my room," observed the parish priest. "During the years of my studies, I invoked her when I had my exams, or when various difficulties arose along my path. For this reason, I could only welcome the news that was communicated to me by some parishioners with joy, when

short, saints are that warm embrace that we need in every circumstance of life, in whatever condition we find ourselves. Saint Rita means all this to many devotees and also to Don Francesco Mombello, a young and committed parish priest of the church of San Siro in Castelletto Monferrato, in the province of Alessandria, where there is a statue of Rita. The parish priest's devotion is very strong, and his personal experience



they told me that the pilgrim relic of the miracle worker from Cascia had arrived in a nearby parish,” continued Don Francesco.

After experiencing the closeness of the saint during his seminary studies, Don Francesco once again turned to the Pearl of Umbria for a personal request. Beatrice, his sister, longed for a baby, but this long-awaited desire for motherhood was slow to materialise. And so, Don Francesco turned to the saint of the impossible without his sister's knowledge. He made many intense prayers until little Enrico Francesco finally arrived: another sign of the saint's closeness to him and to his family. The baby's first days were not easy. It was a long time before he was released from hospital and, without telling her brother, on that occasion Beatrice also turned to Saint Rita, and soon after she was able to take her child home.

If possible, this happy event further increased the devotion of Don Francesco and his parish community. This inspired the parish priest to continue to act out his devotion to the saint of Cascia more vividly. Thus, while searching the Internet, Don Francesco came across the Saint Rita Pious Primary Union, the only association dedicated to Saint Rita in Italy and in the world, recognised by the monastery of Cascia. And so, the priest decided to found a prayer group of the Pious Union in his parish, which now has about 30 members. Every 22nd of the month, they meet to recite the rosary of Saint Rita and dedicate an hour to Eucharistic Adoration. “The group is very young,” says Don Francesco. “It was formed recently, and we still have many projects and many



The PPU family welcomes more and more people who experience devotion in a concrete way

ideas to implement. At the moment it is important for us to feel like a group and to be close to the saint. Everything else will happen over time.”

As I said at the beginning, saints are the friends that the Lord gives us to advance in our life journey and are also an example to be followed with commitment and perseverance. To show them our friendship, then, our mission is to spread their worship and devotion: in short, everything that the experience of Don Francesco shows us.

JOIN THE PPU

Whether you are an individual or a member of a group, become a member of the PPU! You can then take part in our gatherings, meeting people who, like you, are devoted to dear Saint Rita. For more information, you can contact the Secretary General, Alessandra Paoloni: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org

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.



We embrace their hopes. Together.



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by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

“Let us look to God’s will”

Discovering the teachings of Blessed Mother Fasce

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Beatification of Mother Teresa Fasce, Abbess of this monastery for 27 uninterrupted years in the first half of the last century. What message did Blessed Mother Teresa leave to us?

St Theodore the Studite splendidly affirmed the monk's true purpose: “The monk fixes his gaze on God alone, ardently desires God alone, has consecrated himself to God alone and strives to pay him an undivided worship” (Parva catechesis, Ed. E. Auvray, Paris 1981, pp.141-142).

From the Positio for the cause of Beatification and from the letters written to the family, we know that Mother Teresa embraced her vocation as a consecrated woman with love, passion, enthusiasm and “heroism”, and she received it as a gift from the Lord.

During the 27 years in which she was continuously Abbess, Mother Teresa had the opportunity to leave an indelible trace in the history of Cascia, Ritian worship and Augustinian spirituality. Her contemplative nature, the *amor veritatis*, was combined with the *necessitas caritatis* in an all-Augustinian vision. Her motto, which

became a fully-fledged lifestyle, was: “I want it even if it costs, I want it because it costs, I want it at any cost”.

The decisive moment of her life was the sabbatical she made outside the monastery before taking her solemn vow, the sole aim of which was to look at the monastery from the outside, with some distance. She came to Cascia hoping to find the ideal monastery. What a disappointment! She then asked to stay. Her year spent alone in Torriglia (her hometown, in the metropolitan city of Genoa, *ed.*) was her greatest grace. It was her transition from childhood to spiritual maturity, to inner autonomy. She understood that she had to cling to Christ. She saw her vocation in the One who is the foundation: Christ. With this rediscovered inner freedom, she never stopped at anything. There she began to become the mature, courageous, merciful and free woman in Christ, who never left things as they were but always tried to improve them. She gave a new breath of life back to the Community, with a new interpretation and knowledge of the Bible as an educated woman. She restored to the Augustinian style to the community.

Mother Teresa embraced her vocation as a consecrated woman with “heroism”



Her strong vocation was to imitate Saint Rita. She was inflamed by this desire: to live a life like Saint Rita. She found courage in illness because she looked at Rita and imitated her. There we saw the strong woman become the mystic who united herself to Christ, who offered his life on the cross. Mother Teresa's tumour is like Rita's thorn: both sought to assimilate Jesus to the point of resembling him in the Passion.

Sometimes idealism is not enough, and a house must be built on a rock and not on sand. The rock is Christ. For Mother Fasce, her vocation found its strength in her relationship with Christ. The rock had to be Christ, building her vocation on Christ so as not to be uprooted by storms. Even the words of Blessed Simone of Cascia fit well with the life of the

blessed woman: "The right way to seek the Lord is in the concern of the morning, because lukewarmness never found it... Seeking Christ in the morning means preferring him to all thoughts and reasoning. He will always be found, if nothing is sought before him or outside of him." (Blessed Simone Fidati - *"De Gestis Domini Salvatoris"*, book VI, ch. VII).

Let us listen to the words of the Mother: "You see, the soul has only one commitment before God: its sanctification. And this depends on the perfect fulfilment of his most holy Will." "I feel happy, only happy, because the most holy will of God has been fulfilled in me." "In these times, we must make virtue out of necessity: we look at the will of God and not at the wickedness of man, so we will live with more virtue and serenity."

She never left things as they were but always tried to improve them

*We safeguard their future.
With joy.*



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