

# FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



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of Saint Rita of Cascia

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## LEARNING TO LOVE IN ORDER TO WELCOME

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Cover: Some nuns from Cascia in prayer  
Photo: Giovanni Galardini

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# Learning to love to welcome and console

“**T**o be in the world but not of the world”. This sentence encapsulates the meaning of our seclusion. Through prayer, intimacy and communion with God, it is transformed into services to our fellow sisters and others, welcoming the people who knock at our doors. This is how we carry out the ministry of Consolation, alongside the work of the fathers who are committed to welcoming the thousands of pilgrims who visit our Sanctuary every year.

Thus we begin this new and special year, which marks the 100th anniversary of the magazine, by further exploring the meaning of our existential choice together on the occasion of the celebration of consecrated life on 2 February. As I recall in my column, we are in the monastery because “God has cast his gaze on us”, following “the longing to reach all humanity, the passion for God and the passion for every person, through prayer, which has no walls that bar it and no boundaries that restrict it”, as Sister Natalina Todeschini reminded us in an interview a few years ago.

The desire shared by every nun who is in love with God is to learn to love ourselves and others, starting from God's love for us. It is a desire that takes different forms in each community. In Cascia it translates into the ministry of Consolation and the act of welcoming, as well as fundraising for our charitable works.

In these connected but difficult times, what seems to be lacking is precisely the ability to listen, a problem to which we offer an answer through the language of gratuitous love, following Rita's charisma and as an outpouring of the divine Spirit, defined as the “Paraclete” (comforter). Our wish is to welcome everyone in their truth and in their uniqueness, without prejudice.

Now, at the beginning of 2023 we remind you that we are here to listen to you whenever you need it and that you can stay in touch with us by phone, post and email, through the website and social networks, as well as by visiting us in Cascia. We look forward to hearing from you!







by Vanessa Postacchini

# A community life traveling between past and future

Interview with the nuns of Pennabilli

They lead an essential monastic life

A monastic community has existed in Pennabilli, in the province of Rimini, since 1500: at first it was Humiliati, then Dominican and since 1816 the nuns have been Augustinian. Visiting the Monastery of Saint Anthony of Padua between the

slopes of Romagna, on the rocks of a cliff, is like making a surprising journey into the past that at the same time also projects us into the future.

In this place I met a community of 13 women – mostly young – who lead an essential monastic



life in a medieval village composed of prayer, work and study as part of an unconventional dialogue that, in my opinion, has a lot to offer contemporary society.

In the hours that we spent together, I experienced the community-centric dimension very strongly. What I am going to tell you is like a mosaic composed of many pieces, the result of a collective chat with eight of them (Francesca, Elena, Eva, Elisabetta, Simona, Chiara, Chiara G and Veronica), in which each one told me about and gave me a part of herself. I have, however, chosen to privilege some aspects for the sake of space.

### WOMEN IN TRANSFORMATION

Through our dialogue, I learned that the nuns present in the community come from all over Italy, and one is from Lebanon. I listened to the stories of the inner journeys that brought them to this cliff and the reflections that circulate in the community regarding the style with which they experience the bonds between sisters and with guests, the way in which they encounter authority and the choices made regarding work. I got the idea that monastic life is an existence that is far from immobile, but rather a life of women in transformation.

“What's at stake for us is to get involved, starting from the relational point of view, so we aim to build real friendships between us,” says one sister. “Our lives truly touch each other,” continues another. I discovered that friendship is a trait of Augustinian spirituality that is

felt particularly strongly here. “Decisions are taken together at the chapter level, so that no one feels excluded. The Prioress is then in charge of implementing the decisions of the chapter.”

They explained to me that their way of experiencing obedience and exercising authority is something they pay great attention to, because it relates to the sense of community co-responsibility. This means that chapters are clearly time consuming and frequent. “The community cares about the whole life of every sister, so it listens to her and her world. It embraces her feelings, her gifts and her attitudes”.

“But isn't embracing the specific qualities of each person likely to arouse confrontation and rivalry? And most importantly, does it not go against the decision to live an ascetic life?” I asked myself and them. “Letting the unique traits of each of us emerge, aiming to act with God and in the relationships between us in full seriousness, this is what makes prayer our whole lives and every relational moment a place of encounter with God,” one of the sisters replied.

### ACTIVITIES: ARTS, CRAFTS AND HOSPITALITY

The art and craft skills brought to the monastery by some sisters led to the community's main activities, such as the carpentry and artistic window workshops, consisting of very well equipped work spaces where wonderful pieces are created, including some made on commission. Sister Elena is a sculptor, a profession she carried out before

What's at stake for us is to get involved

entering the monastery. The nun has created countless works, including important ones, that are scattered all over the world and also inside the monastery. In 2011

the Church and their return to the faith came precisely through the hospitality they received, as they felt seen and welcomed, not labelled.” Together with all this they take care of the house, where all the sisters, including the youngest, are busy with tasks ranging from the kitchen to the vegetable garden, from the sacristy to the infirmary.



Sister Elisabetta in the carpentry workshop

They felt  
seen and  
welcomed

she made the panels for the Way of the Cross on Good Friday with the meditations of Sister Rita Piccione, an Augustinian Nun.

Then there is the guesthouse, with three buildings that are open to host anyone who wants to get to know the monastery and experience silence, prayer and interaction with the community, with a large movement of people. “Some of the sisters were distant from

### INTERESTS: HUMAN BEINGS

“The community interest is strictly concerned with humanity. And the political sphere concerns everything that is human: we are not talking about parties, but about history that happens, including that from the specific perspectives of each individual, considering the different sensitivities that circulate in the community because of our different origins,” explains Sister Simona, a former council member of her town in Sardinia before entering the monastery.

Another fundamental piece of the puzzle is that of study. Before Covid, a six-year course of study of theology was held in the monastery, which was open to the participation of lay and religious friends of the

## THE PILGRIM'S BOX: TOWARDS THE 2025 JUBILEE

*edited by  
Fr. Vittorino  
Grossi OSA*

### PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Throughout the course of their lives, Christians become pilgrims in order to rediscover themselves in the paths of God. They go to places associated with Jesus, the sanctuaries and, for the Jubilee, to the tombs of the Roman Apostles, Peter and Paul. As far back as the fourth century, Saint Jerome, a Roman student, wrote: “As a young man, when I was in Rome to study, I used to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs with my friends on the day of the Lord” (Commentary on Ezekiel 40: 5).

community. At present, each sister is offered the possibility and responsibility of a personalised course of study. “Inspired by monastic tradition and Augustinian tradition, we live out study as one of the paths taken in the quest for God and humanity,” Sister Chiara explained. “We try to educate ourselves about our feelings, our thought, our way of loving.”

For us, to live through studying therefore, first and foremost, means to live by searching, to live knowing that life must be constantly learned, anew and always new, as we always do, in relation to God and to ourselves.”

“In the past there was a strong disparity in the theological education between priests and nuns,” stressed one of the more mature sisters. “Men had a cultural background and official qualifications, while it was as if women did not need them. Today, as women, it is important to have the same tools in the Church and in society.”

Another area in which many sisters take great care is that of music. “Musical instruments and the voice are places of listening, of asceticism, of liberation and sharing of the beauty received from God and spread through the joy of the many people who attend our liturgies.”

### **“IN THE MONASTERY TO LEARN TO LOVE”**

“Why choose monastic life, then?” I asked at the end of our talk. After a brief silence, Sister Chiara began by saying this: “Despite the desire and the open choices involved, our lives are always shown as a scandal, a separation. Indeed, monas-

tic life can never be front page material. By vocation, it chooses marginality. However, while people generally think of a separation between monastic life and the world, in the monastery we understand that we have the world inside us to a greater extent than we realise. We are pervaded by it. I believe that our vocation incorporates the mystery of free choice. I am here because I encountered a life that has come into a relationship with



Some of the nuns from the community in prayer

me, finding someone ready to listen to my voice: this has set my freedom in motion.”

“The goal is not to express ourselves, although this happens,” said one sister, to everyone’s agreement. “Our lives are here and not elsewhere because there was a call that moved us, that is, the relationship with God, which led us to a community where it was immediately necessary to have relationships with others, within which we put ourselves at stake, with what we are. Our goal is not to express ourselves, but to learn to love.” Finally, Sister Elisabetta commented: “The goal is to build evangelical communities, in our case it is inspired by what the Lord showed Augustine.”

Today, as women, it is important to have the same tools





# Devotion as participation

On the path to the feast of Saint Rita  
from 9 February

**R**itian devotion is essentially physical. The devotee takes an active part in everything relating to the saint of impossible causes, together with other devotees, like a large family: praying, interacting on social networks, donating, going on a pilgrimage to Cascia. This led to the slogan

Festa Santa Rita 2023

Quando  
la *devozione*  
è *partecipazione*



that has accompanied the feast of Saint Rita since last year, which is next scheduled for 22 May, the anniversary of her ascent to Heaven: “when devotion is participation”.

For all of us, this can begin to become a reality from 9 February, from the first of







the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita, that is the 15 Thursdays that precede the feast in May. This is an event to commemorate the 15 years in which Saint Rita's forehead bore the stigmata caused by the thorn she received on Good Friday in 1442, at the end of the sermon by the Franciscan Saint James of the Marches.

During this time, we prepare ourselves through prayer on the one hand. On the other, we carry out concrete acts of charity to take care of the most vulnerable in the name of the great Saint Rita, who, in addition to being a wife, mother, widow and nun, was a woman who fulfilled God's message of love by helping others.

### THE PROJECTS

A donation to the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation, even a small one, is enough to help support the social utility projects that the organisation has been carrying out since 2012. For the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita, there is a very important project to continue the journey undertaken on behalf of fragile people and especially children: the reconstruction of the "St. Virgilius" hospital, founded and managed by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima in 1983, in the community of Namu, in the state of Plateau, Nigeria. The facility, which served more than 12,000 people with difficulties, was destroyed in August 2019

due to a fire caused by an electrical fault.

Namu is a village in the Nigerian state of Plateau. There are no essential amenities such as running water or an electricity supply here. The inhabitants live from agriculture, mainly growing sweet potatoes and cereals for their livelihoods.

The Virgilius Memorial Hospital in the village of Namu was founded by the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima to provide health care and thus respond to the needs of the community, which is made up of more than 35 agricultural settlements for a total of 15,000 inhabitants. Over the years, the number of beneficiaries of the healthcare offered in the hospital has grown considerably thanks to the quality of the services offered, especially for the fragile people living in the community and beyond (patients also come from the

neighbouring State of Nassarawa). The estimated number of beneficiary patients is 12,134 (of which 4,254 are men and 7,880 women).

In 2019, the hospital was destroyed by a fire caused by an electrical failure. After the disaster, the hospital was unable to find the resources needed for reconstruction.

The healthcare provided before the fire was invaluable, particularly for the treatment and prevention of serious diseases affecting the community, such as HIV and AIDS, for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and for the treatment of tuberculosis.

United in our love for Saint Rita, even the smallest act of generosity will be important.

## FIND OUT HOW TO SUPPORT OUR CHILDREN'S PROJECT IN NIGERIA

Our goal is to support the project dedicated to children by reconstructing the "St. Virgilius" hospital, founded and run by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima in the village of Namu, in the state of Plateau, Nigeria, since 1983 to provide basic healthcare to the community.

It is a structure that served more than 12,000 people in difficulty before it was destroyed by a fire. It is severely damaged, so it cannot be restored, but needs to be razed to the ground and rebuilt. With your help, we can treat many people, including mothers with HIV or AIDS, preventing transmission of the virus to their children.

**Help us to help others. DONATE NOW!**

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**THANK YOU!**





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

# Welcoming and harmonising

The commitment of religious people, nuns and workers will continue in the new year

**W**e enter the New Year by recalling that welcoming all those who arrive in Cascia to visit the sanctuary is without doubt the primary commitment of the religious figures, nuns and all the workers. It is the most complex task to perform, because it requires great openness and listening skills. However, it is also the most beautiful and rewarding experience.

Everyone is “accompanied” by their baggage of expectations, joys and hopes, but most of the time also by great pain or failure. There are those who arrive with an attitude of defiance and pretence. There are those with great humility, great need and the ability to trust. All of them, however, through a blessing ask to “meet God” so that He will protect them and cast His gaze on their loved ones. Everyone also has something to confide in Saint Rita, sometimes by showing the photo of a loved one facing difficulties. People ask for advice, miracles, peace, a little light and comfort – in short, a little more faith.

Everyone has their own way of manifesting faith through gestures, words, silence or singing, but no one should ever be judged. Rather they should be “harmonised”, and accepted in their truth and unique-

ness! Respect for everyone's identities is as important as helping people not to live through magical signs but through faith. We always invite everyone, not so much to honour Saint Rita but to imitate her, setting out on the path to follow in her footsteps. With words and gestures, we try to harmonise and restore unity to that which has been broken or needs forgiveness. Harmonising, however, does not mean standardising. Everyone brings a precious asset with them, and although sometimes it may be hidden under aggression and despair it is always unique and providential.

The temptation is to be judgmental toward that which we do not understand or which is far away from our way of doing and thinking. It is easy not to have the patience to educate and value, or, worse still, to feel that we are better than others. This is also a veiled form of violence, with devastating effects on those who are already fragile or are looking for a “hook in the middle of the sky”. Through grace, the sweet words of Jesus resound to disperse our empty pride: “learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart”, “come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest!”

Everyone  
has  
something to  
confide in  
Saint Rita



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

# A faithful and eternal Love

Love is the  
source and  
soul of every  
Christian  
vocation

**B**y virtue of Baptism, all Christians are consecrated to be, with Jesus, the only body of Christ: He is the Head, they are members who are animated by the same Spirit, carrying on the work he began over time, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and bearing witness to the Gospel, becoming light and salt of the earth. This is the task of the whole Church!

From the beginning of his mission, however, Jesus chose men to be with him to entrust to them the mystery that his person embodies – truly man, truly God – to make the love of his Father that he came to

communicate known. It is an immense love that goes so far as to become the total giving of himself. The Apostle John summed it up as follows: God is Love. Knowing Him is a lifelong commitment, because He never ceases to surprise. Love is the source and soul of every Christian vocation, especially the consecrated life.

The vocation of special consecration is a gift that God makes to an individual, for the good of the whole Church. The Called One finds their reason for life in Jesus. They want to follow him more closely and conform to his lifestyle: in poverty, chastity and obedience to the Father, all with full freedom. True love is never constricting. Precisely for this reason it is a gift and a mystery. It is a mystery because it requires a constant commitment of conversion on the part of those who follow it. Crises, trials, downfalls, disappointments, sufferings, misunderstandings and loneliness are the cross to carry behind Him. Not everyone can pick themselves back up; the commitment becomes too much and they may think twice. His Spirit will give serenity and peace to those who remain faithful to the love of Christ with trust. Even failures, limitations and weaknesses become opportunities for growth and maturity, in the growing awareness that His love knows no bounds. It will open the heart to mercy and make it sympathetic to those who fall and do not have the strength to get back up. I know all this, and I experience it: His love is faithful and eternal!





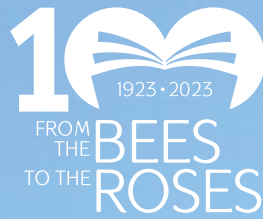


# A century-long history

*From the Bees to the Roses turns 100*

“I will accept what you, dear Subscribers, let me know in relation to the graces and favours you have received from Saint Rita, and anything that concerns the worship of her”.

*taken from the first editorial of the magazine written by Mother Teresa Fasce*



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

## Celebrating the magazine's 100th anniversary

by Carmela Mascio

**I**t's a pleasure to get ready to celebrate a birthday. So get ready because you are invited! You are invited because you are all part of the great family of the Church, in which the Augustinian family is precious and embedded.

The branch from Cascia, especially the nuns of the Monastery, invite you to celebrate and learn about the history of an irreplaceable instrument through which the “pollen of God” reaches the whole world from Cascia. We are talking about the magazine “From the Bees to the Roses” which is turning 100 in 2023. On a birthday, usually, after asking the birthday child their age, people congratulate their mother. Let's start from there, from the mother of this magazine: Blessed Teresa Fasce.

In 1923 worship of Saint Rita was still limited to a few devotees and Cascia was an unknown village. Interpreting the will of Providence, in her heart Blessed Mother Fasce had decided to give Cascia a new face but, to do so, the world had to get to

know “her” beloved Saint, Cascia and the Monastery's projects. As always, everything was done out of love and with love.

One of the inhabitants of Cascia was Nino Angelini, a child that Mother Fasce supported in a maternal way through his Augustinian religious vocation (he went on to become Father Atanasio). In May 1923 she gave him a task: before school he would have to go to the post office to send some copies of the bulletin. So, Nino took a package of printed bulletins, addresses and a dozen “pasterelle” (pastries)... for him. That morning the story of the Ritian periodical began on the date 22 May, together with the collaboration of the Augustinian Father Possidio Marabottini.

Do you know the reason behind the title? The magazine “From the Bees to the Roses” got its name because Mother Fasce wanted to encapsulate all of Saint Rita's life: from the first miracle, that of the bees that entered and left her mouth when she had just been born, to the last before she

ascended to Heaven, that of the rose that flowered under the snow and which a relative of hers brought her along with the two figs. Since 1923 the Grace of God and the will of the Nuns have allowed the magazine to reach the whole world. Today it has a circulation of 300,000 copies, translated into six languages. Images of Cascia, Saint Rita

and the works carried out by the nuns of the Monastery with the precious collaboration of the laity arrive in many people's homes. The magazine is a small cameo that does not fear the eye-catching front pages of the other newspapers and continues to bring the "good scent" of Christ, so that no one is ever separated from His love.

## A Ritian vocation

by Mauro Papalini

The vocation of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce, which is described in the comic on the next page, is essentially Ritian. In her private renewal of her vows, she described herself this way: "I, Sister Maria Eletta Fasce, unworthy Augustinian of Saint Rita... made a sacrifice that I intend to renew, and I will renew and present to you again through the hands of my dear Holy Mother Rita." Since her mysterious meeting with the saint, Marietta had this purpose: to be an Augustinian nun in Cascia. Saint Rita

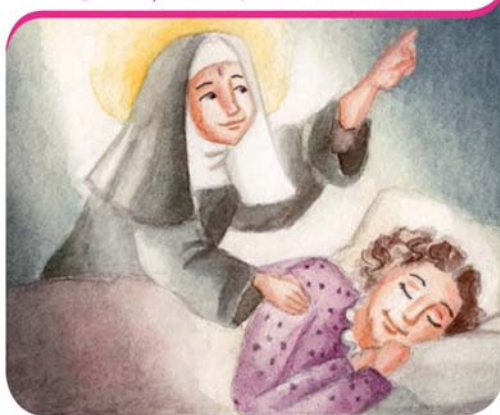
gave several signs of her predilection to Ms Fasce. One took place in the course of her simple profession on 25 December 1907, when she wrote to her sisters: "Saint Rita also made me so happy by letting me smell a truly heavenly aroma and so I approached the Sacred Altar with more courage." Rita was her spiritual guide, her teacher of life; it can be said that the works carried out by Mother Fasce in her 40 years of religious life were all in the name of and for the glory of Saint Rita.



## The Mother and the Saint of the impossible

Saint Rita  
recounts the life  
of Blessed Mother  
Maria Teresa  
Fasce

"Dear Marietta, I drew you to me with strength, I spoke to you in a dream..."

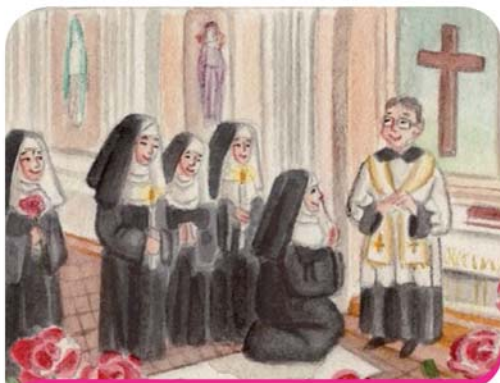


"... Your love for me and Jesus has overcome the quarrels with your family and you have finally arrived in Cascia from Genoa..."



... We hope, we love, we enjoy. Isn't this a taste of paradise?..

"... I watch as you tell your sisters in Genoa about your joy before you take your vows..."



"... The day of your solemn wedding to the Lord has come. You burn and tremble but that's normal. I shall regale you with the scent of Heaven".



# *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](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org) and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.





by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

# When it is God who seduces the heart

**G**od possesses the art of attracting. As St. Augustine said: it is a true seduction of the heart (cf. Ag., Comm. Jn 26: 5). So many things exert their wholly superficial charm on us, but we risk being confused, disoriented and in the end even empty inside. When it is God who attracts us the heart sets in motion. It comes out of the narrow confines of its immediate needs and all its best energies are gathered together to work towards a single great goal: to give

oneself to God and to the brothers!

With his conversion, Augustine gave himself to God, as he says, bending his back to the yoke of the humble Jesus: he thus discovered the taste of Beauty, Truth and Eternity, attractions initially suffocated by his immediate pleasures. It seemed to him that he could not do without them, but God called to him, unveiling a new, vast horizon that was much more attractive and true: "How sweet did it suddenly become to me to be without the sweetness of trifles! And it was now a joy to put away what I formerly feared to lose. For thou cast them away from me, O true and highest Sweetness" (Confessions 9,1,1).

Thinking of Rita and her choice to consecrate herself entirely to the Lord, we cannot help but be fascinated by her courage. Her familiarity with the sense of God's good and provident fatherhood had accompanied her since she was a child, shaping her attitude so she could become confident again in the caring hands of God the Father, even through the "catastrophes" she encountered.

Suffering is always double-edged: it can grow and mature, but also, unfortunately, close off and isolate. In Rita's heart, suffering revealed the even deeper and more conscious willingness to let



"Saint Rita", a painting by the Teresian Carmelite nuns of Tolentino and donated to the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery



## RITA'S PERSEVERANCE: CLINGING TO THE ESSENTIAL

Rita wrote: "I persevered for 40 years in serving God with love". Persevering means knowing how to "endure over time", and can put a strain on our motivations; it is something that has to do with humility, the true tenacity of those who can fall and make mistakes but don't stop asking for help and trying to get up again. Persevering is holding onto the choice to do good over time, doing it well despite all the winds blowing against you. The only way to persevere, without "nesting", is to keep clinging to the essential.

(taken from "Donne Artigiane di futuro con Rita da Cascia" TauEditrice 2021, pp.96-97)

herself be reached by God's attraction. The possibility of a new generative ability became part of her: humble Jesus was the outcome, the origin of her faith. The desire to resemble him, in his feelings first and foremost, became her great ideal.

For Rita the monastery was not a nest-refuge but rather an outpost. It was a space in which to sing the infinite beauty of God, in the simplicity of a life organised around some essential nuclei: the

primacy of God, dedication to the interests of Christ, the joy of fraternal communion.

*Saint Rita, our sister,  
let us look to you,  
loving disciple of the humble  
Jesus in following the monastic  
life: with your prayer, guard the  
seeds of vocation that the Lord  
sows in the hearts of young  
people, so that they may sprout in  
courageous choices for the lives  
of many.*

For Rita the  
monastery  
is an outpost

## THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

*To you, Lord, we humbly recommend these our dead because, as in their mortal life they have always been loved by You of immense love, so now, freed from all evil, may they enter by Your grace into eternal rest. Amen.*

Anna Elisa Atzori (San Nicola D'Arcidano OR - Italy)  
Antionietta Corrado (Toronto - Canada)  
Arturo Bonacina (Calolziocorte LC - Italy)  
Caterina Fera (Canada)  
Chiara Giussani (Veduggio con Colzano MB - Italy)  
Cosimo Camarda (Mammola RC - Italy)  
Enza Galanti (Licata AG - Italy)  
Ezio D'Amico (Palermo - Italy)

Francesco Montone (Foggia - Italy)  
Generoso Petracca (Avellino - Italy)  
Gerlanda Indelicato (Sicily - Italy)  
Giovanna Rosa (Moggio LC - Italy)  
Giuseppe Di Chiara  
Iolanda Capaldi (Cingoli MC - Italy)  
Italo Magalotti (Cesena CE - Italy)  
Loretta Casadei (Ancona - Italy)  
Margherita Sciarretta (Termoli CB - Italy)  
Father Paul Graham OSA (Great Britain)  
Pia Tullio (San Nicola D'Arcidano OR - Italy)  
Salvatore Amato (Battipaglia SA - Italy)  
Tina Santi (Rome - Italy)  
Valerio Markesich (Melbourne - Australia)



by Marta Ferraro

# The Saint of the Heart, who helps us to grow in faith

From Terrasini to Cascia with devotion

**T**he story of the creation of the Saint Rita Primary Pious Union in the community of Terrasini, in the province of Palermo, is told in chorus. Sicily is one of the Italian regions where devotion to the saint from Cascia is felt most strongly, and this is also demonstrated by the significant number of Sicilian affiliates belonging to the prayer Association dedicated to the Umbrian miracle worker. The enthusiasm and joy with which these PPU members recounted their experience of faith is yet another demonstration of their closeness and attachment to the saint.

As I usually do when interviewing the leaders of the local prayer groups, I set up a telephone appointment with Mr Leonardo Perna, head of the Terrasini PPU. But what I didn't know was that this time I was going to talk not only to him, but also to a substantial slice of the group.

The Terrasini PPU has a relatively recent history. It was recently established under the wise guidance of Fr Davide Rasa, parish priest of the church of Mary Most Holy of Providence, and was affiliated during the last national meeting held in Cascia last March. Although their experience as a group is short, the members have all been great devotees of the saint for a long time.

Some of them claim to have been

healed of an incurable illness thanks to the grace they received. There are those who finally lived out their dream of holding a child in their arms after many prayers and tears, and those who grew up in a family already devoted to the saint and experienced the closeness of Saint Rita from childhood.

Everyone is in love with Cascia, with that mystical atmosphere that can be felt when arriving in the land of Rita. None of them manage to stay away from it for long, and this is why they return to Cascia to meet their most beloved saint at least two or three times a year. Some of them plan to move there after retirement, to fulfil their desire to live a life of prayer and closeness to Rita.

“Even though we have only been affiliated recently, most of us had already been devoted for a long time, I would say. But since we joined this family, we feel more responsible. Our commitment today is to spread devotion to Saint Rita and expand our group.” The Terrasini PPU currently has about 30 affiliates, who meet every last Thursday of the month to pray in front of the relic of Saint Rita that the Augustinian nuns of Cascia gave them, as customary, when they joined the PPU. The devotees have also created a place of prayer for those who wish to share moments of prayer with them even if they are





not members. In fact, they devised a rock of prayer in a part of the city called the “Village of fishermen”, reminiscent of that of Roccaporena, which according to tradition the saint went to in solitude on a daily basis to pray.

“We are happy with this new experience. Being part of this group enriches us a lot. We are all very simple people and Saint Rita helps us grow in faith. In Cascia we feel that sense of peace and serenity that helps us to be in harmony with the Lord strongly. That's why we hope to return soon,” a member added enthusiastically during our conversation.

### GENERAL MEETING IN CASCIA: 15 AND 16 APRIL

On Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 April 2023, Cascia sees the return of the traditional general meeting of the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, an Association dedicated to the saint of impossible causes. Groups, devotees, individual affiliates and sympathisers are invited to live out two days of prayer and conviviality, in the name of their devotion.

For more information go to [santaritadascia.org](http://santaritadascia.org)

### SIGN UP FOR THE PPU

Whether you are an individual or a member of a group, join the PPU! You will participate in our meetings, meeting people like you who are devoted to dear Saint Rita. For more information, you can contact the Secretary General, Alessandra Paoloni: [piaunione@santaritadascia.org](mailto:piaunione@santaritadascia.org)



by Rita Gentili

# A saint close to women

A story of admiration and gratitude from Peru

## RITA IS ALSO HERE



**Country:** Peru

**City:** Cuzco

The Parish of Saint Rita in Cuzco was founded in 1997 by the Vicariate of Saint Augustine of Apurimac. "The Augustinian Fathers organised home visits to the urban areas that constituted the new parish, to meet the parishioners and educate us on Augustinian spirituality, informing us about the lives of Saint Rita, Saint Augustine and Saint Monica," says Edith. The Augustinians' activity in the region has also been enriched by social works, including the Lucia Vannucci Maiani general hospital, created with the collaboration of the non-profit association Apurimac.

"I do not look to her for her miracles but for her answers to human suffering."

These simple but effective words by Edith Suarez Pillco summarise the devotion to Saint Rita experienced by this woman from Cuzco, Peru, and by many, many others, perhaps even all the devotees of Saint Rita in the world. It is a devotion that recognises the normality of Rita's life and, as Edith says, the fact that "she was not a stranger to the lives of many women made of suffering, pain and loneliness".

What strikes Edith most about the life of Saint Rita is her being a wife, mother and nun and the fact of her having clung to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ at every stage. "I dedicate myself to her



out of admiration and gratitude. I feel her very close to me and to many women who live in a very painful, masculine family environment. She is like a light at the end of the tunnel, which is why I always pray to her, because as a

woman she lived through all the stages of life and I know that she can help us find an answer. She teaches me the power of prayer and trust in God. I admire her vision of God's plans, despite human reasoning, her blind faith in God

went; between suffering, fears and hopes, I had my Astrid Arianna.”

Edith's devotion to Saint Rita, then, turned into altruism and openness to her community. In fact, the parish organises several activities to raise awareness of and



A devotion that recognises the normality of Rita's life

and her tenderness for her family.”

Edith encountered the figure of Saint Rita in 1999, just after the inauguration of the parish dedicated to the miracle worker of Cascia by the Augustinians of the Vicariate of Apurimac, a region in the high Peruvian Andes. This meeting immediately turned into devotion and a request for intercession. After two Caesarean sections with which she gave birth to two male children, the doctors advised Edith to avoid new pregnancies so as not to put her life at risk, given her small and fragile body. But Edith wanted another child: “I prayed to Saint Rita that it would be a girl and that I would get through this pregnancy safely, which I knew would inevitably end with another caesarean section. Thanks to the powerful intercession of Saint Rita, this is how it

pay homage to the Saint, and Edith contributes to these. In particular, there are the Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita, during which – Edith tells us – “we invite 15 families to tell them about the life of the Saint, encouraging them to recite the rosary and celebrate the Eucharist on the Thursday assigned to them”. Then there is the novena, mass and procession on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita. “These days involve the parish areas, that is, the sectors in which the parish, ecclesial communities, schools and institutions are divided. Personally, I was *Mayordoma*, that is, I had the function of presiding over and organising these activities, including the distribution of sandwiches and the roses of Saint Rita and offering lunch to the participants”, Edith explains.





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

# On foot from Pollenza to Cascia, in the name of Saint Rita

## A 24-year pilgrimage

There is an  
incessant  
trust that  
binds them  
to their saint

**T**his column was born out of a desire to give voice to the devotees of Saint Rita, who, like an unstoppable river, come from all over Italy and the world every day to honour, thank, beseech and pray to their saint.

There is a palpable proximity felt between the saint of impossible causes and her devotees.

There is an incessant trust that continually binds them to their saint. There is a red thread that never breaks after a pilgrimage to Cascia, even once they have returned home.

This is also what happened to Piergiuseppe Vita, known to everyone as Piero, from Pollenza, Macerata, who became a devotee of Saint Rita after a harsh trial in his life. By tradition, Piero now arrives in Cascia on foot after a three-day pilgrimage.

At first he did not know the story of the saint in depth. He had often been to Cascia, but more as a tourist than as a believer. That was until 1996, when, during a dramatic moment in the life of a person very dear to him, he vowed to the saint that he would go to Cascia on foot if that situation was resolved. Faced with what a person of science would call an impossible cause, a desire was ignited in Piero's heart to ask the only expert in these cases: Saint Rita. "I am the most sinful man on earth, and yet in that hopeless moment, alone in the garage, after receiving dramatic



The pilgrims in front of the Basilica of Saint  
Rita of Cascia





Pilgrims on the path

news without a solution, she came to my mind and I made her a promise that I would go to Cascia on foot to thank her, if she would only listen to me.”

The day Piero kept his promise was 1 September 1998: “With every step I felt an immense contentment in my heart,” he says. “I was with an atheist friend of mine, who came with me to keep me company. I started out with a sandwich, a school backpack and the challenge of a 100 km walk to keep the promise I made.” By 2000, the two of them had been joined by a third friend. And since then every year other devotees have decided to walk the route too, and in fact, there are never fewer than 20/25 people from Pollenza, Tolentino, Sant’Angelo in Pontano, Montecassiano, Macerata, Cingoli, San Giorgio di Pesaro, San Michele al Fiume, Staffolo, Corridonia and Poggio San Vicino, logistically supported by a devotee from Cascia. What had begun as a solo journey to deal with one person’s anxieties, prayers and thoughts is now a

community pilgrimage that not only involves the devotees who decide to join Piero each time, but also people along the way with whom they have made friends over the years. In fact, there are ladies who set up a refreshment point for them in the three stops in Valcimarra di Caldarola, Serravalle di Chienti and Mevale. It is now a time-tested experience, with three days of walking, reflection and prayer: “Every year someone new joins, including atheists. Often they are people who don’t know each other, but by the third kilometre they already feel like friends,” said Piero.

This year the group celebrated the 24th anniversary of this experience that binds them throughout the year. “Without any pretence, we try to do good in our small way. Once a year, usually for Christmas, we hold a charity dinner and we use the proceeds to donate basic necessities to some families in difficulty in the municipalities that help us during our walking pilgrimage. We don’t raise large sums, but we do it with our hearts,” Piero concluded.

“At every step I felt an immense contentment in my heart”

### TELL US YOUR PILGRIMAGE STORY

If you have also visited the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia on pilgrimage and want 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

# “We are in the Monastery because God has cast his gaze on us”

“**N**either with you, nor without you”: this phrase from the 1981 film “The Woman Next Door” by French director Francois Truffaut is the first thing that instinctively came to mind when I was asked to speak at the conference “Interrupted Paths” on 24 November 2022 with a testimony of our lives as contemplative Augustinian nuns. It's a very good film but it has a tragic end. Why this phrase, spoken by the narrator of the film when faced with the bodies of a man and a woman, him having committed suicide, her having been murdered for refusing him? Because the conference was part of the two days of meetings on the occasion of the day against violence against women. “Neither with you nor without you”: it is a possessive, selfish love that speaks, that uses the other person and throws it away when everything ends. Can't you be mine anymore? You won't belong to anyone else...

Saint John wrote in one of his letters: “For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and

its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” (1 Jn 2:16-17).

We nuns are in the world but not of the world. The cloister is the means, the instrument that separates us from the “worldliness” of the world, as described by John, and allows us to live with more intimacy and communion with God. Having the Lord beside us at all times makes our heart burn with joy. This is the true and full happiness of our lives, we do not need to look for anything else or elsewhere. In the Rule we read: “The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.” It is not always easy to live together with Sisters whom we have not chosen, but everything is placed in the heart of God, loving and welcoming diversity so that it may bear good fruit so that we may “give forth the good odour of Christ in the holiness of your lives” (cf. Rule no. 48). We are in the Monastery not because of affinities, merits, virtues or because we are better than others, but only because the Lord has cast his gaze on us. He has loved us and called us out of



His goodness and mercy. God has a unique and unrepeatable plan of love for each of his children!

Saint Augustine invited his monks to greet each other every time they met with the words *Deo gratias!* Thank God. This shows the extent to which the sense of beauty and the joy of friendship, of communion as a gift of God was alive in him!

“Our brothers, upon meeting someone, greet them by saying: “Thank God!” They say, “What is this, “Thank God?”” But are you really so deaf that you don't know what “Thank God” means? Whoever says “Thank God” intends to thank the Lord, and reflect on whether they should not thank God as a brother who meets another brother. Or perhaps when two people who dwell in Christ

meet they should not rejoice?” (Saint Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 132.6*).

Life is not found in selfishness nor in individualism, but in gratuitousness, in charity, in Love, in giving, because we contain the root of love, the Holy Spirit.

Pascal wrote: “The God of Christians, is a God of love and of comfort, a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom He possesses, a God who makes them conscious of their inward wretchedness, and His infinite mercy, who unites Himself to their inmost soul, who fills it with humility and joy, with confidence and love, who renders them incapable of any other end than Himself” (*Pensées*, 556). This is why we're in the Monastery!

*Deo gratias!*

We nuns  
are in the  
world but  
not of the  
world

*We safeguard their future.  
With joy.*



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

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