

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

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BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

EASTER OF REBIRTH

The Light of God Shines

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Cover: Easter of rebirth
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Easter, the “Feast of the Rolling Boulders”

What is the gift of Easter? It is to show us how to set out again every day, to become “new” every day, regaining the gaze of children who are still capable of being amazed and opening themselves up to the joy of the Resurrection.

Let us make the words of Don Tonino Bello our own: “[...] On Easter morning, having arrived in the garden, the women saw that the boulder had been removed from the tomb. Each of us has our own boulder, a huge stone placed at the mouth of our souls that stops oxygen from flowing through, that oppresses us with its freezing grasp; that blocks each blade of light, that prevents communication with others [...] May Easter then represent the rolling of the boulder for everyone, the end of nightmares, the beginning of light, the spring of new relationships. If each of us, coming out of our tombs, works to remove the boulder from the tomb next to them, the miracle that marked the resurrection of Christ will finally be repeated.” We must not lose our way when faced with pain, therefore. The story of Rita, a woman of Easter, “casts light on our paths”, as Sister M. Lucia Solera recalls in her column.

And what is the ultimate purpose of these paths? It is to discover the meaning of



our lives, going towards God but without passing over any You, in accordance with, the words spoken by Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council, which are reported in the magazine by Father Vittorino Grossi: “Love man in order to love God. Love man, let's say, not as an instrument, but as the first term towards the supreme transcendent term, the principle and reason for all love.”

So let's celebrate Easter by rolling away our boulders and those of the tombs next to us, learning to love our neighbours. In this way, we will rediscover all our purposes in love and in relationships to be cherished.

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



by Carmela Mascio

Tell me about God

Interview with Archbishop and theologian Bruno Forte

Our magazine has the pleasure of hosting the authoritative voice of Bruno Forte, metropolitan archbishop of Chieti-Vasto and theologian.



Created out
of love,
humanity is
called on to
love

Your Excellency, you are an archbishop but you are also a theologian. What is a theologian and what do they do?

If theology is the reflected thought of lived faith, whether it be personal or ecclesial, a theologian is someone who brings together three tasks: listening to history, reflecting on the joys, sorrows, challenges and great questions of everyone's journey; listening to the Word made flesh, meditating, exploring and interpreting what the Scriptures tell us regarding the life of the world; discerning the signs

of the times and the appeals that come from it to the existence experienced by following Jesus in the light of the Word of God, which is welcomed and "pondered". I like to call these three tasks company, memory and prophecy. A theologian is therefore a traveling companion to God's pilgrims, who scrutinises the revelation with them and for them and offers the fruits of light to read and live out history according to the divine plan, which we share in our Lord who was crucified and rose again.

As a theologian you have written several books. In particular, "I Would Like to Talk to You About God" seems to fit our curiosity perfectly. I ask you: who is God? Does he really exist? Or is it the answer to that which Man cannot face alone?

God is the Highest, the Lord of heaven and earth, who surpasses all our measurements. Precisely for this reason, we are amazed and enchanted by the fact that he sent his eternal Son, loved always and for ever, among us so that together with him we too could be beloved children, destined for the glory of victorious love thanks to his Easter sacrifice. God is then the living God of the covenant, to whom he is and always will be faithful, the Almighty who is made through love begging for love, the Infinite

one who is embraced by our knowledge and our faith, the Eternal one who enters into history so that history enters into glory, the One in Love, who is the Beloved, the Lover and Their personal Love inseparably, who by pure grace makes us participants in divine relationships and thus makes us loved and capable of loving.

Who is or what is Man to God?

In the biblical vision, man, created for love, is called on to love and is constituted as a pure gift partner of the covenant with the Most High: therefore, his vocation is very high, his dignity is immense, his responsibility as a free creature destined for Eternity is great and must be lived with the help of the Lord.

We often hear that faith is a gift. Is that always the case or are there exceptions?

Faith is certainly a gift, because we would not have been able to invent it or give it to ourselves on our own. However, it is a gift that implies the free and conscious acceptance of creation: herein lies the challenge of being human and of wanting to be human. Called on by Love, we are made to love and we will only be fulfilled by loving: but this love must be welcomed and chosen every day, in a life that is always new.

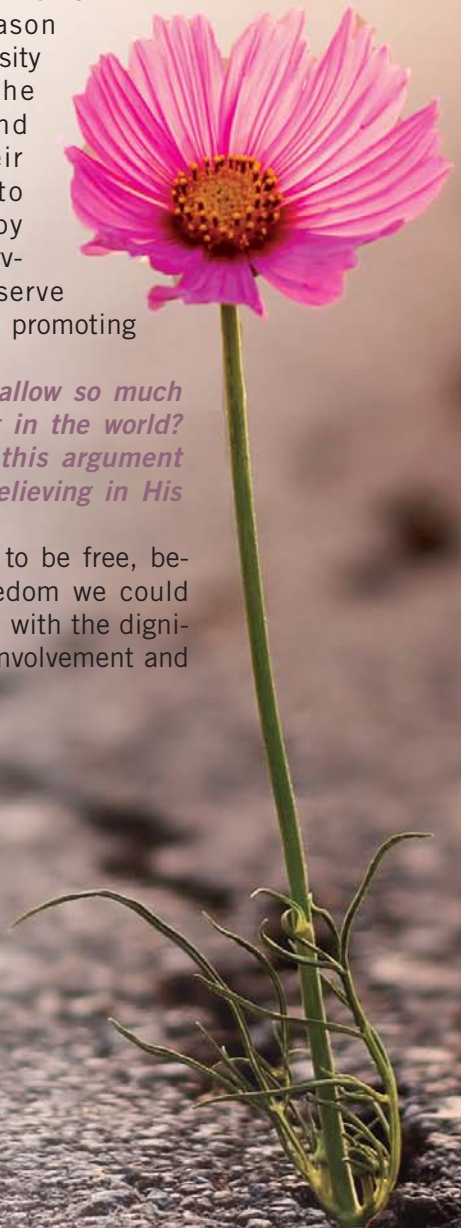
Can faith and reason go together?

Since they come from the same Giver of gifts, faith and reason have the same goal: to know how to love the Beloved, who loves us infinitely. Reason recognises this destiny when it is amazed before the Mystery (what Schelling called

precisely the “amazement of reason”) and strives to respond to the gift by seeking, questioning, listening and letting itself be loved. Faith without reason runs the risk of being naïve and fragile; reason without faith runs the risk of lacking a sense of the horizon and of greater depth. When united, faith and reason open up to Immensity and grow in the knowledge and awareness of their common duty to serve Humanity by listening to and serving God, and to serve God by loving and promoting His creatures.

Why does God allow so much pain and suffering in the world? Many people use this argument as a way of not believing in His existence.

God created us to be free, because without freedom we could not have loved Him with the dignity and fullness of involvement and passion.



We too are
carried in
the womb
of God

The price of this wonderful choice is that we are able both to follow to His design and to reject it: the ultimate outcome of these choices is called salvation or damnation. To be able to play out life in one way or another is something great and terrible: to do so by choosing love is the way of peace for everyone, the way of beauty and holiness.

How would you explain God to a child?

I would tell them about when they were little in their mother's womb: they couldn't see her, everything was dark, but their mother carried them and fed them. Then one day they came out of the womb: they were born and finally saw their mother. We too

are carried in the womb of God, but when we are born we will see him face to face. Therefore believers call death the day of birth: "dies natalis".

If it were possible to define God with a word, which one would you use?

The one He used Himself in His revelation: Love... Yes, God is Love, Trinity of the eternal Lover, of the eternal Beloved and of the Eternal Love, the one and only God because His unique nature is Love, in Three Divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we begin any moment of life in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all we do is ask to begin it and live it entirely in love, with love and for love.

THE PILGRIM'S BOX: TOWARDS THE 2025 JUBILEE

*edited by
Fr. Vittorino
Grossi OSA*

"The Second Vatican Council can be summed up in its ultimate religious meaning, which is none other than a pressing and friendly invitation to mankind of today to rediscover in fraternal love the God "to turn away from whom is to fall, to turn to whom is to rise again, to remain in whom is to be secure...to return to whom is to be born again, in whom to dwell is to live" (Paul VI, quoting St. Augustine Soliloqui, 1,3).

At the end of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI recalled the light of the journey that comes to us from Jesus Christ through the experience of St. Augustine, taking stock of the council's work by directing pilgrimage-seeking humanity towards the City of God, the path to rediscovering God, which is that of love. The pope said: "Love man to love God. Love man, let us say, not as an instrument, but as the first term towards the supreme transcendent term, the principle and reason of all love" (Message of 7 December 1965).

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.



CASCIA-VERONA TWINNING

THURSDAY 23 MARCH - SOLEMN CELEBRATION AND LIGHTING OF THE TORCH OF FORGIVENESS AND PEACE

18:30 - VERONA CATHEDRAL

The first phase of the spiritual and people's twinning with Verona begins. Every year the political and religious institutions of Cascia choose a world-class city with a strong devotion to Saint Rita in order to be able to support it and make it grow. The rites will be concelebrated by **Msgr. Domenico Pompili**, Bishop of Verona, **Msgr. Renato Boccardo**, Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia and **Father Luciano De Michieli**, Rector of the Basilica of Cascia.

FRIDAY 24 AND SATURDAY 25 MARCH VERONA

Official meeting of the delegations of the two municipalities, presentation of the woman who will receive the **"Saint Rita International Award 2023"** by the Diocese of Verona and **programme to visit and get to know the city**.

At the end of the visit, on Saturday 25 March there will be **solemn celebration in the church of Santa Maria Antica**, the centre of Ritian devotion in the city of Verona.

RITIAN MAY

SUNDAY 7 MAY, FEAST OF THE FAMILY

16:00 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Commemoration of wedding anniversaries (1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and subsequent single years - Book via the Information Office on +39 (0)743.75091). At the end of each Holy Mass of the day, there will be some words about Saint Rita for little ones and the **blessing of children**.

FROM 12 TO 20 MAY, NOVENA OF SAINT RITA

Facilitated by the Christian communities of the Diocese.

The daily programme, which other pilgrims can also join, includes:

16:00 - Visit of the Monastery and story of Saint Rita's history and message;

17:00 - Guided tour in the Penitentiary and possibility to confess;

18:00 - Eucharist led by the host communities and, at the end, **passage next to the Urn of Saint Rita.**

SUNDAY 14 MAY, PROCESSION OF THE BANNER

For the timetable consult the website **santaritadacascia.org** - **PIAZZA DANTE**

Procession through the streets of the city up to the **Basilica of Saint Rita** and entrustment of the Municipality of Cascia and its hamlets to Saint Rita, with the traditional banner. We want to thank the saint for the protection we have received from her against many calamities over the centuries and to invoke the gift of Peace and Forgiveness in families and for the inhabitants of the Municipality.

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

SATURDAY 20 MAY

21:00 - ROCCAPORENA

Arrival of the **Torch of Forgiveness and Peace** from Verona. Prayer and walk to the **Rock of Prayer with the Torch.**

"SAINT RITA INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AWARD 2023"

This annual recognition, known as **"The Women of Rita"**, aims to award women who live out the **values expressed by Saint Rita in their daily lives, such as charity, forgiveness and service to others.**

For updated information on the dates of the **announcement and presentation of the women awarded** and the **prize-giving**, consult the website **santaritadacascia.org**

SUNDAY 21 MAY

20:30 - PIAZZA GARIBALDI

Gathering of the banners from the municipalities of the Valnerina, of the civil, religious and military authorities and of the delegation from Verona.

Procession to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita.

21:30 - AVENUE OF THE SANCTUARY

Welcoming the delegation of Verona and the award-winning women.

Exchange of gifts

between the twinned

municipalities and **arrival of the**

Torch of Forgiveness and Peace.

22:00 - FORECOURT OF THE BASILICA

Lighting of the tripod and official start of the 2023 Ritian celebrations. Then, entry to the Basilica for a **concluding prayer of entrustment to Saint Rita.**

MONDAY 22 MAY,

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

7:00 - Festive ringing of the bells.

Holy Masses will be celebrated **throughout the day**, at the **Hall of Peace** and in the **Lower Basilica**, with schedules that can be consulted on the website santaritadacascia.org
The Basilica, where the body of Saint Rita is kept, will remain open throughout the day. You can visit the **Monastery** from 6:30 to 12:30 continuously, with individual visits at 14:30 - 15:30 - 17:00.

For updated information on the arrival of the **Historical Procession** of characters from the life of Saint Rita, on the celebration of the **Solemn Pontifical**, on the Supplication to Saint Rita and on the **Blessing of the Roses**, which will be held on the **avenue of Saint Rita**, consult the same website.





With Saint Rita for Nigerian children's right to health

Support the reconstruction of the hospital in Namu

So much tenacity, gratitude, devotion. Charity and love for one's neighbour shared with Saint Rita. A closeness that feels like family, despite being far away. This is what I have felt so far from my contacts with Sister Florence. She is a nun at the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima working in the community of Namu, in the state of Plateau, Nigeria, along the Lafia-Shendam road, in

2019 and is currently being replaced by a temporary clinic.

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ASSISTED

Despite the precarious situation and the limited means available, in 2022 the clinic guaranteed indispensable health care to over 12,000 people in the local community, out of a total of around 35,000 inhabitants. In particular, it provides support for children and their families: 850 children were treated; 835 were vaccinated against six deadly diseases; 303 were born, of which 83 were delivered by caesarean section, for a total of 1988 children taken in for care. In addition, 3,900 people from family groups were informed about deworming primary school pupils and distributing multivitamins to pregnant women.

THE CAMPAIGN "WHEN DEVOTION IS PARTICIPATION"

These are the children and families that our Foundation has decided to support with the campaign "When devotion is participation", on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita of Cascia on 22 May. The goal is to rebuild the hospital so that it will be much larger and more modern, to guarantee annual assistance to more than 20,000 people, expanding the territorial area covered. You too can do your part: with your contribution, we will be able to extend the family feeling that has always animated our community of devo-



an area without drinking water, electricity or road networks. They are leading the reconstruction of the St. Virgilius Memorial hospital, which was destroyed by a fire in

tees to the Nigerian children and their loved ones.

THE IMPACT

“The presence of the hospital before and the clinic after has made a huge contribution to reducing the frequency of diseases and the mortality rate among the people of Namu and its surroundings,” Sister Florence told me. “Our prevention services, which include health education, awareness raising, vaccinations and therefore greater understanding, have avoided further epidemics of diseases such as cholera and measles. People here really believe in herbal care, so our presence and

the massive efforts made regarding health education have produced significant positive results. Rebuilding the hospital and offering better services is an imperative!”

Healthcare worker Emmanuel Tetsohot specified that “they are a centre of reference for clinics within the community and surrounding villages, thanks to the constant presence of a doctor,” and that they could offer better health services if the hospital were rebuilt. “At present, there are people who undertake very long journeys to reach places that can offer them some services and sometimes they can't reach their destination.”

FIND OUT HOW TO SUPPORT NIGERIAN CHILDREN

We want to support the reconstruction of St. Virgilius Memorial Hospital, founded and managed by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima, in the village of Namu, Nigeria, by providing health care to the community, especially children and their families. In 2022 a total of 1988 minors benefited from their care, out of a total of more than 12,000 people who were assisted thanks to the temporary clinic that has replaced the old hospital, which was destroyed by a fire.

The new facility will be larger and more modern, making it possible to better treat the diseases that affect children the most, such as malaria, anaemia, diarrhoea, malnutrition, measles and transmission of the HIV virus from mothers.

Help us rebuild Namu Hospital. DONATE NOW!

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THANK YOU!





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

The Sanctuary, the home of God's seekers

We try to
meet all
those who
seek God

It has often happened to me during confession, or while simply speaking with the pilgrims I have met on the avenue of the sanctuary, that I sensed a profound restlessness in them that could not be ignored.

It is familiar, well-known concern that we could summarise in a question that dwells in the hearts of many of us: God, who are you to me? And who am I to you?

It's the same question that Saint Augustine asked himself, as a restless young man in search of stability, of something that will not pass, but also of the meaning of life and death, of the why of suffering. These are questions that cannot be answered by theoretical arguments, but only by a deeper and truer relationship with God.

There is a temptation to only ask for things or gestures that do not require us to change. A miracle understood as something magical, regardless of its nature, transforms us into something else and solves our problems without considering the causes.

An encounter, a true relationship, on the other hand, always changes us profoundly. We are no longer the same and we need to

make space for the other, so that we lose the idea of being at the centre of our own selves a bit.

But we *"believe that those who seek reasons to live, in some way and in the depths of their expectation, seek God"* (Letter to the Seekers of God) and therefore an encounter, a relationship of love.

As believers in Jesus Christ, animated by the desire to share knowledge of the one who has given meaning and hope to our lives, we try, with respect and friendship, to meet all those who seek God, and also those who, being resigned or disappointed, do not seek Him anymore but who still come to visit the sanctuary.

All of us, the friars, nuns, volunteers and sanctuary operators, are therefore urged to welcome and listen, to form a true, authentic relationship, to lead to an encounter with the holiness of Rita and a friendship with Blessed Maria Teresa.

The real goal is to meet the One who can truly change life: Lord Jesus, the Only One who subverts our schemes and our expectations, the Only One who can give us the water that will quench our thirst for eternal life.



A century-long history

From the Bees to the Roses turns 100 years old

The first colour cover, dating back to 1957, featured a photo of the Urn of Saint Rita, adorned with flowers and votive offerings. The image recounts the special celebrations for the 500th anniversary of the passing of the saint, who ascended to heaven on 22 May 1457.

The magazine, an embrace for devotees

by Carmela Mascio

For the 100th anniversary of our magazine we are continuing to delve into its history. We're doing it with an authoritative source: the expert writer of local history Omero Sabatini. Like all true love stories, the story that bound him to the magazine came about by chance. Speaking with crystal clarity although his voice sometimes revealed his emotion, he told us of a resounding spanking that his mother gave him at the age of three and a half in the churchyard of the basilica in Cascia. Father Bruno Guidi was passing by and was moved by the scene, so he decided to recruit him as an altar boy: Sister Margherita and Sister Costanza sewed the outfit for the smallest altar boy in the Basilica!

As a young man, Omero began to lend a hand at the Hotel delle Rose in the summer, until the Abbess Mother Gertrude Ceccarelli entrusted him with the task of delivering the magazine.

By 1923, the bulletin had become the link between Cascia, Saint Rita and her devotees, recounting the events taking place in the monastery, the basilica and the town. In 1957, thanks to the foresight of the then Abbess Mother Consilia Corneli, the magazine began to be printed in colour. Making full use of the legacy of Blessed Mother Fasce, Mother Consilia understood the modernity of the times: once again unconditional Love for the children of God had provided guidance and led to the right choice! Omero remembered the fast pace of his work due to the continuous growth of subscribers: that's how it was during the 40 years he was

active and it's still the same today. In 1979 he was helped by a dozen girls, some of whom grew up in the Beehive, the housing project founded by Blessed Mother Fasce, which was home to 120 girls in that year.

Omero stressed that the maternal spirit of the nuns was a shining example for everyone and the girls' joy was proof of this.

Out of love and by chance, Omero met his wife Maria Rita, who grew up in the Beehive. Saint Rita's predilection for the human affairs of families was not theoretical, but part of her life. So it was that in 1985 the phone rang. Omero answered: it was the Abbess, Mother Gertrude, who asked him if he and his wife wanted to become foster parents to a Little Bee. Love cannot be explained. It is lived. So the little girl entered the Sabatini house forever. After her, another girl and a set of twins were born.

Omero has been retired since 2018. It's nice to think how many magazines he's sorted, packed, counted and then shipped all over the world.

When I ask him what it represents, he replies without hesitation that it is the very life of Cascia, of Blessed Mother Fasce, of the message of Saint Rita: it is a message of absolute communion.

This is the magazine: an embrace for all the devotees. It is the embrace of the nuns who pray incessantly, the embrace of Blessed Mother Fasce that constantly guides the editors, the embrace of Saint Rita who miraculously and unconditionally continues to intercede for all of us.

Hymn to Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce

by Mauro Papalini

Those jewels
given to you by Christ the
Bridegroom
were tokens, not burdens,
the most precious treasure.

The diseases, your tumour,
the endless pains;
these were the Lord's gift
of the most divine delights.

Tell us then, Maria Teresa,
how great was your affliction.
What did you feel, hurt
by the bitter passion?

My coat of arms was the Cross,
and I was glad to embrace it;
listen to my voice:
commit to loving it!

Oh, Cross! The Holy Wood,
has ineffable attractions
which can only be
understood
by those who live on that
bridal bed.

Tell us again, our Blessed one,
what is suffering?
Is resignation grateful
to the Most High Wisdom?

To love means to suffer:
here is the suffering;
I was happy to endure it
to receive immense joys.

Those who do not suffer do
not love!
You are not truly chosen;
blessed is he who yearns
to be a slave to the Beloved!

To Almighty God the Father,
to the Easter victim,
to the living Spirit,
praise, glory, equal honour.

Amen

The Mother and the Saint of the impossible

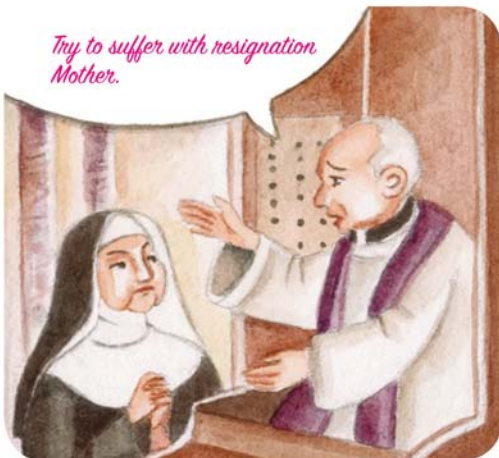
Saint Rita
recounts the life
of Blessed Mother
Maria Teresa
Fasce



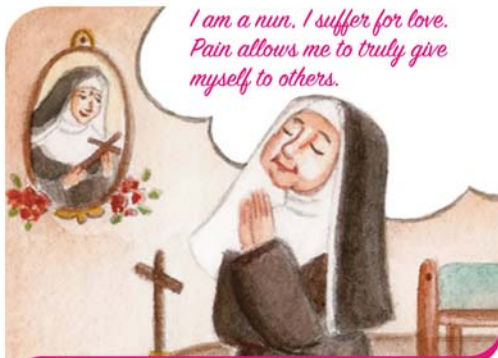
"Just as I received a thorn on my forehead, for you, Maria Teresa, it is breast cancer, which you welcome as a gift from Christ..."

So it's true that
you have a health
problem!

Now my joy is over:
everyone has discovered
my treasure.



Try to suffer with resignation
Mother.



I am a nun. I suffer for love.
Pain allows me to truly give
myself to others.

"... Love for Jesus is a greater joy for you
than physical pain. Here lies the secret
of your serenity and your smile".



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

To follow him is to walk in his footsteps, with humility

I like to think that I am loved by God from eternity. That my life is part of the plan of love for humanity. I am “a particle of creation” that, having been solicited by his love, reciprocates it in full freedom as a creature and a daughter through Jesus Christ, his Son.

I am fascinated by the logic of God, who chooses the humblest, the poor, the lowliest, the defenceless and the marginalised to accomplish his dream of eternity. The Word of God entered history and was made flesh in the womb of Mary. He remained hidden for more than 30 years, working in Joseph's workshop. After leaving Nazareth, his city, he proclaimed the Gospel for about three years, beginning in Galilee by inviting listeners to enter into conversion and to believe in the Good News. Through an itinerant catechesis, he revealed to them the face of God, the merciful Father, who hears the cry of the afflicted and stoops over human misery. Along the way, Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, resurrected the dead and spoke with authority, without duplicity. He chose simple people to make disciples of them, including some women. His life plan was to do the will of his Father.

And he would do so to the most extreme consequences, with love, giving his life on the wood of the cross. “Such was the High Priest that we needed to enter into an eternal Covenant, one no longer made with the blood of bullocks or bulls, but with his blood.” His cry of love, in the act of expiring, ripped apart the night of time, giving humanity the dawn of a new day: the Resurrection. For my part, to quote Saint Augustine, “I cannot limit myself to admiring him, but I am bound to imitate him.” To follow him is to walk in his footsteps, with the strength of the Spirit and of the bread of life, a memorial of his Easter, living in freedom, in the gratuitousness of a love that was received and returned. He traced a path: one that was not comfortable; he opened a door: one that was not wide; he indicated a destination: one that was not obvious, but was within the reach of everyone, young and old. His name is humility. Therefore: “We humbly keep vigil, we humbly pray, with the most pious faith, with the firmest hope, with the most fervent charity, thinking of how our glorification will shine like the daylight, if our humiliation changes night into day” (Saint Augustine).

The Word of
God was
made flesh
in the womb
of Mary



by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

Easter woman, companion on the road

Her story
also casts
light on our
paths

Let's imagine that we are in that garden, the crisp air of the early hours of the day drenched in the scents of spring. That determination to remain, the stubbornness of which a woman is capable when her heart weeps. Staying there, unmoveable next to a tomb that cannot convince her that everything is over. Then suddenly that voice, known and loved, lifts her up, calls her sweetly by name: "Mary!"

The women of the Gospels who came into contact with the Risen Jesus were experts in suffering, yet they did not give up hope, their belief. Their decision to *remain*, like Mary Magdalene next to the tomb, becomes a prelude to the transformational encounter with the risen life of their Master; finally the proclamation is made: "I have seen the Lord!" (Jn 20:11-18).

Silence and joy; cross and hope; love and pain; death and life: Jesus' Easter is all of this together, and Rita welcomed it with no holds barred. Her faith agreed to pass through the crucible of trial and desolation; she knew loneliness and the taste of tears; she supplicated not only for herself, but for the entire city of Cascia. This very "gestation" she underwent made it possible to ripen the fruit of hope, a gift from above like the sweet figs picked in the middle of winter

from the garden of Roccaporena. Rita's entire existence was marked by the stages of Easter, which placed her in one of the three great moments of the Easter Triduum in each case. Her story also casts light on our paths, to remind us that even when we struggle to move past an ordeal, we are actually experiencing Easter with Jesus; and that we are making Easter even when we find ourselves immersed in situations that seem to have no way out, like an endless Holy Saturday.

Rita, woman of Easter: for her humble and tenacious faith; for her hope, imbued with prayer and expectation; for her charity, which grew progressively through the contemplation of the Cross of Jesus.

The stinging thorns, the beauty and colours, the scent... every detail of the rose with which we immediately identify Rita refers us to the suffering of the Passion and the joy of the Resurrection, of the new life that humble Jesus gives us, simply by asking us to go after him, trusting in us.

*Saint Rita, woman of Easter,
be our walking companion,
so that even our painful stations
become Easter junctions, openings
from which you joyfully and
irresistibly filter the life of the
Risen one.*

CROSS, LOVE AND RESURRECTION

In the earliest depiction Rita was shown with the wound on her forehead and the thorn in her hand before the image of a resurrected Christ. God responds to the greatest pain, to the greatest evil, with goodness and the greatest joy, that of the resurrection of Jesus. The wounds of Crucified Jesus are the scars of Risen Jesus and vice versa, in a single whole between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It is impossible to understand one without the other. The cross would not make sense without the end of the Resurrection and we would not understand the Resurrection without the Passion:

cross, love and resurrection, (taken from: *Donne artigiane di futuro con Rita da Cascia*, Augustinian Nuns Rossano, Tau editrice 2021, pp. 118-119)



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.

Alba Gennai (Florence - Italy)
 Alma Lucia Agostini (Mezzocorona TN - Italy)
 Angela D'Alessandro (Rome-Italy)
 Mother Angelica Pruneti OSA (Figline Valdarno FI - Italy)
 Cesarina Acerbi (Larciano PT - Italy)
 Ciro Lacenere (Giovinazzo BA - Italy)
 Clara Milani (Rome - Italy)
 Enza Berardinelli (Monteferrante CH - Italy)
 Ermanno Beddini (Montefalco PG - Italy)

Francesco Concistré (Sibari CS - Italy)
 Giobatta Anapoli (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)
 Giovanni Faccendini (Magenta MI - Italy)
 Giovanni Travaini (Milan - Italy)
 Giulia Rosa Boschetti (Pontevico BS - Italy)
 Giuseppina Consales (San Damiano D'Asti AT - Italy)
 Lucia Di Lodovico (Ocosce di Cascia PG - Italy)
 Luciano Di Flavio (Massa Fermana FM - Italy)
 Maria Grazia Petrangeli in Giustini (Cascia PG - Italy)
 Maria Teresa Melchiori (Pallanzano VB - Italy)
 Marta Sipolo (Zevio VR - Italy)
 Martino De Sacco (Palermo - Italy)
 In Polignano (Putignano BA - Italy)
 Pierino Ferretti (Alba CN-Italy)
 Pietro Rossetti (Rome - Italy)
 Remilda Berardinelli (Monteferrante CH - Italy)
 Rino Di Gioia (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
 Sister M. Gemma Barichello OSA (Lecceto - Italy)



by Marta Ferraro

Faith heals the heart

“I will never stop thanking Maurizio and Francesco for my husband's conversion.” Thus begins the story of Mrs Bianca Defendini of Abbiategrosso, Milan. The woman discovered the Primary Pious Union, the Prayer Association dedicated to the Umbrian miracle worker, at one of the most painful moments of her life. She was in the hospital to look after her husband Teresio, who was ill with cancer.

“My husband was not a man of faith, but he always did a lot of good,” said the woman. “In order to get him to go to Mass at least at Christmas we had to make compromises and often, before he got sick, he said that if something bad happened to him, he was worried he wouldn't make it. That was until he got the diagnosis. Then,



Mr Terenzio, Bianca's husband, who converted before he died



Bianca Defendini, registered in the PPU of Abbiategrosso

it was discovered that he had liver cancer, and the doctors initially gave him two months to live. But instead of giving in to discouragement, he converted, finding strength in faith. Maurizio and Francesco, the organisers of the PPU of Abbiategrosso, often came to visit us in his hospital room. Strangely, my husband was not bothered by their presence, even though their discussions always turned to the Church and Saint Rita. Slowly we also began to say a few prayers with them. In fact, Maurizio and Francesco passed by the ward, keeping us company and speaking to us about Saint Rita.”

GENERAL MEETING OF THE PPU
“LET US WALK TOGETHER ON THE ROAD TO HOLINESS”
CASCIA, 15-16 APRIL 2023

Organisation by the Puglia Region PPU.
 Anyone can participate, even non-members.

SATURDAY 15 APRIL

Hall of Peace

9:00 - Gathering

9:30 - Chaplet of Saint Rita

10:00 - Conference chaired by Don Silvio Bruno “Let's Walk Together on the Road to Holiness”

Grand Parlour

11:15 - Meeting between the Nuns and the groups

Basilica of Saint Rita

14:30 - Entrance for the visit and personal prayer in front of the Urn that houses the body of Saint Rita. During the passage by the Urn: Songs and prayers to Saint Rita

Hall of Peace

16:30 - Meeting with the Managers

Basilica of Saint Rita

21:00 - Eucharistic Adoration and new affiliations

SUNDAY 16 APRIL

Hall of Peace

9:00 - Gathering of groups with banners and their own uniform. Recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

10:00 - Eucharistic Concelebration presided over by Father Ludovico Maria Centra OSA

11:00 - Departure of the Procession through the streets of Cascia with the statue of Saint Rita, from Cellino San Marco (Brindisi)

Contacts: Information Office +39 (0)743.75091 - infobasilica@santaritadacascia.org

Bianca continued: “Over time, Teresio got closer to this figure and once said: ‘I hope I have time to go to Cascia to see Saint Rita’. Thanks to God, my husband and I were able to take part in a pilgrimage to Cascia organised by the PPU of Abbiategrosso. It was April and then he passed away in August. It was a day of great happiness for him. On that occasion, Maurizio and Francesco enrolled me in the PPU and there I met the nuns, including Sister Natalina, who was Abbess at the time.”

“I will always be grateful to heaven for what happened to us, because even if his body wasn't healed, his soul was cured,” commented the widow. “At the end of his

life he was one with Saint Rita. I had holy cards and prayers scattered everywhere throughout the house. When he had a crisis, when he was really sick, Sister Natalina from Cascia, would casually call us to inquire about Teresio's health and then he would start to feel better.”

“He's been gone almost eight years. I'm still part of the PPU. I make my contribution to the association. I take care of keeping the hospital chapel in Abbiategrosso clean, which is where the PPU is based and is the place where my husband converted. And today it's where I always go to Mass, it's a way to find him again,” concluded Bianca.

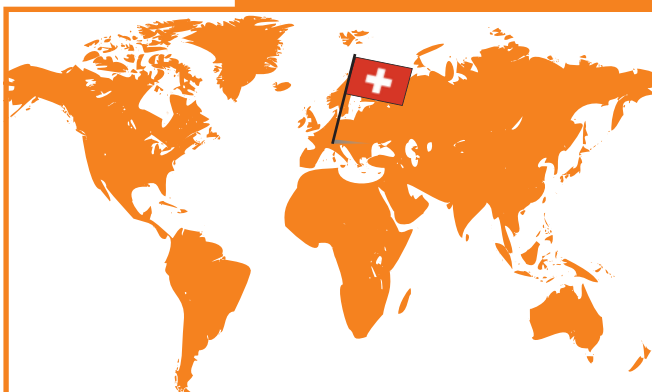


di Rita Gentili

Doing good for others and yourself in the name of Saint Rita

A story of devotion from Switzerland

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Switzerland

City: Locarno

In the church of Saint Catherine in Locarno, visitors venerate a canvas depicting the Saint receiving the thorn made by the artist Arturo Zanieri, a Tuscan painter born in Florence in 1870. The church, as Raffaello tells us and as other sources also testify, welcomes many faithful on the occasion of the feast of Saint Rita on 22 May, and it is not the only testament of devotion to the Umbrian miracle worker in the country. The church of Saint Catherine is annexed to the monastery of the same name, parts of which date back to the end of the 1200s, and was home to Augustinian nuns from 1628 until last October. On this date the last five sisters were transferred to other religious communities of the Locarno area, to allow the huge monastic complex, which is owned by the State and composed of several buildings, to be transformed into a museum of natural history. This transformation will not jeopardise continuation of the liturgical and pastoral activities organised in the church.

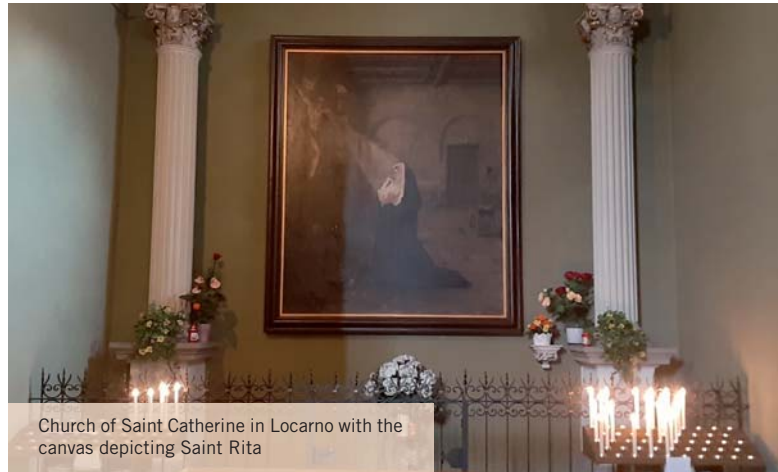
From the Swiss shores of Lake Maggiore, in Locarno, comes a story of devotion to Saint Rita by Raffaello Zucconi, a dynamic sixty-four year old who started hearing about the saint from a very young age. He was just three years old when his mother Ada passed away, but his father Angelo told him how devoted she was to that saint, of whom there were various images and statuettes throughout the house, on the bedside table, in the car and in his father's wallet. It was a presence that turned into companionship when Raffaello was facing a trip to Germany for the first time



at age 12. It was an emotional experience for the young man, who told us: "I took the statuette of Saint Rita with me and asked her for protection for those days away from home. Every evening I looked at her and thanked her." This became habit that was then repeated on the many trips that the man would make in the course of his life together with his wife and two children. As a teenager, Raffaello continued to turn to the miracle worker of Cascia, visiting her in the church attached to the monastery of Saint Catherine in Locarno, which houses a painting of the saint. Then finally, in 1981, he decided it was time to visit Cascia. After Ada's death, in fact, Angelo married the woman who had been taking care of his children, Raffaello and Anita, for some time and with whom he would have a third child, Christian. Rosa is also devoted to the saint and together they went to places connected to Rita: Raffaello wept with emotion before the body of the miracle worker. For him, Saint Rita is an inspiration of life. Knowing how to bring out people's best sides, as Saint Rita did with her "gruff" husband, being good and showing willingness towards those who are less fortunate are some of the Ritian teachings that Raffaello has tried to put into practice in his life, and for years he has accompanied the sick on diocesan pilgrimages from Lugano to Lourdes. He would return to Cascia again in 1987, with his wife, and then again in 2019, alone, on his birthday, which he describes as

"the most beautiful of my life".

However, it was a few years before this last visit that Raffaello felt that he truly had Saint Rita beside him, discovering the power of prayer. "In 2012 I went through a very bad period, the kind that can lead you to despair. I stood in front of the painting of Saint Rita in Locarno. I didn't ask her much,



just to enlighten me." Sometime later, at the end of the celebration of 22 May in Locarno, Raffaello caught the gaze of a lady dressed in red who would soon begin to recite the rosary.

"I stood there listening, in silence, in tears. I did not know what the rosary was, but after that experience, I also began to take part in this moment of prayer. Since then, little by little, through the intercession of Saint Rita, the Lord helped me to take the right steps to heal. Saint Rita has never disappointed me," Raffaele said again. "Indeed, everything I have asked for in life has been granted to me, sometimes it seems almost too much."

Saint Rita is
an inspiration
of life



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

“The trial is hard, but faith is stronger.”

A family pilgrimage to say thank you

There are many reasons that lead pilgrims to go to Cascia. They come to the feet of Saint Rita to ask for the grace to find love and start a family, to experience the joy of becoming parents, to be able to heal from illness, to manage to overcome a difficult trial, but above all they also come to Cascia to pray and to give thanks.

This is what Mr Gildo, originally from Acquasparta, in the province of Terni, did on 23 October last year.

They never
stopped
praying

“I remember my father was very moved. The sisters had the pleasure of meeting us and he was also pleased to tell his story and to have had a second chance. It was a beautiful, exciting, liberating, heartfelt day,” this is how Benedetta, Gildo's daughter, described the pilgrimage to Cascia. “To all those who are going through a complicated situation, I would say don't give up, because you can't know how it ends until the final moment. As difficult as it may be, I say fight and pray, because the trial is difficult, but faith is stronger.”

It was January 2022 when her father suffered a brain aneurysm. After that, Gildo spent several months in the hospital struggling to recover. He was also often alone due to the strict anti-COVID protocols, which forced many people to not only cope with an illness but also with loneliness. However, in that difficult moment of his life, Gildo says that he felt accompanied by Saint Rita. Although he was in a comatose state for some time, he claims to have felt her close to him and to have invoked her several times. Because of this, he went to Cascia to thank her as soon as he could. The day of thanksgiving,



Mr Gildo on a pilgrimage to Cascia with all his family and friends

which should have been experienced as a family gathering, almost immediately turned into a moment of sharing, however. In fact, relatives and friends decided to accompany him on this day of gratitude and celebration, just as they had supported him through prayer in the difficult months he spent in the hospital, albeit from afar.



Even when, according to the doctors, there was little hope that Gildo could recover or that his condition would return to normal, family and friends were never discouraged and never stopped asking and praying for him to go back to having a normal life, each in their own way. As such, on that day, that was as special as it was liberating, he was accompanied by about 60 people, relatives and friends who wanted to share the joy of giving thanks for having received a second chance together with him.

“My father was in the hospital from January to July 2022. Until the end of February he was even alone, because the Covid protocol prevented patients from receiving visits,” comments Benedetta. Then, moving forward in time, Gildo was visited by his daughter, who subsequently took turns at his bedside, together with his aunt Annamaria, who always encouraged everyone to have faith. In May, Gildo finally underwent surgery that proved decisive and from that moment on things kept improving. Today, he continues his journey to recovery with tenacity and determination. There is still some way to go, but he's going in the right direction.

“My family has always been close to Saint Rita. My paternal grandparents married in Cascia back in 1955. My family is from Acquasparta, yet my grandparents chose the basilica of Cascia for their wedding. So, when Dad was ill, it was almost natural for us to turn to her. She has always been a very familiar figure, plus she is the saint of the impossible,” said Benedetta, recalling her family's devotion to the miracle worker from Cascia.

It is the right direction

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

The wonder of Easter

Easter is
the central
point of
Christian life

Easter is the central point of our Christian life, beginning with the Triduum, which Saint Augustine described as the “triduum of the Lord, crucified, buried and risen.” It represents the synthesis between the passion and the passage of Christ from this world to the Father. Augustine also said, “Through passion, the Lord passed from death to life.”

We know it, we experience it, yet we struggle to accept the passage to suffering and death. Just as the apostles and disciples struggled. The Lord said to two of them on the road to Emmaus: “Didn't Christ have to endure and withstand these sufferings to enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:26). The joy of the Gospel can and must change our life, filling “the heart and the whole life of those who meet Jesus” (EG,1). That's why we need to “make Easter.” Augustine

wrote: “Passion and resurrection of the Lord: this is the true Easter.” It is God's Easter that joins people's Easter.

Easter is the cross and resurrection. It is the Easter mystery that is not easy to enter if we approach it with reason alone, but which is a little less difficult if we approach it with life. Because life seeks meaning, it seeks it in joy and it seeks it in pain. In the face of death, the resurrection opens up to hope: “Death and life faced each other in a prodigious duel: the Lord of life was dead, now alive and reigns”. The old medieval sequence sung at Easter Mass heralds hope.

Let us listen to a Father of the Church: “Do not think that the renewal of life, which is said to have taken place only once, is enough; rather we must make this novelty new every day, so to speak. Just as an old man continues to age and becomes more elderly day by day, so this new man continues to renew himself and there is never a time when his renewal is not increasing. Let us walk in newness of life, showing ourselves to him who raised us with Christ as new every day, and more beautiful so to speak, looking to Christ as a mirror of the beauty of our faces. Contemplating the glory of the Lord, let us transform ourselves into his image, because in rising from the dead, from earthly lowliness, Christ ascended to the glory of the

Jesus Christ depicted on the Solemn Casket of Saint Rita in Cascia



majesty of the Father” (Origen).

Easter has always been and still remains the feast of amazement and surprise from the discovery that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, but rather came to meet us as a living person. If we look around we realise that wonder no longer forms part of our horizon, and we are perhaps more convinced that this humanity is heading towards a tragic end. We lack the gaze of children, which is capable of recognising that which is ugly, but also of being amazed by the beautiful news. The expectation for a different future, which already began with the Easter surprise, can make us react to numbness and pes-

simism, restoring confidence and determination.

We rise together with Christ to a new life in which we have been freely liberated from our faults thanks to Him and in which we can finally love our neighbour. Accept God's gift, become “new”, brighter and more beautiful, more alive, every day. Continuous conversion to what the Risen One gives us in baptism is the most powerful thing we can do for the good of the world: believe in God, seek our guidance in Christ alone and remain firm with Him against evil, death, war and violence. Sharing the true life as Children of God. This is the gift of Easter! Best wishes!

We lack the
gaze of
children

A WONDERFUL POLYHEDRON

“When God's loving and creative gaze reaches us in a completely unique way in Jesus, our life changes. And to the extent that we welcome him, everything becomes a dialogue, between us and the Lord, but also between us and others. It is a dialogue that takes us deeper and deeper to discover, understand and welcome the nuances and facets of our personal vocation.

We are waiting for you, not for an alternative holiday... but to spend a few days together in prayer and friendship.

**VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE FOR WOMEN
FROM 7 (dinner) TO 12 (breakfast) AUGUST 2023**

For more information:

Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery - Viale Santa Rita, 13
06043 Cascia (PG) - tel. +39 (0)74376221
email: monastero@santaritadacascia.org

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