

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

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OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

SAINT RITA HOPE FOR GOOD

Waiting for the feast

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"Let us not be robbed of hope."

Seventy years as a nun, in the name of Blessed Mother Fasce

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Hope, “an indefatigable child”

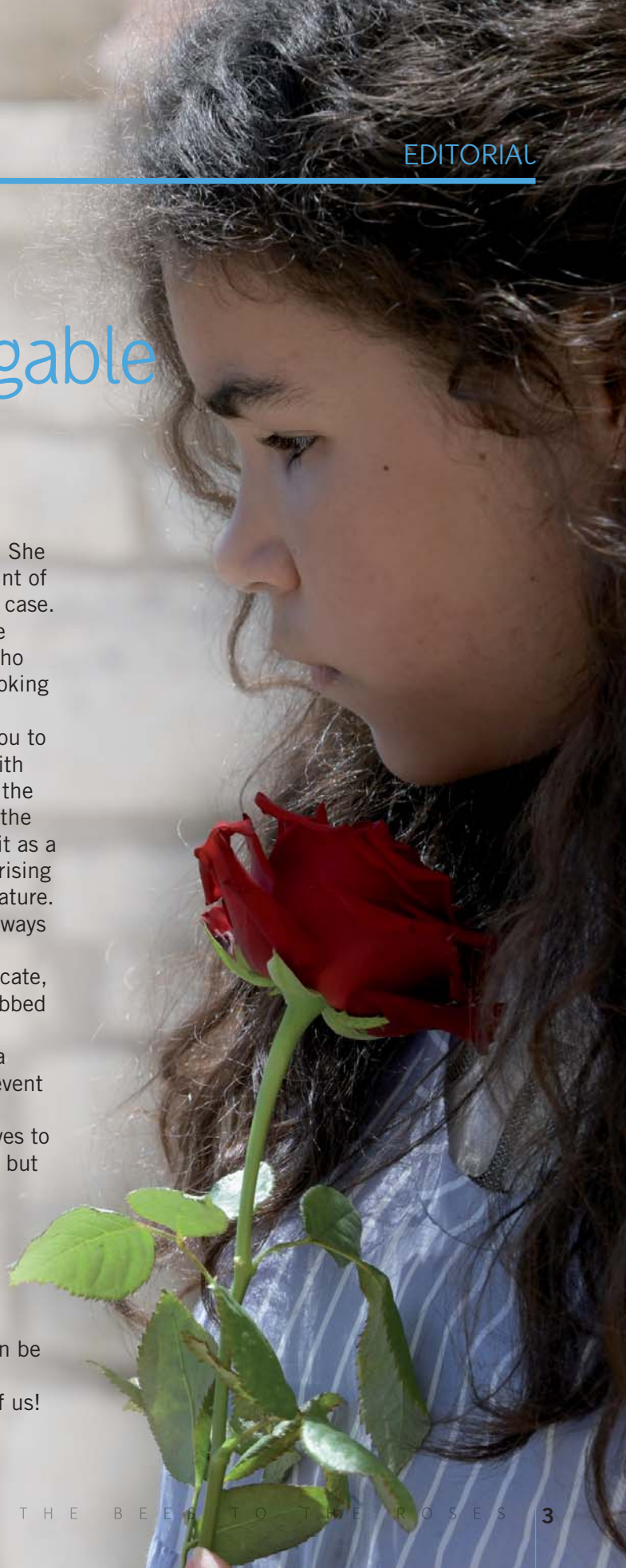
Why do we pray to Saint Rita? She is often described as the saint of suffering. But that's not the case. On the contrary, the Umbrian miracle worker is a woman of hope and joy who shows us how to trust in the Lord, looking beyond what we think is possible.

As such, in this issue, we invite you to live out the Feast dedicated to her with hope, the hope that is recognised as the most important theological virtue by the writer Charles Péguy, who describes it as a young girl looking to the future, surprising God himself with her indefatigable nature. This is the hope that Pope Francis always invokes, starting with his “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, a manifesto of his pontificate, in which he writes: “Let us not be robbed of hope”.

It is the same hope that became a witness of a certainty in Rita: every event of our life, even if it is painful, has a greater meaning if we entrust ourselves to God. This security is not resignation, but belongs to those who see the world with the eyes of the Lord.

Let us therefore take advantage of the Feast to ask Saint Rita to give us her faith full of hope, encouraging us not to give up and to trust that “buds of new life” can even be generated from dry wood.

Happy Feast of Saint Rita to all of us!





by Rita Gentili

The rose, the perfume of Jesus and the gift of love

Interview with Sister M. Natalina Todeschini



The hope
that the
saint will
always be by
their side

Sister Natalina, why is the rose one of the symbols associated with Saint Rita and what does it teach us?

The first thought that comes to mind is that the rose is a symbol of love. It expresses beauty and affection. It is associated with Saint Rita because her life was a gift of love for God, for her family, for her fellow citizens, for the whole world. Saint Rita smelled of Jesus Christ, just as the rose is one of the most fragrant flowers. She experienced the thorns of a life visited by many pains until she received the gift of a thorn in her forehead, an expression of a faithful, ardent, unreserved love for her Bridegroom. With her holy life, Rita teaches us to be the pleasant scent of Jesus in the world and to accept trials as a gift of love to Crucified Jesus, for the salvation of the whole world.

Can you remind us of the miracle of the rose and help us understand the answer that God wanted to give Rita by granting it to her?

When close to death, Saint Rita asked her cousin to bring her a rose and two figs from her garden in Roccaporena. Her cousin, like the nuns next to Rita's bed, thought she was delirious because roses do not

bloom in January, under the snow, and figs certainly do not ripen then. However, she wanted to make her happy and with great astonishment she found a beautiful rose and two ripe figs and brought them to her. I am moved by this episode, as even the saints have their desires and “allow themselves to challenge” God. It is as if Rita asked Him for proof that her husband and children were safe in Heaven. That's what I like to think anyway.

One of the most anticipated events of the Feast of Saint Rita is the blessing of the roses: can you tell us how this came about and how it takes place?

Blessing is a sacramental, “which is praise of God and a prayer to obtain his gifts.” Every 22 May, after the prayer of supplication, devotees raise to heaven the roses that have been blessed by the person presiding over the Solemn Pontifical, a cardinal or a bishop invited for that occasion. The roses are then brought home as a sign of Saint Rita's protection. The entire decoration of the altar, composed of hundreds of roses, disappears in a few minutes into the hands of the pilgrims. This event seems to have come about in the 1950s with Father Gui-

di, an Augustinian, who promoted the blessing of cars and roses to solemnise the feast. However, even in the time of Blessed Mother Fasce, the pilgrims who came to venerate the Saint were given the roses from Saint Rita's rose garden and the preserved and blessed petals.

There is no devotee of Saint Rita who does not carry a rose in their hand to pay homage to the saint. From your experience, what is the relationship between the pilgrims and the rose?

Pilgrims care very much about having the rose blessed, both to pay homage to the saint of roses and to give it to sick or devout people, and they also love to keep it in their houses as a sign of the saint's blessing, closeness and intercession. Sometimes, children ask for the rose to take to their mum's cemetery as gratitude for her having passed on the devotion to a saint who is held so dear and beloved all over the



world. The blessed rose of Saint Rita brings families that are often beset by illness and tribulation the hope and certainty that their beloved saint will always be by their side as a friend, sister and mother.

Devotees raise their roses to heaven

Letter to the Romans 5: 5: "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Saint Rita is the hope of good in so many families put to the test by life. Christian hope is beyond desire because it reaches the desired one, dragging along the love given by the Holy Spirit. God's love can do anything. On the feast of Saint Rita, married men who bring a rose to the Saint's urn express this hope, to apologise to her because her husband Paolo was not always kind to her. While they throw the rose, a tear trickles down these men's faces: they are also apologising to their brides.

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

*Edited by
Fr. Vittorino
Grossi OSA*



by Marta Ferraro

The Torch of Forgiveness, symbol of an open Church

Twinning unites Cascia with Verona

On the occasion of the Feast of Saint Rita, Cascia establishes a twinning with an Italian or foreign city where devotion to the holy miracle-worker is strong. This year, for the 65th edition, it was Verona's turn. The first part of the twinning took place in the city of Verona from 23 to 25 March.

The symbol of the event that united the two communities is the Torch of Forgiveness and Peace. With its light, it is intended to recall the distant night between 21 and 22 May 1457, when Sister Rita joined the Lord, after having loved him all her life. The light of the torch is intended to recall all the lanterns around which the Cascian families of the time gathered, waiting for the

news of her death. And once it arrived, they set out to honour her with those same torches.

In the next lines, we want to give voice to the two Veronese religious authorities involved in the twinning, who gave us their per-



The Bishop of the Diocese of Verona, Monsignor Domenico Pompili



The Rector of the Church of Santa Maria Antica, Don Stefano Origano

spective: the Rector of the Church of Santa Maria Antica, Don Stefano Origano, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Verona, Monsignor Domenico Pompili. We asked them to present the context of Ritian devotion in Verona and the hopes that the community is harbouring after having a more intimate relationship with Cascia.

Don Stefano said: "Santa Maria Antica is located in the historic centre of Verona. The devo-

The devotion
came about
in a simple
and
spontaneous
way

tion to Saint Rita came about in a simple and spontaneous way, between the two World Wars, when the mothers, sisters and wives of the soldiers kept the hope of seeing their loved ones return home in their hearts and, with this intention, they went to this church to ask Rita for grace. Back then, there was only one small picture of the Saint. It was the Rector of the time who decided to acquire the statue that we still have there today.”

“Now, when we find ourselves once again talking more about war than peace, we are very happy to have been chosen for the twinning with Cascia,” continued Don Stefano. “Although we are a small community, we have had the honour of receiving a delegation from Cascia, a land of peace. In our church, which is a rectory, there is an altar dedicated to the saint and the devotees meet to pray to her every Thursday.

The Father Rector wanted to stress that “in this context, for us lighting the torch meant cultivating the hope of having a world without war, and above all to be first-hand builders of peace, in our daily lives, never with a spirit of revenge, but with a Christian spirit. As Rita teaches us with her example, in a historical period not very different from ours, marked by blood and struggles, she knew how to pacify her land, announcing and bearing witness to a message of hope and peace. Twinning is a way for us to open up. It becomes an opportunity to be the open and pilgrim Church of which Pope Francis speaks. In



The lighting of the Torch, held by the torch-bearer, the Veronese sportsman Leonardo Fantato, by Bishop Pompili

this perspective, the torch allows us to walk in this direction and puts us in a state of conversion with a new light in our hearts, without ever losing hope.”

In this regard, Monsignor Pompili stated: “The Torch of Forgiveness and Peace always has a profound meaning by calling to life and peace, but given that Europe has been undergoing an absolutely unpredictable war for more than a year, I would say that the torch refers to a woman who has lived this experience of forgiveness in-depth. The occasion of the twinning is also a way to implore for peace even more strongly.”

Every
Thursday
the devotees
gather to
pray to her

EVENTS IN CASCIA

The events mentioned will be **livestreamed** on YouTube, on the Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia channel, and on other social media channels.

Follow this symbol for live events, which will only be available in Italian.



For more details visit santaritadacascia.org

RITIAN MAY

SUNDAY 7 MAY

FEAST OF THE FAMILY



16:00 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Remembrance of Wedding Anniversaries

(1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and subsequent individual years - Reservations c/o Information Office +39 (0)743.75091).

At the end of each Mass there is a word about Saint Rita for the little ones and the **blessing of the children**.

**FROM 12 TO 20 MAY,
NOVENA OF SAINT RITA**

The daily celebrations will be led by the **different Christian communities of the Diocese**, which pilgrims can also join. Schedule:

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

17:00 - Guided tour of the **Confessional** and possibility of confession;



18:00 - **Eucharist** led by the host

communities, followed by a **passage next to the Urn of Saint Rita**.

**SUNDAY 14 MAY,
PROCESSION OF THE BANNER**

21:00 - PIAZZA DANTE

Procession, with the traditional banner, to thank Saint Rita for the protection she has offered against many calamities over the centuries and to invoke the gift of Peace and Forgiveness for families.

The Procession will go up through the streets of Cascia to the Basilica of Saint Rita.

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

SATURDAY 20 MAY

10:00 - HALL OF PEACE

Testimony and presentation of the women

honoured with the "Saint Rita International Recognition 2023": **Luciana Daqua, Antonella Dirella, Franca Pedrini**.

12:00 - CASCIA ROSEGARDEN

Planting of roses by the Mayor, civil and religious authorities and women awarded the "Saint Rita International Recognition 2023".

21:00 - ROCCAPORENA

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

SUNDAY 21 MAY

BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

16:00 - **Eucharistic celebration of the**

Augustinian, presided over by Father Alejandro Moral Antòn, Prior General of the Augustinian Order.



17:00 - **Awarding of the "Saint Rita**

International Recognition 2023" and message from the **Prioress of the Monastery of Cascia**, Mother Maria Rosa Bernardinis.



17:30 - **Solemn celebration of the Transit of**

Saint Rita: a re-enactment of the last moments of her earthly life.

20:30 - PIAZZA GARIBALDI

Gathering of the banners of the Municipalities of Valnerina and presentation of the participating civil and military authorities. Procession to the Sanctuary of Saint Rita.

21:30 - BASILICA CHURCHYARD

Welcoming of the Verona delegation and the award-winning women. Exchange of gifts between the twinned municipalities. **Reception of the Torch of Forgiveness and Peace, lighting of the tripod** and official beginning of the Ritian celebrations 2023.

Entry to the Basilica for the **final prayer of entrustment to Saint Rita**.

From 12 to 20 May at 11:50 it will be possible to follow the **Rosary with the Nuns**, which will be online in Italian only, for the first time from the Monastery Choir, the place where the cloistered women meet to pray.



MONDAY 22 MAY, FEAST OF SAINT RITA

6:00 - Festive ringing of the bells

Masses will be held at the Hall of Peace at: 6:00 - 7:00 - 8:00 - 9:00 - 10:00 - 12:00 - 16:00 - 18:00.

The Basilica will remain open all day to allow for prayers in front of the Urn of Saint Rita.

The Monastery can be visited from 6.30 to 12.30, continuously; with timed admission at 14:30 - 15:30 - 16:30.



10.30 - PIAZZA SAN FRANCESCO

Celebration of the Solemn Pontifical presided over by **Cardinal Marcello Semeraro**, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints; concelebration of the Archbishop of the **Diocese of Spoleto-Norcia Renato Boccardo**.

The celebration of the Pontifical has been moved from the Viale del Santuario to Piazza San Francesco in the centre of Cascia in accordance with the new safety regulations and in consideration of the increase in turnout, to allow everyone to attend.



At the end of the Mass, the traditional **historical procession** of the characters from the life of Saint Rita will start from Piazza San Francesco. This will be followed by the **Procession**, coming from Roccaporena and directed to the churchyard of the Ritian Basilica, where it will end with the **Supplication to Saint Rita** and the **Blessing of the Roses**.



18:00 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Eucharistic Celebration for the **benefactors of the Santuario**, presided over by Father Luciano De Michieli, Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita.





Together for Nigerian children

We support the reconstruction of Namu hospital

Saint Rita was a mother and she knew how important it is for children to play, to be well. In her memory, on the occasion of the feast dedicated to her in 2023, we are coming together to restore Nigerian children's right to health in the community of Namu, in the state of Plateau, by rebuilding a hospital where they can be cared for better and also play. As Dr. Emmanuel Tetsohot told us from Africa: "It would also be important to have a playroom for the children, so that they can recover faster and bounce back."

The St. Virgilius Memorial Hospital was created by the Congregation of the

Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima and it was destroyed due to a fire caused by an electrical fault in 2019. It has been made the protagonist of our fundraiser for the Feast of Saint Rita 2023, transforming the devotion that you feel in your hearts into active participation, and thus making it possible to achieve the Nigerian children's dream of a much larger and modern hospital with a playroom. Together, we will be able to ensure more specialist care and assistance for more than 20,000 people every year, including children and their families.

NEW SERVICES

What health services do we want to provide, especially for children? A special paediatric unit for new-borns, with incubators and devices for blood transfusions in severe cases of jaundice; an obstetrics and gynaecology department; a maternity ward with a delivery room.

"We are a reference centre for clinics within the community and surrounding villages, thanks to the constant presence of a doctor," continued Dr. Emmanuel. "There are currently people who undertake very long journeys to reach centres that can offer them some health services, sometimes without the possibility of reaching their destination. In addition, in



this community, there are many popular and religious beliefs that are counterproductive to health.”

THE CHILDREN CARED FOR: NUMBERS AND STORIES

In 2022, the temporary clinic that was built to replace the destroyed hospital, with the limited means available, provid-

Festa Santa Rita 2023

Quando
la *devozione*
è *partecipazione*



ed health care to 1988 children out of a total of more than 12 thousand people admitted: 850 children were treated; 835 were vaccinated

against six deadly diseases; 303 were born, of which 83 with caesarean section.

As Dr. Emmanuel told us, one of the

FIND OUT HOW TO SUPPORT NIGERIAN CHILDREN

With the nuns, for 2023 we are supporting an ambitious new project aimed at children, this time in Africa. We have already raised the first major funds for the reconstruction of St. Virgilius Memorial Hospital, founded and managed by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima, in the community of Namu, Nigeria, which was destroyed in 2019 due to a fire.



For the feast of Saint Rita, with your donation, we will be able to extend our family feeling to the African children and their loved ones. We can also provide them with adequate medical care and the possibility of a future.

Help us rebuild Namu Hospital. DONATE NOW!

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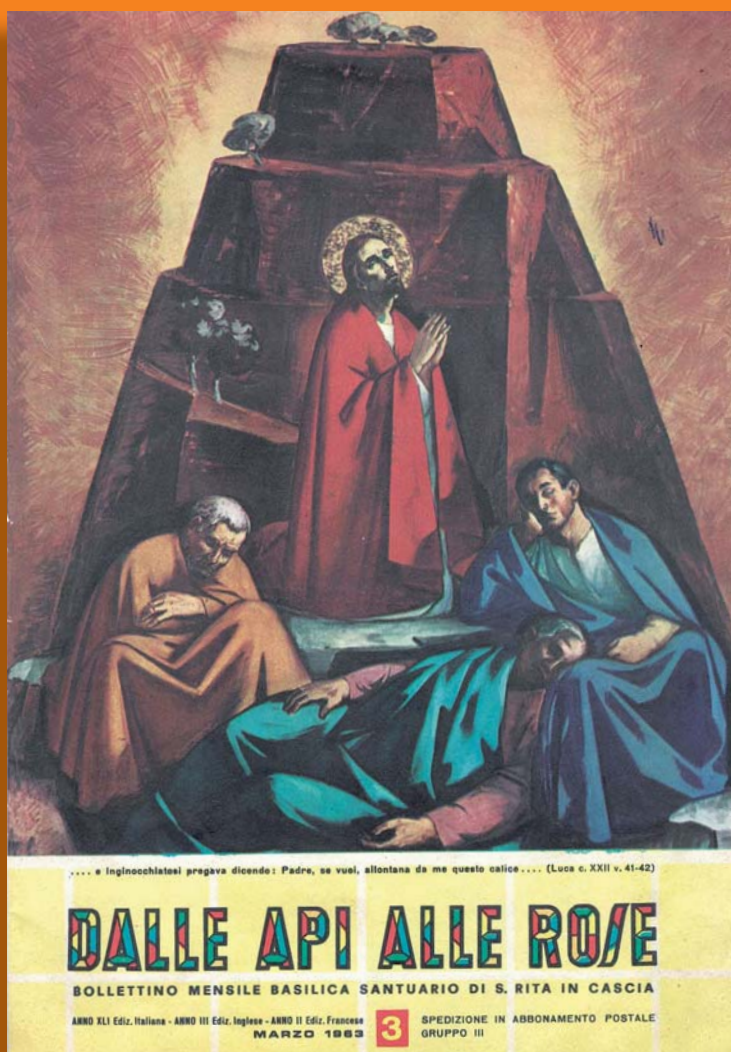
little patients they treated was Yusuf Ibrahim, age 7, who was taken to the hospital in August 2021 with a headache, severe abdominal pain and a fever of over 40 degrees. The diagnosis found peritonitis caused by an intestinal perforation associated with typhoid fever, a condition, for them, associated with an ominous prognosis. The patient underwent an exploratory laparotomy and the operation was a success, so the child remained in the hospital for the post-operative period and then continued his convalescence at home. The medical care provided allowed Yusuf to recover, after returning to the hospital for periodic visits.

FUNDRAISING AND LIVE STREAMING

You too can do your part for Yusuf and other Nigerian children and support our fundraising campaign, which makes Ritian charity tangible. You can find all the information on fondazione.santaritadacascia.org

In addition, for the Feast of Saint Rita, on the santaritadacascia.org website, you will find how you can have the incredible opportunity to follow the celebrations in streaming in Italian only. You can do this via live stream, through a series of direct clips, which will show you various liturgical moments and some events from the lives of the nuns, participating in the magic that is repeated every year in the name of Saint Rita.





A century-long history

From the Bees to the Roses is 100 years old

A cover from the 1960s, which marked a turning point for the magazine and during which its 40th birthday was celebrated: it began to be translated into English and French, looking out towards the world. Inside, the elements that stand out include a column of correspondence with readers, reports on the construction of Cascia hospital, the work of the monastery, and the Beehive page.

God's megaphone

by Carmela Mascio

Our journey to discover the history of the "From the Bees to the Roses" newsletter continues. In this section we are accompanied by the authority of the Rector of the Sanctuary of Saint Rita of Cascia, Father Luciano De Michieli, who has been guiding it for two years.

With him we explore how devotion to Saint Rita throughout the world has increased over the years thanks in part to the distribution of the magazine and the priests who help with the confession, who come from all over the world. Father Luciano told us that this growth has been progressive.

A first important moment was 1626, when Rita was beatified by Pope Urban VIII and the Augustinian order began to make efforts to make her known everywhere.

Another fundamental leap forward occurred in 1900, when Pope Leo XIII canonised her together with St. John the Baptist de la Salle. It was a well-deserved action, but one that was also strongly guided by the intention to single out a valid educator and a female model of family life, maternal charity and reconciliation as a reference figure for the new generations. This literally struck Maria Teresa Fasce who, after meeting her, chose the saint and Cascia as her purpose in life, recognising what Rita would represent to the world in a prophetic way.

The magazine was established in 1923 to increase awareness of her, and the fundraising for the new temple that would welcome devotees began in 1925. During the first pilgrimages in the 1950s the devotees were transported on tarpaulin trucks, on which chairs

were placed. For this reason, Mother Fasce also had the idea to create a Pilgrim's House, to give them proper refreshment.

The rest was done by the good Lord with heartfelt word of mouth, thanks also to the magazine, which began to be translated into English and French in the 1960s; into Spanish and German in 1972; into Portuguese in 2013 and, of course, the borders will continue to widen! When pilgrims from Africa arrive in Cascia, Father Luciano asks them how they know Saint Rita: they tell of miracles attributed to her, recognising the effigy of the saint who has helped them in the magazine.

In Italy, at the same time that the sanctuary was being consecrated in Cascia, two other large sanctuaries dedicated to the saint had already been built, in Turin and then in Milan. The last one to be erected in her honour is in Minas Gerais, in northern Brazil, where she is massively worshipped. Rita is also very beloved in Lebanon, and a great devotion has exploded among Polish people in the last decade. This year Cascia will be twinned with Verona for the feast of Saint Rita, and for next year we are thinking of Jaffa, in the Holy Land, so that Rita, woman of Peace, can intercede for this land martyred by conflicts. Every year about a million pilgrims from all over the world arrive in Cascia and, as the number of foreign visitors continues to increase, for some years, the sanctuary has been equipped with a multimedia room to project videos with the saint's story in different languages.

The prophecy of the Blessed Mother Fasce is now a reality, and it is up to all of us to keep being God's megaphone!

The magazine, opening the monastery up to the world

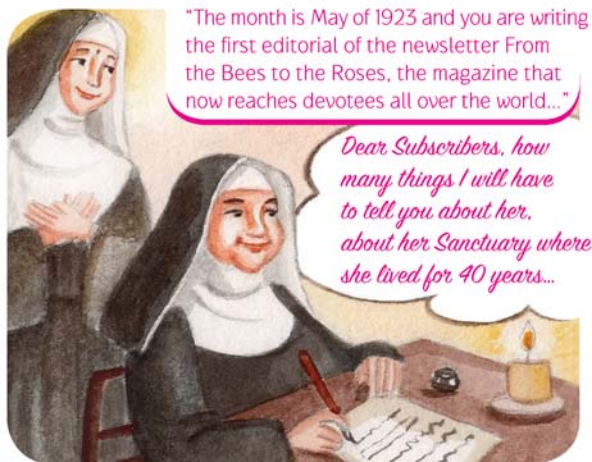
As we can read in the comic on the next page, the “From the Bees to the Roses” bulletin, the voice of the Monastery of Saint Rita, was created on 22 May 1923 at the behest of Blessed Mother Fasce, to spread the devotion to the great saint of Cascia everywhere. Her whole life is encapsulated in its title: from the bees that went in and out of new-born Rita's mouth to the roses that she asked her astonished relative for in the dead of winter. Saint Rita is thus the centrepiece of the magazine,

but it doesn't stop there. In this first century of the Bulletin, many pressing themes relating to the life of the Church and of society have been addressed in light of Ritian values. Religious and lay people have written and write in it, each bringing their own experience of life and devotion to our saint. This a view that ranges from the monastery of the Augustinians of Cascia, opening up to the whole world both because it is widespread on every continent and because of the vastness of the topics.



The Mother and the Saint of the impossible

Saint Rita
recounts the life
of Blessed Mother
Maria Teresa
Fasce



"...The first 200 copies are ready to spread the love that God has taught me..."



"...Thanks to the magazine, you, Maria Teresa, have raised the funds to build the Basilica of Cascia, creating a real and immense family with the devotees. After 100 years, the bond with them keeps growing stronger and supports many works of charity".

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.





by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

Watering dry wood

Rita consecrated herself to God by embracing the evangelical counsels of poverty, obedience and chastity: paths of life steeped in hope and beauty.

Poverty is the capacity to be content with little, as well as the

sobriety that generates attentive and extroverted solidarity. *Chastity* is love that does not keep to itself. It nourishes the heart's simplicity and purity. It guards our inner desire for wholeness so that it may be filled by God. *Obedience* is the wisdom of letting go, as time goes on: things, affections, plans. It means to put the needs of the people with whom you live before your own. Obedience to the word of God and to the teaching of the pope and the bishops is fundamental to Christian life. Confession is also an act of obedience.

In the episode of the flowering vine, which is so dear to Ritian tradition, we can trace the watermark of hope: to test Rita's humility, the Abbess commanded her to plant and water an arid piece of wood. The saint obeyed without delay and the Lord rewarded his servant by making a lush vine bloom.

How often does life present itself as dry wood: toil, sacrifice, dedication that perhaps even goes unrecognised. And yet we persevere: why? Rita is said to have *obeyed without delay*. For us, too, it is a matter of obedience. That is, to believe that beneath the hard bark of appearance flows a sap rich in meaning. Faith is living without waiting to understand things; trusting. Meanwhile, take a small step of faith today. In that command, which was perhaps excessive, Rita could have exposed



The Mother Prioress under the vine, in the cloister of the Monastery, symbol of the obedience and spiritual fruitfulness of Saint Rita

herself to ridicule by carrying it out. Yet she accepted, without being worried about herself: this is an attitude close to poverty understood as distance from one's own self.

Finally: Rita's life might seem to be lacking in human terms. She was widowed and deprived of her children, but precisely because she was able to persevere in the path of hope, she became full of life for many: this says a lot about authentic chastity, which is not sterility, but generativity at the highest level.

Saint Rita, woman of hope, guide me along the paths of happy poverty, of obedience without delay, of fruitful chastity. Obtain for me the industrious hope that awaits everything from God: so that the buds of new life may sprout on my bare branches.

THE CROSS, DRY WOOD THAT HAS BECOME A TREE OF LIFE

Let us not tire of bringing water to the “dry wood” of our lives, especially in the days when we feel all the fatigue of holding on, of continuing, of persevering. Let us do so without exasperation; without grumbling; without a spirit of surrender; let us ask Rita to teach us her inner dispositions. We will also see the flower of our life bloom.

We often look at the wood of the Cross: this too, was dry wood, but it became a tree of life for us, because it was embraced by humble Jesus with his sweet and full, unconditional gift of himself.

(Rossano Augustinian Nuns
Donne artigiane di futuro con Rita da Cascia, Tau Editrice, p. 109)



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.

Adriana Tagliabue (Capolago - Switzerland)
Albina Pepe (Guardalfiera CB - Italy)
Angela Maiolino (Lecce - Italy)
Anna De Gregorio (Acerno SA - Italy)
Anna Matteucci (Treia MC - Italy)
Antonio Mangialardo (Bari - Italy)
Bruna Bruni (Montale PT - Italy)
Carmela Peluso (Monteforte Irpino AV - Italy)
Clemente Lucci (Avendita di Cascia PG - Italy)
Emma Maestrutti Mattiazzi (Manzinello di Manzano UD - Italy)
Ennio Steve Senia (United States)

Enrico Amato (Treviso - Italy)
Ettore Dueville (Vicenza - Italy)
Floriana Della Mura (Salerno - Italy)
Franco Maestrini (Ceresara MN - Italy)
Gianluca Vuono (Rome - Italy)
Giovannina Fiore (San Giovanni Rotondo FG - Italy)
Giuseppe De Bellis (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
Prof Giuseppe Pulella (San Donà di Piave VE - Italy)
Giuseppina Ciotti (Ascoli Piceno - Italy)
Luigi Alicino (Barletta BA - Italy)
Mafalda Pandolfi (Serra San Quirico AN - Italy)
Maddalena Sbrilli (Piancastagnaio SI - Italy)
Manfredo Tocchi (Foligno PG - Italy)
Maria Natali Tanci (Perugia - Italy)
Mimmo Trezza (Salerno - Italy)
Peppino Buggemi (Calamonaci AG - Italy)
Pompeo Bizzarro (Capodrise CE - Italy)
Teresa Canduro (Schio VI - Italy)
Vanda Vallesi (Bolognola MC - Italy)
Wanda Ascione (Salerno - Italy)



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

Let us imitate the Holy One, an example of hope

How wonderful! The feast of Saint Rita is upon us! Pilgrims flock to the alleys of Cascia to climb the hill of Hope! They are filled with commotion, along with songs and small improvised processions...

The roses of the devotees colour the streets, as a gift of love to Rita or to be brought to loved ones, together with her blessing. In the difficulties and joys of life, the encounter with her is a certain gift of grace and meaning.

With her life experience and the divine grace that her holiness and her blessed body emanate, Rita helps us to enter our lives with the

necessary peace and determination. The outcome of her life offers comfort for everyone, together with the hope of reaching the homeland of heaven, and it helps us to keep our heads high in every circumstance and difficulty, giving us the desire for the fullness of life in God.

St. Augustine understood well that the Lord made us for Him and therefore "our heart is restless until it rests in Him"; if we turn our hearts Upward we can live and work in the hope of reaching our goal.

As Pascal wrote, two adults are on the path of life holding a child's hand; the two adults are faith and charity, the child is hope, which always runs ahead, pulling the two adults.

This is Rita who, in the trials she endured with faith and immense charity, always allowed the courage of hope to run ahead, in her heart and in her choices. She saw and believed to be possible what for others was not even a viable hypothesis... this was through the grace that dwelt in her, which had the same feelings that were of Christ Jesus. Let us therefore imitate her and follow her example, living in the Christian hope that is the certainty of being loved, trust in God's mercy and expectation of salvation.

The Lord
made us for
Him





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

Rita, God's masterpiece



Her hope
was fixed
like an
anchor in
Heaven

Imagine Saint Rita's life as a diadem, where the light of multi-coloured divine grace is reflected. It is truly a masterpiece by God, which the divine Artist has chiselled, carving her soul in the trials of life! She certainly lived out the cardinal virtues in a heroic way: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, and the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Above all, she placed all her treasures in the Lord Jesus, because she hoped for greater goods. Her hope was firm because it was fixed like an anchor in Heaven, as the Scripture says.

Faith and charity are sustained by hope. It was here that the joy that no one can ever take away and that Jesus promised from the Cenacle was grafted into her heart.

Rita hoped for the eternal salvation of her Paolo and her children, as well as for peace and reconciliation for her city. And she continues today to hope that others will be reconciled to God and come to salvation, because she understood how great the price that Christ paid for our redemption was. Hope does not disappoint, because God's love is poured into our hearts through his Spirit.

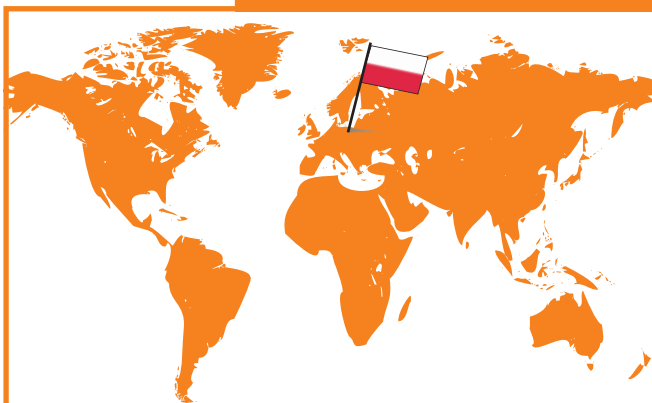


by Rita Gentili

Forgiveness is freedom

From Poland, following the example of Saint Rita

RITA IS ALSO HERE



Country: Poland

City: Głębinów

In Poland, devotion to Saint Rita has been spreading widely for several years. The oldest place of worship is in Krakow, a city in which Augustinian nuns work.

Jolanta comes from Głębinów, a town located in the southern part of Poland, which belongs to the Diocese of Opole. The parish church of Saint Urban, mentioned by Jolanta, has been proclaimed a Sanctuary of Saint Rita since 23 May 2021 and houses a relic of her. The main altar features an image of Saint Rita with her feet sinking into the snow, from which roses arise that stretch around the figure of the saint, who is surrounded by bees. The work is by a painter who made it in a moment of great suffering due to the illness of his wife, but instead of conveying darkness, it is dominated by light. "And this," the parish priest, Father Przemyslaw Sen, told us last year, "is the most beautiful message that this sanctuary brings to people's hearts: Jesus Christ is the light that illuminates all our darkness."

Forgiveness is freedom. This is how we could summarise the testimony of Jolanta, a woman who wrote to us from Głębinów, Poland, telling us about a family tragedy and the difficult path she took to overcome it. It was on 27 April 1989, Jolanta's 23rd birthday, that her sister was killed. "It was a bright



day. It was hot, the trees and shrubs were beginning to bloom," says Jolanta. "My sister and her son Kamil, who was 7 months old, were waiting for the tram at the stop but, since they saw it wasn't coming, they went to a nearby park. There, while Grażyna was

walking, she was assaulted by a passer-by.” Grażyna was hit on the head 27 times with a heavy object, while fighting to keep her son unharmed. After six days unconscious in the hospital, the woman died. She was 29 years old, with a husband and two children. Thus began an ordeal for the entire family, including Jolanta, who kept asking: “Where were you, Lord God, when my sister was attacked? Why didn't God stop that tormentor's hand? God, what would I do if this man was in front of me right now?”

For many years Jolanta carried an indescribable pain with her: “It was as if I was holding a rose in my hand and all the thorns stayed in my body; I didn't know if I could ever forgive that man, if I could look him in the eye. I prayed to God to teach me to look at this situation with the eyes of love and forgiveness, and every day I prayed to the Mother of God to try to understand her pain when she watched the death of her son.”

Then, in 2014, she came to know Saint Rita. “In the church of Saint Urban, in my city, celebrations were held and still are held in honour of Saint Rita,” says Jolanta. “I began to attend and I learned more about Rita's life. I did not know that her journey had been so hard and painful, Saint Rita never surrendered to the constant adversities that befell her and, indeed, she responded to every difficult situation by entrusting her life to God more strongly.”

Watching Saint Rita suffer and at the same time draw strength

from that suffering, Jolanta claims to have understood that her experience was there to teach her something. “I realised,” she said, “that if I didn't forgive I



Saint Urban's Parish Church in Głębinów, now a Sanctuary of Saint Rita

could never be truly close to God. I understood that true forgiveness comes from the heart and frees the soul from uncertainties, fears, pains, fears and misunderstandings. I know that only love and true forgiveness make a person free from tears. That's how I feel now, free from grief over the loss of my sister.” Grażyna's killer has never been found, but Jolanta has forgiven him with all her heart and prays every day for him to be forgiven by God.

“Today,” adds Jolanta, “I gladly give an image of Saint Rita to anyone I meet on my way; I want Saint Rita to help all those in need, as she helped me when I needed it.”

**Saint Rita
never gave
up, but rather
entrusted her
life more
strongly to
God**



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA and Sisters

“Let us not be robbed of hope”

THE EXAMPLE OF SISTER SIMONETTA

Our dear sister, Sister Simonetta Tassone, left this earth to enter Heaven, to join her Spouse Jesus, on 4 October last year. The life of every Christian is already a continuous call to perfection, to holiness, to joy, to fraternal communion and to that with the Saints. The life of a nun is projected entirely towards the wedding with the Heavenly Bridegroom, after having loved him, longed for him, sought him here on earth, looking towards the full light, to that joy that will never end.

Sister Simonetta was called to leave her homeland of Calabria, from which she inherited her wilful and tenacious character, to consecrate herself to God as an Augustinian, and to make an intercession for all humanity. After her training she was called to work at the Beehive of Saint Rita as an external sister, to take care of the many girls in need of love because they were far from their families. At that time there were at least a hundred Little Bees! Another service she was called on to carry out for several years was the management of the House of Spiritual Exercises, which she did for as long as her physical strength allowed her to continue.

Then came the call of old age accompanied by illness and inner trials. God is faithful forever and al-

so jealous... He wants everything from his brides and purifies them so that they come to accept the last call of the fullness of grace: “Here I am, Lord, I am ready, I am all yours, come Lord Jesus.”

All the calls were crowned and experienced by Sister Simonetta in



constant prayer, to tell the Lord of the love and joy of dwelling with Him in His house, unanimous and in agreement with her sisters.

HOLINESS

Here in Cascia we are in the company of a Saint, Rita, and two Blessed figures, Mother Fasce and Simone Fidati. What is the goal of holiness? Sister Simonetta's life

The life of every Christian is a continual call to perfection

told us this in great part: God Himself is the prize of life, He is the absolute Good for which the heart yearns and sighs and towards which we must extend our desire and our hope. The feasts of the saints remind us of the great theme of hope, which is risen Christ, the foundation of every other expectation, the desire for life and peace for the whole of humanity. The saints and the blessed ones, who have lived here among us, are the most concrete and true witnesses of Christian hope. They experienced it in their daily lives, between joys and sufferings, accepting and implementing the beatitudes of the Gospel, with simplicity and fidelity.

"GOD HAS GIVEN US HOPE"

For Charles Péguy, hope is an "indefatigable little girl" who is much more important than her older sisters (faith and charity), but who "still goes to school/and walks/lost in the skirts of her sisters." But she is more important than her sisters because "it is her, that little one, who drags everything with her/because faith sees only what is/and she sees what will be/Charity loves only what is/and she loves what will be/God has made us hope".

Let us borrow Pope Francis' exhortation *"Let us not be robbed of hope"* from

Evangelii Gaudium. Let us make our own this exhortation not to be overwhelmed by the fears, insecurity, loss of hope and trust that seem to characterise the shared feeling of our times and to be witnesses and supporters of a positive, reassuring and proactive look at the present.

We conclude with Cardinal Ravasi's words of hope: "Faith is a cathedral rooted in the soil of a country. Charity is a hospital that shelters all the miseries of the world. But without Hope, all this would be nothing but a graveyard. There are, however, two aspects of this virtue that deserve to be emphasised. First of all, its daily life. Hope is the one that gives you the task of walking every day, 'simply and with your head down', as Péguy said, remaining faithful even in trying times. Aristotle was credited with this suggestive phrase: 'Hope is a dream made when awake.' There is, then, a second note that concerns it: without hope, every action or work we carry out would perhaps be grandiose but stationary and as dead as a solemn monument. Hope prevents the world from being a cemetery because it continually pushes you to go beyond, to wait, to trust, to believe in a different dawn, in a goal, in a meaning.

SMILING AT LIFE

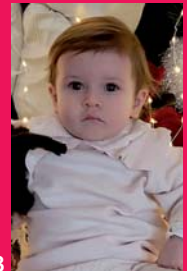
Send photos of your children to monastero@santitradascasia.org with the consent of both parents for publication. Incomplete or illegible authorisations will not be taken into consideration.



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1. Chiara and Giorgia Merli (Perugia - Italy)
2. Mariagiulia Pasquali (Canneto sull'Oglio MN - Italy)
3. Vittoria Agostini (Thiene VI - Italy)
4. Vittoria Cani (San Fermo della Battaglia CO - Italy)



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

Seventy years as a nun, in the name of Blessed Mother Fasce

“With this brief testimony I would like to remember Mother Fasce...Back in 1938, on 27 December, I came here to Cascia and the Mother herself (Blessed Mother Fasce, *ed.*) received me. It was a feast day because it was her birthday and name day (her given name was Maria Giovanna, but everyone called her Marietta, *ed.*). She greeted me with her motherly embrace and a kiss. It was cold and I remember that she immediately covered me with a cape and gave me some sweets. There were just

seven of us; with me were Palma (later an Augustinian nun also with the name of Sister Teresa, *ed.*) and Irma (later Sister Arcangela, *ed.*)”.

With these words, in a testimony made a few years ago at a meeting of former Little Bees, Sister Pierina, who at 94 years and 7 months is the dean of the community, that is, the oldest person to be part of it, recalled Mother Fasce. On 16 February Sister Pierina celebrated 70 years of her religious profession, a great, important milestone that testifies to the fidelity of a journey that she has

“When things go downhill, think less and pray more”



Sister Pierina with her family

always extended “in Deum” and with her sisters. Being very original and kind, very faithful to community life and unique as a daughter of the beautiful Umbrian land, in her prayer book she has a leaflet with these words: “when things go downhill, think less and pray more...” Family and friends came to celebrate her, and she smiled at everyone with her usual joviality, even if she couldn’t recall all their names.

“I remember that they often took the Mother to the garden and she would then call us because she had prepared snacks for us,” she continued in her testimony. “She instructed us with a few brief lessons, she corrected us in a

motherly way, she taught us singing. At other times she brought us before the cell of Saint Rita, where she wrote, and made us pray for the sick, for the benefactors. We also helped to prepare the magazine for shipping, we put stamps on the mail [...] I must say my thanks to the good God for the holy perseverance he has granted me, for the many gifts and graces I have received. But I must also say a mea-culpa for my failures, my limitations, for not constantly following the Mother in her example of holiness. To be grateful to her, I say to all of you: we promise to give it our all, to always go forward in goodness, in joy, in holy hope and in love for one other.”

We promise
to keep
going
forward in
holy hope

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

We embrace their hopes. Together.



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 • santaritadacascia.org/beehive

EMBRACE THE BEEHIVE

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