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FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

BIMONTHLY
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN
MONASTERY
OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

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RITA IS PRESENCE

Her Feast invites us to be there for others

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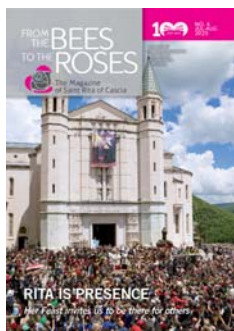
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On the cover: The blessing of the roses on 22 May. Photo by Giovanni Galardini

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Present

The feast of Saint Rita, which we relive in this issue, does not begin and does not end on 22 May, because her presence is constant throughout the year. From the beginning of 2023, in fact, after the pandemic that separated us and the war in Ukraine that inflamed feelings of hatred, I heard Rita whisper to us of the need to open ourselves up to others, putting ourselves at the service of our neighbours, to be the answer to small or large needs.

I remember some news that struck me a month ago: the death of eighteen-year-old volleyball player Julia Ituma. It was a tragedy with many unclear points, especially if it was suicide. Along with the sadness, the words of one of her teammates were imprinted on me: "I'm sorry I didn't understand you. I would love to go back in time, to be able to help you, even if only with a look, a word or a hug." I think about how many lives could be saved (suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people) if we were able to be there, not at the time but always, because being there for others is the true miracle that Rita inspires in us and asks of us. On 22 May, we embraced this purpose and, by opening up the cloister as an exception, we were right among you, expressing Rita's spiritual presence. And it is no coincidence, now, that we open this magazine by taking the example of the women awarded with the Saint Rita International Recognition Award, who embodied service to others: Antonella, who gave herself as a gift in marriage, remaining close to her sick husband, in being an adoptive mother and in the profession of teaching; Franca, who, driven by an active faith, offers her services to her town, from the elderly to people with disabilities; Luciana, a social worker who helps others in every form, opening her home to those marginalised by society.

Thanks to them, we have given new strength and centrality to the Ritian values of listening, dialogue and openness. To sum up, we could say that if life is a team "game", then Saint Rita, who has carried out God's plan of love by helping others, is our "coach": by walking with her and committing ourselves we will definitely win the match that really matters!



by Carmela Mascio

Every day close to the neediest

Luciana Daqua was born in Monasterace (Reggio Calabria) in September 1955, the eldest of five children. Her story is simple but intense, and in some ways incredible. It tells of a woman who was educated with strong values by

and not in form. She ended an engagement with a very good match and decided to dedicate herself to the neediest people who crossed her path. She met Enzo, they fell deeply in love and a process of unparalleled freedom began with him. The door to their home was always open and so were their hearts. Two children arrived: Loredana and Giuseppe, forming a small group who took care of each other. They sent an ultrasound scanner to Congo and found accommodation for all the Kurdish refugees who arrived in Locride, also hosting some in their home. Luciana's heart was full. But Enzo died and she was left alone at the age of 40 with two children. Everything seemed to collapse, but pain either crushes you or leads you to enter into the mystery, and Luciana entered fully into Love. As a social worker she is a reference point for many. She also teaches at the University and, above all, lives out her everyday life. She has gathered together young sex workers and hidden them in her home, she has met over 1,700 couples and fought against despair when her children developed tumours. She has founded several associations. She comforts those who do not understand the meaning of life and forgives those who disparage it. Luciana feels chosen by the pain that fertilises and generates life. One day, one of her students saw that she



Luciana Daqua during the award ceremony for the three women on 21 May in the Basilica of Saint Rita

Her story is
simple but
intense, and
in some
ways
incredible

a deeply Catholic family, in the name of a greater love, who broke every pattern, surprising everyone. Luciana herself was the first to be surprised by her life.

Luciana wanted to go to India and serve God together with Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but God writes straight with crooked lines, and her life, which has been dedicated to love, would be anything but ordinary! She was a girl of disarming beauty but she was interested in content



was worried and approached her, saying that she was praying for Saint Rita: Luciana discovered Rita and found a mirror in which she could recognise herself. Years later, her daughter, who went to Cascia unbeknownst to her mother, brought her to meet the saint and Luciana understood her vocation better than ever. As such, every day

Luciana is a point of reference for the whole territory of Locride but, above all, for the neediest, who she gives preference to. And she wants to dedicate her prize to all the parents who have lost children and to those young people who, while still alive, experience the death of their souls, so that Saint Rita may perform the miracle of rebirth in them.

Dedicating
yourself to
the neediest
people who
cross your
path

WOMAN OF RITA 2023

Luciana, from Ardore, province of Reggio Calabria, received the International Saint Rita Recognition Award 2023 for having made her profession and her family a safe haven for the marginalised people in society. As a social worker and with the support of her husband, who passed away prematurely, she has helped non-EU citizens, sex workers and homosexuals to glimpse a means of escape, looking towards a better future in the darkness of their situations.



by Marta Ferraro

Giving yourself to God, to serve your neighbour

Like Rita,
she had to
face many
battles

Antonella Dirella has experienced all the stages of a woman's life: she has been a daughter, fiancée, wife, mother, widow and consecrated woman. Like Rita, she had to face many battles but she always welcomed them with Love. She met Pinuccio at a young age. At only 22 years old, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer, which would make him sterile and force him to lead a

difficult life between care and hospitals. In 1989, despite the conflicting opinions of their family members, the two of them said that Yes that would unite them for eternity before Christ and in life. Antonella responded to those who told her to think twice by saying: "I only have to say 'Yes', the rest will be done by the Lord". During the first years of their marriage, the couple opened the door of



I've never
felt betrayed
by God

their home to children displaced by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania. In 1994, the family was enriched by the presence of Gianclaudio, a child that nobody expected. They adopted him when he was just 29 days old: others had rejected him because he had health problems.

Antonella and Pinuccio's union lasted 23 years, during which time they fought against six tumours. Pinuccio closed his eyes on earth to reopen them in the presence of God when he was 47 years and 11 months old, after a life spent fighting illness but always living with faith. "Every time the disease came back, we always faced up to it, knowing that the Lord was among us together with the unceasing prayer of the people dear to us. Our growth together in faith thanks to Communion and Liberation brought us to this level of awareness. I have never felt betrayed by God, because His love is immense. Our marriage could have lasted a year, but the Lord gave us many more. The doctors took away our hope many times, but Pinuccio continued to live. After all, God has the last word, not men." Left alone after Pinuccio died and her son moved away to study, Antonella found herself liv-

ing in a house full of memories. "I realised that I had to keep putting myself at the service of others. My love had to transform again. Today I live by giving myself entirely to God as a consecrated woman, journeying with the fraternity of St. Joseph of Communion and Lib-



Along with the other awarded women, Antonella Dirella planted a rose in the rose garden of Cascia

eration." This decision also arose from the desire to live life as Pinuccio taught her: looking at it with beauty, whatever may come, because it is already a gift as it presents itself. For a Christian, what is death but a seed that sprouts and bears fruit through dying?

WOMAN OF RITA 2023

Antonella, from Termoli, province of Campobasso, received the 2023 Saint Rita International Recognition Award for having been able to entrust herself to God every time life put her to the test. Always in search of a greater Love, she welcomed her husband's illness, adopted a child with health problems, spoke of the good Father to generations of children and now lives out her vocation as a consecrated woman of the St. Joseph Association.



by Rita Gentili

“Just look next door”

“**W**ithin my family, I was always surrounded by attention to others, even in the small things: sharing other families’ difficult work moments, welcoming the children of parents at work or in difficulty, responding to those in poverty asking for help.” This is how Franca tells the story of how she came to be attentive to others: the example

carrying out recreational activities, a volunteer at a Caritas listening centre, the first councillor and then president of a retirement home and, now that she is retired, president of the social cooperative “I Piosi”, which provides assistance and support for the employment of people with disabilities. All these occupations fed into the teaching received by Franca from her family and, in the parish and civil context in particular, provided “a free school on how to put oneself at the service of others, thanks to people who have been concrete examples and teachers of life”. This commitment gives Franca the well-being that comes from knowing how to bring “relief to someone, to accompany those in difficulty”. But that’s not all. Franca’s life has been affected by severe grief: for her father, a son and a sister. “In these painful moments, my family was always comforted, helped by the whole town; there was a great solidarity that led me to be even more committed than I was before, almost as if to say thank you.” But if you ask Franca what each of us can do to be of help to others, she replies that “it is not necessary to have roles at the public level; just look next door, have your eyes open, listen and be welcoming, because there is always someone in need”.



Franca Pedrini with Antonella Ventre, host of TV2000, at the presentation of the three women on 20 May in the Hall of Peace

I have always been surrounded by attention to others, even in small things

of her family, of her parents, of her mother Tarcisia, who continued to open the door of their home when she was a widow with seven children to raise. Franca put this teaching to good use and in her life she would become a nurse, a local health assistant, a catechist, a municipal councillor with a proxy for assisting the elderly and

And yet, Franca is amazed at the Saint Rita Recognition that has been conferred on her: “It was a surprise, which I welcome as a gift. It's very emotional. I have lived a simple life dedicating myself to ordinary situations, which I

perceived useful for the community, without thinking of it as something striking or particular”, as it is precisely the “astonishing normality of daily existence”, the reason why, as Pope John Paul II wrote, “Rita is holy”.

Franca's life
was affected
by severe
grief



WOMAN OF RITA 2023

Franca, from Sommacampagna, a municipality in the province of Verona, received the 2023 Saint Rita International Recognition Award for having accepted the enormous grief experienced by her family with faith, from her father, who died prematurely, to her son Luca. With faith, she was able to transform these heart-breaking pains into opportunities to love her neighbours in their fragility, engaging unreservedly in her parish and in a Caritas listening and support centre in her city, in nursing homes and finally as president of the social cooperative “I Piosi”.



When we meet God, we meet others

From the homily of Father Alejandro Moral Antón, Prior General of the Order of St. Augustine, for the Eucharistic Celebration of the Augustinians of 21 May 2023

We must live
in the
present to
fulfil the
mission that
the Lord has
left to each
of us

With Jesus' ascension to heaven, his earthly mission ends and that of the Church guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit and initiated on the day of Pentecost begins. Jesus' mission only lasted a few years. The Church's mission, on the other hand, will last until the glorious return of the Lord and until the establishment of the Kingdom of God at the end of time. We Christians, disciples of Jesus, must live in the present, committing ourselves to fulfilling the mission that the Lord has left to each

of us. Living in the present means living in a wonderful and fascinating world, but one where the power of evil and darkness and its presence also make us doubt many things. We doubt the possibility of communion among all of us people, the possibility of peace. We often no longer believe in justice and in the plan to make our world a true common home of the human family. This situation leads us to doubt God's love for people, his children. But we shouldn't! Good exists! The presence of God is seen and felt in so many things

and in the people who give their lives for others every day, both through prayer and through the concrete work of their hands. The Holy Spirit continues to guide our lives and, thanks to the life, passion and death of Jesus, together with his resurrection, the existence of human beings in our world is truly a life of hope and full of meaning.

One thing is true, however: spiritual life is being neglected, especially among us religious figures. I'm talking about a personal encounter with God, the personal, intimate encounter, in dialogue and contemplation with God, who is the treasure and the greatest good that we can encounter in this world. We must all learn this well: we have never been able to live in the past, we cannot live in the present and we cannot live in the future without faith in God incarnate in his Son and without his love through the presence of his Spirit... without God there is no life!

In this sense, in today's Gospel Jesus says: "Whoever remains in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." It couldn't be said clearer than that. This text emphasises the centrality that Christ must have in our lives. Those who are aware that their life depends on God's love and not on their own pride find the true path, because it is not the criteria of the world that must guide our lives as believers: the criterion for our actions and options must always be the Gospel. Saint Rita drank from this source, in a personal en-

counter, in a prolonged silence with God. She felt the love that comes from God and for this reason her life was a life of suffering, forgiveness and love. What does this example mean for us? Let us be enlightened by the Gospel: "As



the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you." This is the testament that Christ left us, the fundamental criterion for living, and which Rita embraced like a mother embracing her new-born child. Let us pray that this attitude will help us to confront ourselves and to enter more deeply into the radicalism of the Gospel, to love and want to imitate Rita even more, to know our hearts better and to sense the great need that we feel to change them for more human and fraternal hearts, and to realise our absolute weakness and need for God.

God's presence is seen and felt in people who give their lives for others



Works at the Home of Saint Rita

For the Saint Rita of Cascia Foundation, which has supported projects to respond to the concrete needs of the most fragile people since 2012, 22 May means involvement and solidarity. In particular, this year the days of the feast represented the commitment towards a new mission on the one hand, namely the reconstruction of the “St. Virgilius Memorial” hospital in Namu in Nigeria. On the other, they celebrated the achievement of a goal for the project supported in 2022, the Home of Saint Rita, where the installation of the external staircase began after bureaucratic slowdowns had postponed the works.

The project involves renovating an apartment inside the current Cascia Hospital, which has been housed in a structure of the Saint Rita of Cascia Monastery since the 2016 earthquake. The idea is to accommodate the families of hospitalised patients from all over Italy who cannot afford prolonged hotel or rental expenses. The nuns of Saint Rita asked the Foundation to ensure them a place where they could stay with their loved ones, who may be suffering from neurodegenerative diseases or hospitalised due to head trauma, which require time for rehabilitation. Thus, thanks to the generosity of thousands of donors, 260,000 euros have been allocated to the project. Now, in the very week of the feast, the work to lay the foundations of the external staircase has been carried out. This is the most complex operation to guarantee a separate entrance to



the guests and not interfere with normal healthcare activities. It will soon be possible to install the stairs fully. This will be a decisive step for transforming that 237 square metre space into a second home for many people. There will be 7 rooms with a private bathroom, a common dining room with kitchenette, a laundry room

and a storage room. It will be a place where people feel welcomed and where they have the opportunity to assist their loved ones with the strength of love, in total serenity.

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION'S PROJECTS

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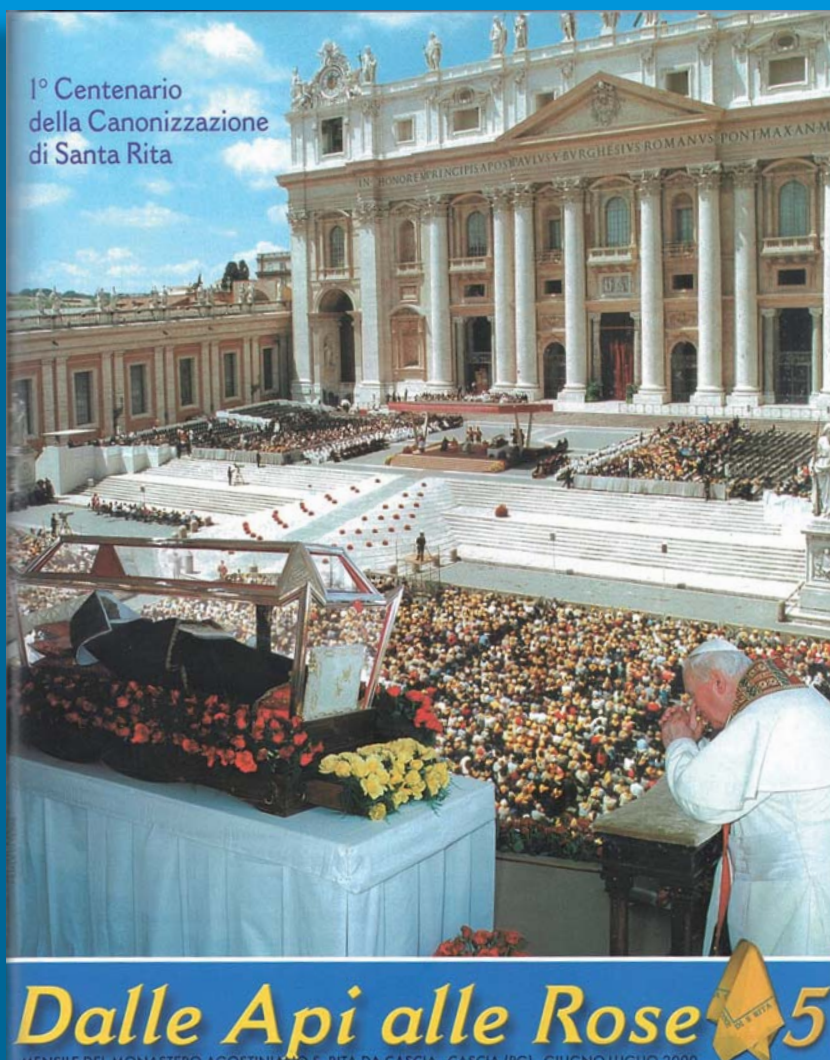
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THANK YOU!




A century-long history

From the Bees to the Roses is 100 years old

The year 2000 was the centenary of the canonisation of Saint Rita. The magazine was covered in a historical photo: for the first time, the Urn with the body of the saint left Cascia and reached St. Peter's churchyard in Rome, where it would be greeted by Pope John Paul II and over 70,000 devotees.

Growing like the faith among devotees

by Carmela
Mascio



It was on 20 May 2000 when, on the occasion of the first centenary of the canonisation of the Saint of the Impossible, the Urn with the body of Saint Rita was venerated in St. Peter's Square. The cover of "From Bees to the Roses" was proudly dedicated to the great event. We talked about it with Monsignor Giovanni Scavino, an Augustinian who collaborated with the magazine and whom we asked why Saint Rita is so beloved.

Monsignor Scavino responded by focusing on two convergent trajectories: the magazine that tells the world about Cascia and the unique qualities of Saint Rita. Over the years, the magazine has changed a lot, remaining true to itself while adapting to the times. Its simple and clear words – which are no less profound for being such – continue to interpret the spirit for which Blessed Maria Theresa Fasce created it perfectly. Many people have planned to come to Cascia over the

years, but, for countless reasons, many of them have not been able to achieve their dreams. Then came this wonderful tool that allows us to be in the heart of Cascia with clear photos, chronicles of events, recollections of important moments and ideas for prayer and reflection. In this way, the magazine has been able to grow just as the faith in devotees has grown. This is why it must continue its mandate and be an instrument of a real experiential catechesis.

Saint Rita showed the world that love does not change but stays firm, even in difficult times. Living through her different states of life, Rita found the solution to her problems in forgiveness and love and reminds us that with Baptism we have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, faithful to the mandate of Jesus, who told us to “proclaim the Gospel and heal the sick” (Gospel of Luke 9: 2), she became the saint we know, the one who heals with love.

The magazine has thus become an instrument of mercy and represents Saint Rita's constant dialogue with her faithful. We know that Rita was worried about whether her chil-

dren were capable of forgiving. Today, in the same way, she cares about all of us. Thus, whenever an issue of the magazine comes into the hands of a devotee, her catechesis comes simply and boldly and heals through the power of the Spirit.

When Blessed Mother Fasce created it, its purpose was to raise awareness of a Saint who had been able to change her life for and with love of Jesus Christ. This is still the magazine's mandate: to bring the Gospel of life into consciences to bring them out of the sadness and despair in which they often find themselves.

On 20 May 2000, John Paul II said: “Saint Rita interpreted the feminine genius of physical and spiritual motherhood by assimilating herself perfectly to Christ with humility and obedience, carrying out her mission of unity and fidelity even in moments of crisis and difficulty. She was the saint of everyday life.” For this reason, in the footsteps of Saint Rita, the magazine never stops guiding readers towards the newness of the Gospel, which is never taken for granted and never surpassed!

The Basilica that defied the war

In the first half of the last century, two women radically changed the face of Cascia: Saint Rita and Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. The former was the cause, the latter the enactor. Since 1920 many new structures have arisen for accommodating the ever increasing number of the pilgrims. Most significantly, a new Basilica was built, but like all things of God it encountered many difficulties. The idea came to Mother Face in 1925, the first stone was laid in 1937 and it

was completed in 1947, four months after the Mother had gone to Heaven. Maria Teresa's unconditional faith and extraordinary strength overcame all obstacles, including war, when the risk of bombing was real and all the work could have been lost. However, like Abraham, Mother Fasce trusted God and responded to those who pointed this out by saying: “If God believes that more glory will come to Him from its destruction, His will be done.”

The Mother and the Saint of the impossible

Saint Rita
recounts the life
of Blessed Mother
Maria Teresa
Fasce



"Thanks to your inspiration and guidance, Maria Teresa, the face of Cascia is changing. It is getting ready to welcome the devotees and there is a flurry of activity..."



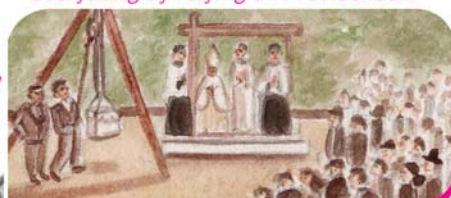
"... The first groups of pilgrims are arriving and you're dreaming of a New Temple..."

*Mother, what if
a bomb destroyed
the Temple?*

*If God believes that more glory will
come to Him from its destruction.
His will be done.*



"... but it will take years of bargaining for your dream to come true, including throughout World War II. You will overcome everything by relying on Providence..."



"... the first stone was laid on 20 June 1937, but, because of the war, the Basilica will be inaugurated in 1947, three months after your death."

Charity and joy guided her

From the homily of Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, delivered at the Solemn Pontifical on 22 May 2023

We have all heard together a passage of the Gospel in which Jesus reminds us that we must be united to Him like the shoot to the vine. The image comes to us from the world of agriculture, but it wants to tell us something essential for a disciple of Jesus. Saint Augustine preached that “we are Christ, all of us together, united to our Leader; without our Leader we are worthless. Why? Because united with our Leader we are the vine, but if cut off from our

Leader we are only broken branches, of no use to the farmers and fit only for the bonfire. That is why He also says in the Gospel: I am the vine, you are the branches, my Father is the farmer; and he adds: without me you can do nothing.” (*Enarrat. in Psalms*, XXX, 11/1, 4: PL 36, 232). We must apply Saint Augustine's words to all of us and for this reason Saint Rita is our model. A witness for the canonisation process said that: “She drew charity towards her neigh-

The call to joy has long been cut off from Christian preaching





She drew
charity
towards her
neighbours
from the
heart of
Jesus

bour from the heart of Jesus, whom she wanted to resemble in every way” (*Positio*, p.44 no. 103). In another testimony we read: “Our Blessed Rita’s love of God was not idle, but rather active and modelled on the charity of Jesus Christ” (*Ibid.*, p. 105).

We have also heard another word from the proclamation of the Gospel: “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full” (Gospel of John 15:11). The call to joy has long been cut off from Christian preaching. However, during the Holy Year of 1975, Saint Paul VI dedicated an apostolic exhortation to joy, the

Gaudete in Domino, and this is a theme that has often been taken up by Pope Francis, right from his first Apostolic Exhortation: “The joy of the Gospel fills the heart and the whole lives of those who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Jesus Christ, joy is always born and reborn” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).

Despite the harsh suffering caused by her stigmatisation she was always full of joy. I speak not only of physical suffering, but also of other humiliations linked to the sign of the wound of passion. *Spina spes gloriae*



(thorn hope of glory, *ed.*). For Father Agostino Trapè it is the phrase that summaries Saint Rita's life. It is not for nothing that the Hymn for the Praises of the ancient officiation in her honour connects the theme of the thorn to another prodigy that occurred when our saint was in the last days of her life, and asked her cousin who came to visit her from Roccaporena to bring her two figs and a rose from the garden of her father's house. The liturgical song connects these two signs, of suffering and joy, and says: *Spina superne caeditur, Rosis viretum purpurat*. "From above a thorn breaks and [on the earth] a

green bush turns red with roses"!

Despite the drama and pains that accompanied the events of her life, she "had joy in her heart and spread it around her... She spread the joy of prompt and generous forgiveness, of peace loved and pursued as the supreme good, of brotherly and sincere love, of full and filial trust in God, of the cross carried with Christ and for Christ" (Trapè, Saint Rita and her message, Terni 1981, p. 49).

Today, we invoke this same joy, through her intercession, for ourselves, for our families, for this diocesan Community and for the whole Holy Church.

"Thorn hope of glory" is the phrase that summarises Saint Rita's life



Let us enter into the Parable of Love

From the homily of Father Mario De Santis, Vice Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, in the Eucharistic Celebration for the benefactors of the Sanctuary, presided over by him on 22 May

Blessed
Mother
Fasce,
another
great
Benefactor
of our
Sanctuary

Every year on 18 May we remember the Dedication of our Basilica to Saint Rita, which took place in 1947. The basilica was strongly desired by the then Abbess of the Monastery, Mother Teresa Fasce, declared Blessed by John Paul II in October 1997. It is a Basilica whose construction was supported by many devotees spread throughout the world, all engaged in that contest of solidarity that allowed the Sanctuary to be so spacious, welcoming, beautiful and functional. At least that's how it was at that time, now perhaps it no longer seems that way for the many pilgrims who visit it; that is why the Hall of Peace also arose next to the Sanctuary for big celebrations. This celebration is in their memory and we want to present them, through Rita, to the Goodness and Mercy of God, in the certainty that they enjoy eternal Beatitude and crown them and our

dear saint, occupying that privileged place reserved for those who, in life, have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, to say it with the Apocalypse.

But Jesus had solemnly told his disciples "without me you can do nothing." This was well understood by Blessed Mother Fasce, another great Benefactress of our Sanctuary, of the Monastery and of Cascia, when trusting in this "Word" and entrusting herself blindly to Divine Providence. Through many well-known and lesser known benefactors, she gave to Lord and to Holy Rita this beautiful Temple, which now allows us to gather in prayer and praise and magnify Rita's great deeds.

I ask myself: could our Sanctuary be made so resplendent and welcoming without Mother Fasce's faith in the Divine Providence and the charity of so many benefactors? I'd say no! But I believe that Saint

Rita and Blessed Mother Fasce were much more interested in the construction of another Temple, that of our hearts and souls, where God truly wants to dwell and settle forever on our earthly journey. This is the miracle that our Saint and Blessed Mother have given in great abundance to all the benefactors of the Sanctuary, regenerated and reconciled in the spirit of the Lord,

the attention first of all of the Lord, of Saint Rita and of Blessed Mother Fasce, so that they may be rewarded for the great good they have done in life and be among those "Blessed of my Father", recommended by Jesus.

Those who want to love Rita and serve her must be inside this wonderful circuit of love, charity and solidarity. To those who now enjoy



The miracle
that our
saint and
our blessed
one
bestowed in
great
abundance

making their heart a true Temple of God, a heart that otherwise would have been restless, to say it with Saint Augustine.

This reconciliation and regeneration of hearts has found its outlet in an immense generosity and solidarity so as to be able to carry out works and promote initiatives that correspond to the charitable impulses of Rita and Teresa. It is in this Parable of love that, this evening, our benefactors find the right place in presenting them to

eternal peace and their just rewards because they lived life within this circuit, let us render honour and glory tonight, in the hope that so many others may retrace this wonderful path of love. My dream is that we may all live, act and work in harmony and in unity, "professionally" prepared to welcome and serve pilgrims or religious tourists. It is the challenge that we launch to those who work in the Sanctuary, in the Monastery and in the city of Rita and Mother Teresa.



by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

Rita spoke to us while dying

The most
precious
things she
had to
communicat
e to us was
in her
hands:
Crucified
Jesus



Rita left this world on tiptoe: her transit took place without any commotion. It was as silent and gentle as her existence had unfolded. She left without leaving anything written behind, not even a spiritual testament or a word of farewell. The most precious thing she had to communicate to us was in her hands: Crucified Jesus. The words of Saint Paul apply well to Rita: "As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died" (Galatians 6: 4).

From the bliss of Heaven, Rita does not forget the suffering of the earth and, silently, she still hands

us Crucified Jesus and seems to say to us: "Welcome him, look at him, contemplate him; tell him your dramas, but also listen to what he has to say to you. He wants to take you by the hand and accompany you along the narrow path you are walking, to teach you the steps to take: these steps are not angry, not resigned, but rather steps of surrender, sweet and confident. Do not seek escape routes or easy solutions, those mundane remedies that only serve to surround yourself with noise and appearances." And like saying a rosary, Rita continues to whisper to us the words that have been made flesh in her thanks to the time she dedicated to remaining in silent contemplation of the Cross: meekness - peace - forgiveness -

perseverance - trust - concealment - charity - sweetness - faithfulness - mercy. A distillation of the Gospel.

He, the humble Jesus, knows how to clear paths with the plough of his Cross where we thought there was no longer any way to go. Clinging to Him opens up new, additional, unthinkable possibilities.

We waited for the consolations of God, we believed that all our hope was to be concentrated in them. With wonder, we discover that we have found much more: the God of consolations, who reopens the horizon of life to us and expands its vastness.

*Saint Rita, Our Sister,
keep telling us your secret:
to embrace life
even when it gets tough;
help us to recognise
that in the very concrete aspect
of our reality
humble Jesus awaits us,
to pour into us
all the abundance of his
consoling presence.*

WITH GOD, WE CAN DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

Rita faced very difficult situations with humanity. In the voids of love and affection that were created around her, however, the possibility of a greater love was formed; there was still and always would be room for hope, for life, for peace, for joy. Rita also fully assumed her responsibilities as a wife, mother and consecrated woman, and there she knew the great power that is released from living the present moment with intensity of love, where she was, in the condition she was living, in the uphill climb that presented itself before her. Rita did what was possible, but with God; and in this way the impossible was also achieved in a human way. (Rossano Augustinian Nuns, *Donne artigiane di futuro con Rita da Cascia*, Tau editrice 2021, pp. 147-149)



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.

Adriano Pozzetti (Lurate Caccivio CO - Italy)
Alberico Sonogo (Colle Umberto TV - Italy)
Angela Colombo (Rome - Italy)
Cristina Panzeri (Voghera PV - Italy)
Dora Ruffolo (Milan - Italy)
Elda Comandella (Rho MI - Italy)
Ettore Buratti (Dueville VI - Italy)

Fausto Campese (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)
Graziella Zavagnini (Pesaro - Italy)
Luisa Rita Di Terlizzi (Rome - Italy)
Manuela Aramu (Selargius CA - Italy)
Maria Liberti (Cerde PA - Italy)
Mario Frisone (Laval - Canada)
Nazzareno Cattapan (Valdagno VI - Italy)
Olimpia Trimarchi (Canada)
Orietta Torchio (Erba CO - Italy)
Pina Aliverti (Lurate Caccivio CO - Italy)
Pierantonio Bernascono (Morbio Inferiore - Switzerland)
Settembrina Viotti (Genoa - Italy)
Regina Saradelli (Brescia - Italy)
Renato Todeschini (Montecchio Precalcino VI - Italy)



by Marta Ferraro

In Cascia to imitate Rita



One of the most emotional moments of the National Meeting of the PPU, which was held in Cascia on 15 and 16 April, was the route at the Urn of Saint Rita, reserved for the 1200 devotees who arrived from all over Italy



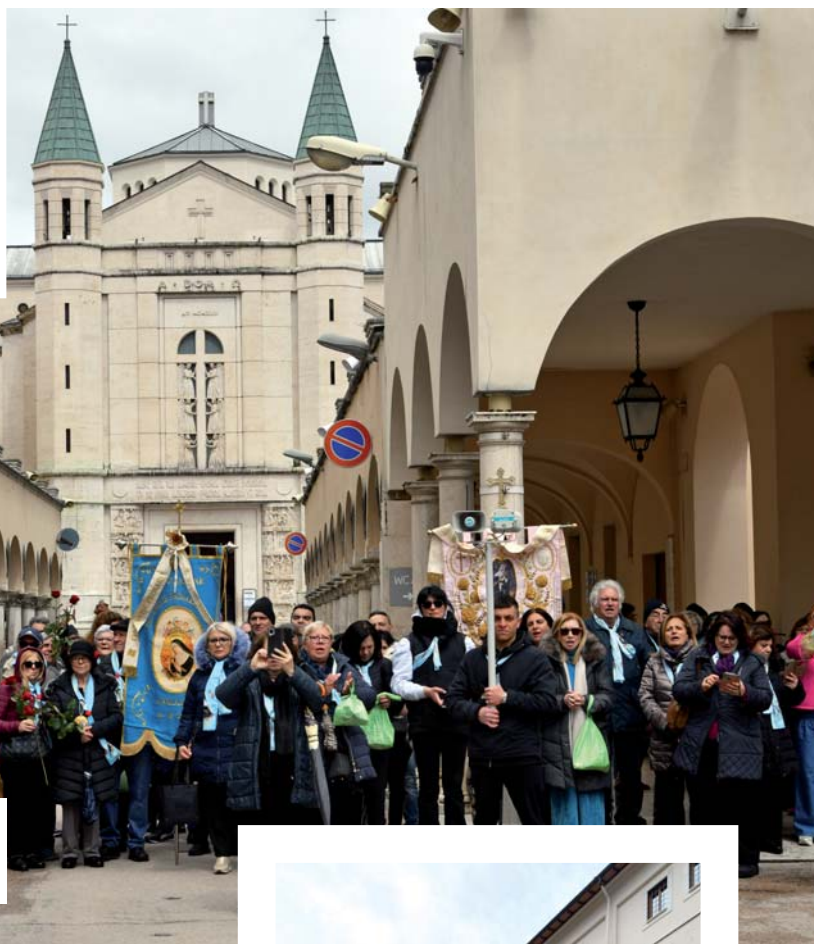
Mass celebrated in the Hall of Peace by the spiritual guide of the group Fr. Ludovico Maria Centra, in the presence of 42 affiliated groups with their respective banners



The statue of Saint Rita offered this year by the group from Cellino San Marco (BR)



PRIMARY PIOUS UNION



The moment of the procession that took place on Sunday 16 April and which involved all the streets of Cascia



Affiliation of the new groups that presented their own banner: Altavilla Irpina (AV), Potenza, Valverde (CT) and Vittoria (RG)



Arrival of the procession in the Basilica, which closed the meeting. The next appointment is set for 6 and 7 April 2024

“She could touch hearts”

Recalling Sister Alfonsina Versienti

In April Sr. Alfonsina left us to go to Heaven. Here are the testimonies of the nurses who assisted her in her years of old age and illness in the monastery infirmary and of a fellow sister, thanking the Lord for the gift of her life.

“I met Sister Alfonsina in the infirmary. I was struck by her strong vocation. She was a humble and sweet person. Her sweetness was compelling. In the room you had to make sure that the crown of the Rosary was

under her pillow, she couldn't rest without her Jesus. One thing that still strikes me is her great love for the Lord and for her family. Before falling asleep, she had to kiss her mother's picture. With a smile full of love, she would say: “My beautiful one...”. She wouldn't let you go without wishing you a good night, ‘and your mum too’ she always told me. She remembered her origin with joy and pride: ‘I am from Campi Salentina’ (province of Lecce, ed.). And then she continued: ‘he didn't just want one but two from my family’ thinking with pride of her brother, priest Don Mario. THANK YOU Sr. Alfonsina, for your simplicity and the richness of your soul. You were always firm in your love of the Lord. He will reward you for the good you have done among us.”

“‘Good morning my darling’: this is how our days began, by entering her room and hearing her laugh. One morning I was absorbed in my thoughts. I entered in silence, said a simple good morning and I got to work. Then I heard a faint voice say ‘Forgive me!’ I looked at her, not understanding, and with her sweet way she said to me: ‘I sense that you're sad today, forgive me if it's my fault’. That was Sr. Alfonsina to me! A good, pure soul who was able to go beyond and touch your heart, who stopped to observe you and gave you love. When I chose to do this work many years ago, I promised myself that I would be of help to anyone who needed it, that I would give love. With Sr. Alfonsina I received more than I gave, a strong bond, something that taught me to under-



Sister Alfonsina, on the 50th anniversary of her solemn profession, celebrated together with her loved ones and the community in 2018

stand what it means to love. May you have much joy (Tobias 5:10). My days now begin like this, with this sentence from the Bible that Sr. Alfonsina wrote inside a small paper flower. Every morning I open it, smile and remember her in my prayers! THANK YOU for the affection you have given me, I love you so much.”

“Remembering Sister Alfonsina is a real pleasure. One of the services she had within the community was correspondence with the devotees of Saint Rita for Italian Switzerland. It was a real privilege for her, as someone who bore the same Baptismal name (which later changed to Alfonsina, that of her dear mother, when she took religious vows). Her character was both wilful and sweet, and she changed her mind only in the name of the truth and rectitude of her conscience. She took part in the parties and recreational and

playful moments organised in community with joy. We laughed so much together! And in the kitchen? She was very good at making “creams”. On the inside she was a true Augustinian nun. She prayed a lot and read many books, sent by her brother the priest. There was a wonderful emotional and spiritual bond between the two of them: they were in a competition to get to Heaven! Father Mario preceded her by a few months and last April it was up to her to reach him in the Heavenly Homeland, participating in that Heavenly Liturgy that she had loved, followed and desired so much. In her final weeks, which she spent in the hospital, she was serene. She could no longer speak but she emanated peace and serenity from her gaze, providing a beautiful testimony for everyone. Thank you Alfonsina, we are sure that you will pray incessantly for us from above!”

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
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email: monastero@santaritadacascia.org

*We safeguard their future.
With joy.*



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

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