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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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A NEW JUSTICE

*Looking to Christ, between redemption
and reparation*



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On the cover: A new justice.
Photo by: Stefano Dal Pozzolo

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He gave his life for his 'enemies'

While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son (Letter to the Romans 5:10). Commenting on these Bible verses, Saint Augustine says, "He did not lay down his life for his friends, but for his enemies. How great is God's love for men, how much tenderness, to love sinners to the point of dying for them out of love!" (Sermons 215.5). So, what can this Easter teach us? In this time bloodied by atrocious violence that, without looking at the horrors of war, is taking place ever closer to home, in our neighbourhoods, in our families, let us rediscover Christ's gaze, which is capable of going beyond the Passion and hatred.

If, indeed, it is only in light of the Resurrection that we understand the plan of love enacted by God, who loves our weakness, filling it with value and meaning, in the same way we can only overcome the tensions we experience through reconciliation, including social reconciliation. Drawing on the charisma of Saint Rita, I speak of nurturing a culture of forgiveness to free us from violence, to heal open wounds and grudges, and allow healthy relationships to flourish with ourselves and in our communities.

We might ask: where is justice in forgiveness? Usually the idea of justice that we have is punitive. However, if justice did not condemn but freed the beauty of the human beyond the mistakes we make, as the justice of God does, could it be called 'forgiveness'?

To answer this together, in the following pages we talk about redemption and restorative justice: the latter is an approach that focuses on the regenerative power of justice. We are also honoured to do so thanks to the testimony of Maria Agnese, daughter of Aldo Moro, the former Prime Minister of the Italian Republic who was kidnapped and murdered by the Red Brigades in 1978.

She experiences the effects of a new justice to such an extent that she describes those who took her father away as "friends".

*"Our Redeemer has risen from the dead.
Let us give glory to the Lord our God.
Hallelujah!"*

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



by Alessia Nicoletti

Redemption: Misery meets Mercy

Interview with editorial director
Sister Maria Giacomina Stuani OSA

Sin is to be
condemned,
the sinner
to be
welcomed
and loved

What does the concept of redemption tell us about what God is like?

Especially in the Old Testament, God is seen more as a Judge than as a Father. In the New Testament, Jesus chose to inhabit our flesh to show us the true face of God: a Father full of love, mercy and goodness for his children. On the Cross, Jesus Christ “paid the bill” for us, freeing us from the slavery of sin and death. He is our Redeemer. We do not deserve it, but it is a pure gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, a gift of divine Grace. We find these beautiful words in the Hymn of Vespers at the time of Advent: “To redeem the world overwhelmed by sin, you were born of the Virgin, you climbed onto the Cross”. God loved us and loves us first, he always anticipates us.

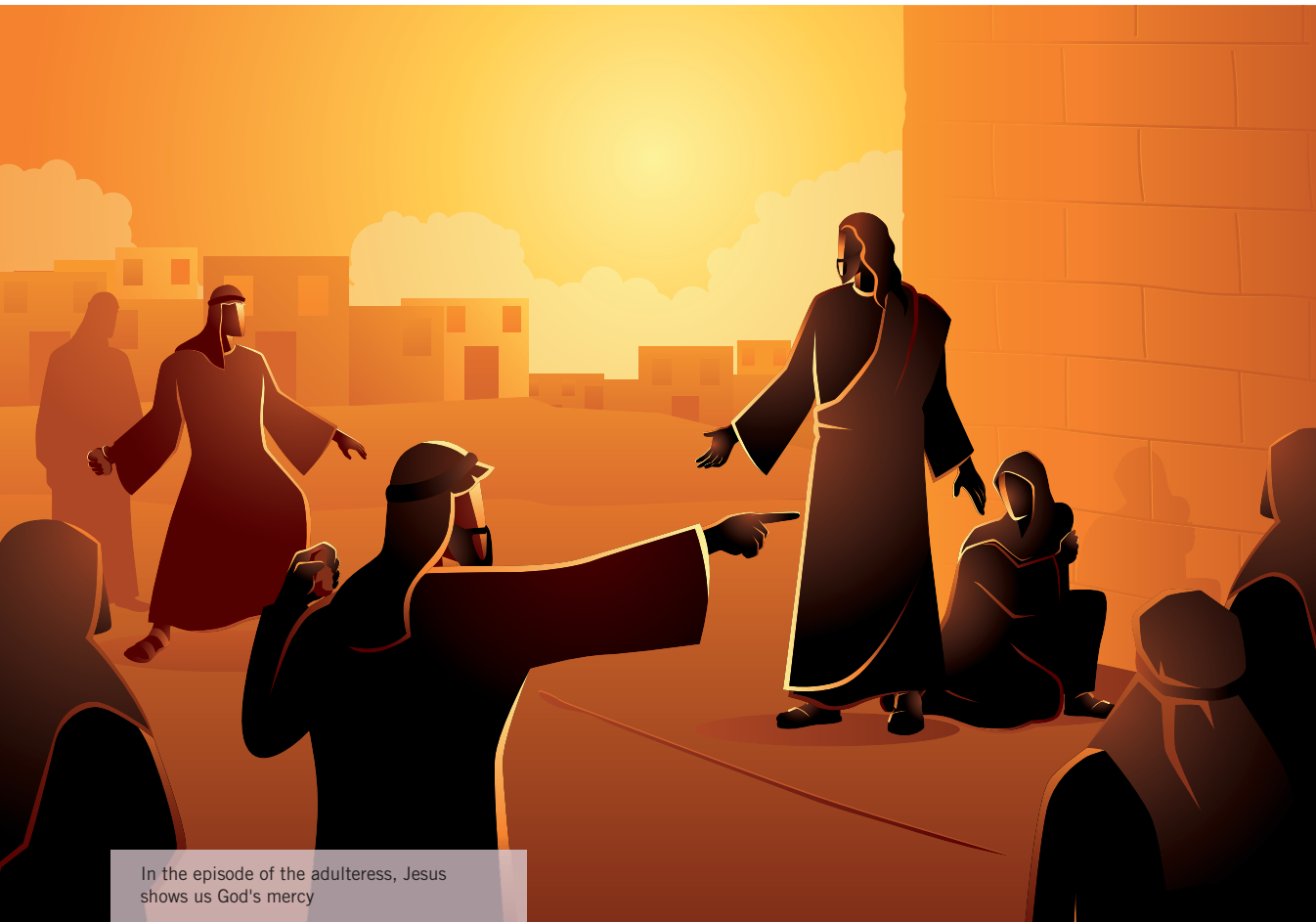
How does one obtain salvation?

The liturgy offers us another inspiration, this time from a Good Friday hymn: “Created for the glory of your name, redeemed by your blood on the cross, marked by the seal of your Spirit.” Salvation begins with the decision to follow God and obey Him and continues with the recognition and repentance of our sins because we love

Him; it is a process that becomes a lifestyle and accompanies us throughout our existence. The Holy Father Augustine tells us “*Conversi ad Dominum*”, that is, “turn to the Lord”: it is a daily conversion, the firm decision to leave the ways of the “world” to follow the ways of the Lord.

We usually judge and point the finger at those who make mistakes, thinking that there is no chance of recovery...

Our Spiritual Father Saint Augustine affirmed that sin is to be condemned, but the sinner is to be welcomed and loved. In theology we speak of “justification” that manifests the justice of God in condemning and punishing sin, His mercy in forgiving and welcoming sinners, and His wisdom in the harmonious exercise of both attributes (justice and mercy) through the Christ/Messiah (Romans 3:23 ff.), as Redeemer. In the episode of the adulteress, Jesus shows us God's mercy, which is not mere do-goodism: “Woman, has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on do not sin anymore.” Saint Augustine gives us a wonderful reflection. Once Jesus silenced and dispersed



In the episode of the adulteress, Jesus shows us God's mercy

the woman's accusers with the simple phrase *Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her*, he remained alone with the sinner. In that moment of eternity, Saint Augustine recognises the decisive encounter that can change each of our lives. He says: There were only two left: misery and mercy. In one sentence he summed up the meaning of human life. The sinner met the gaze of Christ. She didn't cross paths with him at just any time. She met Christ when she was on the ground, in the dust, condemned by

men. Perhaps she condemned herself and did not forgive herself for living a life far removed from the truth of love. That's where the miracle takes place. There the adulteress not only avoids death by stoning. There the adulteress is born to new life. She was spiritually dead and Jesus brought her back to life. He gave her back the truth of herself. He restored her dignity and regal quality. He did it with just his gaze – the look of someone who loved her was enough. The gaze of God that goes beyond the misery and fragility of mankind and man-

God's gaze
goes beyond
the fragility
of people
and can see
their beauty

ages to see its constitutive beauty, which is made by God, made in the image of God. We should adopt this gaze too.

Justice and Redemption go together with Reconciliation. What does this latter mean?

“In the sacrament of reconciliation the Lord washes our dirty feet again and again and invites every believer to do the same with his brothers. We must wash one another's feet in the mutual daily service of love. But we must also wash one another's feet in the sense that we must forgive one another ever anew. Do not allow resentment toward others to become a poison in the depths of the soul.” (Benedict XVI - Homily S. Mass In Coena Domini - Holy Thursday 2008) Forgiveness is a gift, a gift of God, a gift in its most beautiful and true form: the love of mercy. *While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him* (Lk 15:20). The Lord welcomes us with His merciful embrace and tells us: I was waiting for you, you have finally arrived. I couldn't wait to embrace you, to make you feel all my fatherly love. God continually intervenes to restore the covenant that we creatures break because of sin. While God is always faithful, people repeatedly break the covenant with God and deviate from the Way of Life. God's joy in embracing his sinful creature once again is so great that each time he throws a banquet to celebrate the return of his distant son. God loves us precisely in our sinful form and in his

great love as Father he sent the Son to reconcile us to Him. Why reconcile? Because sin is the reason why we have lost friendship and communion with God and with our brothers. Reconciliation with Him involves the conversion of the sinner, our conversion, which is full adherence to Christ, the total Christ that is Christ the head and Christ the Body – the Church. Therefore I invite us to rid ourselves of our pride, of our attachment to material things, to regain the full freedom of the children of God. Whoever is in Christ is a new, reconciled creature. Through reconciliation and forgiveness we no longer live only for ourselves as beings emptied of love, but filled with God's mercy we become new beings.

Saint Rita, in agreement with the Lord, shows us the way of forgiveness.

The message of forgiveness that Saint Rita left us is a message to be thought of again every day of the year, since the people of today find themselves increasingly torn up on the inside by the guilt of the past and unable to forgive themselves and others. Forgiveness is not the result of chance or even an instinctive gesture at the last moment, rather it is the fruit of a life grafted on the Lord, of a journey taken hand in hand with the Word, the Sacraments and prayer, of a total identification and assimilation to the Cross of Christ, of an incarnation of the Beatitudes in one's own life. Those who feel “poor in spirit” have already laid the foundations for the Kingdom of Heaven. To for-

give is to imitate Crucified Jesus in all his aspects: to allow oneself to be crucified by all the pain of others and of one's own pain, to feel its great weight humanly, to bring it to the Father as children together with the Son, to cross through it with Love, with faith and abandon, to touch a sort of inner death and then rise again. And all this is lived not only once but several times, because forgiveness

is part of every day, of every moment. It must always be renewed so that misery meets Mercy. The path of forgiveness is lit by the torch of faith. The way seems to be that of defeat but it is actually the way of victory, the courageous victory of love. Forgive those who love, those who, at the crossroads of their heart, can see signs that indicate: Direction: Love... Direction: Life...

The publication of the “From the Bees to the Roses” bulletin in November-December 2023 provoked many reactions from our loyal readers and many other people who expressed their feelings on the subject. We all thank them for their closeness, as we read a precious adherence to the teaching of the Catholic Church in their writings.

We want to reaffirm this adherence here publicly and firmly as Augustinian Nuns of the Monastery of Cascia. The articles that may have given the impression of proposing a different vision on some moral issues, although perhaps imprecise, intended only to guide us to welcome every brother and sister – with love and in truth – that is, to the attitude of the heart that Jesus asks of those who want to call themselves his disciples.

To the intercession of Saint Rita, we ask “a descending blessing from God himself on those who, recognising themselves as destitute and in need of his help, do not claim the legitimacy of their own status, but beg that everything that is true, good and humanly valid that is present in their lives and relationships, be invested, healed and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this way, every brother and every sister will be able to feel that they are always pilgrims in the Church, always beggars, always loved and, despite everything, always blessed” (*Fiducia supplicans*, 31. 45).



by Maria Agnese Moro

Justice that liberates

“To be able to take the mask of the monster off them and that of the victim off me and discover people, wounded, but together”

There are many definitions of restorative justice. In my experience – which began on Christmas Eve 2009, when Father Guido Bertagna invited me to participate in a dialogue between people affected by the armed struggle of the 1970s and 1980s and others who had been active in that struggle – restorative justice is the

quences are like radioactive waste that must be treated and disposed of, disarmed so that lives and people are no longer disfigured.

The irreparable cannot be repaired or cured. My father, who was killed, will not come back; the 25-year-old girl I was then will not reappear, and the people who shot him cannot go back to before this happened. The irreparable can only be looked in the eye and taken for what it is: irreparable.

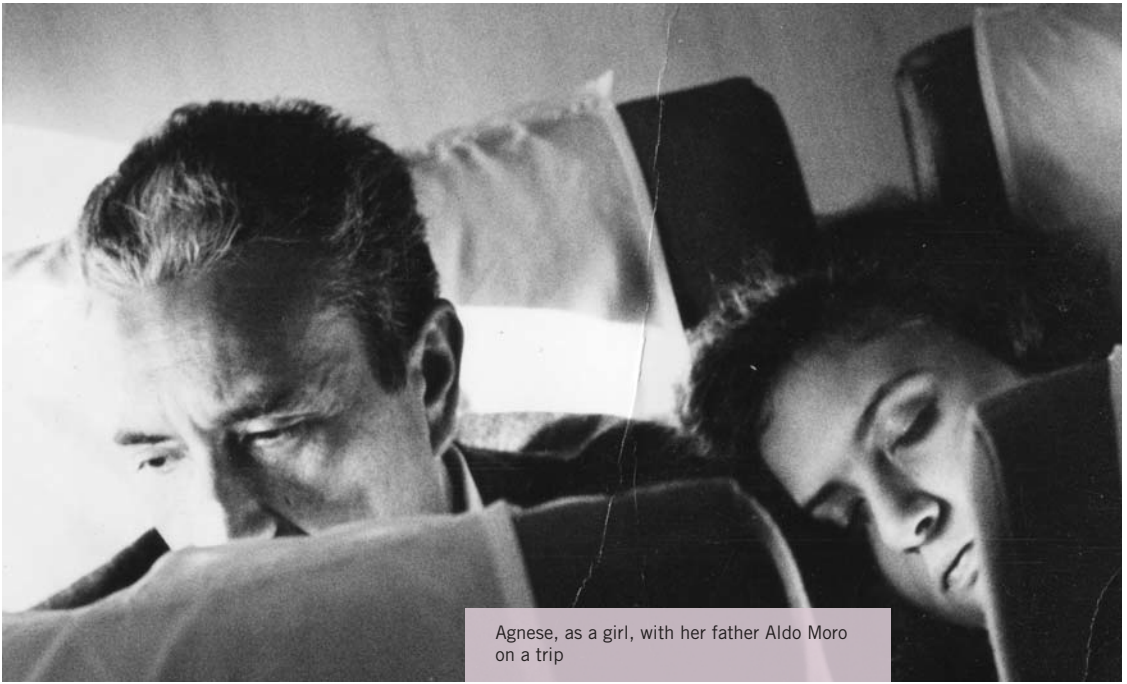
Radioactive waste, on the other hand, can be disarmed. It feeds on atrocious pain that no one wanted or has been able to approach. Left to itself, this pain becomes silence, ghosts, masks, immobility (what has been is not a memory; it happens again today, as then, in a continuous present), loneliness, defeat.

How does reparative justice fit into all of this? With an invitation (like that from Father Guido); with the offer of a place that is free (enter if you want, leave when you want), reserved and respectful, where you can meet, talk and listen; with guidance that is discreet, expert, “equi-near”, that is, equally close to each other, and honest. For me it was a place full of surprises: that humanity is not lost



Agnese and Franco Bonisoli – former Red Brigade members – testify to their shared path of reconciliation on many occasions

justice of return. It is the return to a possibility of a free and full life for all those who have experienced the horror of the irreparable, by having caused it or by having suffered from it, and struggle with the lasting consequences. These conse-



Agnese, as a girl, with her father Aldo Moro on a trip

even if you make a huge mistake; their excruciating pain over having done terrible things while thinking they were doing good for the poor and the world; their generosity (why subject themselves to the meeting with us after they have served their sentences with so many years in a terrible prison? They owe nothing to me or anyone else, yet they are here doing something extremely painful). There is also a surprise in their faces, which are now old, like mine, demonstrating that what happened is still horrible, but it is not the present now. And the past slowly falls into place, behind us. It's a surprise to be able to reproach them and say who my father was for me, and to be heard with pain and respect; and to be able to listen, with pain and respect, to their stories. It's a surprise to discover people and not ghosts. It's a surprise to be able to take the mask of

the monster off them and that of the victim off me and discover people, wounded, but together. It's a surprise to be able to go through my hell with them and go through theirs with them and carry those weights together. It's a surprise to see them unarmed and disarming me; and not to forget or water down anything they have done, but love them and be friends.

All this – and much more – is a return to a life of remembrance, freedom, clarity. Not the one before, but yours. Doesn't Article 27 of the Constitution mention this when it says that penalties are intended for re-education? We re-educate ourselves to return. We all want to come back. But this return is either for everyone or for no one. I can't come back without them, nor can they come back without me. And neither they nor I can return if you do not welcome us.

Being able to say who my father was to me, and being heard with pain and respect



Mission accomplished for Namu Hospital

The reconstruction of the “Virgilius Memorial Hospital” in the community of Namu, Nigeria, is a dream that is becoming a reality, thanks to you who supported it, starting with the awareness and fundraising campaign promoted for the Feast of Saint Rita 2023. This is the good news we want to give you, as we approach the Feast of Saint Rita 2024 with leaps and bounds. The new hospital will come to life within a year thanks to the more than 128,000 euros that we are going to allocate to it. While we are intensively continuing our contacts with the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima, initiators of the construction of the

first hospital and now of its reconstruction, we are ready to allocate the sum we have accumulated as the result of your generosity in different instalments, according to the progress of the work, as it is completed.

THE NEW FACILITIES

What will this mean for the children of Namu and their families, part of a community of over 35,000 inhabitants, who have been the beneficiaries of our help? We will be able to guarantee them access to a greater and more specialised range of health services thanks to modern and much larger facilities, which will allow over 20,000 peo-



ple to be treated. The hospital, which was founded by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima in 1983 and managed by them since then, had been destroyed in August 2019 due to a fire caused by an electrical failure. It was temporarily replaced by a provisional clinic, to guarantee the most important health services. However, the inhabitants are now forced to undertake long journeys for many specialist services. The new hospital will once again be a point of reference that also ensures education about health, to eradicate popular beliefs about treatment with herbs that are widespread in the society. The units under construction include support for children with 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 department with a delivery room; a paediatric department with a playroom, so that children can recover faster. More generally, there are plans for a pharmacy, a nursing department, a surgical department, an adult department (for men and women), an Intensive Care Unit and Isolation Unit for infectious diseases.

THE WORK SCHEDULE

The preliminary works are currently underway, which include, among other things, designing the project itself, applying for permits, setting up the construction site, clearing and remediation, and planning. The actual reconstruction will begin shortly (we are writing this in January, ed.). It will begin by demolishing the remains of the building that burned down and clearing the debris, then the next step will be the construction of the main building and the creation of its different components, such as the structure, the roof, the internal and external walls, the floor, the windows and the doors, to which the electrical, hydraulic and mechanical works will be added. Keep reading to find out how the works progress!

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION'S PROJECTS

Support the most fragile people in Italy and in the world for the Feast of Saint Rita 2024. Together with you, we guarantee the right to education, health and nutrition by bringing light where there is none. Like in **Cuzco**, a town located in one of the poorest and most isolated regions of Peru, where we want to create an **Auditorium**. For the over **300 students** of the "San Augustin de Hipona" Institute managed by the Augustinian Order, this means **socio-cultural development**. It also benefits the population, which faces serious hardships. Every donation is essential to create the Auditorium, **which is currently unfinished due to lack of resources**.

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We support their dreams. With love.



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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RITIAN MAY

5 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 years - Book at the Information Office +39 (0)743 75091). The Mass ends with a word about Saint Rita for the little ones and **blessing of children**

FROM 12 TO 20 MAY, THE NOVENA OF SAINT RITA

Led by the Christian communities of the Diocese

16:00 - Visit of the Monastery and narration of the history and message of Saint Rita

17:00 - Possibility of confession



18:00 - Eucharist and passage next to the Urn of Saint Rita

19 MAY, PROCESSION OF THE BANNER

21:00 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Procession through the streets of the city, with the traditional Banner



From 12 to 20 May, at 11:50, participate in the **ROSARY WITH THE NUNS**, online only from the Monastery Choir

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

20 MAY



10:00 - PEACE HALL

"Saint Rita International Recognition Award"

testimony and presentation of the "Women of Rita" 2024

21:00 - ROCCAPORENA

Arrival of the **Torch of Peace and Forgiveness** lit in Enna.

Prayer and climb to the **Rock**

21 MAY



17:30 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Awarding of the "Saint Rita International Recognition Award 2024" and message from the Prioress

18:00 - Solemn Celebration of the Transit of Saint Rita.

20:30 - PIAZZA GARIBALDI

Parade to the Shrine of Saint Rita

21:30 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Welcoming the **Torch of Peace and Forgiveness**. Lighting of the tripod and prayer of entrustment



22 MAY, FEAST OF SAINT RITA

10:30 - SANCTUARY AVENUE

Arrival of the **Procession from Roccaporena and Historical Parade with the Statue of Saint Rita**

11:00 - PEACE HALL

Solemn Pontifical, presided over by Cardinal Robert F. Prevost OSA, Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. At the end of the Procession, the Parade and statue continue to the Basilica

12:00 - FORECOURT OF THE BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Prayer to Saint Rita and Blessing of the Roses

The reported events will be live streamed on the Monastery's social networks.



Follow the symbols to find out what they are and where to follow them.

Info and updates on santaritadacascia.org



by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

Walking with Saint Rita through the Year of Prayer
and towards the 2025 Jubilee

What does it mean to invoke?

Let's learn from Rita to ask God to dwell in us

After considering prayer as a kind of heartfelt attention that recognises the presence of God in all things in the previous issue, we now pause to reflect on that type of prayer that is *invocation*.

The name of the person who is dear to us resounds on our lips with all the warmth of our affection. Similarly, we turn to Saint Rita by invoking her, that is, calling her by name – “Saint Rita, our Sister, Saint of impossible cases!”

– and we present our needs to her.

We also meet people who invoke Jesus in various ways in the Gospels: “Lord, Lord!” (Matthew 7:21 ff.); “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:38); a varied range of humankind turns to him and addresses him with a series of requests.

When we invoke God, most of the time it is to get him to take our situation to heart by giving us what we urgently need. Yet, the saints themselves show us



Gospel of Luke 2:42-42: *Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.*

In Jerusalem there was the temple of God of Israel. Jesus had promised His presence there, together with as many as could join. They went there for Passover in a caravan. A lamb was sacrificed there, which was then brought home and the exodus of the people from Egypt was remembered by eating while standing, because it was necessary to leave again. The Jubilee is a pilgrimage to the tomb of Peter, in Rome, where you can pass through the holy door. We go there in penance, but we return with hearts changed by God's forgiveness. In Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph lost Jesus and they frantically searched for him for three days. Our anxieties resemble Mary's. In the 2025 Jubilee, then, let us pray to the Mother of the Lord: "Mother of the Jubilee, mother of the new millennium of humanity, give peace to our hearts that feel anxiety for the children, bless their journeys."

THE PILGRIM'S BOX: TOWARDS THE 2025 JUBILEE

*edited by
Fr. Vittorino
Grossi OSA*

something more. If we consider Rita in the unfolding of her human events, which were so troubled and filled with suffering, we discover that her prayer gradually simplified. What did Rita ask God when she invoked him? Certainly for peace; reconciliation for her city of Cascia, for her family, which was shaken by multi-generational vendettas; certainly she asked for the strength to forgive. But there is more. Through all these questions, Rita developed the fundamental request, in which at some point all the others come together: she asked that the presence of God dwell in her, to fill the empty areas of her heart, the spaces left desolate after widowhood and the loss of her children. In a word, Rita came to ask God... for God Himself!

Centuries earlier, Saint Augustine had understood that this is

precisely what it means to invoke: to call God within oneself, to invite him into the house of one's heart in a certain way. And since invoking is a matter of the heart, he recommended having it prepared, clean and in order, to be able to welcome such an important guest as God himself!

Finally: our invocation is true when it is free, anchored not to the things that God can give us, but to God himself: "Do you want to invoke God? Invoke him for free. What of the things that God has made can be enough for you, if God himself is not enough for you?" (cf. Exp. on Psalm 30 II, D. 3:4).

*Rita, woman of prayer,
ensure that our invocations do
not fail to include the most
important one: the one
that asks God for nothing but
God himself.*



by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

The figure of Mother Fasce is reinterpreted within the historical and social framework of her time

A courageous vocation

“Back then, entering a monastery was very risky”

On 17 March 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was officially founded with Victor Emanuel II of Savoy, but without Rome, Venice, Trento and Trieste. The harsh opposition of Pope Pius IX led to a strongly anticlerical policy being adopted by the Italian governments, both those of the historical Right and of the Left in power from 1876. On 7 July 1866, in the midst of the war of independence, the Italian parliament approved a law that suppressed religious orders, that is, it closed convents and monasteries. This was a measure that

caused irreparable damage to the artistic heritage preserved in those sacred buildings and led to the dispersion of many religious communities. It was not applied equally: some monasteries and convents survived, but could not receive new vocations. The maximum tension was reached on 20 September 1870 when Italian troops entered Rome, putting an end to the temporal power of the popes that had lasted for more than 1100 years. Pius IX responded with *Non expedit*, that is, he forbade Italian Catholics to participate in political life. His successor Leo XIII continued along this line, although he brought the Church out of the isolation in which it had found itself. During his pontificate, Catholics addressed serious social problems that afflicted Italy, organising themselves in leagues to defend peasants and workers, together with the socialists who were being formed at that time



(the socialist party was established in Genoa in 1892). Leo XIII himself proclaimed the famous encyclical *Rerum novarum*, the first dealing with the social question.

When talking about the vocation of Maria Fasce and her two sisters who had to give it up, we must keep this dark picture in mind. The Fasce family was religious, so it may be surprising that the father was opposed to his daughters' vocation, but at that time entering a monastery was very risky for a girl. In fact, it could be closed at any time and the living conditions were very hard. Eugenio Fasce knew this well and feared for the future of his daughters, but Maria was determined and ultimately succeeded. She entered the Monastery of Saint Rita in Cascia in 1906. At that time things in Italy were changing due to the arrival of new figures on both sides who were more inclined to a policy of collaboration: several time president of the council of ministers Giovanni Giolitti and Pope St. Pius X. The suppressions decreased considerably and Pius X removed the *Non expedit*, allowing Catholics to participate in the general elections of 1913. The young Sister Maria Teresa Fasce, however, experienced the disruptions caused by the suppressions, which also affected the Monastery of Cascia where two groups of nuns resided that were divided by values and in clear opposition. She suffered a lot, to the point of questioning her choices, but after a period of reflection in her home in Torriglia, she returned to Cascia, stronger and more determined to move forward.

One hundred years of From the Bees to the Roses

The roots of the magazine

The history of our magazine began on 22 May 1923, the publication date of the first issue. And since then, with only a forced interruption for the Second World War between 1943 and 1945, it has continued until today. However, its roots lead us to 1909, when the Monastery of Cascia began to print its first periodical: the Echo of Saint Rita. Published until 1911, it was the precursor of From the Bees to the Roses. The Echo of Saint Rita was well-edited and well-made, but there was a problem: it had a medium-high cultural level that did not suit the general public. Thus Mother Maria Teresa Fasce, Abbess of the Monastery, thought of a new bulletin, one that could speak to the hearts of readers in a simpler and more direct way. This is how From the Bees to the Roses came about.

From the exhibition "From the Bees to the Roses: 100 years on display (1923-2023)"

After a period of reflection, she returned to Cascia, confirmed and determined to move forward





by Father Josef Sciberras OSA,
Augustinian General Postulation

The Postulator General of the General Curia of the Order of St. Augustine promotes the causes of canonisation of members of the Augustinian Family. Info: postulazione@osacuria.org

Be creative to sow love and hope

We follow Ange Le Proust, who chose
serving the neediest as a way of life



Pierre Le Proust was born in Chatellerault (France) on 3 December 1624. His parents cultivated a deep love for the Eucharist and compassion for those in need in his heart and those of his eight siblings, so much so that as many as six of their children consecrated themselves to the Lord. In 1641 Pierre began the Augustinian novitiate and was given the name of Ange. During this period he was struck by the life of the Augustinian saint Thomas of Villanova. He took his vows, embracing all the values of the Augustinian Rule, and continued his studies until he was ordained a priest in 1649. At the age of 28, Father Ange arrived in Lamballe (in Brittany, a region in the extreme northwest of France) where he dedicated himself to teaching and, later, as a visitor to various convents, to promoting the ideals

of communal life. Here he had his first contact with what would be his future apostolate: the small hospital full of sick people, reduced to a pitiful state.

Thomas of Villanova, father of the poor, was canonised in Rome in 1658. This circumstance amplified the Servant of God's devotion to the new saint. During Eucharistic adoration, he received a "light" that clarified what God wanted him to do: to alleviate the suffering and inhuman conditions faced by the sick. As such, he went to great lengths to train young Augustinian Tertiaries who had agreed to help him in his project. On 2 March 1661, the bishop of the diocese blessed the work and the first four girls began their service to Christ, through the sick: thus began the Sisters Hospitallers of St. Thomas of Villanova, the first religious congregation formally attached to the Augustinian Order. The seed sown by Father Ange has borne abundant fruit to this day. He died in holiness in Paris, on 16 October 1697. Today his remains are venerated in the general house of the Sisters he founded in Neuilly sur Seine. The cause of canonisation is underway.

The Servant of God could be described as an Augustinian who was passionate about God, salvation and integral development of people: by drinking from the well of love, he brought love in turn, especially to the poorest. Serving them was not a distant ideal for him but a privileged means. The purpose was to teach the poor to love God and the sick to share their suffering with Christ. His

NEW PROVINCIAL OF THE AUGUSTINIANS OF ITALY

Father Gabriele Pedicino is the new Prior of the Augustinian Province of Italy. Now rector, parish priest and sacrist of the Basilica Santa Maria dei Miracoli of Andria in Puglia, where he arrived after 19 years living in the Basilica of San Nicola da Tolentino, Father Gabriele will officially begin his four-year mandate in Cascia during the Ordinary Provincial Chapter that will be held from 15 to 19 April. He will take the baton from Father Giustino Casciano, who currently holds the position. Best wishes for this new important journey from the Augustinian and Ritian Family of Cascia!



shining example drives us to seek creative ways to serve Christ, in courageous gestures of love, especially among the poorest we encounter in our environments, on our pavements, in the social and cultural peripheries of our communities. The Servant of God could encourage us to roll up our sleeves and look for ways – albeit small and, at first glance, even insignificant ways – to heal our human environments, sowing love and hope where there are none. His life and work confirm what the Lord said: "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16).

The seed sown by Father Ange has borne abundant fruit to this day



by Marta Ferraro

“I cultivate love for Rita in Sicily”

The testimony of the priest who leads the 30 groups of our family on the island

Don Bernardo Briganti is the living embodiment of a promise fulfilled!

His mother, a devotee of Saint Rita, had difficulty getting pregnant, and so to ask for the grace of motherhood she recited the 15 Thursdays wearing the saint's habit for years. And so, in 1978, little Bernardo was born. He then became a priest and continued to spread worship and devotion to the holy miracle worker in his native Sicily, a land that is both tied to and in love with the saint of Cascia.

“I am originally from Corleone, Palermo, and my family was already very devoted to Saint Rita. In a moment of difficulty, my mum turned to her and here I am. Then, since my school days and following the sem-

inar, I too have entrusted myself to Rita and I have constantly experienced her closeness and friendship with great joy.”

Don Bernardo is a very active man who is always busy. He is tirelessly dedicated and attentive to every need. Also for this reason, in addition to being a parish priest and teacher, he holds the role of regional head of the Primary Pious Union in Sicily. Assisted by three other area leaders, Don Bernardo is the spiritual guide of the 30 Sicilian groups affiliated with the PPU. In addition to these, there are many others dedicated to Saint Rita asking to become part of the great PPU family, which is the only group officially recognised by the Monastery of Cascia.

“My region is so in love with Rita and I



ON 6 AND 7 APRIL GENERAL MEETING IN CASCIA

“Rita: craftswoman of the future” is the theme of the event organised by groups in Central Italy, in which everyone can participate, including non-members.

SATURDAY 6 APRIL

9:00 - Peace Hall Meeting

9:30 - Saint Rita's Chaplet

10:00 - Conference led by Sister Maria Lucia Solera O.S.A.

11:15 - Meeting with the nuns in the large parlour (priests present, managers of new affiliated groups and regional managers)

From 14:30 to 15:45 - Entrance to the Urn that holds the body of Saint Rita: songs and prayers

From 18:45 to 20:00 - Basilica:

Eucharistic Adoration and new memberships

SUNDAY 7 APRIL

9:00 - Peace Hall: meeting of groups with banners and their own uniforms

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

Delivery of the lamp from the Centre/North to Calabria

11:00 - Procession through the streets of Cascia with the statue of Saint Rita

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

am convinced that the duty of us priests is to channel this love for Rita in the right direction. I spent five years in Campofranco, Caltanissetta, and there, together with the parishioners, I created the group of the Pious Primary Union. This was almost 10 years ago now. Then, I was transferred to Marianopoli, also in the same province, and as soon as I arrived I gathered together the devotees of the saint, who were many in number and enthusiastic. Suffice it to say that out of 1600 inhabitants, 100 are now affiliated with the PPU. With them I organised not only the feast of 22 May, but also the whole lead-up, with the recitation of the 15 Thursdays that is so dear to me! Together with the devotees and parishioners we participate in the annual national PPU meetings in Cascia, and every year we always experience a new and different emotion.”

It is nice to realise that devotion to the saint leads her devotees to strive to culti-

vate and give rise to particular initiatives, starting from the salient symbols of her earthly experience. In the case of Don Bernardo, special attention was given to bees, the first miraculous sign of Ritian tradition. In this regard, the prelate being a volcano simmering with ideas and initiatives, he has taken up urban beekeeping. “I designed a beehive for the parish bell tower, and I would like to make the Easter candle with the wax from our bees.”

Regarding his personal devotion to Saint Rita, Don Bernardo confesses: “I see her as a friend who accompanies and guides me. Like her, I always try to be oriented to the Crucifix, to accompany and be close to people in need, talking about her and her life. Saint Rita, just like all of us, had many difficulties, but it was in the Lord that she always found the strength to overcome them. In my pastoral life, like Rita, I see thorns as a moment of rebirth for rising again.”



DEAR SAINT RITA

Maurizia Di Curzio, assistant to the listening service of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, entrusts your Graces to the saint

Giving life does not only mean conceiving it

Dear Saint Rita,

Many prayers come to you from married couples who cannot become parents and bring the fruit of their love into the world. Reading and hearing their requests is like a punch in the stomach, especially thinking about the many unwanted and aborted children. We live in a society of opposites, and, as always, death makes more noise than life does. However, we must also speak of the many people who cultivate the desire to be a mother and father together. And they ask You for help.

Ilaria's story is incredible because she didn't know you. Together with her husband she wanted to experience the joy of a child, but unfortunately after various exams and attempts, it all came to nothing. Ilaria felt useless. But she still looked ahead. There was no time to ruminate and mull over what could have been but wasn't. One day, out of the blue they applied for adoption. After a

whirlwind of documents, interviews and anxiety while awaiting the outcome, the judge finally ruled that they were suitable. One night before, as she says, Ilaria had a *beautiful dream*. She was by the river in the middle of the mountains sitting on a rock. Many people were there, including her late aunt and her mother. *A rainbow appeared in the sky and I saw the image of a nun's face, who looked at me and smiled, saying: "Soon a child will come for adoption". Then she disappeared. In the morning, with great peace in my heart, I tried to recognise this nun from among the faces of the saints, and there she was, Saint Rita. The aunt in the dream was very devoted to her, my mum tells me, but I didn't know.* The phone call came and a child was waiting for them. It was special child who smiled as soon as he saw them. He kept this smile even when he faced serious health problems. However, as Ilaria says, *Saint Rita is always with him and holds his hand*. Ilaria and her husband could not choose how to start their lives as parents, but every day they choose how to continue their journey, the three of them together.

Tell us what gift Saint Rita obtained for you from the Lord.
Send us your story to redazione@santaritadacascia.org



A bequest, a gift of love

Remembering
who is most vulnerable
in your will can change someone's life
for ever

Allocating even a small bequest to the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia means leaving a sign of your generosity in time.

Thanks to bequests, we can support the Beehive of Saint Rita, a hope for all Little Bees, the children who will inherit your love.

Write to us at monastero@santaritadacascia.org and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.





by Mother Maria Rosa Bernardinis OSA

Reflections and advice from the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia

We forgive by training ourselves to be humble

I consider forgiveness a great gift from God, but it should be exercised every day

Talking about forgiveness means opening up a topic that seems endless. So I thought I'd write Saint Rita a letter. Dear Rita, to you who are an expert in this message, I ask for help, as to the Holy Spirit so that I can be useful for those who are in spiritual, human and relational difficulties. Starting from the word itself, I consider forgiveness a great gift from God, one to be exercised every day in family and social co-existence. We cannot say that He is partial, if Jesus set the conditions for having the forgiveness of the Heavenly Father, to the extent that we forgive our neighbours.

Dear Sister, in the Rule Saint Augustine recommends: "May there never be quarrels (impossible), but, if they arise, cut them off as soon as possible (very demanding) with forgiveness, so that the molehill (for an irritated and irritating silence) does not become a mountain. This is so that the prayer (the Our Father) may be sincere and true."

So, how can we forgive? I think it depends on who is more humble. The offended person can take the first step, because they are in the best position (Jesus also says this). However, it could also be up to those who have offended to seize the opportunity to acquire self-love.

Saint Augustine suggests a golden rule, to give substance to the peace achieved: "Do not argue". That is to say, have you forgiven? Then you charitably dropped the offense you received; remember it no more. This is what God does every time we ask him for forgiveness with sincere confession! Let's train ourselves to imitate him.

Dear Rita, in your life you had the great ability to forgive those who destroyed the happiness you found with your husband Paolo. You tried to convince your children to forgive those who had killed their father, and then you spent 40 years here in the monastery to reconcile your husband, children and the murderer to the Father who is in Heaven, finding the meaning of your suffering in Crucified Jesus. He left the judgment (which belongs to God) of forgiveness to the Father. He justified the actions of those who crucified him and made reconciliation possible, with his death and resurrection. You, Rita, experienced true Love that loves us first and you know that Love never fails, even when the evidence suggests otherwise. You know that those who feel more forgiven better respond by loving again without expecting anything in return. In this way it is possible to achieve true peace, the



Those who
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loving again
without
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anything in
return

kind that still seeks loving hearts to fill them with this eternal love.

Yes, my friend, there are people who must also forgive God, who seems deaf and absent to them: by believing that there is a plan of love for everyone behind the incomprehensible, they will succeed. You did it, Rita, with His help, and you are still a sign for us today. Thank you and shalom! Saint Rita, an expert in family life and a saint of dialogue, tells us things do not

always go well within a family: she too had difficulties with her husband. However, if Paolo came close to knowing true love, his reflections were not only triggered by the prayers that Rita sent up to the Lord, but also her words that were not shouted but were supportive, said at the right time. With dialogue and listening, love is patient. It knows how to excuse and be excused, to reach full maturity by reflecting the Love of the Lord!

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.

Antonella Pennisi (Bari - Italy)
Augusta De Carolis in Ercolani (Sant'Eraclio di Foligno PG - Italy)
Caterina Castorina (Riposto CT - Italy)
Emma Magrelli (Cascia PG - Italy)

Luigi Primiceri (Casarano LE - Italy)
Mafalda Emma Caltana De Luca (Zurich - Switzerland)
Maria Bongiovanni (Catania - Italy)
Mario Giannangeli (Cascia PG - Italy)
Miryea Rita (Licata AG - Italy)
Pierino Ceccano (Sezze LT - Italy)
Rinaldo Siniscalchi (Montpellier - France)
Rita Gallizia (Genoa - Italy)
Rita Muscionico Morbio (Switzerland)
Rita Tassone (Catanzaro - Italy)
Salvatorina Solinas (Monserrato CA - Italy)
Teodoro Raco (Australia)



by Alessia Nicoletti

Easter with Saint Rita is joy and love

In dialogue with Sister Maria Natalina Todeschini OSA,
Vicaress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia

The story of Saint Rita is deeply linked to that of Christ, so much so that He involved her in His Passion.

She tells us
not to be
afraid before
the crosses
we
encounter

Yes, we can say that Saint Rita embodies Easter. The stigmata thorn that she bore on her forehead for the last 15 years of her life testifies to her profound participation in/conformation to the Passion of Jesus, a gift and a pain welcomed with love and gratitude to align herself to her Spouse Christ, to share with Him the burden of humanity's sin and, like Him, to save the world. Every Good Friday culminates with the joy of Easter Sunday. The pain re-

ceived and offered with love is fruitful. The saints understood this very well. They guarded it as a precious treasure and thus helped to make the world better, bringing life and love in the certainty that all suffering would be transformed in the glory of the Resurrection.

In each representation, Rita is accompanied by the Crucifix. What does it tell us?

Those who love want to be one with their beloved. Saint Rita found the strength to overcome the trials to which life subjected her because she embraced her Crucified Jesus, who died for love. She understood what Edith Stein called "*scientia crucis*" (*science of the Cross, ed.*): both were praying women marked by the Cross. Rita made pain into a lifting force and an expression of love. She transmits this to her devotees: the wisdom of the Cross is the essential message of the Gospel, as the Augustinian Father Trapè wrote in the book "Saint Rita and her message". Saint Rita tells us not to be afraid before the crosses that we encounter in our lives. That thorn that we all carry in our flesh is short-lived and will give way to joy that never ends.



Basilica of Saint Rita of Cascia, The stigmata, G. B. Galizzi, XX C

Can the right focus be placed on the value of Easter?

Saint Rita gave us the example of a holy life centred on the Easter mystery: passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. This is the heart of our Christian life with all its beauty of communion with our Lord. Today we prefer to enjoy the pleasure of the moment and we often find ourselves empty and slaves to ourselves. How can we bring humanity back to the Lord of life and grace, the only one to give meaning and fullness to life? This is why we in the Monastery pray and offer our lives, so that the men and women of our time may also meet the Lord and experience his Love, which never disappoints.

How do you nuns turn the Risen One's message of love and salvation into reality?

Jesus rises and gives us his peace. We Sisters of Saint Rita welcome this gift, as she did in her time, to give it to the brothers who approach the grates of our parlours, in search of hope, consolation and comfort. A gift received is never for ourselves, but must always be shared to enjoy the fruit better. In addition, we Nuns promote the solidarity products of the "Made for love" line for the Easter time, the proceeds of which are used to help those in need. These gestures of solidarity transmit the love received, which then pushes us to reciprocate it.

Today we prefer to enjoy the pleasure of the moment and we often find ourselves empty and slaves to ourselves

«CREATING A HOME» (CHRISTUS VIVIT, 217)

"If our gaze could cross the sky, if it could look through the history and facts of life, it would only see that the Christ who comes to reach us – to come to us – is the only thing that he also ardently desires; to be in our company, to make a home with us: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

We offer a few days for listening, praying, living and being at the school of Jesus, the inner Master...

**FEMALE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION COURSE
FROM 5 (dinner) TO 10 (breakfast) AUGUST 2024**

For more information:

Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia - 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

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