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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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ON THE SIDE OF LIFE AND THE FUTURE

Towards the Feast with the Women of Rita 2024



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Trust regained

It is no secret that we live in a heavy climate of mistrust, fuelled by economic uncertainties, environmental crises, social instability and ever-increasing wars and violence. We just need to look ourselves in the face to understand that our trust is in danger: our trust towards our neighbours, whom we draw away from with suspicion, the trust in the future where we see no light, the trust in ourselves while we do not perceive ourselves as actors of change. To sum up, trust in life, which God has placed in our hands, as a gift and responsibility. It is the life that is expressed in everyone, but which finds its most complex and wonderful manifestation in the new generations, to which much political and social reference is made, with a lot of rhetoric and not enough action, unfortunately.

While the various conflicts around the world are deadly scenarios for children, even here young people face hardships as inheritors of social and cultural pressures, precariousness, crises of values, excessive exposure to technologies, problems related to self-esteem, violence, isolation and dependence. Being fragile, they sink into anxiety and depression: a teenager dies by suicide every 11 minutes. This list makes me tremble and ask: are young people really our priority? It is always worth asking ourselves and taking action to guarantee their future, a future that is already happening today, because every young person embodies our trust, the lifeblood that gives hope to everyone's future.

It is a burdensome and essential commitment for “us” adults, who are required to be “caretakers and fertile soils” for young people. These are the three women who will receive the Saint Rita International

Recognition this year, for the feast of our Patroness, at which we have been rewarding women who embody her values for years. Discover their stories by turning the page. These are stories of women who know how to



do their part, forgive, turn the pain and waste of war into banners of peace, listen, support, care for and protect the future of young people and humanity. It is a mission that everyone can undertake, training “maternal intelligence” (in times when we only talk about artificial intelligence), which is more typical of women but not exclusive to them, which leads us to act as beings called on to spread courage, joy and hope for life. Then we can build the newfound trust we so desperately need.



by Rita Gentili

“Here children are the last of the last”

The doctor who creates life and a future for the poor and young in Zambia

Young people need to be heard

“We can't save everyone, but we can't lose our sense of responsibility because of that. If my 24 years in Zambia had only saved a single life, it would have been 24 years well spent. The uniqueness of life is fundamental, which is why we travel 4 hours by car with the mobile clinic to vaccinate just 10 children. If we can only improve the lives of those we meet, we have done our part.”

The person speaking is Cristina Fazzi, a doctor of Sicilian origin who has put her professionalism, her availability and her stubbornness (her word) at the service of the poorest of the poor, in Zambia, in southern Africa, for over 20 years. Through the NGO she founded, Cristina works “together with the collaborators and the many who support us, because we don't go anywhere on our own”, she says. She acts through two major projects, *Mayo-Mwana* (which means Mother-Baby) and *Ishuko* (Opportunity), to provide

health services, school support and training.

She does this by serving as a doctor, administering the projects and responding to the needs of the population because, says Cristina, “by living with people you realise the things they need; otherwise we run the risk of helping others according to what we think their needs might be.”

Cristina is also the mother of an adopted boy and 7 others she has taken into foster care, demonstrating both that her missionary spirit goes far beyond the white coat, and that children have a special place in her life.

“Because,” she explains, “a bit like women, children here are the last of the last; they are a burden, mouths to feed that bring nothing home. If an adult and a child are ill, the priority for taking them to the hospital or buying a drug goes to the adult.” She adds: “in the social condition in which they live, the adults, who have often been mistreated, exploited, abused children themselves and have known beating as the only means of education, have difficulty behaving differently with their own children.”



WOMAN OF RITA 2024

Cristina Fazzi, a doctor from Enna (Sicily), is receiving the 2024 Saint Rita International Recognition for the respect, justice and love with which she has protected the lives and built the future of many people in areas of extreme poverty in her 24 years of professional and human service, in Zambia, Africa. She pays special attention to children and young people, in a society where they are among the last of the last, often being abused and mistreated: she created the country's first mental health centre for minors and educational projects, to generate opportunities for change and fulfilment.

Thus, the *Ishuko* project also came about, which shifts the support to minors to a completely new area for the country, that of psychiatric pathology, for which there are no facilities for minors in Zambia.

“In such a poor area where there is much mistreatment and exploitation of children, and where children have problems because they live in poverty, they cannot go to school because it costs money, so they are forced to go to work but there is no work, meaning the frustration experienced is very high.

“Having someone like us open doors, someone who says 'come here, let's talk about it' is very important, because young people need to be heard. And this not only applies to Zambia, but also to the West.

“Going back to listening is a fundamental key for a project that aims to provide an opportunity for change and fulfilment to those who have mental and psychological difficulties,” says Cristina, explaining that they met over 500 young people last year.

Cristina is gratified by the people who also look to her for problems not within her competence;



when they tell her “now you can go, we know how to do it alone”; when - she says - “I see the people I have helped being happy”.

Cristina is a woman who draws inspiration from Saint Rita, as she appreciates her human side, which we can all recognise ourselves in, and her ability to forgive.



by Marta Ferraro

A ‘mother’ for many parents and young people

The story of a journey of pain, forgiveness, listening and caring for others

“When you become a mother, you never stop being one”. An Augustinian nun from the monastery of Cascia said this to

me a few years ago. I found this expression incredibly sensitive, so much so that it remained in my heart and when I heard the story of Virginia Campanile, it came back to me.

Virginia is the mother of Daniele and Luigi. Daniele died due to a car accident, caused by a girl who was driving under the influence of substances. After the loss of her son, Virginia wanted to make what she calls “an investment of love”. “I did not want to get sick from the pain and so I continued to live for the living, otherwise what would my faith be good for?” Virginia has cultivated her faith since she was a child. There was devotion to Saint Anthony and Saint Rita in her family and when her despair over the deaths of Daniele and her mother, which occurred only half an hour apart from each other, made her cry out “Lord, why me?”, a second later her faith replied, causing her to ask “Why not me? Who am I?”

In that moment, 25 years ago, an unfinished journey began, one made up of a tangle of feelings and emotions: anger and resent-



WOMAN OF RITA 2024

Virginia Campanile, who lives in Otranto (Lecce), is receiving the Saint Rita International Recognition 2024 because she took her indescribable pain over the loss of her son Daniele, together with the freedom and peace she acquired by offering forgiveness to those who caused his death in a road accident, and turned it into an 'investment of love' that she shares with others: listening to many parents affected by grief and helping them to return to life, and engaging with young people to protect them in the face of social and psychological fragility, supporting them so they can rediscover the beauty of life.

ment, but also pauses, suspended moments, and then goals, silences, listening to stories of parents who had the same experience. Virginia listens to thousands of mums and dads in order to help them grieve. "Today, the word sharing is almost obvious. Twenty-five years ago that wasn't the case," Virginia recalls.

"I knocked on the door of Anna, a mum like me. Then we became 3, and then 4, 5. From there, the first groups of parents who had lost their children began to form in my area, Salento. This led to the intuition to create the association *Figli in Paradiso, ali tra cielo e terra - ODV* (Children in Paradise, wings between heaven and earth; today it manages 120 groups in different regions of central and southern Italy and in Spain, ed.).

"After 40 years of profitable activity, I decided to close my jewellery store, to be reborn to a new life, to 'wear a new hat'!"

Virginia has done so much good with this association. She tries to give an alternative to that pain that she describes as "inconsolable, unmanageable, incur-

able". In short, she tries to give life in the face of death, looking to the future, taking care of others, of those who remain: parents, brothers, sisters and young people. Together with the association, she has had a school built in Africa, three wells in Ethiopia and contributed a lot of aid to the neonatal department of the Vito Fazzi hospital in Lecce, with the Volunteer Service Centre, of which she has been a part for 13 years. She takes care of young people and children in the fourth and fifth grades, as she says, "the book of my life".

"The leading cause of death among young people today is suicide. That's why I was asked to create a suicide prevention project to help kids overcome what I call the pain of living. I go to schools, I meet young people."

After uniting her family and making herself "a free woman", forgiving the girl who took her son, Virginia continues to be a mother and acts as a mother for many parents and young people in difficulty, with her determination, her beautiful character and her most precious treasure, faith.

A suicide prevention project to help children overcome what I call the pain of living



by Carmela Mascio

From war refugee to peace advocate

They erased her past but not her desire for a future of brotherhood

The ways of Love are inexplicable, just as the ways of the Lord are infinite!

This is the current summary of the life of Anna Jabbour, born in Aleppo in 1988, and her husband Subhi Assafo, also a Syrian. A practicing Catholic with strong faith, Anna divided her life between her parish and work until 2011, when war broke out in Syria. For Anna, it seemed like the end of all her plans, but her faith

and the education she had received comforted her and encouraged her not to give in to despair. Since she was a child, two women, Our Lady and Saint Rita, have been her point of reference: remembering their history and praying, she took courage and decided to move forward. In 2014, under bombardment, she married Subhi and in 2016, again under bombardment, Pamela was born. This would be the real turning point in Anna's life, as she decided to invest in the future of her people, her daughter and all Humanity that she would meet on her way.

Out of love, and only out of love, exercising the virtues of Faith and Hope, the new parents left for Lebanon with their one-month-old baby. They only took two small paintings with them: one represented Saint Rita, the other framed the phrase "Jesus is alive". From 2016 to 2020 they lived in Beirut, but it wasn't as simple as they might have thought. The distrust they encountered as Syrian refugees and the explosion in the port of Beirut in August 2020 strongly weakened their decision not to return home, but the word "future" was Anna's life plan. Still



WOMAN OF RITA 2024

Anna Jabbour, who was born in Aleppo (Syria) but now lives in Rome, is receiving the 2024 Saint Rita International Recognition for bearing witness to peace, brotherhood and faith, which she embodies with her history. She went from being a war refugee to a mother of hope and courage for her daughter and, at the same time, for all those she meets, having never lost the strong desire to dream and commit to a future of humanity and union that can erase all hatred and suffering.



in 2020, she met the Community of Sant'Egidio and discovered the possibility of being able to take advantage of a humanitarian corridor and leave Lebanon. Her fear and pain grew every day, but courage had the face of her daughter Pamela; for her and with her, Anna wanted to be the mother of a future that builds peace and new possibilities for families like hers. Also in Beirut she found a church with the effigy of Saint Rita and

asked her for the impossible: in December 2020 her email requesting to leave from Beirut received a positive response. Anna, Subhi and Pamela were in Rome for Christmas. In that moment the future took root. Anna could not choose, she had to leave, so her only intention became to build, unite and collaborate for a future in which everyone feels part of one big family, that of the Church and the world!

Following the example of Saint Rita, to whom she never stopped praying, Anna strongly believes that everyone can be an ambassador of peace and life. With the birth of Pamela, who now joyfully attends third grade, Anna has developed the awareness of a “universal motherhood”, a motherhood in which the existence of every single human being is part of her plan for Hope and Peace. It is not easy to understand but Anna's daily vocation is to invest in a “new humanity” to give her daughter Pamela and all the children of the world an opportunity for growth based on faith and brotherhood: because good, peace and hope cannot and should not be an exclusive luxury for the few but a gift to be received and returned to all!

Good, peace and hope must not be an exclusive luxury for the few but a gift to be received and returned to all!



by Alessia Nicoletti

The staircase is installed at the Home of Saint Rita



“The Home of Saint Rita is **our bulwark against the loneliness of the sick**, those who face long treatments far away from their loved ones at the Cascia Hospital, a centre of national excellence for rehabilitation. After the works began in September 2022 and despite some bureaucratic slowdowns, **we took the decisive step** by installing the entrance staircase, which would soon allow us to create a stronghold of human ties where we can welcome the families of the sick, because only in sharing does suffering transform into a collective journey of hope and healing.”

This is how *Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis*, *President of our Foundation*, conveys the happiness she felt when visiting the construction site of the Home of Saint Rita for the installation of the staircase, which took place in the first days of February. The most complex operation to be carried out, it will now **guarantee the internal renovation and then a separate entrance for the guests**, without interfering with the health activities. “The project,” she continues, “came about as a response to a need shared by families and the sick, which became apparent when we housed the hospital in a monastery building that was redeveloped for use after the 2016 earthquake. In the north wing of this facility we immediately dreamed of creating a place where the sick could always count on the embrace of those supporting them.

“The place will continue to make a contribution even when the Cascia Hospital moves to the new centre, which has been

under reconstruction since May 2023. Our dream, which is closer to becoming a reality, will be based in the heart of the land of Saint Rita who, as someone who bore stigmata, is an example of how being strong does not mean facing illness alone, but rather carrying the cross together.”

The Home of Saint Rita is a project by the monastery, and, as of **31 October 2022, our Foundation has set aside 288 thousand euros** for its creation, thanks to the help of many donors who have supported the mission, especially for the Feast of Saint Rita 2022. In December 2023, **the first 141 thousand euros were paid to cover the costs of setting up the staircase.** The project involves the renovation of an area of 237



square metres, where 7 rooms with private bathrooms, a common dining room with kitchenette, a laundry room and a storage room will be created.

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION'S PROJECTS

Support the most fragile, in Italy and in the world, for the Feast of Saint Rita 2024. Together with you we bring the light where there is none. Like in **Cuzco, Peru**, where we want to complete the work of the **“Beata Maria Teresa Fasce” Auditorium** within the “San Augustin de Hipona” educational institute, founded by Augustinian missionaries in the district of San Jerónimo. Here, **over 300 students (from 3 to 18 years old)** are the potential architects of a better society thanks to an education based on Christian values.

The completion of the Auditorium, which is still unfinished due to post-pandemic economic difficulties, will make it possible to create a **safe place** for both **educational activities for students** and **socio-cultural inclusion initiatives**, such as seminars, workshops, training meetings and mutual help groups, **aimed at their families and the local community**, who live in a context characterised by difficult conditions: economic poverty; alcohol and drug abuse; violence against women, with the exploitation of sex work; trafficking in minors; disability; vulnerability in the processing of mourning and family separations.

Each donation is essential for guaranteeing students and the local community a space with a wide socio-cultural scope.

Choose how to support this and other projects for the most vulnerable:

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THANK YOU!

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.



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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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 individual 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 to confess



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, take part in the
ROSARY WITH THE NUNS, online only from
the Monastery Choir

FEAST OF SAINT RITA

20 MAY



10:00 - HALL OF PEACE

"International Recognition of Saint Rita 2024" - testimony and presentation of the
"Women of Rita" 2024: **Cristina Fazzi, Virginia Campanile, Anna Jabbour**
Presented by well-known TV host and journalist **Roberto Giacobbo**

21:00 - ROCCAPORENA

Arrival of the **Torch of Peace and Forgiveness from the City of Enna**
Prayer and climb to the **Rock**

21 MAY



16:30 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA

Holy Mass of the **Augustinian Family**, celebrated by the **Prior General of the Augustinians, Father Alejandro Moral Anton**

At the end of the **"International Recognition of Saint Rita 2024"** with a message from the
Mother Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis



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

20:30 - PIAZZA GARIBALDI

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

11:00 – HALL OF PEACE
Solemn Pontifical presided over by
Cardinal Robert F. Prevost OSA, Prefect of
the Dicastery for Bishops
At the end of the Procession, Parade and
statue continue to the Basilica

**12:00 - CHURCHYARD OF THE BASILICA OF
SAINT RITA**
Prayer to Saint Rita and Blessing of the Roses



18:00 - BASILICA OF SAINT RITA
Mass for benefactors of the Sanctuary,
presided over by the Rector,
Father Mario De Santis

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 Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

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

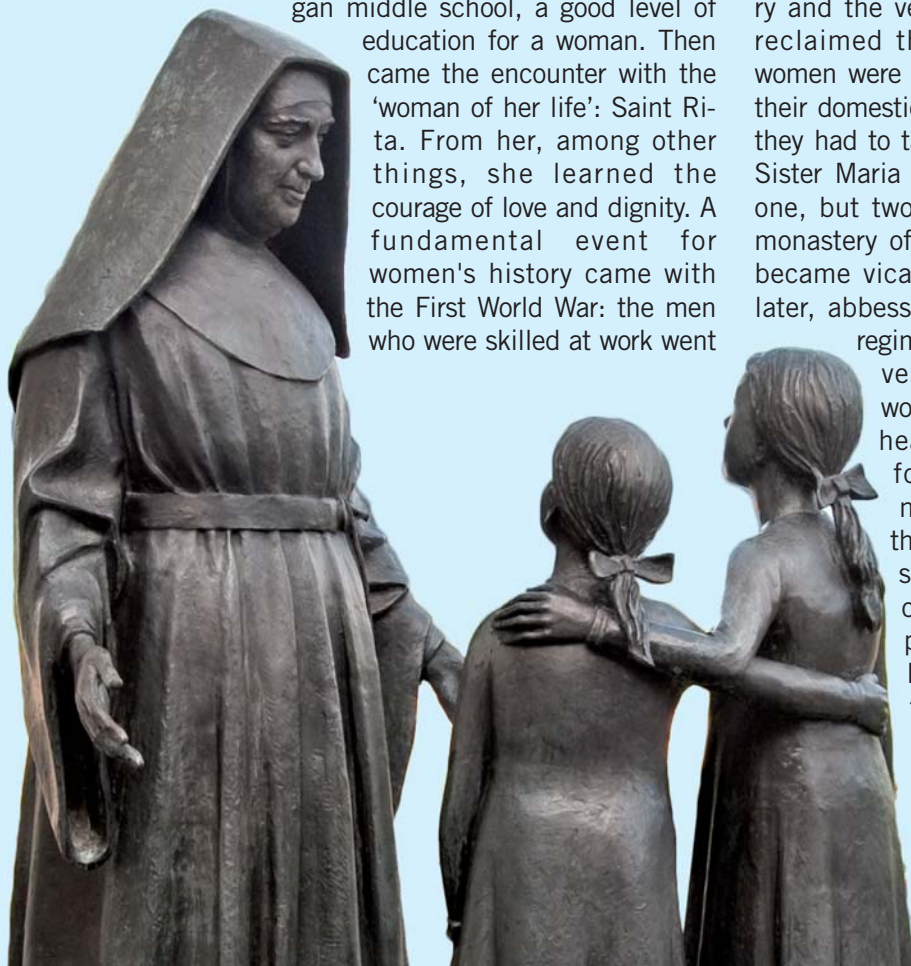
Champion of female dignity

“She rejected the image of the submissive woman”

At the time Marietta Fasce was born (1881), the female condition was very difficult: only rich women studied, most worked at home or in the fields. The Fasce family was wealthy, so the daughters attended school. Marietta also began middle school, a good level of education for a woman. Then came the encounter with the ‘woman of her life’: Saint Rita. From her, among other things, she learned the courage of love and dignity. A fundamental event for women's history came with the First World War: the men who were skilled at work went

to the front, leaving their jobs in factories uncovered, which is why industries hired many women to replace them. This made them aware of their active role in society and the fact that they also had rights. Then the war ended with the Italian victory and the veterans from the front reclaimed their old jobs, so the women were fired and sent back to their domestic activities. In practice they had to take a step back, while Sister Maria Teresa Fasce took not one, but two steps forward in the monastery of Cascia: in 1917 she became vicarress and, three years later, abbess. In 1922 the fascist

regime began, which had a very traditional idea of women: the angels of the hearth, having children for the homeland and not taking care of anything else; no work outside the home. This conception was completely removed from Mother Fasce's way of thinking. She was always aware of her dignity as a woman and demanded respect



from everyone for both her and the nuns. During her years as an abbess she always had to deal with men only: priests, bishops, Augustinian superiors, not to mention the men involved in the construction of the new sanctuary. In her relations with them, while she respected their authority and roles, she never backed down, and sometimes assumed strong attitudes, which was unthinkable for a woman at the time. She had a very precise conception of women, including religious ones. She wanted her nuns to be hard-working and strong women: "Jesus does not love dolls," she would say. As such, she was very demanding in the training of her nuns. She rejected the image of the submissive, slightly flirtatious woman and got angry when women behaved like that. If we were to compare Mother Fasce to another contemporary woman, the figure that most resembled her in character and attitudes is Maria Montessori. She was very far removed from Mother Fasce in terms of her lifestyle, but she had the same strength and determination, and the same conception of what a woman was. After all, Maria Teresa Fasce was also an educator both of her nuns then of the orphaned girls that she hosted from 1938 onwards. Even at the end of her life, Mother Fasce was very ill but wanted to show a sign of solidarity with all women: on 2 June 1946, on the occasion of the institutional referendum and the election of the constituent assembly, Italian women won the right to vote and she wanted to take part, so she was carried in triumph by the Cascians. Maria Teresa Fasce: a real woman to the core!

100 years of From the Bees to the Roses

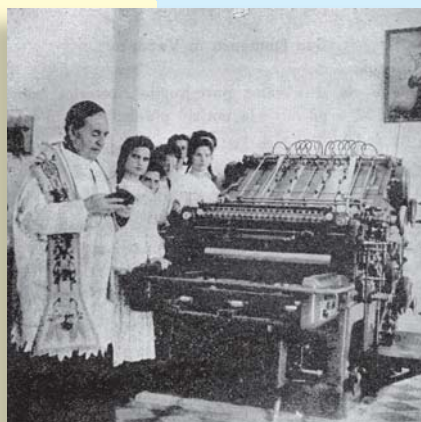
A print works in the Monastery

The nuns used a company in Rome to print the first issues. In 1951, thanks to the offers, the Monastery created a small internal print works and the Bulletin announced: *From the Bees to the Roses*

has its cradle here from now on.

With movable type printing, the pages were printed one by one, composed letter by letter. This was followed by sewing, packaging, labelling and cataloguing according to the destination and delivery to the Post Office. Everything took place with great industriousness until the growing requests for subscriptions made it difficult to continue in 1957. Since then, the Monastery has used printers: as of 2011 the Magazine has been published by Industria Grafica Umbra (Todi).

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





by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

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

Interceding: before the Lord for others

Rita dedicated her entire life to this ministry

“You tell them!” How many times, driven to ask someone for help, have we turned to a third person to use them as a spokesperson for our addressee, to find the right words to say?

Turning to this practice is a form of intercession and, if this is valid in the field of interpersonal relationships, it is even more so when it comes to turning to God. Very often we feel unable to express what is weighing on us before God, or we find ourselves equipped with a poverty very close to misery. This, then, is the time to make use of the saints, as those who not only speak to God about

what we intend to present to him, but who, even before that, take our situation, our pain, to heart.

Rita experienced both of these forms of intercession. Before entering the monastery, she carried out the kind concerned with listening and openness to those who turned to her by virtue of her role as a pacifist within the city of Cascia: a kind of *mission impossible* that required enduring patience, understanding and a constant series of small gestures to mend torn relationships between families and clans. After becoming a nun, the practice of intercession became even more demanding for Rita: standing before the Lord for many.



The 'romeo' pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Rita

The sarcophagus that hosted the body of Saint Rita for a few years, known as the “solemn coffin”, featured an icon of dead Jesus standing in the central part. This icon is found above all in places of pilgrimage for those who could not go to Rome to visit the tomb of the Apostles. Finding it on Saint Rita's funeral casket is, perhaps, an indication that ‘romeo’ pilgrims who could not go to Rome went to the tomb of Blessed Rita immediately after her death, as we do today.

THE PILGRIM'S BOX: TOWARDS THE 2025 JUBILEE

*edited by
Fr. Vittorino
Grossi OSA*

Through intercession, Rita lived out her deep, total existence for others, taking a concrete interest in and caring for everyone, in the image of God's care for each of us. Rita dedicated her life to the ministry of intercession for all her brothers and sisters, driven by the desire for them to live according to God's will.

An episode in the Gospel manifestly expresses the meaning of the prayer of intercession: the paralytic brought by four people, lowered from a roof and placed before Jesus (Mark 2: 1ff.). It's a wonderful image: interceding means taking charge of the other who turns to us, taking them to heart to the

point of feeling their pain and presenting them to Jesus, placing them before him. Interceding not only requires the efforts of the heart, but also of the body: how can we not think of those small renunciations, or those small, silent gestures of charity that we know how to carry out precisely to strengthen our prayer!

*Rita, woman of prayer, help us,
so that we, like you,
may courageously live out
the ministry of intercession
for our siblings:
with heart and body,
with prayer and with life!*

**Taking
charge of
the other
who turns to
us, taking
them into
our hearts to
the point of
feeling their
pain and
presenting
them to
Jesus**

THEY LIVE IN CHRIST

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

Adriana Bonazzi widow Modè (Mantua - Italy)
Agostina Cordoni (Rutigliano BA - Italy)
Anna Gatti (Como - Italy)
Anna Moleri (Bariano BG - Italy)

Anna Rita Rellini (Todi PG - Italy)
Carmela Taddeo (Pietrapertosa PZ - Italy)
Emilia Scottini (Rovereto TN - Italy)
Gina Severini (Rep. San Marino)
Giuseppina Mazzetto (Macerata - Italy)
Primo Beccari (Rep. San Marino)
Sergio Beccari (Rep. San Marino)
Teresa Ugolini (Rep. San Marino)
Teresa Muccioli (Rep. San Marino)
Ugo Ugolini (Rep. San Marino)
Vilna Ippoliti (Foligno PG - Italy)



by Marta Ferraro

The first 'family' meeting in Sardinia

Many groups and many new members to carry on Rita's values

The first regional meeting of the PPU in Sardinia was held on 28 January in Siniscola, Nuoro. There was great participation from the island's groups enrolled in the only prayer group dedicated to Saint Rita recognised by the Monastery of Cascia. It was a day of faith, sharing, union and friendship. This was the Siniscola meeting, enhanced by the catechesis of Father Ludovico Maria Centra, spiritual guide of the PPU and completed by a wonderful surprise: the presence of a first-class relic of Saint Rita.

"The devotees of Saint Rita must be inspired by her in times of daily difficulty. Saint Rita must be that light that illuminates their path, even when it is difficult. Her devotees have the duty to do good in silence, to be, like her, people who unite and not divide, exactly as Ritian devotion unites," said Mrs Antonia, leader of the association of Villaspeciosa, Cagliari, reporting the words of Father Ludovico.

"It was very emotional to see the church full of faithful, some enrolled in the PPU and others not. Many decided to join the group that very day. Many ladies were happily amazed by the presence of the relic. It was so exciting! At a certain point, in the church, I turned and saw it was crowded. Then I immediately focused on the prayer and the touching words of Father Ludovico," said Rita Meloni, head and founder of

the PPU group in Siniscola and organiser of the day. It was a day marked by friendship, like the one that flourished between her and Grazia, a fervent devotee of Saint Rita, who died due to Covid in 2020, who was remembered during the meeting. Despite living in the same town, the two had never seen each other. It was during a pilgrimage to San Giovanni Rotondo and Cascia that they became friends.

"She was very feisty," Rita says. "She trusted very much in God's providence. Whenever I had any misgivings, about some charity work to be done, Grazia reminded me to trust in God's providence. And my thoughts flew to her, when I received the phone call from Alessandra Paoloni, national secretary of the PPU, to propose that I organise the meeting in Siniscola! It was a source of great joy and pride to be chosen to live out such an intense moment of prayer." Thoughts of her friend Grazia, with whom she shared the faith, prayers and the foundation of the PPU in her city, accompanied her throughout the organisation period. "I miss her so much. I was the first member in Siniscola, in 2009. Then she asked me to do something in the parish. In those days, I received a booklet with the prayers of the Holy Rosary of the PPU and the 15 Thursdays, and so we began to recite them. We did many things with her, but always in silence."



The groups from Quartu, Decimomannu and Villaspeciosa made a real pilgrimage to Siniscola to participate in the meeting. It was a journey that lasted over 350 km, during which their spirits were reborn and their

faith recharged. The meeting also served as an opportunity for the groups of Decimomannu, Villaspeciosa and Siniscola (in the photo above, ed.) to join the PPU family with official affiliation.

JOIN THE PPU FAMILY TOO

Whether you are an individual or part of a group, become a member of the Primary Pious Union! You can take part in our meetings, getting to know people who, like you, are devoted to dear Saint Rita and committed to promoting her worship and values every day, in a concrete way. Visit our website piaunione.santaritadacascia.org to learn more about PPU, consulting the Statute and the map with all local groups. For more information, you can contact the **Secretary General, Alessandra Paoloni**, by writing an email to: piaunione@santaritadacascia.org



by Mother Maria Rosa Bernardinis OSA

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

“Educating children is the most beautiful way of loving”

Acknowledging your mistakes and correcting them is a sign of maturity and growth. Forgiveness becomes an exercise for rebuilding relationships

Educating children is the most beautiful way of loving. It helps us to discover our own vocations, inscribed in the heart of each of us by God himself. We are all born unique, singular, loved by Him in an exclusive way and love is the driving force of existence.

God is the first educator! How much patience, how much prudence, how much forgiveness this art requires, awaiting for the opportunity for the other to choose in freedom, to respond to love by putting the gifts received from Him to good use!

The family is the privileged place for education. It is the cradle of love received and given. The love of God is understandable, which the Bible describes as that of a father, a mother, a friend, if experienced in the family! All members help increase this love to its fullness, which is completed when the human faculties, mind, heart and will are unified and grow harmoniously. No one is excluded from doing

their part, and this means parents as well as children. There are people who are born with physical or cognitive disabilities; they too are capable of receiving and giving love.

God chose this state of life to become flesh in history! As a child, Jesus “grew in age, wisdom and grace, before God and men”. He lived in it for 30 years, before announcing the Gospel. The lesson that remains for all families is that of the example, accompanied by words.

Fragility and sin unfortunately cause wounds that require a constant purification of the heart. Acknowledging your mistakes and correcting them is a sign of maturity and growth. Forgiveness becomes an exercise for rebuilding relationships, overcoming conflicts, finding peace and inner and outer balance. Since their childhood, many adults may have lived in a climate of conflict, without affection. Is there a chance for them to discover love? To learn

the art of loving? Yes, because this art consists of educating oneself first of all to believe in the love of God, which never fails, and opening oneself to the

action of the Spirit. He will fill the gaps, heal the wounds. There have been educators, there are still and there will be, thank God!



No one is excluded from doing their part, parents as well as children



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

Climbing back from the abyss of depression

Dear Saint Rita,

with Patrizia's story we are lost as we enter the world of depression. It is overflowing time that produces the effect of a decline in the meaning of life. We have everything but this does not make us happy, on the contrary it causes an absence of meaning. All values have lost value, but existence is a value in itself and

to make it come alive you have to transmit fire and desire. The prophet Elijah also came down with depression. From joy for victory, a threat was enough for him to think of taking his own life. God brought him back to the

truth: it is not the external victories that are his great works, but the journey to a more insidious land, that is, himself. And it will be by passing through death and anguish within himself that he will hear the friendly Voice that cares for him. His "get up and eat" is the experience of Someone who takes care of himself, just when nothing else can be done, not even thinking. Patrizia, like Elijah, had this experience. She spent her childhood in a small village, then moved to the north. Her mum got sick and this made her

scared she would lose her. Patrizia grew up, prayed and had friends, but in her soul she felt a great sadness, an emptiness, until it reached the level of depression. She underwent various examinations and met with doctors, but she continued to feel unwell. Her parents took her back to the village. One night she dreamt that while she was praying the statue in front of her said to her: "I am Saint Rita, don't worry, everything will be fine". She told all of this to her neighbour, who said "But do you realise who you dreamed of? The saint of impossible causes." Slowly she rose from the abyss. She met Valter, who would become her husband, and together they had a daughter. For her, it was like being born a second time. Her heart was full of joy at having met the saint. When we feel very bad and we feel like we can't do anything anymore, there is something we can do, an act of trust: we can cultivate this trust that will take us out of the tomb in ourselves. Believing against all hope, all evidence to the contrary. The story continues. Maybe we won't be the ones to continue that story and we should pass the baton on to someone after us. It doesn't matter. The story is not over, even if it may seem like it is. This is the hope hidden behind the great experience of the Resurrection.





by Alessia Nicoletti

We have become a cradle for the students of Cascia

Visiting the new site of the high school, which has been located in one of the nuns' facilities since January

Together, the Monastery and Cascia celebrated the new course of the Scientific High School and the State Professional Institute for Industry and Crafts (Ipsia), which has been relocated to a renovated structure, owned by the nuns, in Via Beata Fasce, next to the Beehive, since January 2024. On the occasion of the open day on 27 January, the Mother Prioress, Sister Maria Rosa

Bernardinis, visited the 'new school' with Sister Giacomina Stuni. "We are throwing open the doors of this building to welcome students, teachers and school staff," the Mother highlighted. "Our Monastery's mission has always embraced the local area, listening and responding to the needs of the community, as taught by Saint Rita and Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. Today, in this new





“Our
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mission has
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territory,
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responding
to the needs
of the
community”

location that we have been glad to make available, we have seen a safe and stimulating environment, in which we hope that we can build the best future for many young people, who are the concrete hope for the future of humanity.” While waiting for the old school to be demolished after it was damaged by the earthquake of 2016 and for a new school complex to be created in its place, the Monastery building will in fact be the cradle of school growth for many students. This building has been brought up to standard thanks to the works financed with funds provided by the Monastery itself and by the Municipality of Cascia, directed by the engineer Lanfranco Castellucci and the industrial expert Gianfranco Piccioni. The interventions carried

out meant that the structure could fulfil the new function of being a school, while the Province of Perugia was responsible for the works for the maintenance and upkeep of the building.

Working above all to limit the consequences left by the earthquake (the Monastery allowed the Hospital of Cascia to come back to life in 2018 thanks to the generosity of many of you), the nuns not only allowed the High School and Ipsia only to carry out their educational activities without interruptions, but also to increase the range of training they offer, through numerous classes and workshops: art, CAD, Fab-Lab and Robotics, electrical systems and industrial automation, languages, mechanics, gymnasium, sciences and new spaces such as a small the-

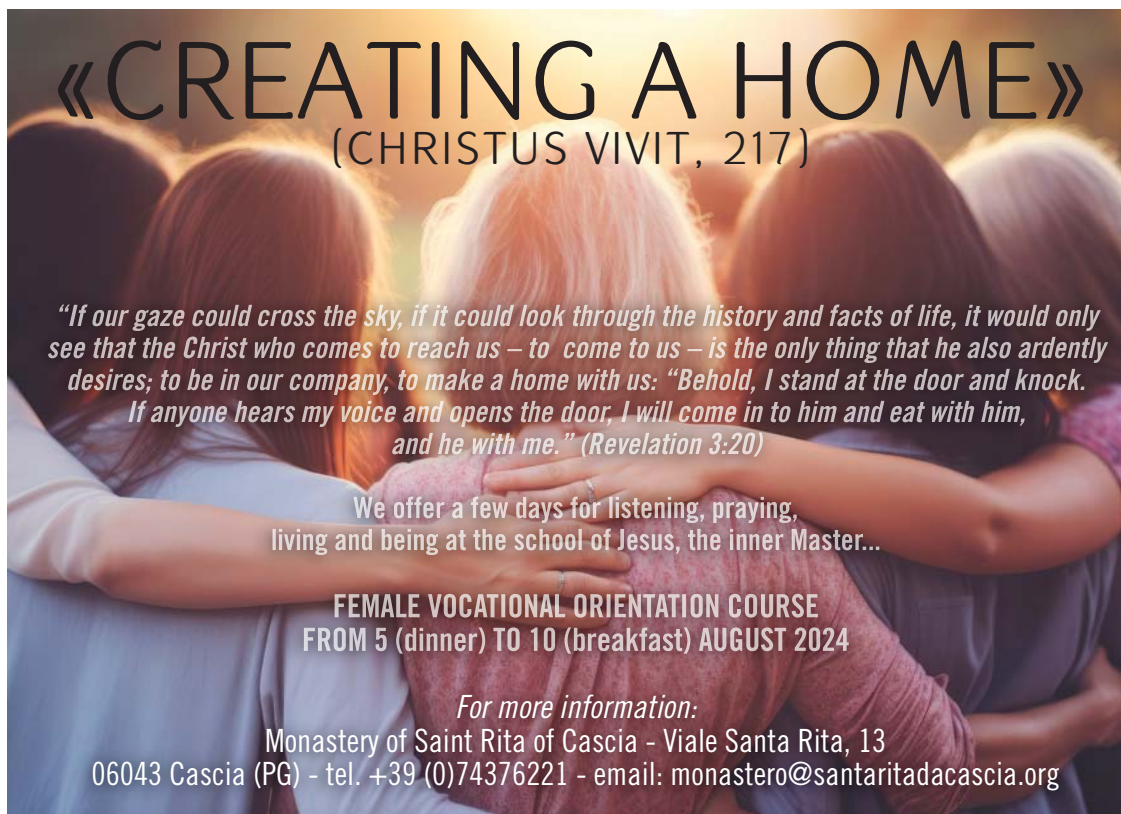
atre with a stage and a welding lab.

“Thanks to the nuns, we have turned a problem into an opportunity,” said the Headteacher of the Beato Simone Fidati Comprehensive School in Cascia, Professor Rosella Tonti. “This building prevented students from ending up in container-type facilities that would not have had the same functionality and potential. In fact, the transfer allows us to benefit from an improvement by expanding the technical and technological equipment of the laboratories and in terms of the safety of the classrooms. The presence of the Monastery of Saint Rita here in Cascia is an added value in terms of sensitivity and availability, two

values that have always been passed on to the local and global community. We immediately welcomed their outstretched hand and, with safety and high quality, we were able to provide students with even higher levels. Finally, I would like to thank all the staff of the Institute, the families and the children themselves, who engaged in the move, symbolically ‘rebuilding’ their school here.”

Acknowledgements were also received from the Mayor of Cascia, Mario De Carolis, who, present together with Niccolò Sabatini, Councillor for Youth Policies, reiterated the climate of great collaboration with the nuns, describing them as a point of reference.

Waiting for the old school, which was damaged by the 2016 earthquake, to be demolished and for a new school complex to be created in its place



«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...

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FROM 5 (dinner) TO 10 (breakfast) AUGUST 2024**

For more information:
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