

NO. 5 SET-OCT 2024

# FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine  
of Saint Rita of Cascia

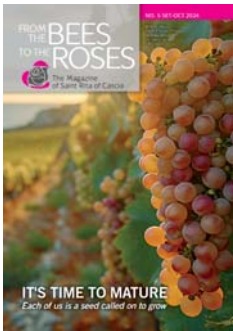
BIMONTHLY  
OF THE AUGUSTINIAN  
MONASTERY  
OF SAINT RITA  
OF CASCIA



**IT'S TIME TO MATURE**  
*Each of us is a seed called on to grow*

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On the cover: It's time to mature.  
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# In the inner cloister

Observing natural cycles teaches me a truth: in nature, the only constant is change, which reveals the fulfilment of God's creation. Each season brings with it a transformation. Each creature follows a path of birth, growth, decline and rebirth. These dynamics are reflected in the spiritual life. Indeed, there is also a Christian form of maturation, a process of change and growth. It is God who calls on us to transform ourselves to embrace a new life in Christ. St. Paul says: "put on the new man, which was created according to God".

Monastic life, with its rhythm of prayer, silence, work, contemplation and listening, is fertile ground. But growing is also possible in the chaos of the world, because all of us, by listening to the Word of God, open ourselves up to the Grace that shapes and renews us. There is an 'inner cloister' there for each of us, a place in which to sow seeds and mature. It is a slow process, like that of nature, but one that is continuous and certain. The Scriptures teach us that even Jesus grew "in wisdom, age and grace": if he too experienced transformation, then we are called to follow it as a way of life. Yet many fear change. Fear of the unknown and uncertainty can seem insurmountable. However, as nature demonstrates, it is inevitable and necessary for growth. Others, on the other hand, want to see the harvest come immediately and do not enjoy the precious wait in anticipation of it. The time it takes to mature is made up of patience, accepting that every step, no matter how small, is part of the divine plan. Welcoming change with faith and humility is fundamental, as

our Rita tells us with the miraculous episode of the vine, which was reborn from a dry weed and is still our and your companion in the Monastery today. Living in continuous conversion, making an incessant return to God, entrusting



ourselves to His will and accepting the transformations that He works in us and through us: this is how we reach fullness and spiritual maturity, reflecting the love and beauty of our Creator.

We see, then, our whole existence as an opportunity for maturation, without fear and without haste, because change is a sign of God's presence in our lives and God's time is infinite.



by Rita Gentili

# We are God's words, seeds called on to bring life

In dialogue with Father Gabriele Pedicino,  
Prior of the Augustinian Province of Italy,  
on maturation

**I**s maturation the end of a process, the moment when fruits are harvested, or is it a process in itself that lasts a lifetime?

I can more easily imagine it as something that evolves and accompanies all of existence. I think there is a moment when you realise that there is a maturity that says that the child in you, the adolescent, has become an adult, when you reach a maturity that allows you to live out a stability typical of adulthood. But to say that, here and now, I have personally achieved a definiteness and maturity that need to be reviewed, to live out new challenges, new adventures, even new deaths for new rebirths? No, I wouldn't say that.

**By maturing, do we become what we have always had the potential to be or do we change because of what we live through?**

I think there is a seed and the seed already contains a determined fruit. Some things that I live out today can be traced back to my childhood, to my parents' lives; I find a lot of myself in the education I received, in the first experiences I had in my infancy, and I believe that they con-



tribute a lot to determining the people we become, our docility, our ability to live out trials with stability. However, at the same time, I also believe that people can change as they mature. I personally associate this with the experience of the earthquake (the earthquake in Central Italy in 2016, which Father Gabriele experienced in Tolentino, province of Macerata, ed.), which marked a great watershed for me, a great transformation. So yes, I am still Gabriele, with his limitations, his resources and his abilities, but the experience had such a strong effect on me that it did not only cause me to mature but also to change in some aspects.

**Who guides us and makes the greatest mark? Ourselves, the inner teacher of whom St. Augustine speaks, or those who are next to us?**

Certainly, I believe that the family and parents have a very important role in the first steps. That is why the family issue is so delicate today and it is important that children grow up in a context where they experience affection and the benevolence that allows them to develop the self-confidence that comes from being wanted and loved. But it's not just the family. The hand of the Lord shapes us even before we come into the world, putting all the experiences and people who can foster, promote and grow that seed around us. This also happens in faith: the experience of the Church we have as children, being alongside consecrated witnesses, catechists who have met the Lord, certainly fosters that process of

maturation, together with the family. This also applies to the vocation: rarely does the vocation appear to you in a vision, but there are a series of people, of experiences that the Lord has placed beside you that determine a path that you must be able to recognise. The vocation is history, the family and the priests, it is all that happened to you in the first years of your life that you must gradually learn how to recognise and embrace, with the freedom that the Lord then leaves us. So I would say that it is a chemical reaction of all these realities guided by a Providence, by the hand of God.

**And how important is it to know how to look within, to question oneself independently?**

Earlier you referred to this beautiful Augustinian expression of the inner Master: certainly we do not go far or risk doing much damage if we do not learn to live out this maturation like a peasant, who sometimes has to wait a lot, to stop, to do nothing. Prayer, reflection and introspection are essential for doing no harm and ensuring that our lives are fulfilled and complete.

**What message can we give to those who are advancing with age and consider themselves not mature but rotten?**

Precisely because I said that we never finish maturing, we never finish bearing fruit. There is no place, there is no experience, there is no time when it is not possible for our lives to be generators of life, because there is no time when our existence is not called upon to be fruitful. You can



## 28 YEARS DEVOTED TO THE LORD BECAUSE “THE SEED THAT REMAINS IN THE POCKET ROTS”

Father Gabriele Pedicino was born in Rome 48 years ago. Since then, he has devoted 28 years to religious life, many of which have been spent supporting young people. This year he celebrated the milestone of 20 years since his priestly ordination and his election



as the new Provincial Prior of the Augustinians. He had this to say about it: “I do not believe that it is the result of maturity but I take it as a challenge, as an even stronger warning from the Lord to grow, to give more and more of my life as a priest, as a consecrated person, and today also as a provincial superior, into his hands, because deep down I believe that great maturity means to give oneself. The seed that remains in the pocket is not a seed that is saved, a life that is saved, because it rots without bearing fruit. Today I realise that I am being asked to put this seed in the ground, to bind it to the earth so that from this death fruits may be gathered, so that life may sprout. These two experiences, that is, the priestly life of these past 20 years and the request made to me by the Augustinian brothers to be the Superior, certainly challenge me more and more to work towards inner and human growth.”

be old, you can be sick, you can recognise yourself as being more and more in need of others, but I believe that until the last moment, until our last breath, we can be instruments in the hands of God. We can be a word of God.

**And, conversely, what should we say to young people who are in a hurry to call themselves mature?**

In our society I fear that some of the factors that make up the chemical reaction I was referring to earlier have been put aside. For example, the experience of faith, walking in the Christian communi-

ty, having a spiritual father, facing up to the Word of God and living the sacramental life are aspects that play a secondary role for young people. When the role of the family, educators, faith, the space to give to the Lord, the ability to read experiences, is lost, we run the risk that this seed will bear incomplete fruit. The rush threatens the lives of the youngest. I have always told the many young people I have accompanied that there is a time to live out relationships and live them out in a certain way, to invest in the

From the Book of Hosea, 6: "I will return to my home... they shall seek my face," says the Lord, "they shall turn to me in their distress."

The pilgrimage of the Holy Year marks the merciful Lord turning towards us: he is coming to meet us to embrace us again. His coming, His approach, makes it possible for us to return to Him, He who is faithful to His perennial fidelity to us people. And so we rediscover and recover our lost faithfulness, to the Lord and to those who life puts beside us. It is the time of the Lord's grace that the pilgrims of Saint Rita experience when coming to Cascia and her Shrine.

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

*edited by  
Fr. Vittorino  
Grossi OSA*

field of work. Do not do things too quickly, do not rush to become adults immediately, do not try to have all the experiences immediately. Learn that this was a time of play, of lightness, the time to let ourselves be overcome by amazement. Because then, sometimes, we realise that we live with adults who have remained unripe because the fruit was harvested too early and did not undergo that ripening stage that involves disappointments, failures, waiting – all the things that make us very afraid but are actually the secret to ensuring the fruit is properly ripened.

### **How can faith help us mature with fruitfulness?**

By bringing faith down to the level of life, not separating them into two sectors whereby you are in one way in the Church and then you live in another. The Lord took on a body, he wanted to take on human nature: he was hungry, thirsty, sleepy, he wept over the death of a friend. I believe this humanisation of our faith is very

important today as a tool to help everyone, young and old, to experience the ingredients that guarantee the maturity we have talked about. First, there is patience, and who knows how to wait better than a person of faith? Then there is knowing how to see teaching in experience and in the signs of time, and who better to do this than a person of faith, who must interpret what happens to them not as chance but as God's plan? Finally, there is knowing how to see the Lord's word for your own life in the other, from which we can always learn something, and who better than a person of faith, who sees the other as a messenger, a prophet, a page of Gospel given to us by God? I believe that, if lived in a mature way, if it is a continuous questioning of the will of God, about where the will of God is moving in what happens to me, about how the Lord is speaking to me, faith not only helps people to grow in faith but truly forms people and makes them become mature.

Disappointments, failures and waiting are the secret for the fruit to ripen properly



by Vanessa Postacchini

# The school bus for Ishiara, your act of love for 400 children in Kenya

**“W**e thank God and all those who have contributed to this act of love towards us and our children.” This is how Sister Esendita, the Augustinian nun in charge of the mission in Ishiara, Kenya, northeast of the capital Nairobi, informed us of the delivery of the school bus financed by our Foundation last June by the appointed seller, for an amount of 103,000 euros. The vehicle is intended for about 400 students, who mainly come from poor families in the area and attend the **‘Beata Maria Teresa Fasce’ School** created and run by the nuns. In particular, it will **serve the students who are forced to walk the long journey from**

**home to school and vice versa every day, even in the rain or when it is very hot.** Now, thanks to this donation, everyone will be able to end the school year in peace, which follows the calendar year in Kenya.

We want the heartfelt thanks of the cloister to reach you too, as the people who **have generously fulfilled the wishes of so many children.** We have had the privilege of seeing this materialise, communication after communication with Ishiara, with great emotion. It started with the request from the Kenyan nuns, then continued through the allocation of funds, receiving the photo of the raw structure of the school bus, up to the delivery of the







vehicle to the cloisters, documented in a video in which they appear visibly excited.

It was a journey that made us understand first-hand how much that which is trivial for us and which we take for granted, such as a means of getting around, is not at all seen the same way in other contexts. Not only that, we have thus reinforced the reason why we have chosen to do what we do. Step by step, through Sister Esendita's words of thanks to us and Providence, **we have experienced their gratitude and the enormous value of your generosity.**

This generosity will have a great impact, as it is tangibly aimed at supporting the **right to education** of the students who attend the Ishiara school every day, **to guarantee a better future for themselves, their families and their country.** Especially since, as I write, Kenya is facing a new economic crisis, exacerbated by new taxes on essential goods, having already been hit by the consequences of the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. By continuing to support the Foundation, together we can make a difference in alleviating these and many other difficult living conditions!

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**THANK YOU!**



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

# “To Saint Rita with my mother in my heart”

**L**istening to the story of Federica Tessari from Oristano, I thought, yes, it really is true that a trip is lived out three times: when you dream of it, when you live it and when you remember it. And her pilgrimage to Cascia was no exception...

Federica has always been devoted to Saint Rita. She recalls that her mother, Maria Rimedia, known as Memi, used to say that when she entered a church as a child, the first thing she did was look for the image of the Umbrian saint and repeated: “Saint Rita, my saint”.

Federica is a young woman of 38, however she has already had

to face many sorrows and much grief in her family. While she was still very young she lost her father, who died prematurely at the age of 44. Then she had to deal with her mother's illness, as she battled with breast cancer for 16 years, until 2020, when she passed away. Finally, she lost her grandmother, the last point of reference she could hold on to.

“In 2016 everything was ready. Finally, after so many years of waiting, we were ready to leave for Cascia. Mum and I were over the moon about this pilgrimage. We had dreamed of it and waited so long. Soon we would see our beloved Saint Rita. Then, however, one evening, a few days before departure, the host of the Tg5 news programme announced that there had been a strong earthquake in Valnerina and we could no longer leave, also because all the accommodation facilities had closed. We were very sorry to have to give up on our pilgrimage, but in our hearts we were sure it was only postponed.” Unfortunately, Federica and Memi were unaware that Memi would no longer have time to make that long-awaited pilgrimage. Federica told me: “Sometime after mum passed away, a family friend asked me if I wanted to accompany him to Foligno, as he was taking part in

Then she  
had to deal  
with her  
mother's  
illness, as  
she had  
been  
battling  
breast  
cancer for  
16 years



a competition. I replied that I was willing to follow him, as long as we made a stop in Cascia. The desire to go to Saint Rita had never faded in my heart, but first with the earthquake and then Covid, it seemed like something would always get in the way. That time, however, my friend accepted the proposal and I was finally able to go to Cascia.” Federica told me that when she arrived at her destination she cried a lot, from pain but also from joy. And referring to her mum, she recalled, “I took her with me. I wore her clothes, I took her bag and somehow she was there with me too.” Then, she continued: “Cascia is a beautiful place, a place that gives you peace. There, all thoughts drift away. I remember that as soon as we arrived we were also able to pass around the Urn of the Saint, something that I later learned does not happen often, but only on special occasions. It was very emotional for me. It was as if Saint Rita was waiting for me! I prayed a lot in those days. I entrusted my mother to her. I took that journey we were supposed to make together with her in my heart. Saint Rita helped me not to miss her, but rather to feel that she was more present than ever.”

That day in Cascia, Federica also entrusted her whole family and her life to Rita. And since then she feels under her protection. She added: “Good things happen to me, which seem like coincidences, but I see another value in it. Wherever I go, Saint

Rita is always waiting for me. Shortly after returning home, then, I met a good guy, also a believer, who became my life partner. I'm sure it was Saint Rita who put him on my path and now we are planning our lives together: a gift from Rita and my mum, I'm sure.”



Michelina Buono Galasso from Turin, with her son Giuseppe, in front of the enlargement of the painting of Saint Rita that her family donated to the Sanctuary of Cascia, to thank the saint for her continuous protection and intercession. The original painting, by Tito Troia, is preserved in the Basilica.





by Rita Gentili

# “An inspiration for me and for women”

## RITA IS ALSO HERE



**Country:** United States of America

**City:** Huntington Beach

California, the state where Daniela's testimony comes from, is the most populous in the United States of America. In fact, it is larger than the whole of Italy. With a wealth of lush mountains and beaches teeming with tourists, it alternates between fertile agricultural areas, centuries-old forests, desert areas and modern cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. This mixture of landscapes also reflects the mixture of cultures, ethnicities and religious traditions that characterise this State: Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Mormons and atheists. In California there are at least five churches dedicated to Saint Rita but, partly due to the enormous distances and partly due to this variety of cultures and traditions, as Daniela tells us, it is difficult to find a community of devotees to Saint Rita to join, and in which – adds Daniela – dressing as a nun like Saint Rita is fully understood.

**F**rom Sicily to California, the Pacific coast of the United States of America: there is so much along the thread of devotion to Saint Rita told to us by Daniela Miele. Born in Vittoria, in the province of Ragusa, 53 years ago, at the age of 18 Daniela, her



mother Carolina, her father Angelo and her sister Simona moved to the other side of the world, to California, where they built a new life. This was not done without difficulties and not without a longing for home, where her brother Gaetano remained and still lives today. At the age of 21, Daniela had the good luck – as the woman herself describes it – to meet the love of

her life, Franco, also of Italian origin but born in the United States, whom she would marry just a year later. The couple's love resulted in Melissa and Cassandra, now 30 and 29 years old, who, as Daniela says, were raised according to "our Italian traditions and culture". Daniela had heard about Saint Rita, the saint of impossible causes, from an early age, but she had never delved into her story. Until 1995. While attending a Christmas party, her husband, Franco, who had just opened his dental practice, lost consciousness. When he awoke he was completely disoriented and complained of numbness on the left side of his head. "We took him to the hospital," Daniela says, "and did tests but we didn't find any problems". Back home, Franco continued to complain of numbness and as the days went by he felt more and more tired. Franco's immune system began to give way and he developed a serious infection. "It was very frustrating," Daniela recalls, "because we weren't able to determine the cause of his discomfort. It went on like this for months. We lost the studio we had recently opened and I was afraid of losing my husband." In despair, Daniela remembered the saint of impossible causes. "I asked her to help my husband and promised her that, as a sign of devotion and gratitude, I would always wear the nun's habit like hers on 22 May. Literally the next day, my husband started to get better." Seven months later, Franco was back at work, collaborating with another dentist. Since then, Daniela has worn the Augustinian

monastic dress every 22 May. In 2023 she did so in Cascia: "I was lucky enough to achieve my dream of coming to Cascia and participating in the procession. When I arrived and saw the Basilica, tears came to my eyes. I will never forget the emotion I felt: an overwhelming feeling of peace and spiritual closeness to Saint Rita. It



was a pilgrimage full of meetings with the extraordinary people of Cascia who, although they did not know me, welcomed me and made me feel as if I had known them for years." For 28 years now, Daniela has not only thanked Saint Rita and lived out her devotion to her, she spreads knowledge of her to others, especially those who are having problems in life and are spiritually lost. "Saint Rita is an inspiration for me and for all women around the world," comments Daniela. "The trials she underwent during her life seem unbearable to us but, with her faith and her love for God, she managed to overcome everything. I pray to Saint Rita to help us believe that everything is possible with God."

I pray to  
Saint Rita to  
help us  
believe that  
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God



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](mailto:postulazione@osacuria.org)

# The Apostle of simplicity

Francisco Cantarellas Ballester translated the Gospel into concrete gestures

**F**rancisco was born on 15 August 1884 in the small village of Muro, on the Spanish island of Mallorca. After his early education, he began working with his father until he joined the Augustinian community of Palma at the age of 20. Here, having returned to their historic church of the Mother of Relief, the monks had begun planning a boarding school for the city's children. After his military service, Francisco did his novitiate at the Monastery of El Escorial. He took his first vows on 29 September 1909 and his solemn vows in 1915. He was sent back to Palma with the main role of sacristan. His work brought him into direct contact with many people who came to the church, especially out of devotion to Saint Rita, whose church became a driving force after her canonisation, also thanks to Francisco, apostle of the saint's wonders!

Friar Francisco taught the young students of the college through example. He helped the

most destitute of people, unbeknownst to his confreres. He had a good word, a comforting smile and a charitable gesture for everyone. Being humble, he looked for the least visible places. A man of deep prayer, when he freed himself from duties, he went to his favourite nook to pray. His presence ensured a human, gentle, serene, joyful and welcoming trait. Right until the end, he worked to maintain the temple well, with an array of altar servers, leaving an indelible mark on generations. He died on 22 April 1968, aged 83. He was a communion builder, both within the Augustinian community and outside of it. Witnesses recall his virtues, especially the humility that silently shouted to reveal his strong evangelical presence. Given the reputation of holiness that he still enjoys, the cause for his beatification was initiated, the diocesan phase of which was happily concluded on 26 April 2024.

This Servant of God, a true apostle of simplicity, teaches us



## “I FEEL LIKE A FATHER, BECAUSE I WILL BRING SOULS IN THE WORLD”

On 2 March, the Augustinian family of Cascia celebrated the Solemn Profession of Father Gennaro Maria Lione. Born in Cernusco sul Naviglio (Milan) in 1976, he felt a strong vocation from an early age. Then, after his first experience in a seminar, he studied accounting and worked. That was until he heard the call: “On the day of Pentecost 2002, during the Eucharist, looking at the priest, I felt that my heart was there. I abandoned everything: my job, my girlfriend and my city.” In Ferrara, he studied theology and became a priest in 2009. Struck by the life of Augustinian communion, which he experienced during a retreat in Cascia, he took his first vows in the Order in 2020. He confirmed these vows after three years as a professed monk in Cascia, in a day of joy and the gift of fatherhood, because “not everyone can be parents, but we can be fathers and mothers, offering life to those you bring into the world. And I feel like a father, because I will bring souls into the world.”



to carry out God's plan with determination, even when it is made up of small gestures, everyday things, choices that could seem insignificant in the eyes of a world that seeks fame, greatness and immediate gratification. Friar Francisco reminds us that com-

munion is built with small and constant evangelical gestures, by carrying out our responsibilities with joy and gladness, but at the same time with radical and deep humility, which makes us discover the truth of ourselves in the silence of prayer.



by Marta Ferraro

# Grandma Marianna's gift that bloom

The story of Valerio Bonanno,  
one of the founders of the PPU of Palermo

**“T**he elderly are like trees that continue to bear fruit: even under the weight of years, they can make their original contribution to a society rich in values and to the affirmation of the culture of life. And what about their role in the family? How many grandparents take care of their grandchildren, transmitting their expe-

rience of life, the spiritual and cultural values of a community and a people, to the little ones with great simplicity!” This is what Pope Francis said during the audience at the National Federation of Older Workers in 2016 and the story I am about to tell you is a striking example of it. If a mother is always a mother, a grandmother has a very special



Valerio, the first in the front on the left, keeps the devotion he inherited from his grandmother alive and active with the Palermo PPU group

tenderness that makes her even more convincing and her teachings continue to speak to us even when she is no longer there. Valerio Bonanno, a 40-year-old from Palermo and one of the founders of the Primary Pious Union of his city, knows this well. When he talks about Palermo in relation to the devotion to Saint Rita, he calls it the 'Cascia of the south' and the numbers he backs this up with are indisputable. On 22 May, for example, in the Shrine of St. Augustine alone, 17 Holy Masses are celebrated, 18,000 thousand wafers are given out and more than 50,000 pilgrims come to honour the saint. But why grandparents? We were saying: imagine an eight-year-old boy walking with his hand in his grandmother's hand and turning around, between Cascia and Roccaporena, his eyes being able to admire everything that grandmother Marianna has told him about over and over again for the first time. The miraculous vine, the roses, the Monastery, the body of Saint Rita, the places connected to the saint finally materialise in front of them. That child's name is Valerio and the woman is his grandmother Marianna, who made her first and only trip with him to the places of her beloved Rita. Just as Pope Francis says, Grandma Marianna sowed a seed in the heart of her grandson that has sprouted over the years and is bearing fruit. Then, the devotion of their family went beyond the household dimensions and joined that of many families like theirs and they all became a community together. Grandma Marianna is no longer with us: her pious practices, her promise to wear the belt

every Thursday, having entrusted her family and in particular the studies of her daughter Antonietta (Valerio's mother) are all distant now, but imagine if they had not existed. In the 1960s it was not so taken as given for a girl to be able to attend university. Travelling to classes every day could be a misunderstood behaviour and then, albeit with many concerns, Grandma Marianna entrusted her daughter and her future to the saint of the impossible. Antonietta graduated in foreign languages and literature and became a professor, under the protection of Saint Rita.

Palermo's devotion to Saint Rita has distant roots: the Augustinians have been there since 1300, and in the early 1920s they implanted their worship with the purchase of a simulacrum, which is still the object of heartfelt veneration today. But the PPU is very young and the official affiliation of the devotees of Palermo to the prayer group dedicated to Saint Rita dates back to this year. Thinking about how well the PPU has done in its context, Valerio said "it is a reinterpretation of popular devotion. It has managed to channel our devotion into a new dimension."

I was very pleased to learn about this story, because it represents the portrait of Italy from a few decades ago, which is hard to find today, and for which many who knew it feel nostalgic. However, it can certainly return if, as Pope Francis says, we renounce the throwaway society and appreciate the teachings of our elders. Thank you Grandma Marianna and thank you to many other devoted grandmothers scattered around the world and in Heaven!

## UPCOMING REGIONAL MEETINGS

**Northern Italy** on **22 September** at Sanctuary Santa Rita La Barona Milano, **Calabria** on **13 October** at San Marco Argentano with the affiliation of Spezzano Albanese. For more info [paunione@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:paunione@santaritadacascia.org)





by Sister M. Lucia Solera OSA

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

# The fruit of humble trust

In prayer, Rita becomes a friend of God,  
capable of impossible things

He calls  
us to  
perform  
great  
and un-  
precedented  
things

**J**ust before she died, in the middle of winter, Rita asked a relative who had gone to visit her for a rose and two figs from her garden. Having gone back home, the woman actually found a deep red rose and two ripe figs. This episode, which is so dear to Ritian devotion, sheds light on that particular fruit fostered and prepared by prayer: humble trust.

Trusting is creating a bond: one so intense, robust and deep that it withstands, despite the many kinds of situations that can put it to the test. Looking at the story of Rita, we can dare to make a statement: with every test, it is Rita's faith and trust that is *tested*. This may seem like a very harsh phrase that makes us picture a severe God who keeps raising the bar of his demands for us. We try to tiptoe through this "terrain".

Every friendship is tested: you who call yourself my friend, can you stay by my side in my moments of pain? Do you know how to share and rejoice in my joys? Do you know how to guard this bond of ours in fidelity and inti-

macy? This is how God acts with us: He makes us have experiences, not because He needs tests to know what we have in our hearts, but to ask us for something that we would never have dreamed of asking ourselves; while we would settle for the routine of the usual little things, He calls on us to perform great and unprecedented deeds.

Through adversity, Rita grew in the experience of God. She becomes his intimate, his friend. She was dear to his heart. Her secret consisted of prayer, where she told God about her struggles, her troubles and her hopes.

Pope Francis said: "To be disciples of Jesus it is not enough to believe that there is a God, that he exists, but we must put ourselves out there with him, we must also raise our voices with him, invoke him, cry out to him" (Angelus, 20 June 2021). Trust in God is a fruit that ripens through every season and trial of life. Rita's is a *humble* trust because it is centred on God and not on herself, and it is strong precisely for this reason. This is how Rita be-



To trust is to create a bond: one intense, robust and deep enough to withstand, despite all the kinds of situations that can put it to the test

came capable of humanly impossible things: forgiving; going through the loss of loved ones and rising up from these deaths, putting her future back in God's hands; being patient, waiting; feeding benevolence to the end.

*Rita, our sister,  
teach us to sprinkle moments of  
testing  
with prayer,  
so that for us, as it was for you,  
the fruit of humble faith  
may ripen.*



by Mauro Papalini, Augustinian historian

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

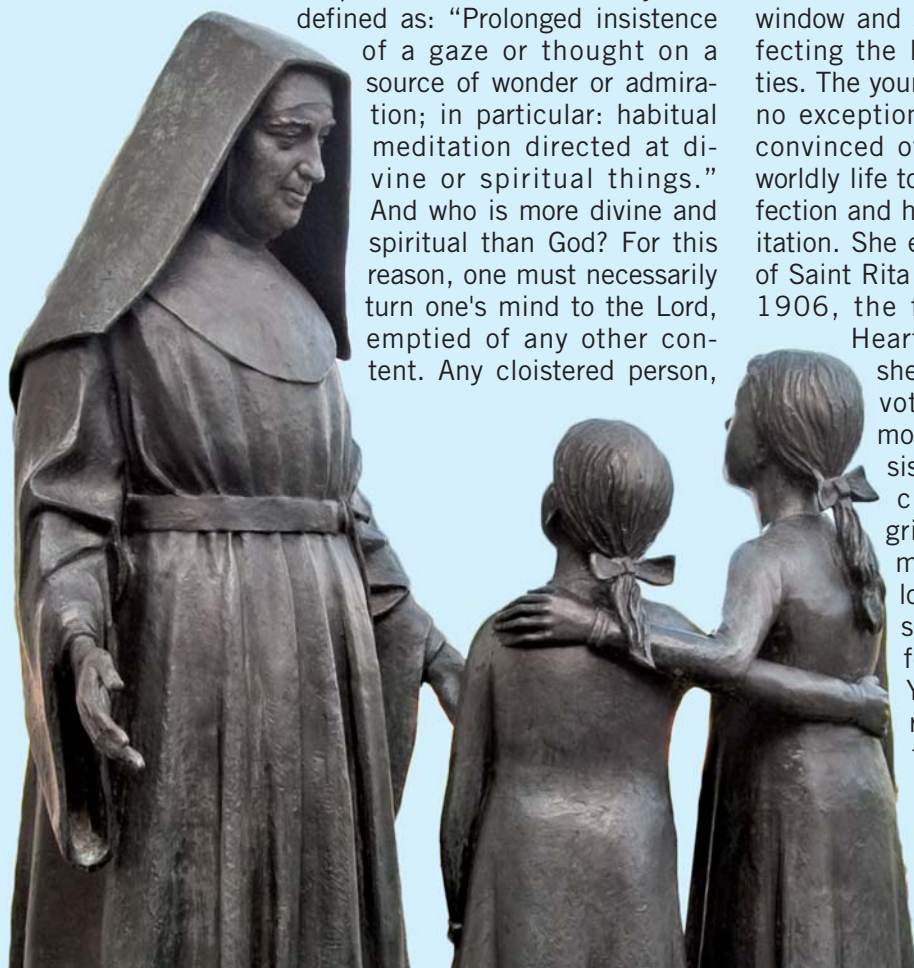
# Between contemplation and the world

Mother Fasce always kept her mind on God, despite grappling with external problems

**I**n spiritual literature, the cloister has always been synonymous with total isolation from the world and all its evils, to dedicate oneself to God alone in a foretaste of paradise. The highest form of meditation and prayer is contemplation. In one dictionary it is defined as: "Prolonged insistence of a gaze or thought on a source of wonder or admiration; in particular: habitual meditation directed at divine or spiritual things." And who is more divine and spiritual than God? For this reason, one must necessarily turn one's mind to the Lord, emptied of any other content. Any cloistered person,

however, knows well that contemplation requires a great exercise of the spirit and a lot of constancy. Of course, we must always rely on the grace of God, but all this is not always easy, not least because that world that is thrown out of the door then comes back in through the window and somehow ends up affecting the life of the communities. The young Marietta Fasce was no exception: she left her home convinced of leaving behind her worldly life to take the path of perfection and happiness without hesitation. She entered the Monastery of Saint Rita in Cascia on 22 June 1906, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to which

she was always very devoted, and after a few months she wrote to her sisters: "Here we do not cry, here we do not grieve, here we do not moan. We hope, we love and we enjoy ourselves! Isn't this this a foretaste of Paradise? Yes, be cheerful and rejoice with me." After a short time, however, she had to come to terms with





the fact that there was not so much a paradise in the monastery, but rather worldly things, which she undertook to throw out to make room for prayer, meditation and contemplation, the things for which she had left her native Genoa. Even after her election as Abbess and the radical reform of her community, the world did not leave her in peace and continued to creep in, often diverting her from the high contemplation that she loved so much: she would spend hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament in a silent conversation, and to those who asked her what she was doing all that time she replied: "I look at Him and He looks at me". She wanted to transmit the love of contemplation and meditation to her sisters, even while doing daily chores, and for this reason she taught them a method to always keep their minds on God: silence and repeating certain phrases that re-concentrated the soul in its God. Meanwhile, the events concerning the worship of Saint Rita were pressing, something she cared about very much, but she would never have imagined that the construction of the new Sanctuary would turn out to be worthy of a novel. Bureaucracy, envy, war and many other factors forced Blessed Maria Theresa into a reality that had very little to do with contemplation. Sometimes she would come out with phrases like: "This morning we drank more tears than milk!" or "How bad the world is!" In short, we can say that, good or bad, Maria Teresa Fasce wanted to abandon the world forever but was never abandoned by the world, and she knew how to govern it.

### 100 years of From the Bees to the Roses

#### A bridge between the Monastery and the devotees

There is a special bond between the Monastery and Rita's devotees, and they come into

c o n t a c t  
through talks,  
l e t t e r s ,  
emails and  
communication on social media. Even the Magazine is an instrument of this.

Right from the start, it has entered into a relationship with its readers, with direct, frank, recognisable communication and its own personality. And while the devotees are an ever-present 'you' for those who write it, the same attention and participation is found on the part of the readers, who comment on the articles, share the graces they have received, news such as births or remembrance of the dead and letters. The response to the first letter was published in 1923 as an "open letter"; it expresses closeness, hope, advice and encouragement. An invaluable service and heritage. *From the exhibition "From the Bees to the Roses: 100 years on display (1923-2023)"*



That world  
that is kicked  
out of the  
door then  
comes back  
in through  
the window  
and  
somehow  
ends up  
affecting the  
life of the  
communities



by Mother Maria Rosa Bernardinis OSA

Reflections and advice from the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, on the joys and difficulties of being a family

# Discovering the vital solitude inhabited by God



**P**eople are by nature driven to socialise in order to live, grow, give meaning to life and be happy. They need to grow in self-knowledge, in trust, in the inner strength they have to respond to the love they receive by returning it. However, people also need to be with themselves, not necessarily in a physical space, but an interior one. There is, in fact, a solitude that helps to stabilise choices; that restores calm to the soul, if it is agitated on the surface by emotional or relational storms; it recalls the fundamental choices if they have become blurred or lost.

This “inner cell” is a cure-all for the soul and spirit, if we only let God in. Because “God, who is more within us than our innermost part and higher than our highest part” (Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*) waits at the door and knocks, so that we may let him in. It is God who gives peace, who purifies the imperfections that emerge; with Him we can read them and transform darkness into light! In this unfiltered space, the life-changing encounter takes place, making it ever more simi-

lar to the Author. When we are certain that we are loved in a unique way by the Lord, “nothing disturbs us anymore, nothing scares us”. Without Him, solitude is truly frightening.

I offer an example in the person of the prophet Elijah. Submissive to the divine command, he withdrew into the desert, certain that God would provide for him. That is indeed what happened. Here he strengthened his relationship with God and felt ready to face the prophets of Baal, who he exterminated with great zeal. Queen Jezebel learned of this and threatened him with death. He fled into the desert and fell into a deep depression from which God himself brought him out by making him walk along an inner pathway that led him to discover the presence of the Lord, not in the powerful and destructive forces of fire, earthquakes and rushing wind, but in the whispered breeze (First Book of Kings).

Then we find a shining example in Jesus. He, a perfect man and God, did not need to purify his memory, but surely in

## PRAYER

**Prayer to Saint Rita**  
 Oh Saint Rita, model of family life and consecrated life,  
 I turn to your intercession in this difficult time of my life.  
 You know that sadness often weighs me down, because I cannot find the way out of so many painful situations.  
 Obtain from the Lord the graces of which I have need and, especially, the serene confidence in God and inner calm.  
 May I imitate your sweet mildness, your strength in trials and your heroic charity.  
 Let my sufferings benefit all my loved ones.  
 And may everyone obtain eternal salvation, with the blessing of the Lord, of Blessed Virgin Mary and you, Saint Rita.  
 Amen

the silence of the nights, in prayer with the Father, he found comfort for the mission for which he had been incarnated, in the face of the disappointments of his own and the rising hostility of his adversaries. This is the true and fruitful solitude that makes life full.

## 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.*

Antonio Pastorelli (Gallarate VA - Italy)  
 Mara Bardelli (Arezzo - Italy)

Maria Teresa Lamonaca - Rutigliano (Bari - Italy)  
 Maria Vanna Germiniasi in Danielli (Goito MN - Italy)  
 Onorina Rossi (Nichelino TO - Italy)  
 Gaetano Bragantini (Verona - Italy)  
 Gisella Paneduro (Catania - Italy)  
 Rita Angelini (Latina - Italy)  
 Romolo Falasca (Tortoreto Lido TE - Italy)  
 Sandro Carnicelli (Bergamo - Italy)  
 Tiziana Tucceri Cimini (Pescara - Italy)  
 Vanna Allegro (Albenga SV - Italy)  
 Marta Longhi (Bulciago LC - Italy)





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

# Refuge of peace for all tormented hearts

Dear Saint Rita,

in the deeds of your beatification process from 1626 (preserved in the Diocesan Historical Archive of Spoleto, ed.), among the various testimonies collected, it is evident that your veneration is not the prerogative of the female world. Given your story, which encompassed every phase of a woman's life, we might in fact think that there is a shortage of 'boys' quotas' among your devotees, but we would be mistaken.

In one of the depositions made on 22 October 1626, the following was reported: *"I have seen more and more people coming to the tomb of the said Blessed Rita at different times, so many men and women of this country, and even foreigners..."* Marcello is an example of this with his story. Originally from Umbria, within his family he "breathed the air" of love: they always prayed to their Wonder, as he calls You. After moving for work, he married and had three children, but there's not a year when he doesn't come to visit you. Now retired, he devotes much of his time to his

parish. Through his innate talent for singing, he accompanies the faithful in moments of prayer. Marcello knows that every talent is a task and responsibility. It was 22 May and he could not make a decoration for You, together with the one for the Blessed Virgin Mary. Marcello was experiencing days of anguish, a storm was beating down on him. The diagnosis was not good and this upset him a lot. Without thinking about it, he went to the mother church and took Your statue, he brought it to the small church where Mass would be celebrated. He arranged the roses and dropped petals on the ground; he prepared everything with infinite detail. Everything was ready, the parishioners were ecstatic and the saint could be celebrated. Marcello does not know how things will turn out, he still has to undergo tests; he does not know if he can say that he has received the grace of healing. But since he embraced the statue of Saint Rita, his heart is no longer in torment. He does not expect to avoid the storm, but now he knows that he will not be alone in facing it. He has found the strength hidden in him, he is not afraid. The words of Jesus: "Do not be afraid, have faith, I am with you" resound in him, together with those of his Wonder.



# *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](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org) and you will receive information on how to help the children in difficulty that need you.





by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

# In silence there are answers beyond the questions

**T**here is a dimension that is overlooked in our time, one that is radical yet fundamental to human life: silence. If we look for the definition of silence in dictionaries we find: relative or absolute lack of sound or noise; an environment that produces sound less than 20 decibels is considered silent; figuratively, it can indicate abstention from speech or dialogue, etc.

Yet, silence is not only a denial

our true thoughts through words. True silence is never renunciation.

We must not be afraid of silence, as is customary for today's society, which seems to remove it, to exclude it, to exorcise it. We are immersed in noise, overwhelmed and confused by an avalanche of information from all sides, making us accustomed to filling every small void. Silence, on the other hand, is a discreet companion with which to travel within ourselves in order to find the answers that we often look for outside in hundreds of words. Love silence as a moment of intimacy to live with ourselves. Feel it as a faithful companion that does not betray us, one that lets us think without interrupting us, that enriches our days and helps us understand the meaning of life.

Our inner selves must be listened to in silence. Silence is nourishment for the soul. Modern people must rediscover the awareness that silence is still a great teacher, one capable of accompanying us on the paths of meaning and God. The way of silence is one of the great treasures that, together with fraternity and Scripture, have been handed down to us by the Christian tradition and which should be presented again in all



or interruption of communication, but a means of expressing thoughts and emotions. It is a message. Silence is a condition of listening. It can be a deliberate and conscious choice to be heard and to listen. Or to speak a different language, which does not put on masks on



their beauty. In Discourse 52 (9, 22), Holy Father Augustine says: "Let us also leave something to personal reflection, let us also grant something to silence. Come back to yourself and try to escape from any noise; see if you have a sweet and secret cell of your conscience inside you, where you do not make a noise, you do not have to quarrel or plot disputes, where you do not have to devise discord and stubbornness. Be meek to listen to the word to understand."

Silence is necessary in our lives because we live by words and silences. As believers, we need it because we find irreplaceable moments of our personal experience of the mystery of God in

it. In silence, I listen to the Lord, I am attentive to His Presence and His Word.

"The Father uttered a word, which was his Son, and he always repeats it in an eternal silence; therefore it must be heard by the soul in silence" says Saint John of the Cross. We should always find ourselves humanly "speechless" before the greatness of the mystery of God and the beauty of his love. People are capable of returning to themselves and experiencing the hidden and silent presence of God. None of us can be exempt from being humble and insistent seekers of God in silence. "Be silent before the Lord, and hope in Him" (Psalm 36: 7).

We should always find ourselves humanly "speechless" before the greatness of the mystery of God

# «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...

*For more information:*

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06043 Cascia (PG) - tel. +39 (0)74376221 - email: [monastero@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:monastero@santaritadacascia.org)

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**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. Stay close to us, your love is the most solid foundation on which to build new hopes. [alveare@santaritadacascia.org](mailto:alveare@santaritadacascia.org) • [santaritadacascia.org/beehive](http://santaritadacascia.org/beehive)

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