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OF SAINT RITA
OF CASCIA

FROM THE BEES TO THE ROSES



The Magazine
of Saint Rita of Cascia

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ENTREPRENEURS OF HOPE

*Working together to put our humanity
and Christianity at the centre*



CONTENTS

- 3 *Editorial*
A Holy Year to transform us
- 4 *Changing the world by doing business*
"In a world of sharks I don't eat others, I help them instead"
- 9 *Saint Rita Foundation*
A symbol of hope for Cuzco: the Auditorium is almost here!
- 10 *Holy words:*
Blessed Mother Fasce
The entrepreneur who did not work for herself
- 12 *Pilgrims of Hope*
Wise hearts capable of attracting faith

The joy of Christmas throughout the year

Believing in the adventure of love
- 18 *Augustinians*
"It's nice to proclaim the Gospel to so many people"



On the cover: Entrepreneurs of hope.
Photo: Stock.adobe © HellSI

- "The hand of the Lord has guided me"**
- 22 *Primary Pious Union*
Rita's example also lives in Portugal
- 24 *Dialogue with the Monastery*
The charity that saves the world

60 years of faith for Sister Pia

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A Holy Year to transform us

In a world torn apart and warped by wars, economic crises and devastating inequalities, there is another way, one capable of transforming us and our time: this is the message with which we are approaching 2025, which opens with the immense promise of hope represented by the Jubilee, during which our Basilica will be the Jubilee Church, and the 125th anniversary of the Canonisation of Saint Rita.

Both come to remind us that Christian faith and values can be the engine of real change, including in social dynamics. We try to bear witness to this in the magazine thanks to the example of Blessed Mother Maria Teresa Fasce: an extraordinary woman, a nun, the Abbess of our monastery who lived in the heart of the twentieth century. She intuited that the economy can be an instrument of good when it puts people at the centre and is guided by principles of charity and justice. In Cascia, as a symbol of the spirituality of Saint Rita, she not only created tangible works but also an “enterprise of good”, spreading a vision in which doing business means community, dialogue and peace. Because doing business is not only an economic act but also a human gesture and

entails recognising the dignity of people, overcoming the logic of exploitation and considering profit not as an end but as a means to improve the lives of all.

Entrepreneurship is thus a mission: to build a future where peace and justice are not exceptions but rather fundamental

rules. This is the kind we heard about from Paola Veglio, a woman and entrepreneur who received the Award dedicated to

Mother Fasce, which celebrates women who are true entrepreneurs of change.

With this in mind, 2025 is a unique opportunity to

reflect on how ancient values can guide new responses to contemporary challenges.

The Jubilee of Hope and the holiness of Rita also invite us to take a step forward: to transform our lives, our personal and collective choices, into instruments of reconciliation and peace. It is an invitation addressed not only to entrepreneurs, but to each of us “entrepreneurs of hope”, because every action counts, every small gesture can contribute. May this year find us ready to bring together the courage of Mother Fasce and the hope of Saint Rita, with the certainty that improving the world is not only possible but necessary.





by Rita Gentili

“In a world of sharks I don’t eat others, I help them instead”

The human example of an entrepreneur who creates value



of the metalworking company Brovind di Cortemilia (Cuneo), is the entrepreneur who received the award in 2024. She was given it for having been able to grow her company while staying attentive to people and for having looked at the region with projects and actions capable of improving quality of life for the community. We talked to her about her story and approach to entrepreneurship.

Who is Paola Veglio and how does she define her company?

Who I am is a good question: it took me almost all of my 45 years to understand it because so many times you become what others want you to be in part. You lose your identity to follow the flock. Eventually, I was a kind of black sheep that never compromised with its values. If I had to describe myself with three adjectives I would say crazy, stubborn and sensitive. This is far from simple because some traits that I see as valuable are considered defects in today's society. Sensitivity, for example, is seen as a weakness, while I have always seen it as living life in colour. At the corporate

The “Mother Maria Teresa Fasce” Award, conceived in 2023 by the nuns of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, is dedicated to female entrepreneurs who choose to do business by looking not only towards profit but also towards the common good. Paola Veglio, from Piedmont, CEO



level, I would say I'm courageous because in a world of sharks I never try to eat others but instead I strive to help them from many perspectives. I help customers with a highly innovative product. I help my employees, who are never numbers to me. They are always people to support, to make myself available for. I help a village that would otherwise be fated to die.

What led to your choice to do this type of business?

When life presents you with certain storms and you manage to survive them, there are two paths you can take: either you decide to get angry and turn nasty towards the world and others, or you can think that there is a reason for everything and at that point you accept what life offers you. If you do this, you inevitably begin to make yourself available to others. This is what happened to me. I never made an informed choice to do this type of work. It was simply

a desire to do, to help others, to make myself available and, in a way, to make use of the talents that have been given to us. There is always a basis of selfishness, because helping also makes you feel good, but this must be a consequence, never the end.

Is doing business by being attentive to people's needs, offering them services, offering them to the region and the community a possibility for all companies or just for some?

There definitely has to be a solid foundation. We have gone through moments of economic collapse and absolute decline, and when you can't pay suppliers and employees your priorities change a lot: if I don't make a profit, then all the fine words are thwarted. But here there is a substantial difference between merely making a profit and creating value. I have always tried to turn profits into value and hence put people first, be-

I help customers with a highly innovative product. I help employees who are never numbers to me, always people



FEAST OF BLESSED MARIA TERESA FASCE 2024

The day of 12 October was the liturgical feast of Blessed Mother Fasce, the Abbess of the Monastery of Saint Rita for 27 years, who left an indelible mark on the history of Ritan worship and Cascia in the first half of the 1900s. As last year, the nuns added to the spiritual initiatives with the “Mother Maria Teresa Fasce” Award, which was launched on 11 October by the meeting with students from the region, and was held thanks in part to the collaboration with the Municipality of Cascia, led by Cristiana Caricato, the Vatican correspondent of TV2000. The award winner, Paola Veglio, and Sister Giacomina Stuanì, treasurer of the monastery and editorial director of *From the Bees to the Roses*, brought the values of Mother Fasce and Paola's life experiences to 200 boys and girls. The students, who were involved and engaged, presented a video on the legacy of Mother Fasce, made by the scientific high school and the State Professional Institute for Industry and Crafts (IPSIA) of Cascia. Finally, on 12 October, the Solemn Mass was presided over by the Rector of the Sanctuary, Father Giustino Casciano, in the Lower Basilica that guards the body of the Blessed woman. A dialogue took place between the nuns and Paola Veglio with the award ceremony. The Prioress of the monastery, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, presented the Prize, a unique work of art that represents the concreteness of charity, and the Rector gave the artistic parchment with the reasons for the award.



cause human capital is a company's greatest value.

Company size is a relative factor. For example, I am now participating in a network project and there are companies with 3 people as well as 200: this is proof that projects can be carried out regardless of scale. It's obviously a question of sacrificing a part of ourselves, but that is what the concept of creating value means: putting what we have managed to do out there for a greater good. I repeat, the company has really gone through dark times, but it rose back up through prowess or luck – I'll leave this to others to tell – but the moment you manage to make it solid and strong is beautiful. It's essential to make these paths of value for people, the region and the community.

What feedback have you received from your employees?

It was difficult because I joined the company at the age of 27. I was a woman in a metalworking environment populated by men who had been working there for 30 years. However, by rolling up my sleeves and putting a lot of humility into it – that also makes a difference – what I perceive now is respect. This doesn't fall from the sky, it's earned through sweat. Gaining people's respect is the most beautiful thing that can happen to you. I have hired many people in the company who came from recovery communities for drug addicts, people with personality disorders, and people with difficulties, because I like to give second chances in life. Now, when you meet them in the workshop, the

smile they give you with implicit gratitude is something that makes you say "I'm going in the right direction".

Does being a man or a woman change the sensitivity you put into doing business?

There is a difference, absolutely, but it's a complicated topic. I always say that you won't solve the problems with pink quotas, which are a blatant admission that there is a problem with women. Pink quotas do shed light on the problem but I find them almost humiliating, because I want to join the company because I deserve it, not because I am a woman. It's true that women are undervalued and not understood, but many of the limits we put on ourselves are in our heads, and we must learn to believe in ourselves. This is also because feminine sensitivity and a maternal instinct make you go beyond your role as an employer and see your employees as people who need to be heard. So you can really make a difference and improve a little bit of the world.

In this regard, do you believe that even just helping those you meet in life can change the fate of the world?

I do. I went through existential crises because I realised that I could not save everyone, that I wasn't doing enough, that I wasn't enough. Then, thinking about what my dad told me, that is, not to complain if you haven't at least tried to change things, I realised that you can change the world, your world. I don't claim I am doing anything that will stop there being any more wars, but I know that I can

What the Prize left me with was light: it came at a very difficult time for me

translate this concept into my own little world, not by attacking others but by making myself available, by listening. So I bring some peace to my little world and if everyone did the same thing, imagine how much the world could change.

What has stayed with you from the Blessed Mother Fasce Award?

The days I spent in Cascia and in Umbria in general were magical, a surprise. I expected an austere, closed, backward world and instead I found the exact opposite. The nuns, who live in a world of cloistered entrepreneurship, showed me a sweetness, an affection, an extraordinary maternal demeanour... The world I met in Cascia, the Augustinian fathers, the lay people who revolve around it: it was all a surprise. And I felt so good because, even though each of them has a different vision, they all have the common goal of helping together. In Moth-

er Teresa Fasce I found a great source of inspiration because, in my opinion, she was truly an enlightened entrepreneur. She was driven by faith but she was also a revolutionary. She led Cascia to become the world that we and millions of pilgrims know today. I see myself in many of her traits: stubborn, idealistic, firm. Her will to make a change, to do, to believe until the end: many modern entrepreneurs should take the solidity of her thoughts as an example. What the Prize left me with was light: it came at a very difficult time for me, with many enormous responsibilities, family situations that lead me to ask if it's worth it. I have come back profoundly changed. Those who meet me tell me 'you are bright' and now what I know is that yes, it is worth it. It was a beautiful journey that I will keep in the depths of my heart.

THE ECONOMY OF SOLIDARITY IS THAT OF "US": AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ECONOMY OF "I"

We increasingly feel the need to imagine an alternative to the current economic system: an economy of "us", aimed at growing and developing people, communities and local areas, an alternative to the economy of "I", aimed at growth at all costs, in favour of those who work in order to maximise profit and in which people, communities and local areas are merely considered productive factors. This is enterprise based on solidarity: a business model that puts people's well-being, social justice and sustainability at the centre, rather than profit alone. It is an economic organisation that operates with the aim of creating value for the community, respecting workers' rights and the principles of equity and promoting transparent and collaborative relationships between producers, consumers and workers. This type of company not only produces goods and services, but also has a positive impact on society, helping to reduce inequalities and build a more inclusive economic system. It serves as an alternative to the traditional model that invites us to make more conscious and responsible choices, prioritising collective well-being.

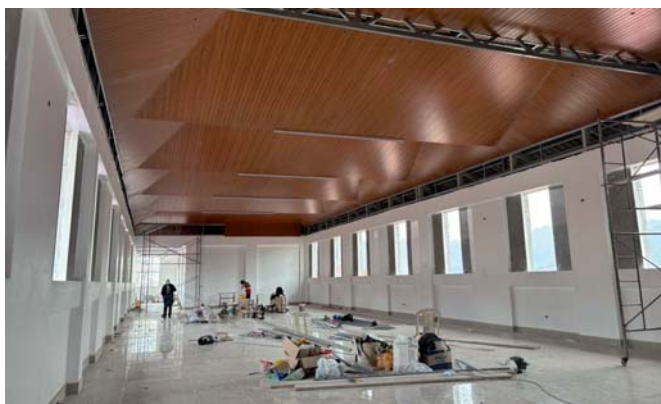


by Alessia Nicoletti

A symbol of hope for Cuzco: the Auditorium is almost here!

Strengthened by your increasingly precious support, for the Feast of Saint Rita 2024 the Foundation committed to building a future of hope for Cuzco, Peru. This is represented by the completion of the “Beata Maria Teresa Fasce” Auditorium of the “San Agustin de Hipona” School, intended for **300 students** (3-18 years old) and **32,000 inhabitants of the district** of San Jeronimo, in the south-eastern suburbs of Cuzco.

This is one of the poorest regions of Peru, where the majority of the population lives in serious conditions of **social, cultural and economic hardship**. Here, the Institute created by the Regional Vicariate of the Order of Saint Augustine of Apurimac in 2012 is essential for education and social inclusion. With this in mind, work began on the Auditorium, which had been left unfinished for financial reasons. Thanks to the funds raised in May through your immense generosity, the Foundation was able to dedicate **over 140,000 euros to the construction** and transform the raw space into a multifunctional and safe place for holding seminars, workshops, training events and mutual aid groups. From August to September 2024 **we sent 128,000 euros**, which covered the electrical, audio and sanitary systems, the coatings of ceilings, walls, floors and the painting of the rooms. Today (we are writing in December 2024) the works are moving forward, while we are about to send the last part of the amount for the missing finishes, doors, windows, furnishings and bathrooms. **THANK YOU: this goal bears your name!**



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THANK YOU!



by Mauro Papalini,
Augustinian historian

The entrepreneur who did not work for herself

I want it even though it costs, I want it because it costs, I want it at any cost.
- M.T. -

Everyone arriving in Cascia instantly realises that everything speaks of Saint Rita. So many works have been erected in her name, and all this is due to the tireless activity of Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce. While referring to the spiritual context, her words above recall the perseverance, courage and tenacity with which she committed herself to the construction of the new Basilica, encouraging all the side projects that affected the entire city: hotels, accommodation facilities for pilgrims, and better roads to reach Cascia. She found herself managing works, complicated economic issues and bureaucratic hurdles, as well as large sums of money. She had to deal with people who were not always honest and who tried to take advantage of her; she suffered a lot from this and in some of her letters she came out with expressions like: "Oh monsignor, how bad the world is!" or "This morning we drank more tears than milk." So can we say that she was an entrepreneur? Perhaps yes, but we must clarify the meaning of this term. Entrepreneurs work on their own behalf, they have to make profits to move forward, so they can give work to others and so that everyone benefits from it (we are of course talking about honest entrepreneurs).



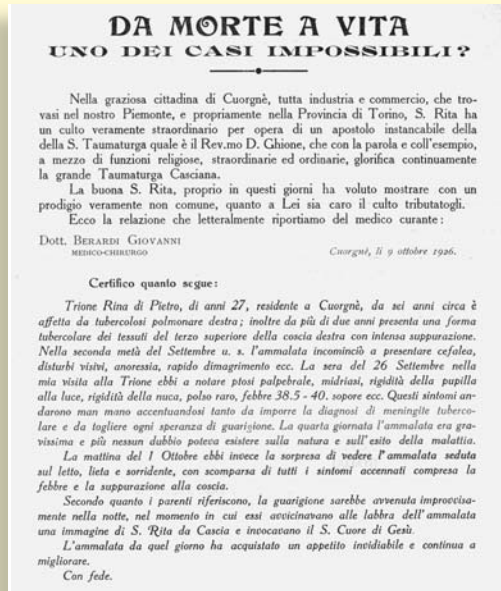
Mother Maria Teresa Fasce (by Maria Bonaduce, 20th century)

Journey through the history of the Magazine

Stories of graces received

Right from the first issue, From the Bees to the Roses gave voice to the testimonies of graces received through the intercession of Saint Rita. It has thus become a space for storytelling, sharing and public appreciation of devotees, with words and then also with photos, like a modern social network. The editorial staff does not enter into the merits of the testimonies, recognising their "human faith" alone. They are small Magnificats written by people who have known physical and moral suffering and then saw that which seemed impossible occur. Each story is unique, but they all speak of faith and prayer.

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



Maria Teresa Fasce did not own anything, having taken a vow of poverty. She did not work for herself, but only for others. She also had two very demanding 'bosses', God and Saint Rita, and she always stressed this. Often, in her letters, speaking of the various stages of the work, she stated: "Saint Rita wants it, Saint Rita has chosen it, etc.". As for profit... the expenses were enormous and she also went into debt, but her 'bosses' were generous and through the many devotees she managed to meet all the expenses, at the cost of living in great poverty, especially during the war. She earned nothing for herself but rather for her 'bosses', and then she did not accumulate money but souls.

All the devotees of Saint Rita that she attracted were souls for the Lord, the true end of devotion to the saints and to Our Lady; Maria Teresa Fasce earned many of them! She had a very strict business ethic

and she imposed it on all those who collaborated with her: to give the Cascians work first, to always pay the workers adequately, to use the money that came from the devotees in keeping with their intentions. She was inflexible on this. Having administered the things of God, Saint Rita and others, instead of an entrepreneur we could call her a "managing director", the Sergio Marchionne of Saint Rita! But unlike the CEOs of companies who are well paid for their work, Maria Teresa Fasce only received her compensation after she left this world on 18 January 1947, when she joined her 'bosses' in Paradise.

We believe with good reasons that today Mother Fasce can and must be held up as a model for anyone who wants to do business correctly, based on Christian values, having the good of others at heart more than their own profit, which of course must be there.



Experience the 2025 Jubilee with the messages of hope of **Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis**, Mother Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia for the elderly, young, parents, poor, sick and consecrated



Wise hearts capable of attracting faith

What does a believer, a man or a woman now “full of days” (Job 42:17), hope to leave to future generations? Faith is a gift from God, which must be nourished so that it bears fruit, otherwise it becomes scattered and dies. It can, however, be transmitted... not by imposition, but by attraction; the personal experience that each of us has with the Lord renders it alive and effective. And who has more experience than an elderly man or woman: this is then your and our mission, especially in this Holy Year.

In the first pages of the Bible, we read that the great patriarchs not only passed on material goods to their descendants, an expression of divine benevolence, but also the mystical experience they had with God, each adding a piece to that knowledge. When revealing himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, God says: “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abra-

ham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:15).

Jesus himself chose men to be with him so that after his death, resurrection and ascension, they would continue his work: to make the Gospel known to all, supported by the power of his Spirit. In the Acts of the Apostles, we really see the attraction that this announcement held for many people, to the point of dying for Christ, in order to remain faithful to him.

But they were not just men, there were women too. Think of how much authority the Christian woman had in the family at that time! Saint Paul presents some of them in his letters; we can find an example in Saint Monica, mother of Saint Augustine.

I am sure that even today we can draw in and attract new generations to the faith with our testimony, making the feelings and teachings of the Lord our own. I am also happy to remember that for many of my nieces



and nephews and great-nieces and great-nephews, the teachings of their grandparents have become points of reference, reflections of human and spiritual sensitivity in their choices. When one of my great-nephews was eight years old, he was asked by the parish priest, who had seen him at the Easter Vigil Mass and then at the usual time: "Why have you have not been to sleep yet? You must be tired, there is another Mass later." He replied: "Grandma taught me that we must

give the Lord fresh grass, not hay."

I myself take so much from the example of the elderly nuns of our monastery: serenity, peace, gratitude, acceptance of growing fragility... these are the fruits of a faithful relationship with the Lord and of a silent and continuous prayer for humanity.

I therefore invite all the elders to say with the Psalmist: "Lord, teach us to count our days, and we will acquire a wise heart" (Psalm 90:12).

The teachings of grandparents have become points of reference, reflections of human and spiritual sensitivity in their choices





Father Giustino Casciano, Rector of the Basilica of Saint Rita, accompanies you in the 2025 Jubilee alongside Saint Rita, for a Holy Year to experience together in joy and hope



The joy of Christmas throughout the year

The 2025 Jubilee began on Christmas Eve last year with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome by Pope Francis. The Holy Year was inaugurated in the Diocese of Saint Rita, that of Spoleto-Norcia, and also in those around the world. The Pope dedicated it to Christian hope, choosing Saint Paul's words to the Romans: "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5: 5). The message we want to give to all the pilgrims of Saint Rita is that 2025 years ago the Word became flesh and therefore the joy of Christmas is valid every day, forever.

For us Christians, this whole year will be a contin-

uous and daily reminder of the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. The joy, peace, beauty and tenderness of Christmas cannot end on 6 January. What happened in the fullness of time when God was born of a woman, born under the law, to give us the joy of being adopted children of God, is too great and too beautiful (Letter to the Galatians 4, 4-5).

During the life of Saint Rita (1381-1457), four Jubilees were celebrated: that of 1390 and that of 1400 with Pope Boniface IX during the painful period of the Western Schism; that of 1423 at the end of the Schism with Pope Martin V; that of 1450 with Pope Nicholas V.

Saint Rita experienced the first three without moving from the area of Cascia, together with her husband and children. However, she participated in the Jubilee of 1450 personally. Our saint went on a pilgrimage to Rome at the age of 70, after which the Lord granted that the wound on her forehead, caused by the thorn of Christ, would be healed for a few months. Perhaps during that Jubilee pilgrimage Rita also witnessed the canonisation of St. Bernardine of Siena, celebrated by Pope Nicholas V on 24 May 1450, the solemnity of Pentecost. Together with the sisters, she prayed at the tombs of the apostles and martyrs, visiting the basili-

THE BASILICA OF SAINT RITA IS A JUBILEE CHURCH: WE LOOK FORWARD TO DRINKING FROM THE SPRING OF HOPE WITH YOU

As decreed by the Archbishop of the Diocese of Spoleto-Norcia, until 6 January 2026, in our Basilica "the faithful will be able to obtain the Jubilee Indulgence if they devoutly visit this sacred place and here they will engage in Eucharistic adoration and meditation, concluding with the Our Father, the Profession of Faith and an invocation to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God".



JUBILEE MOMENTS

edited by Fr. Vittorino
Grossi osa

cas of Rome and receiving the indulgences and spiritual benefits of the Holy Year. If we can, like Rita, let's go to Rome and also to Cascia this year, and let's renew our life of faith with the Sacraments, prayer, indulgences and good works for the living and the dead. Together with Saint Rita, we experience the joy of Christmas every day, because 2025 years ago the Word truly became flesh and since then he has always lived among us and taken part in human history.

We renew our life of faith with the Sacraments, prayer, indulgences and good works for the living and the dead

Let us begin our journey of faith with trust

Pope Francis says: "Faith is a journey, which is to say walking, that is, connecting to what is happening around us, bringing us closer to the lives of others to walk together. Walking does not mean standing still, and believing means having an inner restlessness that drives us towards something 'more', to take one more step forward, in our relationship with God and with others. Faith is a pilgrimage, we on this earth are pilgrims, not tourists or wanderers who move aimlessly. The pilgrim lives out their journey in the name of three key words: risk, effort, and goal." To-day we struggle to understand what it means for Christians to make a pilgrimage, as we are accustomed to the speed and comfort of travelling. The pilgrims of the past teach us trust in God, who called them to journey to the tomb of the Apostles, the Holy Land or a shrine. With the Pope's teaching, we set out on the path towards the Lord and those who life puts beside us.



With **Sister Maria Lucia Solera**, Mother Superior of the Monastery of Saint Augustine in Rossano (Cosenza), celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Canonisation of Saint Rita by reinterpreting her life as a woman of hope



Believing in the adventure of love

Saint Augustine speaks of hope in words that seem to paint a portrait of Rita: “To hope means to believe in the adventure of love, to trust in men, to make the leap into uncertainty and to entrust oneself completely to God”. Let's see how each of these statements took shape in the story of Saint Rita.

Adventure is not something sensational outside the small range of your daily life. Adventure is what happens while you live your everyday life: a person comes to meet you and you welcome them; there is a serious decision to be made and you give yourself time to consider it seriously; there is someone who asks for your time, your help, your ear, and you let yourself be found. For a Christian, as for Rita, every day, situation, context, even one that is so habitual that it doesn't seem to have much to offer you, is an adven-

ture: that is, an opportunity to welcome the humble Jesus who comes to meet you; an opportunity to exercise the charity of the certified evangelical brand.

We believe that Rita was a woman who made gestures of love because they were generative in their yeses: yes to forgiveness; to reconciliation; to peace. This is true without a doubt. But it is equally true that Rita was also capable of nos that were powerfully generative.

NO to escape: it would have been understandable, on her part, after everything that had happened to her – her husband killed, an entire family pressuring her for the law of revenge to be fulfilled. She could have wished for some peace, and rightly so, and moved away from that bloody town. Rita didn't do it. She chose to stay.

NO to resignation: no chronicle gives an account of that hard time, in which Rita was completely alone.

But we know how Rita re-emerged: by increasing her openness to consecration. Rita didn't give in to her pain. She firmly believed that there was an alternative to complaints that can only produce another complaint. NO to turmoil, which was then a yes: to concealment; to normality; to silence. Nowadays we flaunt everything, ending up becoming people who live life in a showcase. Rita followed a different path: that of silence, of smallness that does not make proclamations.

PRAYER

*Saint Rita, our sister,
allow us to appreciate
our little stories
and to consider
them as they are:
a great adventure of love,
so that our hope expands
and gains strength.*



I leave faith in tomorrow to the nuns of Saint Rita

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MONASTERO
SANTA RITA
DA CASCIA
Comunità agostiniana



by Alessia Nicoletti

“It’s nice to proclaim the Gospel to so many people”

In dialogue with Father Juraj Pigula, new Prior of the Convent of Saint Augustine and Saint Rita of Cascia

Born in 1976 in Presov (Slovakia), he has been part of the Augustinian family since 1995 and became a priest in 2004. Today he is also a member of the Council of the Augustinian

Province of Italy. His story symbolically started with Cascia and Saint Rita, to whom he has now returned. In Slovakia, in Kosice, Father Juraj was, in fact, Prior of the local Augustinian community, founded in 1995 by Fathers Angelo Lemme and Paolo Benedik, who came from Cascia. Support for Kosice also came from the nuns and priests of Cascia to construct the community itself, starting with the purchase of the land on which the convent (completed in 2011) and the Church were built. This latter was consecrated to Saint Rita in 2018, partly as a way of giving thanks. In the same year, Cascia was twinned with Kosice for the Feast of Saint Rita, for which a connection is created with a different place in the world every year, and, as an exception, it was the Prioress of the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia, Sister Maria Rosa Bernardinis, who brought a relic of the saint there. Yet, despite his links to the Ritian world, Father Juraj says: “I never thought I would come to Cascia to live in the community permanently. So to be here today and, moreover, as Prior of the community, was a real surprise for me, one I live out filled with expectations.”



“Life in Cascia,” he emphasises, “is very different from all the other contexts where I have lived. As a city it is very small, but the large number of people present is impressive. The most beautiful thing is precisely the Basilica full of people to whom we can proclaim the Gospel every day, as well as the pilgrims who listen to the story of Saint Rita with amazement on visits to the monastery, and also those whom I bless and listen to as they tell me about the heavy crosses they must carry in life.”

In Italy, Father Juraj was a novitiate in Cartoceto in the Marche for a year, and then he studied in Rome. “After my studies I spent many years in Slovakia (from 2005 until 2022). I only had one interlude in Viterbo for a year, as Prior of the community, and then the last two years I was in the community of Pavia, in the shadow of the tomb of Saint Augustine. Now, I have gone from Saint Augustine to Saint Rita.”

In Slovakia Father Juraj carried out his service with young people and families, in teaching at the University and as a spiritual guide. “Over the years,” he recalls, “the work has expanded to the field of pastoral care also to the divorced, and I have begun to write books on spirituality and science. I founded and ran the magazine ‘Consecrated life’ and the web page for consecrated people for ten years. I held mass media courses for consecrated people in Slovakia. I led the diocesan vocational ministry team. In recent years I was also part of the commission for the Synod and for the new evangelisation. I was

involved in preaching and conferences for religious and lay people. I am still part of the group of Slovak scholars concerned with Commentary on the Bible and I have published about ten volumes as a co-author (the last one on Psalms 1-25 came out in 2024). My latest book, which I am very happy with, is ‘Saint Augustine. History, spirituality and texts’ and also a translation of a book on Saint Augustine for children.”

Those I bless
and listen to
as they tell
me about the
heavy
crosses they
must carry
in life



In October 2024, Father Juraj, in the centre, celebrated the Holy Mass of the 90th birthday of Father Mario Di Quinzio, who is next to him (on the left). We will talk about this milestone on the next page

A comprehensive commitment and a precious experience in contact with the new generations, families and the challenges of modernity: this is the baggage that accompanies Father Juraj in guiding the community of Cascia in the best possible way, always in Saint Rita's spirit of welcome and fraternity.

“The hand of the Lord has guided me”

Father Mario Di Quinzio's 90 years

Even in times
of illness
and trial,
you have
enlightened
those
who have
assisted you

“I am happy because I have always felt the hand of the Lord, who has guided me since I was little. He allowed me to overcome every difficulty and limit. Let us never lose faith in His love and mercy.” This is how Father Mario – who has been in the community of Cascia for some time, where he was chaplain of the Beehive and Rector – expressed his joy, in part for all the good wishes he received. These include those of Father Gabriele Pedicino, Prior of the Province of Italy of the Augustinians, who wrote him a letter, the significant parts of which are here. “Dear Father Mario, 90 years are a wonderful milestone, and this time brought you from Nepezzano (Teramo), through Gubbio, Terni and Perugia to be here with us in Cascia, near Saint Rita. From ‘strong and kind’ Abruzzo, of which you are a splendid reflection – strength of soul and kindness being your defining traits – you arrived in Umbria, guided by the spirituality of Saint Augustine, teaching all the confreres and the people of God that spirit of service and unselfish availability that are typical of the Rule we profess. I was helped to formulate this message of good wishes by those who have known you better than me. In particular, I

refer to the confrere and Prior Provincial emeritus Father Gianfranco Casagrande, who stressed to me that you have always gone to work with enthusiasm, encouraging young people and children who still recognise your friendship and your commitment. You have never given preferential treatment to anyone because you understand that before God we are all equally His children. Your openness of mind and heart has taught many of your confreres and countless lay people to live better lives, avoiding divisions and fences. Even in times of illness, you have enlightened those who have assisted you by showing docility and patience. Your resourceful spirit has helped you and helps you be creative, and this ability of yours is endearing. Your courage made you keep going, and again and again you sought the common good before your own. We wish to thank the Community of Cascia, the Nuns, the relatives and friends and those who assist you for the attention and care they give you, and together we thank the Lord for the beautiful gift you are for our Province. Continue to offer your ailments for the Augustinian family and for so many of the lost caregivers of our time. *Ad multos annos* dear Father Mario.”

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. 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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by Marta Ferraro

Rita's example also lives in Portugal

A beautiful prayer and 'action' group arose from Else's devotion

The great family of the PPU – the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita, the only prayer group dedicated to the Umbrian miracle worker recognised by the Monastery of Cascia, where she was one of the sisters – keeps growing and expanding, even beyond Italian borders. In this issue of the magazine, we have chosen to tell you about the experience of the PPU in Portugal.

A dream, a journey, a meeting and this is what the “coincidences of God” have led to: Else Gomes da Silva dreamt of Saint Rita some time before going into the operating room for surgery that could have put her in a wheelchair. However, with great faith, she turned to Saint Rita and the operation was successful. Then she was admitted to the São José hospital for another illness. On one of these days of hospitalisation, despite her intense pain, she went to the chapel of the hospital, and there she saw the scene she had dreamed of, the image of Saint Rita as she had appeared to her. Since that day she has never stopped invoking her, and in one way or another Saint Rita has always shown her her closeness.

Soon after, Ms Else discovered that a large procession was being held in the parish of São Nicolau, precisely for the saint's day on 22 May. She took part in this event with enthusiasm and devotion, however she noticed that there were no symbols or images dedicated to Saint Rita. As such, she decided to create t-shirts with her im-

age and a banner, which has been carried in the procession every year since then. That idea led to the foundation of a local prayer group dedicated to Saint Rita in 2009, which has never stopped growing.

In 2017 some devotees from the group went on pilgrimage to the places of Rita. These trips were then suspended with the spreading of Covid. Only in 2022, after the pandemic, did the Portuguese devotees return to visit Cascia, thanks in part to the



Else with her daughter Teresa and her grandson Eduardo



PRIMARY PIOUS UNION

skilful organisation of one of the affiliates, Teresa Fonseca. On that occasion they met Father Carlos Chavez, a young Augustinian father of Peruvian origin, who was part of the community in Cascia at the time. “It was he who opened the doors to us and told us the story of Saint Rita with passion and involvement, and also the Beehive (the housing project for minors run by the Monastery of Saint Rita of Cascia). He immediately sensed that we loved Saint Rita so much, and that we were willing to do anything for her.” “Having grasped our great devotion, he also told us about the PPU and introduced us to Alessandra Paoloni, the national secretary of the group”, added Teresa, the daughter of Ms Else, who has always accompanied her mother and shared the devotion with her. “I took the Little Bees made by the monastery (one of the

products of the Made for Love line, which support the nuns' charitable works) and once we returned home we bought some material to make replicas.

“We involved the whole group, which now has 155 people who are from different parishes but are all united by the same devotion and the same spirit of union and brotherhood,” said Teresa. In addition to praying together, in fact, the devotees meet to produce and distribute some small objects symbolic of the life of Saint Rita, and they support the Ritian works from afar with the proceeds. At least once a year, then, some devotees of the group go to Cascia to meet the Augustinian fathers, in particular Father Bruno, with whom a strong bond has been created, and the nuns, and to deliver their offerings. As a local prayer group, now, having completed the normal processes to be followed, they are officially affiliated with the PPU.

It's nice to note that despite physical, linguistic and cultural distances, if the Lord wants to, He can make everything possible. It is with this article that we thank all the devotees of Saint Rita scattered around the world, reminding you that you can also join the PPU personally and not only as a group.

2025 WITH THE PIOUS UNION: ALL THE EVENTS

26 January in Selargius (CA): Pious Union Meeting in Sardinia

7-8 June in Rome: Pious Union Jubilee. Contact those in charge. Registration by 6 April. Individuals can register, specifying “participation in the Primary Pious Union of Saint Rita”, at: pilgrim@iubilaeum2025.va

19-20 July in Cascia: Pious Union Puglia Pilgrimage for 125th Canonisation of Saint Rita.

12-14 October in Cascia: Meeting of Spiritual Assistants and Regional Managers

GENERAL MEETING IN CASCIA 2026 - 20th anniversary of the Pious Union 11-12 April organised by Calabria



by Sister M. Giacomina Stuani OSA

The charity that saves the world



The virtue of
love perfects
Christ in us
and, by
letting
ourselves be
guided
by Him,
the inner
Master,
we renounce
ourselves,
our
selfishness

“**P**erfect charity has neither the avarice of the century, nor the fear of the century, that is, neither the avarice to hoard temporal things, nor the fear of losing them. The enemy enters and reigns through these two doors; they must be driven out first with the fear of God and then with charity. We must therefore desire a very clear and very evident knowledge of the truth. This must be more ardent, the more we realise that we are progressing in charity, and we must have our hearts purified by its simplicity, since it is precisely through the inner eye that the truth is seen: Blessed are the pure of heart, says the Lord, for they will see God. In this way, rooted

and founded in charity, together with all the saints we can understand the width and the length and the height and the depth; to know the highest science of the charity of Christ, to be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Saint Augustine - The Christian Combat, 33, 35). With these words, Augustine invites us to open our hearts to the most perfect model of Godman and to place ourselves at His disposal with hands of willingness, the firm knees of prayer and our hearts wide open to the Infinite.

One of the conditions for every other virtue to grow and be exercised in each of us is love, which is also a virtue in itself. The virtue of love perfects Christ in us and, by letting ourselves be guided by

Him, the inner Master, we renounce ourselves, our selfishness, the vices that can arise from being closed off in ourselves.

We hear Saint Augustine again: “It seems to me, therefore, that the order of love is a short and true definition of virtue (The City of God, 15, 22). And then: “Restlessness reigns outside of order, in order there is stillness. My weight is my love; by it I am carried wherever I am carried. Your Gift, Lord, ignites us and leads us upwards” (Confessions 13, 10)

Our complete attachment to God, our ultimate goal, helps us to live a virtuous life and carry out that charity that can save the

One of the synonyms of love is mercy. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremiah II, who lived at the end of the sixteenth century, stressed the importance of the virtue of mercy, as a true synthesis of charity and Christian holiness: “Food without salt, words without truth, works without faith, principle without end, and virtue without mercy, are all dead things. Just as no living being walks with one foot, and no bird flies with one wing, and no ship sails with one flank, and no house is covered with one wall, so none of the chosen is saved unless they unite mercy with the other virtues. In fact, this is what

God is love
and the soul
returns to
God in love
through
virtue



world. Through “the order of love”, the soul seeks to live united with Him, even if it is only in eternal life that it will obtain perfect union with its Creator, since in this world we are attracted by self-love and pride. For Augustine, charity is the true essence of the Christian life and the ultimate goal is the contemplation of God.

punishes through its absence and, if it is put into practice, it saves with its presence.”

God is love and the soul returns to God in love through virtue. “Love and do what you want... May the root of love be in you, since only good can come from this root,” Augustine would conclude.



by Vanessa Postacchini

60 years of faith for Sister Pia



Sixty years of monastic life told with the sweetness and depth of someone who has made their existence a total gift to God. Sister Maria Pia Conversa traces a journey of faith with a wealth of significance for every person seeking the meaning of their life. At 83, she remembers her initial 'yes' as a call from the Infinite. It was a call that led her from the darkness of the Mystery to the light of trust, just like Abraham, entrusting herself entirely to the divine plan.

The strength of self-confidence

In her most precious message, Sister Pia invites everyone to rediscover their self-esteem, whatever season of life they may be in. "Each of us is a bearer of gifts. We must know how to recognise them, become aware of them and express them, even when going through complex moments. Indeed, it is precisely then that we must have the courage to entrust ourselves to God-light and push ourselves to act from our inner depths."

This is what she did, facing every difficulty with faith and trust – which is a struggle, a way to come out of oneself and go towards God – always accompanied

by the Word. Sister Pia encourages inner listening, following the teaching of Saint Augustine: “so I may know me and I may know God”. It is an invitation not to fear one's own fragility, but to transform it into opportunities for spiritual growth.

Hope as a path of reconciliation

Looking towards the Holy Year, Sister Pia shares a deeply comforting vision, that of the Church, mother of humanity, which proposes a time of reconciliation, starting with ourselves. It is a path for us to welcome ourselves as people, “in positivity and real fragility”, presenting ourselves to God, who welcomes us with mercy, in the most authentic truth. Her hope is “to achieve harmony, fullness in being a person in the image of God and to acquire serenity, peace and joy.”

Being a nun in Cascia

In her daily Ministry of Consolation, Sister Pia welcomes thousands of pilgrims. “Every encounter is a gift, as each one expresses the reality they live in with

their own sensitivity. For my part, I try to welcome people with respect and involvement, giving a word of comfort and trust in God which later becomes prayer, so that the ‘grace’, a gift from God, reaches the individual person, giving them strength and serenity in the events they are facing.”

For Sister Pia, “our contemplative choice is a state that gives space to silence to reflect and dwell on the deep meaning of our being a person in the image of God. Our Augustinian community is called on to be constantly seeking him.” In this context, for her prayer is “a feeling of a presence that becomes praise, thanksgiving, intercession.” In her cloistered life, one of her ‘refuges’ is nature: she contemplates Creation as a reflection of infinite divine love. She perceives “a very small dot” yet she is aware that she is “much larger than creation” because she is a conscious person. Sister Pia's message is one of hope that crosses the boundaries of the monastery and reaches every heart in search of meaning and peace.

Each of us
is a bearer
of gifts, we
must know
how to
recognise
them

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.

Alba Coni (Pavia - Italy)

Anna Frediani (Brindisi - Italy)

Ausilia Trincherio (Pezzana VC - Italy)

Aldina Pillon Callegaro (Vas BL - Italy)

Chiara Demarinis (Rutigliano BA - Italy)

Elisabeth Lybia Pennacchi (Sao Paulo - Brazil)

Emilia, known as Emy, Fabbri (Rome - Italy)

Federica Antonini (Norcia PG - Italy)

Federica Bartolini (Cascia PG - Italy)

Giovanna Santamaria (Noicattaro BA - Italy)

Grazia Farella (Rutigliano BA - Italy)

Malvina Oliviero (Sovizzo VI - Italy)

Maria De Angelis (Cascia PG - Italy)

Maria Rita Vialeto (Marostica VI - Italy)

Maria Zedda (Cagliari - Italy)

Roberto Nardi (Cascia PG - Italy)

Santo Di Dedco (Lauria PZ - Italy)

*We safeguard their future.
With joy.*



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