

At the age of thirty-six, Rita pledged to follow the ancient Rule of Saint Augustine. For the next forty years, she gave herself wholeheartedly to prayer, works of charity, striving especially to preserve peace and harmony among the citizens of Cascia. With a pure love she wanted more and more to be intimately joined to the redemptive suffering of Jesus, and this desire of hers was satisfied in an extraordinary way. One day, when she was about sixty years of age, she was meditating before the image of Christ crucified as she was long accustomed to doing. Suddenly, a small wound appeared on her forehead, as though a thorn from the crown that encircled Christ's head had loosed itself and penetrated her own flesh. For the next fifteen years she bore this external sign of stigmatization and union with the Lord, in spite of the pain she constantly experienced, she offered herself courageously for the physical and spiritual well being of others. During the last four years of her life, Rita was confined to bed and was able to eat so little that she was practically sustained by the Eucharist alone.

Someone who visited Rita a few months before her death was privileged to witness extraordinary things wrought by her requests. When asked if she had any special desires, Rita only asked that a rose from the garden of her parents' home be brought to her. It was a small favor to ask, but impossible to grant in the month of January. On returning home the woman discovered a single brightly colored blossom on the bush just as Rita had described. The woman returned and gave it to Rita who gave thanks to God for this sign of love. Thus the saint of the thorn became the saint of the rose. Rita's final words to the sisters around her were, "remain in the holy love of Jesus. Remain in obedience to the holy Roman Church. Remain in peace and fraternal charity." Rita of Cascia died on 22 May 1457. Her body which has remained incorrupt, is venerated today in the shrine at Cascia. She was beatified by pope Urban VIII in 1627 and canonized on 24 May, 1900 by Pope Leo XIII.

\*(excerpted from: [www.augustinianpress.org](http://www.augustinianpress.org);

[www.marypages.com](http://www.marypages.com))

## *Saint Rita of Cascia*

Feast Day: May 22



***Patroness of impossible cases.***

## Saint Rita of Cascia

\*Also known as Margarita of Cascia, was born in the year 1381 in the village of Roccaporena, near Cascia, in the Diocese of Spoleto, Italy. She was a daughter of Antonio and Amata Lotti, known as Peacemakers of Jesus. They considered her birth a very special gift from God, for Rita was born to them as they were already advancing in age. Rita was baptized with the name of "Margherita".

As a young girl Rita frequently visited the convent of the Augustine nuns of Cascia and showed an interest in a religious life. She often dreamed of one day joining their community. Her parents, however, promised her in marriage, according to the custom of the day to Paolo Mancini. Out of obedience to her elderly parents, she accepted her parents' decision, resolved to see this as God's will for her.

Her husband, Paolo Mancini, was the source of much suffering to her, but she repaid his perfidy with prayer and kind attention to him. In time, he was converted, becoming most considerate of others and God-fearing. When Rita was eighteen years old, she became the mother of twin sons. Rita found herself occupied with the typical concerns of a wife, mother, and homemaker of Roccaporena, while Paolo was employed as a watchman for the town.

In Cascia, as elsewhere, a great rivalry existed between popular political factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. As a minor official of the town, Paolo often found himself drawn into the conflict and the strain which this caused probably accounts for the tension which he sometimes brought into the Mancini household. While by her prayers, patience, and affection, she was able to ease the stress and worry her

husband experienced, she was not able to shield him altogether from the dangers to which society exposed him.

One day as Paolo was returning home from work, he was ambushed and killed. The pain which this unexpected and violent death inflicted upon Rita was only compounded by the fear she felt that her two teenage sons, moved by the unwritten law of the "vendetta," would seek to avenge their father's death. Rita's only recourse was to prayer and persuasion. As it happened, the death from natural causes a short time later removed them from both physical and spiritual danger. Despite the great burden, she could still thank God that they had died in peace, free of the poison of murder to which hatred and revenge might have otherwise drawn them.

Now alone in the world and without family responsibilities, Rita once more turned to thoughts to the desired vocation of her youth, that of joining the Augustinian Nuns of Saint Mary Magdalene Monastery. Some of the religious of the community, however, were relatives of the members of the political faction considered responsible for Paolo's death, and so as not to tempt the harmony of the convent, Rita's request for admission was denied. Fortunately, she was not to be easily dissuaded from following what she knew to be God's plan for her life. She implored her three patron saints--John the Baptist, Augustine, and Nicholas of Tolentino--to assist her, and she set about the task of establishing peace between the hostile parties of Cascia with such success that her entry into the monastery was assured.