

Parrish and Sanctuary

Santa Rita da Cascia

Her life —

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Feast of St. Rita —

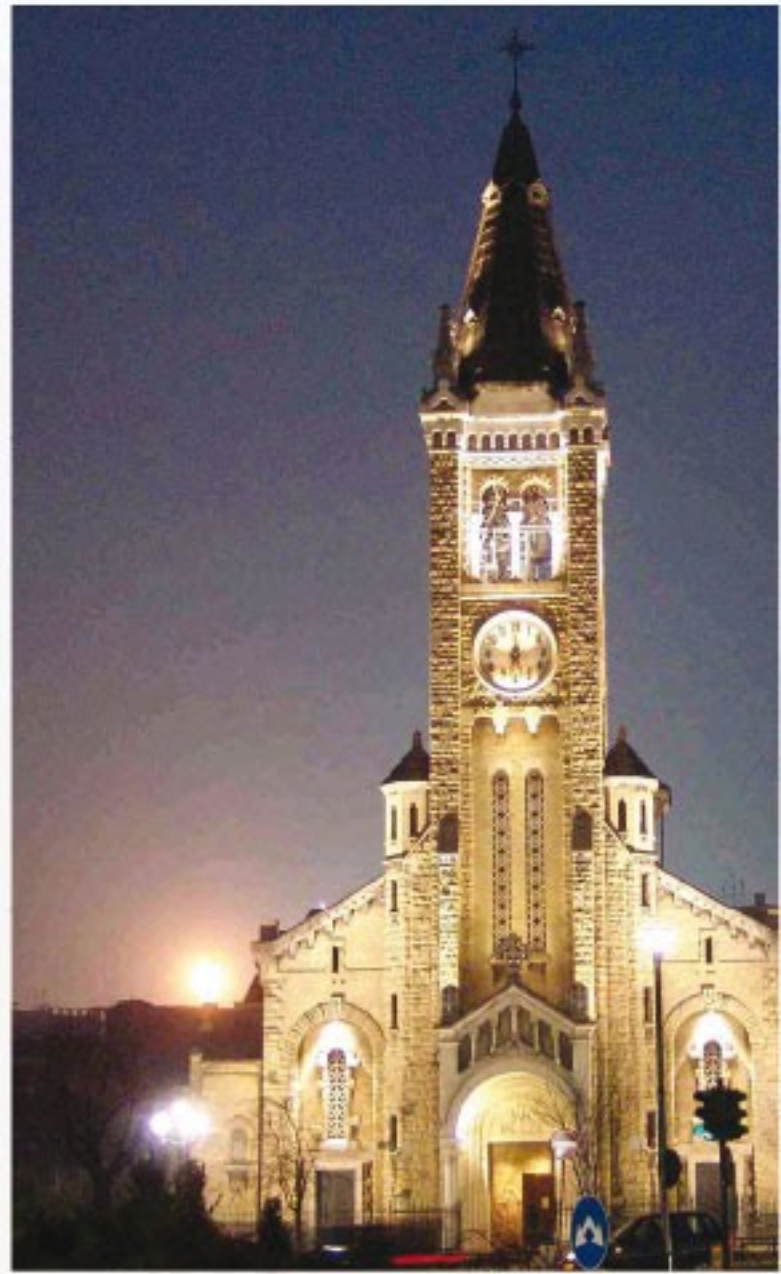
Information —

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The Sanctuary
is a meeting
point with the
Lord of Life,
where people
go to receive
“the Grace”,
even before
receiving
“a grace”.



St. Rita's life

Margherita Lotti, Antonio Lotti and Amata Ferri's daughter, is born in 1371 (some people say in 1381) in Roccaporena, a small suburb 5 km away from Cascia. In a climate of fragile peace, her parents act as peacemakers.

Margherita marries Paolo Mancini, a young man from the suburb, known for his strong and impulsive nature. She supports with patience all his mistreatments, without complaining. After their sons' births, Giangiaco-
Antonio and Paolo Maria, and thanks to her persistence in replying with sweetness to his violence, Rita succeeds in changing her husband's personality over time, making him more tractable. Her children are brought up by their mother. Unfortunately, they also absorb ideals and rules of Cascia community, where revenge was considered to be justifiable.

In 1406, Paolo is killed. Rita runs on-site, but she arrives only in time to witness her husband's last breath and to hide in a hurry his blood-stained shirt, so that her sons, seeing it, will not end up pursuing revenge. Rita forgives from her heart and will never reveal the killer's names. A much bigger fear distresses her: the fear that her sons can become victims or protagonists of that triggered spiral of hate. That explains her prayers to God, in order to avoid that her children will not soil themselves with such atrocities and to avert from them the wish to avenge their father. Both young men will die very soon, one after the other, probably because of the plague.



After her husband's murder and both her children's tragic deaths, Rita seeks consolation in praying. At the age of circa 36 years, Rita knocks on the door of the Monastery of Saint Mary Magdeleine. After many troubles, in 1407, she starts her new life: she receives the habit and the Rule of Saint Augustine, that she professes and lives in her forty years of permanence in the Monastery until her death.

Within the Monastery walls, Rita asks for and gets from the Beloved, as a pledge of love, to share His suffering in a deeper way. One day, when she is deep in prayer, in 1425 she ask the Lord to share with her His sufferings: one thorn comes off the Crucifix and sticks into her forehead and soul.

In the winter before her death, Rita is seriously ill and spends long periods in her cell. It is likely that she is homesick and that the memories of Paolo and her children are very strong in her heart. Maybe Rita, who has always prayed for their souls and realizes her death is approaching, feels a pain in her heart: a wish to know if the Lord has welcomed her suffering and prayers as an atonement for her dear ones' sins. She asks for a sign from the Lord and she gets an answer. She asks a relative, who came to visit her, to go to her vegetable garden in Roccaporena to pick a rose and two figs.

It is a cold snowy January. Her relative goes to the vegetable

garden and finds a rose and two figs, as requested, which she picks and carries to Rita.

After suffering a lot, Rita arrives at the dawn of her heavenly meeting in the night between the 21st and the 22nd of May 1447 (or 1457).⁴⁷ (or 1457).

St. Rita's message

St. Rita has handed down her message without writing anything, but through the concrete example of everyday life, respecting others and the creation. The number of testimonies of miracles that took place through her intercession is so large, that she is proclaimed "saint of impossible cases" by the believers, because, as Rita taught us, if we trust in God, all can happen. This little great woman left traces of numerous miraculous deeds, both during her life and after her death: the testimonies of received graces are thousands.

The way which Rita suggests is made of humility,



sacrifice, listening to others and searching a dialogue. It is not easy, but it is the only way that brings us closer to God and makes all feasible. Her example of simplicity and faith in God reaches us, today, to remind us that we can achieve peace only if we build it holding a dialogue.

Sanctuary of Santa Rita in Turin



In 1916, when World War I was raging, father Giovanni Balloire, a young priest in uniform, got in touch with the area of “Barriera di Orbassano”, where he would later build the Sanctuary of Santa Rita da Cascia. In 1919 he was discharged and sent as vice-curate to the Parrish of St. Secondo in Turin. In that church there was an altar devoted to the Saint from Roccapiorena and in that community the devotion had started the “Compagnia dei Devoti di Santa Rita”. On the 17th of July 1926, Monsignor Balloire signed a contract with the Municipality of Turin to buy the first 5000 square meters of land. Then, he looked for an architect: he chose Giulio Valotti.



Original chapel

On the 19th of May 1927, Monsignor Pinaridi blessed the beginning of the works. The ingenious of the architect Valotti was able to transform the original chapel into a jewel of art and devotion.

The Saint's painting, painted on that occasion by Giovanni Crida, was moved on the 15th of April 1928 from the church of St. Secondo to the new chapel, in procession on a triumphal cart along Turin streets and avenues in front of an impressive crowd.

Sanctuary

On the 20th of June 1929, Monsignor Pinaridi blessed solemnly the area where the first excavation for the church foundations had started. The style will be a happy combination



of the Romanesque and Medieval styles.

The magnificent bell tower predominates the church facade and the two side walls lean on it. A secondary entrance is in each of the side walls and the big main gate is in the center, at the base of the bell tower. The external decorations consist in stone blocks from Credaro. The building works were terminated on the vigil of the feast of St. Rita in 1934 and pilgrims could admire it in all its monumental beauty. Five bells were provided to give voice to the tower bell. The bronze bells were cast by the foundry Achille Mazzola in Valduggia.

Processional statue

The manufacturing of the big statue of St. Rita with its triumphal cart was promoted on the 29th of June 1933, to be used during the solemn procession on May 22th. For its manufacturing, silver objects offered by worshipers were melted, refining the silver till an average 900. The circa 2.5 m tall and 200 kg heavy statue was realized based on the sculptor Luigi Aghemo's drawings.

Mosaics

The mosaics, which embellish the sanctuary's decorations, were realized by Casa Giulio Castaman in Venice based on Carlo Morgari's drawings.

Mosaics are also found on the sturdy pillars, which support the dome, that is stretching up towards the sky. In the presbytery, the theological (faith, hope and charity) and cardinal virtues (justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance) are shown. On the other pillars, the Holy Spirit's gifts and other less known, but not less important, virtues (sorrow, penitence, meditation, gratitude, mercifulness, mildness, kindness, patience, obedience, work, poverty, humility, modesty, vigilance, chastity, martyrdom, sacrifice) are represented.

High altar

Behind the high altar the canopy stands on 4 columns made of Siena alabaster and its upper element is made of Botticino stone with small columns, arches and friezes of alabaster and onyx. In 1940 the altar was decorated with a



“Group of Angels in Glory” made of gold-plated wood, made by Mussner di Ortisei and ready to accommodate the new Santa Rita’s painting, a work by Giovanni Crida.



Decorative work

In 1939, a new protagonist in the history of the sanctuary shows up: the painter Piero Dalle Ceste.

He starts working on decorating the vault of the apsidal calotte. The Cross is in the center, the Virgin Mary and the other Marys are on one side and St. John and the soldier Longinus on the other side. Christ rises to form a central group with the Father and the Holy Spirit. At the base of the apsidal calotte a mosaic is located, it was carried out based on Dalle Ceste’s cartoons: twelve lambs are moving toward the Lamb of the Apocalypse standing on the book with seven seals.

In the vault above the presbytery, the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is painted.

Another mosaic is located on the arch near the sacristy, again based on a Dalle Ceste’s cartoon: the lunette is dedicated to St. John the Baptist.

Prof. Dalle Ceste worked then in the central nave. St. Aloysius de Gonzaga, St. Tarcisius and St. Pancras, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Lucia and St. Agnes are represented in the lunettes; groups of angels that are playing an instrument, singing or carrying symbols are in the vaults above them. “Sacraments” is the guiding theme of the frescoes in the vaults of the aisles.

Again, Dalle Ceste painted the winged angels with symbols of the Beatitudes in the eight sections of the top, and four Great Fathers of the Western Church: St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Gregory the Great. Among them, on big consoles, the four Evangelists’ symbols are made of gold-plated stucco. At the end of the decorating works, more than 15000 stars and about 250 angels were visible in the vaults of the Sanctuary.



Confessionals

In 1940, six confessionals were placed in the church aisles: they were made of walnut by the Salesian Institute Rebaudengo. The bas-reliefs on their panels were realized by the sculptor Giacomo Vincenzo Mussner from Ortisei. In 1997 those confessionals were modified in conformity to the new needs of the penitence celebrations, respecting however the original look and structure.

Sacristy

1940 witnesses also the arranging of the sacristy, with the furnishing being finished with walnut carved pieces and a big marble washbasin. A new picture of St. Rita, that was ordered from Olivero Pistoletto Ettore, was placed here.

Chapel of the Sacred Heart

Today, the Blessed Sacrament is kept here. The floor is decorated with mosaics and the walls are covered with inlaid marble. On the altar, a tablet by Dalle Ceste, representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus, surrounded by angels and saints (St. John the Baptist, St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and St. Mary Magdalene).

Side altars

Between 1952 and 1953, the altars and the mosaic decorations in the transept were finished. Four big mosaics represent the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and, together with the stained-glass windows, they form the complete cycle of Jesus' Nativity and childhood. The mosaics on the sides of the Virgin Mary's altar represent the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and the Visitation to St. Elizabeth. The mosaics on the sides of the Joseph's altar (now replaced by the new organ) represent the Flight into Egypt and Jesus speaking to the Doctor of the Temple. On the stained-glass windows of the transept, the predominant theme is the Holy Family: the Nativity is represented

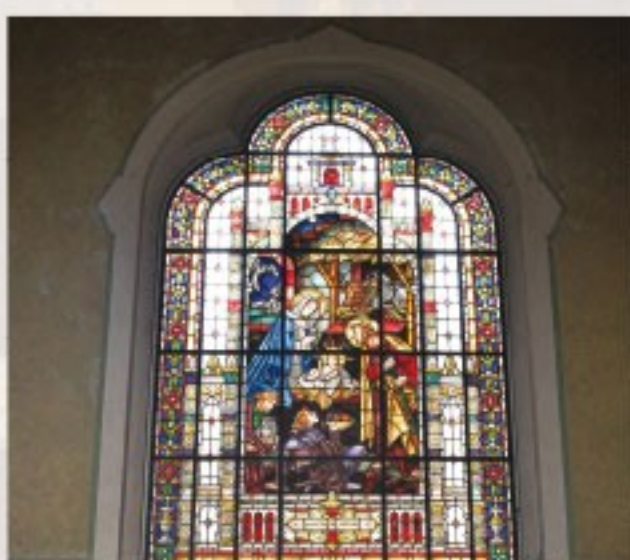


on the right and the Holy Family at home in Nazareth on the left.

The altarpieces are canvases by Dalle Ceste. On the altarpiece on the right, the Virgin Consolata, patron of Turin, is represented together with Saints who are connected to the history of the city. On St. Joseph's altarpiece, the artist painted the protector of workers, while he is showing the Child. After removing the altar, such painting was placed on the aisle wall leading to the sacristy, on the side of the high altar.

Stained-glass windows

1953 witnesses the installation of the historiated stained-glass windows representing St. Rita's life (her birth, child Rita's charity, betrothed Rita, Rita wife and mother, Rita carried by Saints into the convent, consolation and help to the poor, obedience and sacrifices, the devotion to the Crucifix, the rose that bloomed in the snow).



Votive pictures

Since the beginning of the history of the sanctuary, believers brought an expression of their thanks to St. Rita through votive hearts and pictures. At the beginning the hearts were placed in the Chapel of Graces, from which they were removed at the moment of their restoration. On the other hand, paintings of different making adorn the gallery behind the high altar.



The new organ

On the 14th of March 1990, the new organ, that was built by the society Zanin in Codroipo (Ud), was inaugurated, replacing the original one, of which only the front pipes were left in the old site. The new organ was installed on the left side of the transept, after removing St. Joseph's altar.





The most recent works

In 1993, restoration works started to conform the Sanctuary to the norms of the conciliar liturgical reform.

removed. The large front bannister of the high altar was moved near the main entrance to perform the task of ideal separation between the entrance and the area reserved to praying and meditation. The old high altar was modified and forms the wall against which chairs for the priests lean.

altar is made of a block of Greek marble. The marble carving shows the Mystical Body of Christ, the “new mankind” arising from the Eucharist and, among them, the “new woman” St. Rita. The ambo is also made of a block of marble and the Greek letters alpha and omega are carved there, which letters, in the Apocalypse, mean Jesus, Beginning and End of every-

thing. The new baptismal font, made of a block of Greek marble, is in front of the Virgin Consolata’s altar, to facilitate the communal celebration.

At last, it was decided to provide the Sanctuary with bronze entrance portals. Jesus, the Good Sheppard, is represented on the central gate (2003), the right door (2009) is dedicated to St. Rita, and Mary under the Cross is represented on the left door (2011). The task was assigned to the Centro d’arte AVE and was realized by the Art Foundry MAF in Seggiano di Pioltello (MI).



May 22nd: Feast of St. Rita

After a preparation of 15 St. Rita's Thursdays and a novena, a great crowd of believers participates to the feast of St. Rita every year. After receiving a blessed rose, believers take it home and give it to a sick person as a sign of St. Rita's intercession and God's blessing. On the eve of the feast the St. Rita's "vigil of the blessed transit" occurs. The feast is then crown by a solemn evening procession with the Patron's silver statue.

Sanctuary magazine

"**Gli esempi e le grazie di Santa Rita da Cascia**" connects and informs the whole big family of St. Rita's devotees, who are connected to the Sanctuary in Turin. A subscription shipment can be requested at the Secretary's office or per e-mail at segreteria@srita.it.

Prayer book

"**Santa Rita noi ti preghiamo**" is a booklet that collects prayers to St. Rita, together with the rosary, the Via Crucis, and a selection of prayers for all circumstances in life. It can be bought in the Sanctuary or online at www.srita.it.

Santa Rita Association

All devotees may subscribe to the Associazione Santa Rita, an agreement of mutual prayers. Every Thursday, all living and dead members are remembered during the Mess at 10 am. Those who wish it, can subscribe at the sacristy or the secretary's office of the Sanctuary.

Secretary's office of the Sanctuary

Located in via Vernazza 38, its opening hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm; Saturdays from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. Here books and booklets about St. Rita, godly books, rosaries, souvenirs, and religious objects are sold.

Opening hours:

Working days: 7:00 am-12:00 pm and 3:00 pm-7:30 pm
Holidays: 7:00 am-13:00 pm and 3:00 pm-10:00 pm

Mess times:

Working days: 7:15 am * - 8:00 am - 10:00 am
5:00 pm * - 6:30 pm
Saturdays and Vigils: 7:15 am * - 8:00 am - 10:00 am
6:30 pm (Vigil)
Holidays: 7:30 am - 9:00 am - 10:30 am - 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm *
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm
(*suspended during summer)

Confessions:

Working days: 9:30 am-11:30 am and 4:00 pm-6:00 pm
Holidays: 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 4:00 pm-8:00 pm

Visit: www.srita.it – E-mail: segreteria@srita.it