

# Saint Rita Of Cascia

## Her Life, with Devotions in her Honour.

By a devotee.

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SAINT RITA OF CASCIA. Advocate of the impossible.

PRAYER TO SAINT RITA.

O glorious Saint Rita, who shared in a marvellous manner the sorrowful Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, obtain for me the grace to suffer in patience the miseries of this life, and be my refuge in all my necessities. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father... (Three times).

Her birth.

SAINT RITA OF CASCIA is universally called the 'Saint of the Impossible', because her intercession has been found effectual with God in most desperate and hopeless cases. Born in Rocca Porena in the diocese of Spoleto, Italy, about the year 1381, Rita came to her parents, already advanced in age, as the answer to many years of prayer. The piety and charity of her father and mother were so well known that they were called the 'peace-makers' of their little village.

On the day after Rita's baptism, as she lay in her cradle, a swarm of pure white bees alighted on her face and went in and out of her slightly opened mouth, as if to take honey from her lips. Doubtless this was to typify the sweetness of word and manner which later was to win for God so many souls, and the comfort she was to diffuse throughout the world.

Example for virgins.

Rita's parents gave her a good home training. At an early age, she felt drawn to God, and spent many hours in the parish church. She did not care for the pastimes and sports of youth, and was free from vanity and love of fine clothes. Rita's obedience to her parents was remarkable. At a tender age, Rita began to perform bodily penances, particularly fasting. She gave alms to the poor, for whom she always showed most loving compassion. When only ten years old, she felt drawn to retirement and to a cloistered life, but love for her aged parents prevented her from making known her desires.

With her parents' permission, Rita fitted up a small oratory where she prayed and meditated. In this solitude, her love for Jesus Crucified and her compassion for his bitter sufferings daily became more ardent. But after a year, her duty of assisting her parents forced her from her loved solitude.

The desire to join a community of Augustinian nuns at Cascia was daily growing in Rita's mind. But, pious though they were, her parents were deeply grieved at the thought of this separation. Tearful pleadings and the weight of their parental authority prevailed; they even induced her to marry. Hitherto Rita had been a model of virginal purity, filial love, reverence and obedience. She

had now to follow another path, to become a bright example of virtue to all who lived in the married state.

#### Model for mothers.

The young man selected as Rita's husband was passionate and quick-tempered, one well suited to try the patience and virtue of a saint. Just a few days after their marriage, he began to ill-treat her. It was only her love for the Crucified One that enabled her to bear this heavy cross. Sweetness of temper was the weapon she used to combat her husband's cruelty. After many years, her virtue and long-suffering at length won her husband's heart and brought unity and love into their home.

Gradually, to her great anxiety, Rita noticed that her two sons had inherited their father's quarrelsome disposition. She spared neither vigilance, words, nor punishments to curb their self-willed dispositions. She performed penances for their welfare, and was unwearying in acts of charity towards her neighbour.

#### Pattern for widows.

After eighteen years of married life, Rita's husband was barbarously slain a short distance from their home. Grief filled Rita's heart, particularly because of the uncertainty of his readiness to meet his Judge. But soon, her trust in divine providence triumphed, and she bowed in resignation to God's design. She generously pardoned the murderers of her husband and sought pardon for them from divine mercy.

To her consternation, Rita discovered that her two sons, though young in years, were plotting vengeance against those who had murdered their father. In spite of all her advice and solicitude, the sorrowing mother could not touch her children's vengeful hearts. In her grief, she turned to God and besought him either to change her children's hearts or to take them from this world before they could accomplish the vengeance they were plotting.

Rita's prayer was answered. Within a year both sons died, and, though touched by natural sorrow, she thanked God for taking them away from the dangers of sin and the risk of eternal damnation.

Rita's life as a widow was short. During that time, she spent herself in works of charity for her neighbour, in penances and in fasting. She lived in retirement and wore coarse mourning garments. Her former burning desire to enter the cloister now grew more vehement. She sought admission among the Augustinian nuns of Cascia, but was several times rejected. It was not their custom to receive widows.

#### Miraculous entry into the convent.

One night, Saint John the Baptist, to whom Rita had been devoted from childhood, Saint Augustine and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino appeared to Rita. They conducted her to the convent of Cascia. Bolted gates and doors opened at their touch, and they left Rita in the chapel of the Augustinian nuns. What was the surprise of the Sisters the next morning on finding the oft-repulsed widow within their enclosure! Her miraculous entry being too evident to doubt God's designs in her regard, they now accepted her unanimously.

#### The perfect religious.

In her religious life, Rita excelled in the perfect observance of her Rule and the holy vows, in charity for God and her sisters, in profound humility and sacrificial labour. Love of our suffering

Saviour urged Rita to perform heroic penances. She possessed the spirit of prayer and contemplation in a high degree. In her cell, she devised a little mountain with a cross to remind her of our Saviour's torments in his Passion. With tearful compassion, she followed our Lord, in spirit, to Calvary and to death.

Miraculous wound.

In 1443, when Rita attained her sixty-second year, God placed his seal upon her merits by a singular privilege. Once when the holy nun heard a sermon on the sufferings of our divine Saviour, compassion so filled her that she went to her cell to weep bitterly before the crucifix. She besought her Beloved, crowned with thorns, to let her share his torture. Thereupon one of the thorns from the crucifix detached itself and penetrated the left side of Rita's forehead. She swooned from pain. This wound festered and emitted a foul odour, making it necessary for Rita to live apart from the community. It was humiliating but she bore it with joy until death and was happy in her solitude. When Rita wished to go to Rome to gain the jubilee indulgence in 1450, the wound healed almost instantly, and after her return reopened, proving its miraculous origin.

During the last five years of her life, the saint was bedridden most of the time. Once an acquaintance asked if she wished anything. 'Yes', Rita answered, 'go to the garden of my house, at Rocca Porena; pluck a rose there and bring it to me'. It was in the month of January during the rigours of winter. Amazed, the woman went and to her utter astonishment, found a full-blown red rose amidst the frozen bushes. She hastened to bring it to Rita, who joyfully took it as coming from the hands of her divine Spouse.

Another time Rita bade a woman bring her two figs from the same garden. Actually finding two ripe figs on a leafless tree, the woman plucked them with awe and pleasure and carried them to the sick nun. The religious and the people of the vicinity, on hearing of this second wonder praised God and conceived a great veneration for the dying saint.

Three days before Rita's death, Our Lord, accompanied by the Blessed Virgin, appeared to her and promised her the joys of heaven. Rita died May 22, 1457, aged seventy-six years, forty-four of which had been spent in the religious life.

Miracles after death.

Crowds hastened to venerate Rita's body before its burial. The noxious wound in the forehead now shone like a brilliant jewel and exhaled a heavenly fragrance. A close relative of Rita's confidently leaned over the holy body and at once recovered the use of her arms, which had been paralysed for many years! Many other astounding miracles were wrought before the remains were entombed. Rita was solemnly beatified on July 16, 1628.

In late years, devotion to Saint Rita has increased, and she has won for herself the title: Saint of the Impossible. Many instances are related of how the saint rendered aid in the last adversities. Conversions of hardened sinners and of those who had led dissolute lives are no less numerous than cures of bodily ills.

Canonisation of Saint Rita.

The universal devotion to Saint Rita and the many wonders wrought through her intercession enkindled in the hearts of the thousands of devotees of the humble Augustinian nun the ardent

desire to see her elevated to the honours of the altar. Great was their joy when on May 24, 1900 the Decree of Canonisation was published. Her feast is celebrated on May 22.

In conclusion, we quote these memorable words from the Decree: 'Saint Rita of Cascia as maiden, wife, mother and nun was so pleasing and so beloved by Jesus Christ that he deigned to signalise her not only with the seal of his love, but especially with the seal of his Passion. Saint Rita merited this great privilege on account of her singular humility, her complete detachment and her admirable penance. However, the virtues which made Saint Rita particularly pleasing to God were her love for her neighbour and her devotion to Jesus Crucified.'

#### DEVOTIONS IN HONOUR OF SAINT RITA.

#### NOVENA PRAYERS TO SAINT RITA.

One or several of the following may be used as a novena.

O holy protectress of those who are in utmost need! Shining as a star of hope in the midst of darkness, in patience and fortitude, like the patriarch Job; scourge of devils; health of the sick; deliverer of those in extreme need; wonder of saints and model of all states! With confident trust and firmly united to the adorable will of God, I implore your help, through the merits of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and in particular of that painful Crown of Thorns which you contemplated with tender devotion. Through the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and your own graces and virtues, I implore you heart and soul to obtain my earnest petition, if it be for the greater glory of God and my salvation, (there make your request).

Guide and purify my intentions, O holy protectress and most dear advocate, that I may obtain the pardon of all my sins and the grace to persevere daily, as you did, in walking with courage, generosity, and unwavering fidelity upon the heavenward path on which Our Lord desires to lead me. Amen.

#### INVOCATIONS TO SAINT RITA.

Saint Rita, advocate of the impossible, pray for us.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father... (Three times).

#### PRAYER TO SAINT RITA.

Holy patroness of those in need, Saint Rita, so humble, pure and patient, whose pleadings with your divine Spouse are irresistible, obtain for us from our Crucified Lord our request. (Mention it.) Be propitious towards us for the greater glory of God, and we promise to honour you and to sing your praises forever. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father... (Three times).

#### LITANY IN HONOUR OF SAINT RITA.

For private use only.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father Almighty, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, who said: 'Ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' have mercy on us.

God the Holy Ghost, Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, infinite in power, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, who never refuses a petition, pray for us.

Immaculate virgin, Queen of heaven and earth, pray for us.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us.

Holy Angels, spirits of humility, pray for us.

Holy Principalities, protectors of religious communities, pray for us.

Holy Virtues, angels of fortitude, pray for us.

Holy Cherubim, angels of light, pray for us.

Saint Rita, advocate of the impossible, pray for us.

Saint Rita, consecrated to God, pray for us.

Saint Rita, bride of the suffering Saviour, pray for us.

Saint Rita, filled with compassion for the sufferings of Christ, pray for us.

Saint Rita, crowned by an angel with a crown of thorns, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who bore the wounds of His mysterious crown on your forehead, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who firmly trusted in the loving mercy of Jesus, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who importuned the dying Saviour with ardent supplications, pray for us.

Saint Rita, who never doubted a gracious answer to your prayer, pray for us.

That we may renounce all self-love, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That we may confidently trust in the promise of Jesus, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That the enemies of our salvation may be put to confusion, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That we may ever perfectly fulfil the will of God, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That our inclinations to evil may be destroyed, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That the Faith in all its purity may be spread over our land, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That holy zeal may fill our hearts, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That we may infuse a holy love for chastity into all who come in contact with us, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That in all our actions and omissions we may endeavour to promote a tender charity, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That we may be delivered from all avarice, vainglory and rash judgment, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That great saints may rise in our land, who will edify the people and dispel the darkness of unbelief, pray for us, Saint Rita.

That we may be delivered from all interior enemies, pray for us, Saint Rita.

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Versicle. Pray for us, Saint Rita.

Response. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

O God, who in Your infinite tenderness deign to hearken to the prayer of Saint Rita and to grant to her supplication that which seems impossible to human foresight, skill and efforts, in reward for her compassionate love and firm reliance upon Your promise; have pity upon our adversity and succour us in our calamities, that unbelievers may know that You are the recompenser of the humble, the defence of the helpless and the strength of those who trust in You. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

#### PRAYER TO SAINT RITA.

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