



St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastor

Celebrating the Present Graced Moment as the Journey Continues

Dear Parishioners,

This month's issue of the parish newsletter is dedicated to our patroness, St. Rita of Cascia, and the various ways in which we are invoking her intercession in the life of our parish and even in the architecture and planning of our parish campus. May 22 is the date on the Roman Calendar for the celebration of the Optional Memorial of St. Rita of Cascia. This year, the feast is not observed liturgically because it falls on Sunday – this year, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. But that doesn't mean that St. Rita Parish can't throw a party in her honor anyway! So, let's do it!

In this newsletter, you will find an article about Mayfest, sponsored by St. Rita Fine Arts with encouragement and support of the parish. The keystone of the Mayfest festivities will be the world premiere of the oratorio on the life of St. Rita – commissioned by St. Rita Fine Arts and the parish – *A Rose in Winter: The life of St. Rita of Cas-*

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Celebrating the Present Graced Moment *continued from front cover*

cia. Leading up to the premiere, Dr. Alfred Calabrese, Director of Music at St. Rita, will provide means for parishioners to better understand the oratorio and its connection to the life of St. Rita.

You will also read an article about how the re-design and landscaping of the parish campus, especially the redesigned plaza, were inspired by the story of St. Rita's life. In the article, Kent Mendenhall is interviewed as lead landscape architect for the project. Kent was an architect with TBG Partners, the landscape architecture firm hired as consultants for our building project. As part of his work consulting on behalf of the parish, he did extensive research on the life of St. Rita. It is actually Kent's research and subsequent presentation of plans for the parish landscaping that have served as inspiration to the leadership of the parish, which led to establishment of the Spiritual Life Committee. And we all know the work of that committee – including our St. Rita Parish Prayer, which fits in so providentially with the Jubilee Year of Mercy – which is ongoing in developing our parish's spirituality around that of our beloved Patroness.

Speaking of St. Rita, an incredible bas-relief has been commissioned by the parish to be placed on the east side of the bridge entrance to the plaza across from the parish administration lobby. An article in this newsletter describes the process that brought about that beautiful work of art. We will be blessed in coming months to receive the wooden mold used to cast

the bronze bas-relief. That mold has been painted by the sculpture firm in Switzerland and upon its arrival, we will decide where to locate that wooden version of the bas-relief – perhaps someplace in the Parish Commons building.

On Sunday, May 22, we are planning a Parish Feast celebration with food and fellowship on our newly designed plaza. At that time, the parish and school staff will host an open house of the new building housing parish and school administrative offices, the youth and young adult facility, enrichment classrooms for the school, Pre-K classrooms and parish nursery, meeting rooms and conference room. The weekend's festivities will culminate in the parish's 5:30 Mass, celebrated by Bishop Kevin Farrell, Bishop of Dallas, followed by the Dedication/Blessing of the new building. Please consult the normal parish communication sources for more definite times regarding the Dedication and Sunday's festivities.

The God of Mercy has blessed us so abundantly at St. Rita. May we continue to be built into a "community of mercy, compassion and forgiveness." But let's celebrate the present graced moment even as the journey continues!

God bless you,


Fr. Bob Coerver



Our Patroness Inspires Landscape Design

When the TBG Partners undertook the new landscaping project at St. Rita, they found themselves turning to the faith journey of our patroness for their inspiration.

Kent Mendenhall was the principal-in-charge for the project and led the design work with the team. He now is working independently as a consultant.

"The TBG Partners are very creative with design and in our ability to create spaces," he says. "We felt this was more of a calling than just creating a beautiful space. Our thoughts were, what makes it unique, in a sense, is what is something that the parish, church and school can hold as their own story?"

Kent says as a Lutheran, he didn't know St. Rita's story, but he researched her life to find out what her gifts were and what made her unique.

"By learning about her and her ability to keep steadfast in her faith, she was given cards to play in life and how she responded to them, meant there is a story there," he says. "The journey she took in life, and her steadfast faith, was the design for our landscaping plan."

The designers created a path beginning at the parking lot and terminating at the church. From that



The visual underlying cross panels in the path leading to the church are visible in this rendition of the plaza. The panels provide a visual direction for locations parishioners may choose to visit on the parish campus.

path, the walker can make decisions about where to go – to the school, to a prayer garden, and so on.

Those working with Kent on the project were Seth Atwell, Project Director; Jodi House, Project Manager; and Matt Bukholt, Site Observation.

"The aspect was a very direct path to travel, from the lot to the church," Kent says. "There is a little narration about it. For the visitor or guest coming to the campus, does the path need to be that linear? It is tied to her journey."

The team presented the plan to Fr. Bob, who was enthusiastic about it and grasped the concept.

The long-standing drainage creek on the property was brought into the design as a means to make a baptismal crossing in the walker's journey.

"It allowed the people to view the waterway differently," Kent says. "We made it a visual for the buildings and walkway. People can view it as a meaningful threshold."

The walkway also incorporates carpet bands set perpendicular to

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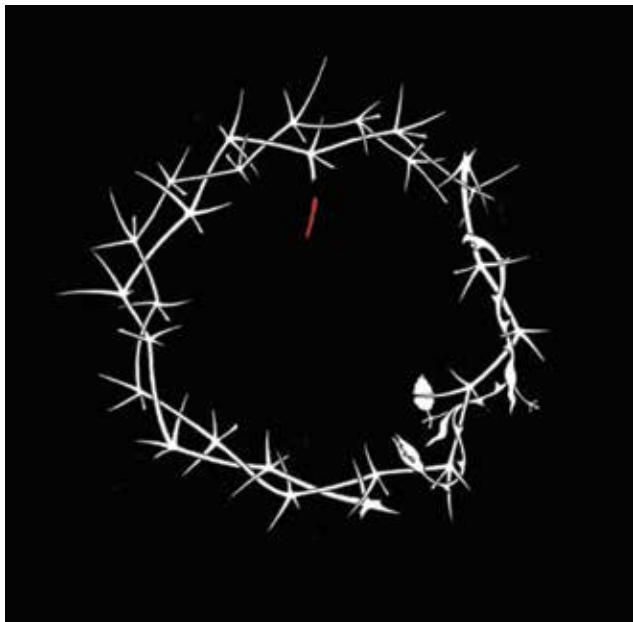
Three-Day Conference Brings Pa

Across the world, Catholic parishes bear the names of countless saints – but how often do we stop and think of the person behind the name? Here at St. Rita, our parish is planning a three-day conference from May 19-21, called “High Above the Stars: Sainthood, Beauty and Catholic Artistic Expression.” This conference will delve into the life of St. Rita of Cascia, and how her example can resonate in our day-to-day lives. In addition, the conference will conclude with a concert, premiering a special musical composition reflecting St. Rita’s life. Whether you attend the conference, concert or both, it will be an unforgettable experience you won’t want to miss!

“This whole project began three years ago from a desire from our pastor to make St. Rita more prominent in our lives,” says Al Calabrese, Director of Music. “As practicing Catholics, we need to be constantly educating ourselves about our faith

and traditions. Sainthood and beauty are two important elements of that tradition, and we have some wonderful experts on hand to help us in our faith journey.”

St. Rita, who lived in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, endured many difficulties in her youth. She lived in an Italian town with violent political factions, and suffered the death of her husband at the hands of a rival family. In addition, she also lost both of her twin sons to the plague. However, Rita was able to both forgive and publicly reconcile with her husband’s murderers, brought about peace in her town, and eventually fulfilled her childhood dream of entering religious life as an Augustine nun. She is now known as the patron of impossible causes, making her an ideal patron for those with difficult marriage situations, as well as those surrounded by hardship and violence.



This icon of the crown of thorns interwoven with a living branch from a rosebush was specially commissioned for the project from Catholic artist Daniel Mitsui.

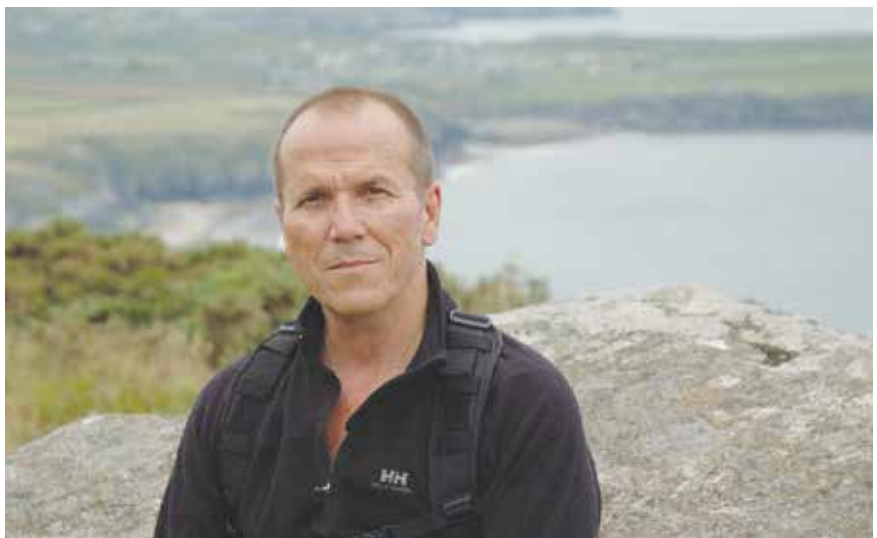
	ST. RITA CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESENTS HIGH ABOVE THE STARS
An illuminative conference featuring a WORLD PREMIERE A ROSE IN WINTER: The life of Saint Rita of Cascia <small>A new oratorio by composer Frank La Rocca & librettist Matthew Lickona</small>	
	BEAUTY SAINTHOOD SACRED MUSIC & ART
May 19 - 21, 2016 REGISTER NOW! www.saintritaconference.com	

Parish Namesake to the Forefront

“There are many elements of St. Rita’s life that resonate today,” Al says. “It’s always a good time to call attention to people like St. Rita – who have lived lives of heroic virtue in uncertain, tumultuous times – to teach the power of forgiveness in reconciling long-established tensions in families and communities.”

At this conference, various speakers will present on topics that will tie the life of St. Rita together with the beauty of Catholic art and music. Through these presentations, parishioners will be able to gain a greater appreciation of the power of art to evangelize, as well as how all aspects of ministry and the faith are linked. Conference presenters will include the former director of the National Shrine to St. Rita in Philadelphia, Very Rev. Michael F. DiGregorio, OSA; as well as David Clayton of Catholic website New Liturgical Movement. Two of the presenters, Drs. Ron and Kathryn Rombs, are also parishioners here at St. Rita.

The concert that will conclude the conference will feature the world premiere of *A Rose in Winter: The life of St. Rita of Cascia*, an oratorio – or large musical composition – about the events of St. Rita’s life. In July 2013, Al reached out to his friend, composer Frank La Rocca, to compose the piece – they then reached out to San Diego-based librettist Matthew Lickona to create the text.



Composer Frank La Rocca

The final result is an epic poem set to music about the life of St. Rita, seen through the eyes of two modern-day pilgrims in Cascia, Italy.

On Saturday, May 21 – the day before St. Rita’s feast day on May 22 – the piece is set to be performed for the first time. The composition has been written for a chorus, a chamber orchestra, an organ and four soloists – Rita (soprano), pilgrim Fideo (tenor), pilgrim Tomas (baritone) and Christ

(bass-baritone). Each movement tells a story, and takes place on a different day of Holy Week. First, an event associated with that particular day is recalled – this is followed by dialogue between the pilgrims, and finally, a flashback to St. Rita’s life.

“In her role as mother, peacemaker and religious, and with her notable experiences of loss, suffering, rejection, perseverance, and final reward, she is truly a saint for our times,” Al says.

For registered parishioners of St. Rita, the three-day registration fee for the conference is \$30 before May 1 and \$40 afterwards. For the general public, three-day registration is \$55 before May 1 and \$75 afterwards. The closing concert premiering *A Rose in Winter: The life of St. Rita of Cascia*, on May 21 at 8 p.m., is free of charge – regardless of conference attendance. All are invited to attend!

“It Meets and Exceeds Our Expe



Process photos shared from the Stuflessor Studio



A new addition to St. Rita’s campus is a sculpture of our patroness that stands over six feet tall. It is an arresting artwork that underscores this saint’s strength and devotion to God, as well as the accessibility of St. Rita who, as a daughter and mother, fulfilled daily familial responsibilities.

“One objective was for people going through the entry to have an awareness of her not just the first few times, but the 100th or 1000th time,” says Charles Phipps, Building Committee member. “This might cause some to reflect on her life as they walk across the plaza to church.”

Four years ago, Fr. Bob met with parishioner, architect and Building Committee member Andrew Bennett to discuss his idea for a bas-relief sculpture of St. Rita. At first, they had envisioned the sculpture as part of the parking structure, a visual symbol upon arriving.

About seven sculptors and artists responded to a request

from Mike Quint, another Building Committee member, for proposals by submitting a sketch of St. Rita and a written commentary. The Building Committee selected the proposal submitted by the Stuflessor Studio in Northern Italy.

“Mike, Gerard Luisi and I were asked to work with the studio to develop further specific design requirements,” Charles says. “A series of telephone calls and iterations of the sketch – photos of a small clay model were used – took place over six to eight weeks.”

The sculpture’s depiction of St. Rita evolved during its creation. Initially, St. Rita appeared youthful and wore the habit of an Augustinian nun. Then, the features of her face were altered to emphasize a mature woman and to reflect the trials she overcame and her deep faith.

“The burdens that she endured would crush most people,” Charles says. “At the age of 12, she wanted to enter the monastery.

“We wanted the statue to be relevant to the every day lives of the parishioners as well as being historical representative of the period – early 1400s – when she lived. The base of the statue was changed and has a single winter rose. In addition, bees were added to the rose bush.” – Charles Phipps

Expectations" *St. Rita's New Sculpture*

Instead, her parents arranged a marriage with another prominent family in Cascia."

St. Rita's husband was abusive and eventually murdered by another family as part of an ongoing blood vendetta between the families. She had two sons, and after her husband's death, they were placed in the home of his brother who taught the sons to avenge their father's death. She prayed that this would not take place, and within a few years, both sons died of disease.

"Thereupon she reapplied to the monastery for admittance, but she was refused as the monastery did not want a member associated with blood feuds," Charles says. "Over the next years, she got both families to renounce the vendetta. St. Rita reapplied to the monastery and was admitted at age of 35."

Eventually, the nun's habit that was going to clothe St. Rita in the sculpture was set aside, and in the depiction, St. Rita now wears a simple veil over her head. Her body reflects that of a woman who bore several children, and the discernible wound in her forehead recalls how a thorn from the crown of thorns pierced St. Rita.

The statue also alludes to several of the miracles attributed to

St. Rita. When a relative went to St. Rita's home in January to fulfill her request of receiving a rose from the garden, she found a single winter rose. Also, St. Rita is often depicted with bees, which recalls the benign bees that appeared on the day after her baptism and later in the chapel of Cascia.

"We wanted the statue to be relevant to the every day lives of the parishioners as well as being historical representative of the period – early 1400s – when she lived," Charles says. "The base of the statue was changed and has

a single winter rose. In addition, bees were added to the rose bush."

Since the hope was for the sculpture to be approachable for those desiring to touch it, a foot of St. Rita's is exposed at the base. The carving that was used for the casting was wood, not clay, and will be finished, painted and displayed elsewhere on the parish campus later in the year.

"We are pleased with the artists at the Stuflessor Studio in Italy," Charles says. "It meets and exceeds our expectations!"



The sculpture's current placement

If you would like more information about the new sculpture of St. Rita, please reach out to the parish office at 972-934-8388.

12521 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75244

Weekday Masses

Monday-Friday, 6:25 a.m., 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, 8:00 a.m.

Weekend Masses

Saturday, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:45 a.m.,

12:30 p.m. (Bilingual), 5:30 p.m.

Our Patroness Inspires Landscape Design *continued from page 3*

the path and underlying it. These represent the events in St. Rita's life that became milestones for her.

"They stop your eye," Kent says, "and let you turn to the school office or parish office, or the peaceful gardens. The terminus is represented by a cross, or cruciform."

This area provides space for donor pavers.

St. Rita's iconic roses were also brought into the design.

"She was very fond of roses," Kent says. "She's depicted with a thorn of a rose on her forehead – a partial stigmata. It's not the beauty of the rose, but the more troubled part of the rose, and this is part of her message – even in the troubled times, there is beauty. Upon her death, a lot of roses were planted on her grave and there was one that bloomed in the winter. We used roses as part of the process. The roses will bloom all year round as the icon that goes back to who she was. It is a subtle reminder of who she was, and the Catholic faith.

"The message of St. Rita is told in the path – through troubles there is good, and things will work out," Kent says. "That is the very direct straight line of the path. Your intended path is very deliberate. And as you move through it there are steps you can explore and see what life has to offer."

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– Kent Mendenhall