

Early Life/Marriage

St. Rita was born Margherita Lotti in 1381 in Roccaporena, near Cascia, Italy. As a young girl, Rita often visited the convent of the Augustinian nuns of St. Mary Magdalene and dreamed of one day joining their community. However, her elderly parents had arranged a marriage for Rita, so at a young age, Rita obediently married Paolo Mancini, despite her desire to enter the convent. Her husband was known to be a quick-tempered, immoral man, who had many enemies in Cascia.

Rita endured Paolo's insults, physical abuse and infidelities for 18 years. Through humility, kindness and patience, Rita was able to convert her husband to renounce a feud between two families known as "La Vendetta". Rita bore two sons, Giovanni and Paulo, and brought them up in the Catholic faith which she closely followed. As time went by, the family feud became more intense; and, Rita's husband was murdered. Although her sons were young, they were expected to avenge the murder of their father to defend family honor. Rita, fearing that her sons would lose their souls, tried to persuade them from retaliating. She petitioned God to take her sons rather than submit them to mortal sin. Rita was granted this grace when her sons died of dysentery one year later, removing them from physical and spiritual danger.

The Convent

After the deaths of her husband and sons, Rita turned to the desire of her youth of entering the convent in Cascia, but was turned away. Although the convent acknowledged Rita's good character and piety, the nuns firmly refused, citing that although Rita had forgiven her husband's killers, her family had not. There were members of the rival family in the convent; her presence would be detrimental to community harmony. However, Rita was not discouraged, convinced that she was called to the contemplative community. Inspired by her three patron saints (John the Baptist, Augustine and

Nicholas of Tolentino), Rita set out to make peace between the families. She went to her husband's family and urged them to put aside their hostility. They were convinced by her courage and agreed. The rival family, astounded by this overture of peace, also agreed. A fresco depicting the scene of the peace embrace was placed on a wall of Saint Francis church in Cascia, a testament to the widow whose forgiving spirit achieved the impossible.

At age 36, Rita was finally accepted into the Augustinian convent. She lived a regular life of prayer, contemplation and spiritual reading for 40 years. Over the years, Rita's austerity, prayerfulness and charity became legendary.

The Gift of the Thorn

Fifteen years before her death, Rita had an extraordinary experience. As she was meditating before an image of Christ crucified, as she was accustomed to do, she was moved by a deep awareness of the physical and spiritual pain which Christ embraced out of love of her and of all humanity. With a compassionate heart, she spoke her willingness to relieve Christ's suffering by sharing a small part of his pain. Rita's prayer was answered when a small wound appeared on her forehead, as though a thorn from the crown that encircled Christ's head had loosened itself and penetrated her own flesh. For the next 15 years, until she died, Rita bore this external sign of stigmatization and union with the Lord.

The Rose

Rita was bedridden for the last four years of her life, consuming almost nothing except for the Eucharist. Several months before her death, Rita's cousin visited her and asked if she desired anything from her old home. Rita requested a rose from her family garden. However, it was January. Upon her return home, the cousin passed Rita's family garden and found to her astonishment a single fresh rose in the snow-covered garden. She immediately returned to the convent where she presented it to Rita.

During the years she spent in the convent, Rita prayed especially for her husband and her sons. The cold earth which held their mortal remains had produced a sign of spring and beauty out of season. So, Rita believed, God had brought forth, through her prayers, their eternal life despite tragedy and violence. She now knew that she would soon be one with them again. St. Rita is often depicted holding roses or with roses nearby. On her feast day, shrines of St. Rita provide roses to the congregation that are blessed by the priest during Mass.

Death

Rita died of tuberculosis at the age of 76 on May 22, 1457. 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." A revered tradition records that the bells of the convent immediately began to ring unaided by human hands, announcing the triumphant completion of a life faithfully lived. So many people came to see her body that her burial had to be delayed. Her body, which has remained incorrupt over the centuries, is venerated today in a glass-enclosed coffin in the basilica of Cascia, which bears her name.

Canonization

St. Rita was canonized on May 24, 1900; her **feast day is May 22nd**. St. John Paul II called Rita an "expert in suffering." She is considered the saint of impossible causes because of the trials she endured in the various stages of her life as wife, mother, widow and nun. She buried her family, helped bring peace to her city, saw her dreams denied and fulfilled – and never lost her faith in God or her desire to be with Him.

St. Rita is the patron saint of impossible causes, sterility, abuse victims, loneliness, marriage difficulties, parenthood, widows, the sick, bodily ills and wounds.



St. Rita Parish Prayer

Lord,

*Thank you for the rich history you
have bestowed on our faith
community.*

*Blessed by your constant grace
and the intercession of St. Rita,
We ask that you be present in our
parish and in our lives.*

*Build us into a community of
mercy, compassion,
and forgiveness,*

*And send us out into the world
proclaiming the good news of
Christ crucified.*

Dearest St. Rita,

*You became a rose
in the garden of Christ
because of your love for him
on the cross.*

*Pray for us, especially in times
of trial and anguish,
that we always know God's love.
Amen.*

Prayer of Petition to St. Rita

Glorious St. Rita, patroness of those in need,
your intercession with the Lord is most powerful.
Through the favors obtained by your prayers,
you have been called Advocate of hopeless
and even impossible cases.

St. Rita, humble and pure;
patient and compassionate lover
of Christ Crucified!

I have confidence that everyone
who has recourse to you,
will find comfort and relief.

Listen to my petitions and
show your power with God on my behalf.

Obtain my petitions for me
if they are for the greater honor of God,
and for my own good.

I promise, if my petitions are granted,
to make known your favor,
and to glorify God for His gift.

Relying on your power with the merciful Savior,
I ask of you... (mention your request here).

Obtain our request for us

By the singular merits of your childhood...

By your perfect union with the Divine Will...

By your acceptance of trouble
in your married life...

By the anguish felt
at the murder of your husband...

By the surrender of your children,
rather than have them offend God...

By your miraculous entrance into the convent...

By your daily penance and fasting...

By your courage and joy in bearing the mark
of the Crucified Savior...

By the Divine Love which consumed your life...

By your devotion
in receiving the Blessed Sacrament...

By the happiness you felt
in leaving this life for union with Christ...

By the example you have given
to people of every state of life...

Pray for us, St. Rita, that we may be made
worthy of the promises of Christ.

St. Rita of Cascia



“Saint of the Impossible”

Canonized May 24, 1900

Feast Day: May 22nd

