

Saint Rita of Cascia - Augustinian



Known as the “Saint of the Impossible” and the “Peacemaker”, Rita (1380?-1457?) overcame many difficulties throughout her life. She had a generous love and a deep sense of penance. She was able to bring about peace between rival families and heal divisions between hostile groups of people.

Born in Roccaporena, Cascia, Italy around the year 1380, Rita Lotti at an early age wanted to become a nun. Her parents, however, insisted that she marry. So, at the age of 14, she married Paolo Mancini, a man who was a bit “rough around the edges”.

Rita was a good influence on Paolo. They lived harmoniously for 18 years and had two twin sons. Paolo, who had settled down and become a responsible adult, worked as the town watchman. One day, members of a local political faction ambushed and murdered him.

Their sons, influenced by their local environment and by angry family members, wanted to avenge their father's murder. Rita forgave her husband's killers. She prayed that her sons would die rather than follow the unwritten “law of vendetta” and take revenge upon the murderers. In fact, both sons did die from natural causes shortly afterwards.

Rita, now without a family, sought to fulfill her desires to become a religious sister. At first the nuns of the Augustinian convent of Saint Mary Magdelene did not want to receive her, partly because she had been a married woman and partly because some of the sisters were relatives of Paolo's killers. Rita persisted. She prayed and worked to establish peace between the hostile factions of Cascia. Finally she was accepted into the convent.

She remained in the cloister during the final 40 years of her life. Fifteen years before her death, while at prayer, she received on her forehead the mark of a thorn from Jesus' crown of thorns.

During the last four years of her life, Rita was seriously ill. She died May 22, 1457 (although a few writers give the year of her death as 1447). Her remains are preserved in the Church of Saint Rita in Cascia. St. Rita's feast is celebrated May 22nd.

