

## FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Can the Lord build our lives? We see just such an example as we approach the feast of St. Rita of Cascia on May 22. This woman, whom the Church venerates as the Saint of the Impossible, is for us a powerful sign of how the Lord Jesus, through His Death and Resurrection, transforms the deepest wounds of our existence into sources of grace, peace, and new life. Rita, born Margherita Lotti around 1381 in Roccapiorena, Italy, knew from childhood the sweetness of a life oriented toward God. As a little girl, she dreamed of consecrating herself totally to the

Lord. Yet, like so many of us, her life did not follow her own plans. Her parents, according to the customs of the time, arranged her marriage at the age of twelve to Paolo Mancini, a man known for his violent temper and involvement in the bitter feuds that divided the region. Here begins the first great trial of Rita's life, a trial that echoes our concrete situations: difficult marriages, wounded families, situations that seem without exit.

Are we learning that the Lord does not call us in the abstract, but in the flesh of our history? Rita did not rebel against God's mysterious permission of this marriage. Instead, she accepted it as the place of her vocation, the first "desert" where the Lord wanted to form her. For eighteen years she lived with a difficult husband, enduring misunderstandings and even abuse, while raising their two sons. Yet, through her patient love, her constant prayer, and her witness of meekness, she became an instrument of conversion. Paolo gradually changed; the violent man began to live more peacefully. This is the power of the Gospel we proclaim: a love that does not resign itself but, united to the love of Christ on the Cross, redeems and transforms even the hardest hearts. "Love one another as I have loved you." Rita lived this new commandment in the very heart of her family.

Then came the Cross, heavy and seemingly unbearable. Paolo was murdered in an ambush, victim of the hatred and vendettas that poisoned the town. Rita's heart was pierced, yet she publicly forgave his killers, an act of radical forgiveness that heralds the forgiveness of Christ. But the trial deepened: her two sons, inflamed by the desire for revenge, planned to kill their father's murderers. Rita prayed with tears, begging the Lord to intervene rather than allow them to harm their souls. The Lord heard her in a dramatic way: both sons fell ill and died before they could carry out their plan. In a short time, Rita found herself a widow and childless, alone in the world.

Who among us has not known such moments when everything collapses? When the family we built seems destroyed, when illness, violence, betrayal, or death seem to have the last word? In these hours of darkness, the kerygma resounds with greater force! St. Rita did not close herself in despair. She did not curse God. Instead, she turned again to the One who had called her from her youth. She sought entry into the Augustinian monastery in Cascia, but the doors were closed to her because she had been married. Three times she was refused. Here we see the pedagogy of God: He purifies our desires, He makes us wait, He leads us through the narrow gate so that our yes may be pure and total.

Finally, through a miracle of grace, the Lord opened the way. Rita entered the monastery, and there her life became a living proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. She practiced severe penance, immersed herself in prayer, and in contemplation of the Passion of Christ. One day, while praying before a crucifix, she asked to share in His sufferings. A thorn detached from the crown of thorns on the figure of Christ and penetrated her forehead, creating a wound that never healed and caused her immense pain for the remaining fifteen years of her life. This "thorn" became her glory.

St. Rita teaches us that the Lord writes straight with crooked lines. The impossible situations, those marriages that seem dead, those family conflicts that poison generations, those sins that seem unforgivable, are the privileged place where the power of the Resurrection is manifested. She shows us that when we abandon ourselves completely into the hands of the Father, then God acts. He brings peace where there was war. He brings reconciliation where there was hatred. He brings life where there was death.

Peace,