

ST. RITA

SAINT OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS TO ST. RITA
INCLUDING THE DEVOTION OF
THE FIFTEEN THURSDAYS

With
A Short Life of This Great Saint
and Prayerful Reflections upon It

Illustrated



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PREFACE

FROM time immemorial Catholics have been devoted to the Saints of God. In the words of the early Christians of Smyrna: "We adore Christ because He is the Son of God; we love the Saints because they are disciples and imitators of our Lord."

Since the Saints lived the Christian life to the full, we seek from them an example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession.

Because of our union with Christ we are united with all those who share His life in the larger family of God, the Communion of Saints. We on earth, members of the Church Militant, still fighting the good fight as soldiers of Christ, still journeying on our way to our Father's house, are helped by the prayers and encouragement of the victorious and blessed members of the family, the Church Triumphant in heaven. We honor the Saints and endeavor to imitate the example of their virtuous lives.

We manifest the love and unity that are ours in the Communion of Saints also by praying to the Saints in heaven as our patrons and intercessors with God. Not only is their intercession with God very powerful because of the love they have shown Him on earth, but we also share in their merits gained by their heroic life.

One of the Saints whose aid has been most sought over the course of the last five hundred

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THE FIFTEEN THURSDAYS OF ST. RITA

ORIGIN AND SPIRITUAL VALUE

BEFORE beginning the devotion of the Fifteen Thursdays of St. Rita, it seems necessary to give some explanations concerning its origin and import. That will help to spread its pious exercise among followers of St. Rita and, among people generally, will help increase the number of good and meritorious works.

It was certainly a very singular gift, the gift of the thorn, that the crucified Jesus made to His faithful servant, St. Rita. She welcomed it and kept it as the seal of her love and passion for her Divine Bride. She wore it during the last fifteen years of her life, till death.

The practice of the Fifteen Thursdays preceding the feast of St. Rita was begun in remembrance of those fifteen years. It can be said that today, in places where St. Rita is venerated, there is not a church or chapel in which this practice is not carried out in private or in groups.

At Cascia, in its church, and at Nice, in the Chapel of the Annunciation, St. Rita is venerated in a very special way. Large crowds attend the devotion, and solemnity reigns.

This pious practice, which has spread far and wide, ought to inspire the faithful to receive the Sacraments of Penance and the

FOURTH THURSDAY**Preparatory Prayer, 13****LIFE: A DREADED MARRIAGE THAT TURNS
OUT WELL**

RITA wanted to be a nun. That seemed to be her vocation, inasmuch as she had always loved solitude and the life of prayer.

However, her aged parents wanted her to marry, perhaps because they had increasing need of her and desperately wished to keep her in the village.

Rita, ever docile, deferentially accepted what her parents called "a good match."

Certainly, her fiance, Paul Mancini, was not the ideal spouse. But possibly Rita's mildness could change his character for the better. After all, even someone who has been subject to a tormented youth can become a good father.

It was important that a girl have a home. At this period, marriages were made without consulting the young people involved and in accord with the interest of the parents. Rita consented, smiling in order to hide her tears.

Thus, at the age of eighteen Rita married Paul. The early years were very hard for her. Her husband was a loud and violent man who at times even hurt her. He is said to have been full of anger, vulgar, and debauched.

EIGHTH THURSDAY**Preparatory Prayer, p. 13****LIFE: KNOCKING AT THE CONVENT DOOR**

THE year 1417 was a sorrowful one for Rita. In the course of it she lost her husband and both her sons. For the Church, it was a hopeful year, bringing the end of the Great Schism.

Rita was thirty-six; Joan of Arc was five. Rita seemed to be all alone in the world. As a matter of fact she was not alone. She was living with her "dead," those who had returned to the Father and had become her personal Saints. She talked to them, prayed to them, and asked them for advice.

Rita probably had a kind of homesickness for the religious life. She had always lived in accord with the spirit of this kind of life. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are its pillars. In her years as a married woman she had tried to practice them as much as possible.

She was obedient to her aged parents despite the difficulty sometimes encountered in keeping old people content. She was obedient to her husband, even in the abusive years.

She practiced poverty, not from avarice or fear of being in want but from a desire to give more alms.

She practiced chastity in its conjugal form, a type often more difficult than the chastity of the

ELEVENTH THURSDAY**Preparatory Prayer, p. 13****LIFE: THE ROMAN JUBILEE**

JUBILEES have existed since the year 1300. They used to be proclaimed every fifty years; now they occur every twenty-five years.

In former times jubilees were the occasion for making a penitential pilgrimage to Rome. They came to a close with the great joy of a plenary indulgence, the most formal and most generous of all.

The jubilee of 1450 was particularly important. The Church had regained her unity and her internal peace only three years earlier.

The regaining of this peace and unity came after the disorders caused by the Council of Basle and then by the Duke of Savoy, Amadeus VIII, who had agreed to become the antipope Felix V.

More than ever, Rome was seen as the center of restored unity. People came to Rome from everywhere.

These pilgrimages of former times required far greater physical endurance than those of today. People had to go on foot. They had to ford rivers, brave the elements, and sleep out in the open. Yet the crowds were overflowing.