

Saint Rita of Cascia

Patron saint of impossible causes, marriage problems, abused women and mothers

Several years ago, I visited the house of Saint Rita of Cascia in Roccaporena in the Italian region of Umbria. I stood outside the door to her house and saw a stone sink where she washed the family clothes. In that simple place, I sensed a saint who was also a real person. This good and holy woman, born in 1381 and died in 1457, lived a life that was both ordinary and extraordinary.

Early in life she wanted to become a nun and devote her life to prayer. But her parents pressured her to marry a quick-tempered nobleman, Paolo Mancini. For most

of the 18 years of their marriage, he abused her and was unfaithful to her. She persevered, prayed, and did everything she could to call him to a better life. Before he died a violent death inflicted by a rival feuding family, Saint Rita had convinced him to change his ways.



Saint Rita's birthplace at Roccaporena, near Spoleto, Italy



Miguel Cabrera (1695–1768), *Saint Rita of Cascia (Santa Rita de Cascia)*

Her two sons were determined to avenge their father's death, and so continued the spiraling vendetta. Again, through her prayers, that act of vengeance was averted.

After her husband's death, she was able to enter an Augustinian monastery and dedicate her life entirely to prayer. Even during her lifetime, people recognized that her prayers for them were especially effective. With her history and experiences, she quickly became a patron of impossible and lost causes, of those struggling with marital difficulties, and of women and mothers who suffered abuse. She was also invoked to bring about reconciliation for warring and feuding parties.

Today, people who find themselves caught in impossible circumstances and extreme difficulties in family life continue to find in her an advocate and model. Her life and her intercession in heaven even now give witness to the truth of Saint Paul's words: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)