

## VOCATIONS, DESPAIR AND HOPE

All over Europe there has been a major decrease in vocations but this does not leave us without hope.

Pope Francis is a member of the Society of Jesus and he says he wants to wake up the world from their slumber and tell them of the wonderful things consecrated people have been doing for centuries throughout the world.

St. Augustine set up a very early form of religious life with its own rule. The middle ages saw the growth of the Friars who were missionary and they spread the faith throughout the whole world especially the Americas.

The Benedictines, Augustinian, Dominican and the Franciscan orders, grew in different forms. In the 19th century a new form of religious life grew with teaching, social and pastoral ideals at their heart. Many of these new congregations came from Belgium and France. Today new forms of religious life strive to make inroads into the Church. A primary example is Blessed Mother Theresa's Sisters, the Missionaries of Charity.

Many people think that the golden age of religious life was in the 60s when seminaries were full. That is a great error, the golden age of any Order was when their first community began with only a handful of inspired brothers or sisters. Seminaries are still full



but not in Europe. Vocations to the religious life are still strong throughout the world. There will always be a future for young men and women who surrender their lives to follow God in a life of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

Our pictures show Bro Hugo from Costa Rica. He is working here in England with the Latin American peoples. This summer he will be ordained and he hopes to return to England to continue his work with the Latin Americans.



*A letter to our Friends St Rita's Day 2019*

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## THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT FRIARS

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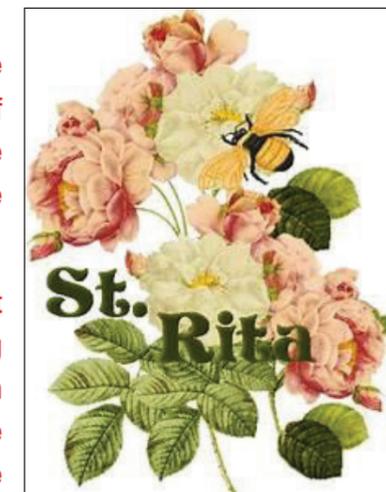
Registered Charity

[www.stritascentre.org](http://www.stritascentre.org)

Dear Friends,

On our very first pilgrimage to Cassia we noticed that the walls of the convent were covered with regular little holes as if made by a drill. It was explained to us that these holes were the hives of "St. Rita's Bees." These white bees could be called the first admirers of our Holy Saint.

According to tradition, as a baby Rita was asleep in her cot when a swarm of bees swarmed around her, they didn't sting her, but dropped sweet pollen into her mouth. The tradition continues, a farmer who had just been badly cut with his scythe saw the swarm and tried to chase them away but as he wave his wounded arm it was immediately cured.



*St. Rita roses with Bee*

When St. Rita finally entered the convent in Cascia her little blessed friends followed her and made their homes in the convent walls and, as we pilgrims witnessed, they are still there to this very day. Around 1630, Pope Urban is said to have asked to see one of the white bees and, having seen it, asked for a tiny silk thread to be attached to it and then set it free. A few days later it was discovered back at the convent over 60 miles away.

St. Rita is the patron of the impossible, this might explain another strange phenomenon. Every year during Holy Week the bees come out of the walls of the convent to gather pollen, they fly around until 22nd of May, St. Rita's feast day and then return to hibernation in the safety of the convent walls until Holy Week of the following year. They are the constant companions of the nuns while they do the work of the Lord, and it would seem as if the little winged creatures were encouraging the work of the sisters by their continual humming and buzzing. These little friends are symbols of loyalty and trust in our great patron. May they continue to be a presence to the nuns in the convent at Cassia and an aid to our growth in faith.

I know there are sceptics who will say the stories of the mysterious bees are pure coincidence, that's as maybe, but as Christians and people of faith, we do believe in miracles. Just sometimes the only hope left to us is that of a miracle. In which case who better to turn to than St. Rita patron of the helpless.

Our novena to St. Rita begins on 14th May and finishes at her Mass on 22nd May. I do hope you will be able to join in with us. The Recollect Priests will remember you all in the Mass on St. Rita's feast day with a prayer of thanksgiving for your continued support.

*Fr Gerald Wilson O.A.R.*

# ST. RITA'S RETREAT & CONFERENCE CENTRE, HONITON, DEVON

As the name, St. Rita's Retreat & Conference Centre would suggest, we can help you plan your parish or group retreat. We offer a haven of peace and tranquillity in the heart of Devon; time to pray with space and comfort for you and your group.

You are guaranteed a warm welcome at St. Rita's Retreat & Conference Centre, which is set in the beautiful vale of Honiton, famous for its market and lace. The Centre is easy to reach by road or rail and is 5 miles from the coast and 20 minutes from the historic city of Exeter. St. Rita's offers a comfortable, cost effective venue suitable for Church groups, voluntary organisations and the business community.

We offer you the opportunity to get away from the daily grind, to pause for prayer and reflection and to listen to the gentle voice of God, with an opportunity to visit St. Rita's Chapel and shrine. Our facilities include en suite bedrooms, lounge area, dining room, kitchen on each floor with TV, delightful gardens, conservatory, ample parking. For the disabled there is a lift and a room with facilities for the disabled plus a ground floor toilet.

**Telephone 01404 42635 to discuss your needs and check availability.**

Visit our web site and watch our video:  
[stritascentre.org](http://stritascentre.org)



St. Rita's Centre offers many different services to all our clients, benefactors and friends. We have a shop with a selection of cards to cover most events: birthday, get well, moving house, congratulations on passing your exams, thinking of you, wedding day, wedding anniversary, ordination and retirement, Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation. All very reasonably priced and at Christmas and Easter we sent out a list of cards and gifts which can also be viewed on our website: [stritascentre.org](http://stritascentre.org).

We can arrange to have Masses offered for your special intentions, a birthday, get well, wedding or ordination anniversary or when a loved one dies. Write to the office and let us know your requirements enclosing a Mass Stipend for a minimum of £5.00 per Mass and we will arrange for the Mass(es) to be offered for you. Mass cards are available for a small charge.

On St. Rita's Day, 22nd May, we have a celebration Mass in honour of the saint the Centre is named after: St. Rita of Cascia. 1,500 roses are blessed and sent out to those who have requested them for the sick. If you would like some blessed rose petals please let us know and we will send some out to you.

