

## Augustinian Spirituality – Part 2

**St Rita of Cascia** (1381-1457) was born Margherita Lotti in Roccaporena, Italy. At a young age she begged her parents to allow her to join a convent, but they instead arranged for her, at only twelve years old, to be married to Paolo Mancini. Paolo was a cruel man with a violent temper, and Rita suffered a very unhappy marriage, but bore two sons. She raised her sons to be Christians, and the townspeople witnessed the transforming effect that Rita's patience and humility had on Paolo. During this time, the Mancini family was involved in a bitter feud with the Chiqui family known as *La Vendetta*. As Rita's generous spirit began to take hold of Paolo, he finally renounced the feud and withdrew himself from the bitterness. The feud heated; however, and finally, betrayed by his allies, Paolo was stabbed and killed by a member of the Chiqui family.



At her husband's funeral, Rita forgave his killers and pleaded for peace, but her sons felt vengeful and wanted blood for their father's death. Rita prayed that her sons might be able to forgive, or if they could not then at least that they not become killers. Her prayer was answered, as both her sons became gravely ill and died before they were able to revenge their father's death.

After losing her entire family, Rita asked admittance to the Augustinian monastery in Cascia, but the nuns, fearing to involve themselves in the bitter family feud refused her admittance unless she was first able to reconcile the two families. She prayed to St. [John the Baptist](#), St. [Augustine of Hippo](#), and St. [Nicholas of Tolentino](#) for assistance. Shortly afterwards Italy was stricken with the bubonic plague. When the head of the Medici household became sickened with the plague, he called off the feud and the families were reconciled.

At the age of 36, Rita joined the Augustinian monastery where she remained until her death of tuberculosis in 1457. It is said that when Rita was sixty years old, while gazing upon the crucifix, she prayed that Jesus might allow her to suffer with him. She received a deep wound on her forehead which never healed throughout the next sixteen years of her life. In icons, she is often depicted with either a crucifix, or a thorn to represent the partial stigmata which she bore.

Several stories have emerged around St. Rita. Some said that when she was finally allowed to enter the convent she didn't walk, but was transported within its walls. It was also said that after Rita's baptism she was asleep in her crib and a swarm of white bees surrounded her, flying in and out of her mouth without hurting her. Her family was not alarmed, but mystified and convinced that this meant her life would be industrious and filled with virtue and devotion. Finally, just before her death, a cousin came to visit. She asked if Rita wished for anything, and Rita asked her cousin to go home and bring back a rose from her garden. As it was January, her cousin doubted that she would find a rose, but was surprised to find a single blooming rose which she cut and brought to Rita. Because of these stories, it is common to find bees or roses included in paintings of Rita.

## Prayer Activity: Praying with the Commandments

### You shall have no other gods before Me.

#### **You shall make no idols.**

*Give me yourself, O my God, give yourself to me. Behold I love you, and if my love is too weak a thing, grant me to love you more strongly. I cannot measure my love to know how much it falls short of being sufficient, but let my soul hasten to your embrace and never be turned away until it is hidden in the secret shelter of your presence. This only do I know, that it is not good for me when you are not with me, when you are only outside me. I want you in my very self. All the plenty in the world which is not my God is utter want. Amen.*

### You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

*Christ is not valued at all, unless he is valued above all.*

### Keep the Sabbath day holy.

*Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.*

### Honor your father and your mother.

*Breathe in me O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.*

### You shall not murder.

*Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And for all your love's sake. Amen.*

### You shall not commit adultery.

*Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know You, and desire nothing save only You.*

*Let me hate myself and love You.*

*Let me do everything for the sake of You.*

*Let me humble myself and exalt You.*

### You shall not steal.

*Let me think of nothing except You.*

*Let me die to myself and live in You.*

*Let me accept whatever happens as from You.*

*Let me banish self and follow You, and ever desire to follow You.*

*Let me fly from myself and take refuge in You,*

*That I may deserve to be defended by You.*

### You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

*Let me fear for myself.*

*Let me fear You, and let me be among those who are chosen by You.*

*Let me distrust myself and put my trust in You.*

*Let me be willing to obey for the sake of You.*

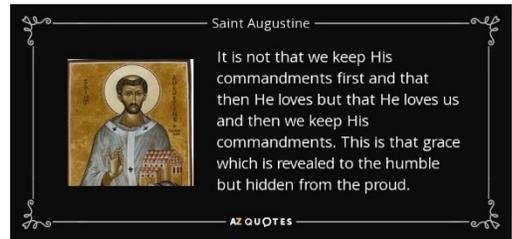
### You shall not covet.

*Let me cling to nothing save only to You,*

*And let me be poor because of You.*

*Look upon me, that I may love You.*

*Call me that I may see You, and forever enjoy You. Amen.*



*This exercise is from "Prayer in the Roman Catholic Church" by Robert J. Wicks*

**Reading Assignment: Chapters 12 and 17**