Day 8 ~ St. Rita: Peacemaker

Rita had pledged to follow the ancient Rule of Saint Augustine. For the next forty years she gave herself wholeheartedly to prayer and works of charity, striving especially to preserve peace and harmony among the citizens of Cascia. With a pure love she wanted more and more to be intimately joined to the redemptive suffering of Jesus. One day when she was about sixty years of age, she was meditating before an image of Christ crucified as she was long accustomed to doing. Suddenly a small wound—a stigmata—appeared on her forehead, as though a thorn from the crown that encircled Christ's head had loosed itself and penetrated her own flesh.

For the next fifteen years she bore this external sign of union with the Lord. In spite of the pain she constantly experienced, she offered herself courageously for the physical and spiritual well-being of others. She would always consider this stigmata as the greatest gift of God's love: a sign that she would love God so completely that she would never expect consolation in this life, but was willing to imitate her Lord in His sufferings, rejection, loneliness, ridicule, and misunderstanding. During the last four years of her life Rita was confined to bed and was able to eat little except the Eucharist alone. In this she brought peace to all who came to visit her. Her patience, faith, and joyful disposition despite her great suffering was an inspiration.