

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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## CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>"The EGO or the "EGOIST".....</i>	3
8 - The Heart of the Matter - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS.....	4
Fr. Vincent Vaz, (1934 - 2009) - Fr. Ivo Coelho sdb.....	7
Keep Going in Prayer (2) - Michael Paul Gallagher.....	8
Why various postures at Mass? - Edward McNamara.....	10
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>Bl. Alois Stepinac</i> - Mario Scudu.....	13
Lectio Divina: Hail Mary - At the Hour of Our Death - Roberta Fora.....	17
Quietspaces: Being Together - Cormac O'Connor.....	18
Family Matters (Final Episode) - Helen Morgan.....	20
Don Bosco At Pinerolo in 1884 - Natale Cerrato.....	23
NewsBits.....	26
Reflecting on Mary: Trust in Mary - Doris Azzopardi.....	29
<i>In a Cheerful Mood.....</i>	15
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother.....</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys.....</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady &amp; Don Bosco.....</i>	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio.....</i>	35



*To modern man,  
the Virgin Mary  
offers serenity  
and a word  
of reassurance:  
the triumph  
of hope  
over anxiety*

Cover: **The Immaculate  
Heart of Mary**



## From The Editor's Desk

The "Ego" or the "Egoist"

For most of us, I suspect, the word "ego" has a negative connotation. To accuse someone of having a big ego is to accuse him of being overfull of himself, inflated, grandiose, and lacking in humility. To have a big ego is to not be humble.

But that can be simplistic and untrue. To have a strong, large ego isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it is a needed thing, especially if we are ever to achieve anything of worth. Nobody does anything great without a strong ego, and that doesn't mean that he or she isn't humble. For example:

Few people would ever think of Mother Teresa as having had a big ego. We think of her as humility incarnate. Yet, clearly, she had a huge ego – a powerful self-image that allowed her to stand before the whole world convinced of her truth, convinced of her worth, and convinced of her importance. She could stand before anyone in the world secure in the knowledge that her person and her word were important. It takes a powerful ego to do that, one more powerful than most of us possess. She was aware that she was a unique and blessed instrument of God in this world and she was secure enough to act on that.

And yet she was humble. She was aware as well, always, that everything that made her unique and special and powerful did not come from her, but from God. She was simply a channel of somebody else's power and grace. She had a huge ego, but she wasn't an egoist. She was never full of herself, only full of God.

It hurts us because, for so many of us, the bigger problem in our lives, including our spiritual lives, is precisely that our egos are too weak. Our self-image is too weak to allow us to do anything really great or even just to reach out in warmth and love.

Because our self-image is weak, unlike Mother Teresa we are too inhibited to reach out, to speak our truth and to express our love. We have too many internal voices (no doubt, originally external voices) that habitually paralyse us with the words: *"Who do you think you are! That's just pride and arrogance! That's just ego! You aren't talented enough or good enough to do this! Nobody wants this from you!"*

As well, it is not because our egos are strong but because they are weak that we so often feel the need to protect ourselves. We struggle to be vulnerable, to not be paranoid and protect ourselves. Why? Precisely because we aren't secure enough inside, because our egos and our sense of self-worth are shaky. Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II and others like them never needed to protect themselves. They were secure enough to be vulnerable. They had strong egos.

We should always be wary of pride, of egoism. But false humility does not protect us against pride. Instead it prevents us from being warm and loving -and from ever achieving anything great.

*Fr. Ian Douulton sdb*

## 8. THE HEART OF THE MATTER

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

**G**ujarat has been in the news on several occasions in the recent past; once again it takes the lead, this time in the field of education. The ground-plan of this non-formal, unorthodox model of education is the brain-child of Ganesh Devy, a litterateur, freewheeler, and social reformist. Goaded on by his own experience in education, he critically examined the practical worth of the script in the index of learning. His belief that gradually grew as a result of this research is that 'scripts have nothing to do with knowledge; they have been an organized means used by the state to institutionalize language.' Many tribals, however, have absolutely no coded equivalent of their language – but that does not imply that they are by any means less intelligent than literate individuals. In most minds, illiteracy is equated with ignorance and this is a social stigma many tribals are unjustly saddled with.

### **Inadequate Educational System**

And so Devy began his own approach to education beginning with learning instead of character recognition and found that a unified focus on learning is arrived at when scripts are avoided for a while. In the schools he has established for tribals in the Gujarat belt, script enters in at a much later date. Here the knowledge of things inspires the students with a desire to learn



how to spell them. And unlike other village schools where only Gujarati is the medium of instruction, here the teachers speak Gujarati, Hindi and also Rathwi and Dungri Bhili, the two primary languages the tribals are familiar with. Added to these is a software programme teaching them to read English phonetically. And once they are excited about speaking English they then want to learn its meaning and later move to the level of spelling.

The education of tribal children in government schools is very poor all over India. This leads to an unremitting cycle of illiteracy and migration to cities as cheap labour, taking their children with them. 'What is the practical use of education?' these tribals and others like them ask; 'it does nothing to improve our earning

capacity,' they argue. But over the years, seeing the success of this new venture, numbers in Devy's special schools have risen to around 60. Not only that, but this academy has received a citation from the ministry of tribal affairs; besides the district primary education department sent fifty of its coordinators to the academy to be oriented in tribal culture and language complexities. Last year 2008 around 35 students sat for the 6<sup>th</sup> standard entrance exam and one among them scored 59% where 60% was the cut off percentage - and that too after only two years of schooling. While they certainly have not yet got on a par with other students, they are well on the way to achieving this and one can confidently look to the future when these tribal children will demonstrate that they are no less than others simply because they come from a different background.

### **Out of the Mouth of Babes**

The lessons to be learnt from this venture are several. For one thing, because tribals are not all the same in their approach to learning as children in other schools, they cannot be condemned as unteachable. God has distributed his gifts differently to different people and no one has the right to say that 'there is only one method of education, the one we use' or that 'only my method is the best.' The point is not the method, but the results. One of the fall-outs of the industrial age is that people want everything and everyone to be the same. Uniformity creates fewer complications when dealing with the assembly line approach which

demands that the continuity and movement of the assembly line should never be interrupted by questioning or wanting to try other approaches! The result is that one's individuality and creativity are left far behind in the name of progress. In all spheres, mass production is the only answer! Yet, in God's world, 'there are a variety of gifts, but all coming from the same Spirit.' What is needed is to discover and invent where necessary, different ways to tap the resources of each particular group. It is much easier to write off such 'unorthodox' groups as backward or primitive and discard them altogether, or at most settle for giving them a hand-out from time to time to ease our guilty conscience. To accompany them patiently while they work at their own pace and in their own way needs godlike patience and faith in their innate abilities!

And what is said about the method of education could be extended to the manner of worship, of communal living and sharing, of respecting elders and ancestors and a host of other aspects of life which we have systematized and propagated simply because it fits in well with our vested interests of globalization and economic colonization. When the United States is on the verge of having their first Afro-american President, a revolution hardly imaginable about fifty years ago, could we still hang on to the belief that one race of people is superior to another? That they are different is without a doubt, but that does not make them necessarily less respectable and productive!

## Gospel Message of Jesus

At the heart of his message is the fact that Jesus proclaimed an alternative way of living life to the full. He quite deliberately paid little attention to the established and traditional life-style the Jews had adopted by the time he came on the scene. And his advocated approach envelopes almost every aspect of human living. With regard to material goods, while the prevailing system was one of free, individual enterprise and private possession, which often led to oppression of the weak and powerless, Jesus advocated the view that all of Nature's gifts were given by God to the whole human race, to be shared with one another out of love. Earth's goods belong first and foremost to the entire community of people. Jesus first got his listeners to realize that God the Father does distribute his gifts unequally – not all the servants are given the same number of talents in Matthew's parable. But this fact only provides all with the opportunity to transcend themselves: those having more by sharing their blessings with others, and those having less by trusting in God's loving providence and his ability to touch the hearts of people making them generous in sharing not only of their goods, but also of themselves, of their very lives.

Jesus did the same with regard to other aspects of our lives, e.g. social stratification, authority to rule or govern, ways of treating the upright and the public sinner – in fact, no aspect of human life was left untouched by his 'kingdom ethics'. Beginning with the truth that God is a loving Father to all (human beings and the rest of creation), the guiding principle then becomes:

living in love and fellowship with all, or as Paul puts it: "speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love (Eph 4:15-16).

## The Real Followers of Jesus

The fact that a stranger to Christ's revolutionary approach stops to think deeply about the lot of tribals and their children's education, should put Christians to shame. Unfortunately, so often we allow ourselves to get sucked into the prevailing system when Jesus our Lord and Master was revolutionary through and through. "I came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it" he proclaimed. His approach was not just to take pleasure in knocking down prevailing systems, but rather he consciously chose to go to the heart of the question; in the case under consideration the key point is: 'what is education all about?' Or again, when we realize that, in general, tribals do not fit into our education system in a way that others do, instead of concluding that this means that *they* are defective, we should be asking: Is there anything we can change in our system of education, as Devy has done, so that the tribals too achieve the same results even though by another route? Isn't this approach simply another application of Jesus' famous dictum: 'The Sabbath is for man and not man for the Sabbath?!' All human beings must be seen as the apple of God's loving eye – Jesus

*continued on pg. 22*



**FR. VINCENT VAZ  
(1934 - 2009)**

*Fr. Ivo Coelho, sdb*

*on the occasion of the death of Fr. Vincent Vaz sdb (BIS NEWS)*

Fr. Vincent Vaz passed away some time in the afternoon of April 19, 2009, Divine Mercy Sunday. He came to Nashik in 1996, the year the MPh course began. He had a PhD in Education, and was needed on the faculty. It was, I think, a big sacrifice for him to leave his comfort zone of Matunga and come up to Nashik. Like many of his age, he was not one to express his feelings directly. The then provincial, Fr Tony D'Souza, was good enough to allow Fr Vincent to keep a room in Matunga, and to move between Mumbai and Nashik as often as he wanted, and that suited Fr Vincent fine. He plunged into his writing, and was probably the most productive professor on the campus. He took up the teaching not only education for the MPh but also a variety of courses for the BPh, ranging from Christian Doctrine to Latin and Italian. He never said no to a request for ministry, be it mass or confessions or recollections or retreats. And whatever he did, he did perfectly. He endeared himself to the brothers. On occasion he would pull out his music books and teach the community the traditional songs and hymns. He was quite independent: he did not make demands on anybody's time (unless you asked him questions about mathematics or about the organ), he was quite busy and found fulfilment in his work. I think we can say quite confidently:



Fr Vincent Vaz received the grace to grow old gracefully, as gracefully as I have ever seen anyone do. He was happy and grateful to be a religious, a Salesian, a priest. He was contented. He was able to say that he had done all things out of love. In the last few years of his life, Fr Vincent kept putting his prodigious expertise in mathematics to good use. Quietly and silently he went wherever he was called: to Jhabua, to Ahmednagar, to Sulcorna, and perhaps to many other places, teaching teachers as well as students, unfazed by problems of language and managing to communicate despite the linguistic barriers. Here was a man who was given a gift, and who used it happily and to the full. Divyadaan and Nashik will miss the silent, unfussy presence of Fr Vincent Vaz. God bless him and give him peace. □

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# KEEP GOING IN PRAYER

By Michael Paul Gallagher

## PRAYER IS FOR YOU (2)

*In the hectic and noisy world of today many people feel a longing for moments of quiet prayer, when they can be simply present to God. Still, such prayer can often seem to be impossibly difficult. In this series (which began in May 2009) Fr. Gallagher shows how quiet prayer is possible for everyone - including you.*

Dear Liz and Brian,

I'm glad to know that my letter on prayer was of some help to you both. Yes indeed, it makes a huge difference to learn some ways of creating inner quiet. It's also vital to 'get God right' as you put it, to remember that God looks forward to meeting us in prayer.

Certainly in practice your strongest support comes from one another. I think many couples could do what you do, but perhaps few manage to pray together like that. So I'd like to quote some of your letter in the hope of encouraging other readers, and after that I'll get round to responding to your questions.

### Praying as a Couple

The part of your letter that I liked most was the following:

*We have discovered that our ways of praying are quite different, but still we find it a great help to do it at the same time, sitting in the same place. Afterwards we sometimes talk about it. We try to keep the same time: after the evening meal. The kids clear things up (usually!) and we go into the small spare room.*

*We start by reading a short passage of Scripture. Years ago we went to a course on the Bible, and it opened our eyes. For our daily prayer we find that even a sentence or two can be enough. We take turns in choosing it, and one of us reads it slowly. After*

*that it's silence for ten to fifteen minutes. Whoever did not read the passage at the beginning reads it aloud at the end. We stand and, holding hands, say an Our Father and Hail Mary together. And that's it. Nothing elaborate.*

*What goes on during the silence? One of us (Brian in fact) is more inclined simply to think of God, perhaps using a line of a psalm, such as 'The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want' (23:1). Liz prefers Gospel scenes, and likes to enter into them in a conversational way, bringing herself into the episode of healing or whatever. Brian says that he needs to give more attention to the quietening down exercises you suggested in your letter. Liz lets her imagination get to work, and finds that by visualizing herself in the scene she can make it personal.*

*We don't always manage to keep this daily prayer appointment, but sooner or later we get back to it. And even when we do it, needless to say we have bad days. We have times when we wonder whether prayer has any point at all. What can you say to keep us going? What might help us when any effort to try to focus and pray seems just a mess and gets nowhere? Because, to be honest, we sometimes feel like throwing in the sponge. If we were not doing it together we might have thrown it in long ago! And yet we do know that without this little effort, our lives*

would be much the poorer.

## Practical Helps

That's what I wanted to share from this your letter, in the hope of letting others know how marvellous and yet how simple it can be for a couple who want to nourish their faith. I'm sure you're right that your perseverance has been easier because of your joint commitment as a couple. Like a joint bank account: you're both responsible for it!

But the difficulties you mention are very real. I have no magic solution, simply a few suggestions that I've tried, and that have sometimes helped me when prayer seemed useless or impossible. I have four suggestions in fact.

The first is to be more careful about laying the *foundations of listening*. You may need to give more attention to creating that inner attention or readiness for prayer. In practice, you may need to give more time to those skills of stillness I mentioned in last month's letter. They build up an attitude of reverence for the God towards whom you turn in prayer.

A second suggestion for the difficult times is to return to some favourite Scripture passage that gave you nourishment in the past. Just because you start from a particular piece of Scripture each evening need not mean that it has to be the only focus for your prayer. If things are empty go back to where they were once full. *Revisiting a moment of grace* is very helpful, especially when things are 'a mess', as you say.

Another way of coping with confusion is simply to admit honestly how you are. If you're feeling angry, or lost, or

despairing, or exhausted, or just disinterested in trying to reach out to God, it's a real and humble prayer to *describe it all to the Lord*. The psalms are full of expressions of strong feelings of this kind: 'Has his love vanished for ever?' (77:8); 'My heart is full of fear' (143:4); 'I am like the dumb unable to speak' (38:13); 'My God, you give no reply, I find no peace' (22:2). Often you will find that giving voice like this to the pain and frustration is a way towards rediscovering trust in God.

Finally, I think of a saying from St Catherine of Sienna: What matters in prayer is not feeling-during but loving-after. In other words, *the test is love*. You don't pray just to feel good. It's a great help to have some consolation, but the deeper purpose is that you learn to love. And so when things are dark or numb, pray for others. Remember the many places of struggle and suffering in the world, and be there with them and for them before God.

I'm often surprised how quickly the personal clouds can lift when I recall the situation of so many others, and try to pray for them. Praying for the Pope's intentions - to be found each month at the end of the *Madonna* - is a way of remembering the great needs of others in our world. Remember the very first word of the Lord's Prayer: it is not just about me.

I'm convinced that we all need some ways like these of coping with those bad days, and even of turning difficulties into occasions for growth in trust and in love.

Keep it up. With prayer and gratitude. □



# walking with the Church



## *Why the Various Postures at Mass*

by Father Edward McNamara,

Professor of Liturgy at Regina Apostolorum University

**Q.** *I am a catechist and I explain Mass for the young ones. A question I always encountered and never found any information about is this: During Mass there are various postures that the community adopts, and these are adapted according to the prayers that are being said. Many ask the reason why this posture is used at that particular time. So I am sending a list of the postures that we use in our diocese, so that you can help answer various questions that many youths and children ask. - T.B., Malta*

**A.** Our reader provides a list of the postures adopted in his diocese. As answering each item separately would exceed the possibilities of this column, I hope he will forgive me if I use a different method which I hope serves the same purpose.

According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, No. 43, the postures adopted by the people at Mass are the following:

“The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance chant, or while the priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the *Alleluia* chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful; from the invitation, *Orate, fratres* (*Pray, brethren*), before

the prayer over the offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated below.

“They should, however, sit while the readings before the Gospel and the responsorial Psalm are proclaimed and for the homily and while the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory is taking place; and, as circumstances allow, they may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.

“(They should kneel during the consecration from the epiclesis to the mystery of faith). Those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration. The faithful kneel after the *Agnus Dei* unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise.

“With a view to a uniformity in gestures and postures during one and the same celebration, the faithful should follow the directions which the deacon, lay minister, or priest gives according to whatever is indicated in the Missal.”

It falls to the national bishops' conference to make specific adaptations to local needs pending definitive approval from the Holy See.

Therefore, as can be seen, the fundamental posture in liturgy is standing. Standing is a natural

gesture of respect toward authority. This is why the assembly stands for the celebrant's entrance and exit, and during the proclamation of the Gospel, just as the Israelites stood upright as they listened to God's word. Indeed, standing was the normal position for Jewish prayer and this custom passed to Christianity as it was witnessed by murals in the catacombs.

Today the faithful mostly remain standing whenever they are associated to the solemn prayer of the celebrant. The upright position is that of the heavenly elect as seen in the Book of Revelation 7:9 and 15:2. The Fathers of the Church considered this position as expressive of the holy freedom of God's children. St. Basil in his treatise on the Holy Spirit says that "We pray standing, on the first day of the week, but we do not all know the reason. On the day of the resurrection (or 'standing again'; Greek *anastasis*) we remind ourselves of the grace given to us by standing at prayer, not only because we rose with Christ, and are bound to 'seek those things which are above,' but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age which we expect ..." (Chapter 27).

Because of this relationship with the Resurrection the liturgy prescribes that certain prayers, such as the litanies of the saints, are prayed standing and not kneeling on Sundays and during Eastertide.

Sitting is the posture of the doctor who teaches, of the one who presides, and so the bishop can preach while seated at his cathedra. On the other hand, it is the posture of those who listen with attention. The faithful are therefore invited to sit at some moments such as the readings, except for the Gospel; the homily;

during the preparation of gifts; and also, if they wish, after communion. Most ancient and medieval churches did not have pews, but the faithful were often invited to sit on the floor for the readings and homily and this was probably a custom from apostolic times as witnessed by Acts 20:9 and 1 Corinthians 14:30.

Kneeling was originally reserved, above all, for intense personal prayer, as we see St. Stephen do before succumbing to martyrdom. We also find saints Peter and Paul using this posture for ordinary prayer and meditation (Acts 9:24, 20:36, Ephesians 3:14).

However, the liturgy did not initially accept this posture except as an act of penance. The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) forbade penitents to kneel on Sundays, and St. Basil said that we kneel in order to show with our acts that sin has cast us to the ground. Little by little the gesture lost its exclusively penitential connotation and, especially during medieval times, it took the additional meaning of profound respect and adoration that is prevalent today. In this way the act of kneeling during Mass reinforces the sentiments and attitudes expressed by the upright position.

Another gesture is that of bowing which also means veneration and respect and, in some cultures, adoration. The invitation to bow the head precedes certain blessings and prayers over the people. During Mass the whole assembly bows the head when Jesus' name is mentioned during the Gloria and in recalling the mystery of the incarnation in the creed. In this way the gesture underlines the importance of the mystery mentioned in the liturgical text. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## BL. ALOIS STEPINAC A PRIEST TO THE END

*by Ian Doulton & and Paolo Risso*

**A**lois Stepinac was born in Krasic, in the northwest of Croatia, May 8 1898 into a family of well-to-do farmers. He grew in a deeply Christian atmosphere, where love and mutual respect reigned. His mother, a simple and compassionate woman, was especially devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a feature that would also distinguish her son.

During his studies at a school in Zagreb Alois demonstrated a strong will even though he was reserved and very discreet. In 1917 he was conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army. He came back to his homeland in June 1919. As a youth he suffered an internal crisis as a result of being so shocked by the immorality he saw during his military career, that he passionately undertook to study agriculture, but before long he abandoned it. He was neither successful in seeking a partner in marriage. In March 1924, a priest who knew him well wrote an article in a magazine on St Clemente Maria Hofbauer. He sent it to Alois with an accompanying letter. Touched by the life of this saint, the young Alois decided to consecrate his life to God. He



entered the "Germanicum," a seminary in Rome. One of his classmates said about him: "He burned with love for the Church and was imbued with a deep fidelity towards the Holy Father."

Alois Stepinac received a doctorate in philosophy, and then in theology from the Gregorian University in Rome and was ordained a priest on October 26, 1930. When he returned to Croatia

he found that it had been destroyed and invaded by Serbia. The Archbishop of Zagreb decided that he be put in charge of Liturgy and also head the curia in the Archdiocese.

In 1934, Archbishop Bauer fell gravely ill and requested the Holy See for a coadjutor, proposing Alois Stepinac who was very much against accepting the position because of his age (36 years) and his short priestly experience, but on May 29 he was named coadjutor. He went to the Marian Shrine of Marija near Bistrica, some 36 km from Zagreb and entrusted himself to Mary his difficult ministry.

On December 7, 1937, Monsignor Bauer died and Mons. Stepinac became the Archbishop of Zagreb. He esteemed religious life deeply and considered it indispensable in his diocese. Monasteries should become "powerhouses of Christ," and they should protect the diocese with the spiritual weapons of prayer, renunciation and sacrifice.

### **The Fruit of Immense Selfishness**

Monsignor Stepinac announced Second World War in these terms: *"Married couples no longer respect the sanctity of marriage and so practice adultery thus bringing children to birth. In fact, people are doing everything possible to erase the name of God from the face of the earth. They are destroying all moral principles and it is not strange that God now goes to the masses in the only language they are able to understand... and that is: chaos, the horror of war and the destruction of everything. This is the result of tremendous selfishness... If we wish to see better days, the first rule is to humbly give God back the respect that is his due. That is the*

*only road to peace."* This is a warning that is appropriate even in our times!

On April, 10, 1941 Yugoslavia joined Germany. Croatian nationalists (*also called Ustachis*) proclaimed in Zagreb an independent state. This new regime discriminated against the Orthodox, the Jews and gypsies.

Even the Croatian government encouraged the Orthodox community to join the Catholic Church. Monsignor Stepinac sent a confidential note to his clergy: "When Jews or Orthodox Christians who are in danger of death approach you and express the desire to become Catholic (receive them) that 'reception' was nothing more than a welcome without any kind of commitment) so that they may save their lives. It is our Christian duty to save them. And when this time of insanity and savagery is over then those with a persuasion to remain in the Church may do so while the others may return to theirs." Throughout the war the Archbishop of Zagreb lavishly distributed whole truckloads of aid to refugees and personally took care of orphans whose parents who were either imprisoned or had escaped to the mountains and he saved almost some 6,700 children from death by starvation, most of them Orthodox.

On May 17, 1945 the archbishop was suddenly arrested but on June 3, the Croatian bishops put as much pressure as possible to demand his release. The bells of all the churches in Zagreb went silent and the Corpus Christi procession was cancelled. This unexpected reaction twisted Tito's arm and he ordered that Monsignor Stepinac be released. On June 24 he

exhorted the faithful to pray much and especially in these difficult times and concretely to pray the Rosary.

In October 1945, during a pastoral visit Monsignor Stepinac's car was ambushed and stoned, breaking its glasses. On the eve of the ambush the militia had threatened the prelate with reprisals if he carried out his visit. "In whatever way," the archbishop pointed out, "he dies only once. They may do what they wish, but I will never stop me from preaching the truth; I fear no one but God and it is my duty to continue doing the same thing: saving souls."

#### **"I have a clear conscience and I am in peace."**

On September 18, 1946, at 5 in the morning, the militia entered in archbishop's residence and rushed into the chapel where the prelate was praying. When the police threatened him he replied: "If you are thirsty for my blood, here I am." After a mock trial he was condemned to rigorous imprisonment for sixteen years "for crimes against the state and the city." During his imprisonment in Lepoglava, Monsignor Stepinac shared the miserable plight of hundreds of thousands of political prisoners.

On December 5, 1951, caving in to international pressure, the Yugoslavian government consented to transfer the Archbishop to Krasic, his native city on parole. There he exercised the functions of a parish priest, spending much time in the parish church and, when they urged him not so strain so much he responded that being with them

was one of his greatest reliefs.

#### **"Only God is Great"**

On January 12, 1953, Pope Pius XII elevated Monsignor Stepinac to the dignity of a Cardinal. But the Archbishop has not been able to go to Rome fearing that the government of Tito would prevent his return to his country.

In his humility, Monsignor Stepinac complained about the publicity that was growing around his person. When he found out that a foreign magazine had just published a comment of the Holy Father stating that: "The Cardinal from Croatia is the greatest prelate in the Church," he lowered his gaze and commented: "Only God is great!"

Truly "another Christ" he often celebrated Mass for his persecutors. On Sunday February 7, 1960 he came down to the church to celebrate Mass "for the people" for the last time.

Tormented by pain and by thirst in the night between Monday and Tuesday he woke up about 40 times. On Wednesday he called for a priest and made his confession and serenely received the Sacraments. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon he asked to be given a blessed candle and before the picture of the Madonna he smiled and said: "*Your will be done, Ave Maria! Blessed be the name of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*" He passed away with a smile on his lips facing the picture of the Madonna.

It was February 10, 1960, at noon. Despite the opposition of the Communists his funeral was a triumph. His remains lie in the Cathedral of Zagreb and is a centre of continuous pilgrimage: an apotheosis of glory. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## The Front Pew

An elderly woman walked into the local country church. The friendly usher greeted her at the door and helped her up the flight of steps.

"Where would you like to sit?" he asked politely.

"The front row please," she answered.

"You really don't want to do that," the usher said. "The pastor is really boring."

"Do you happen to know who I am?" the woman inquired.

"No," he said.

"I'm the pastor's mother," she replied indignantly.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"No," she said.

"Good," he answered, "Let me show you the front pew."

## Record Store

A woman meant to call a record store, but dialed the wrong number and got a private home instead. "Do you have 'Eyes of Blue' and 'A Love Supreme'?" she asked.

"Well, no," answered the puzzled homeowner. "But I have a wife and eleven children."

"Is that a record?" she inquired, puzzled in her turn.

"I don't think so," replied the man, "but it's as close as I want to get."

## Diagnosis

The psychology instructor had just finished a lecture on mental health and was giving an oral test.

Speaking specifically about manic depression, she asked,

"How would you diagnose a patient who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits in a chair weeping uncontrollably the next?"

A young man in the rear raised his hand and answered, "A basketball coach?"

## Two Feet

A teenager was always asking his father if he could borrow the family car. Pushed to the limit, the father asked his son why he thought God had given him two feet.

Without hesitation, the son replied, "That's easy, one for the clutch and one for the brake and accelerator."

## Gold Watch

A boss to a retiree:

"As a symbol of our gratitude, we have created this special gold watch to serve as a reminder of your many years with the company. It needs a lot of winding up, is always a little late, and every day at quarter to five, it stops working."

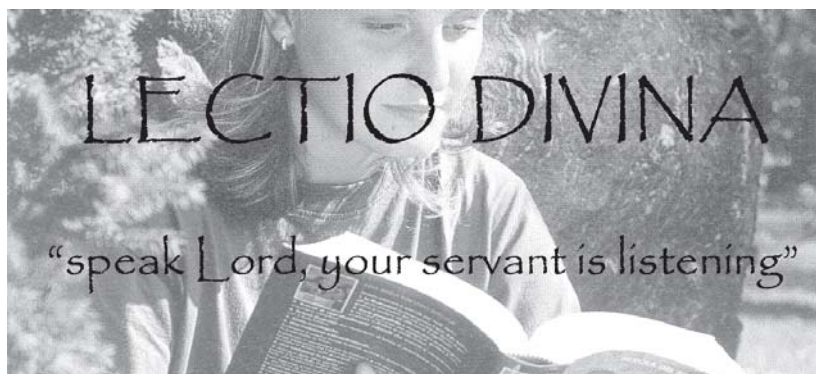
## Doctor's Orders

Doctor: "I see you're over a month late for your appointment. Don't you know that nervous disorders require prompt and regular attention? What's your excuse?"

Patient: "I was just following your orders, Doc."

Doctor: "Following my orders? What are you talking about? I gave you no such order."

Patient: "You told me to avoid people who irritate me. □"



## 'AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH'

by Roberta Fora

*Meditating on this most common prayer is like meditating on the Word of God...may it touch our hearts. (ed)*

**T**he hour of our death: as I read this phrase a shiver runs down my spine...

Death exists! It is part of our human experience and a necessary passage to reach the other Life or better, to reach Eternity. Even though for us Christians this thought is so essential, we do not find it easy to accept this fact. This thought is kept very far from our personal experience.

Perhaps this derives from the fact that each of us is afraid to experience a moment of great pain and suffering.

Who of us is able to contemplate a moment of sudden serious illness without being pervaded by a feeling of panic or fear?

Even Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane fell to the ground and begged his father to take from him the chalice of pain. This only shows us that, humanly, we are unable to accept suffering with





serenity and the thought of death upsets and disturbs us causing us some inner anxiety.

Despite this, each day we turn to Mary and ask her to pray for us at the hour of our death... Though this seems so contradictory it is part of our Christian experience. If we positively reflect on this phrase we will realize how important it is for us to have the Mother of God by our side on our Christian pilgrimage. She, the model of holiness, is a constant example of a trusting faith, so essential to our spiritual life.

If we truly believe that Mary prays for us, that she intercedes with the Father for us when we are in difficulty, that she is promptly by our side at that final moment of our existence, our death, everything becomes less frightening and we feel strengthened to face that final moment as we take our last step before reaching the endless joy of heaven. We are assured that we

will not get lost. God himself, through his Mother, will give us the Holy Spirit, the giver of all good gifts to be our strength.

We need have no fear. We only need to believe and place our trust completely in the Lord, everything else will follow.

Mary, help us each day of our lives to trust in the Lord more and more. Help us to place our lives in his hands, leaving behind all that would rob us of our peace.

Lord, help us to discover every day the final goal for which you have created each of us. May the thought of eternity bring us true joy, a joy that is a prelude to the endless joy where you patiently, mercifully and untiringly wait for us. □





DEDICATED TO  
THE BLESSEDNESS  
OF FORGIVENESS

# Quiet

## PARDON

by Anton

**E**tymologically speaking, pardon means “a gift *par excellence*” (*donum* = gift, *par* = beyond). Pardon, therefore is actually ‘more than a gift.’ By this definition it becomes very clear that pardon is more than just a simple gesture...

In perusing through Holy Scripture one initially finds the corresponding Greek verb is *ἀφημι* (*aphiemi*) which literally means letting go, permitting, abdicating, but it also means forgiving. In a manner of speaking the noun is *ἀφεσις* (*aphesis*) means: freeing prisoners or slaves and even that is not so simple!

Even in the New Testament the terms *ἀφημι* (*aphiemi*) and *ἀφεσις* (*aphesis*) are used but St. Paul uses a much more profound word for pardon. It has a theological overtone. He uses the term *δικαιοῦ* (*dikaiōō*) which means to set right, to correct, to justify. This is because, when Jesus frees us from sin, he welcomes the sinner and gives him back his life. Think of Luke 23: 43; at his Crucifixion Jesus turns to the good thief, who asked to be remembered despite his actions. Jesus tells him: “*In truth, I tell you, this day you will be with me in Paradise.*” Thus our ability to forgive others belongs to the life of grace, of the pardon that the Father has extended to each of us. Human forgiveness is a result of being forgiven by God. If “God’s pardon” is not only the remission of debt but also the liberation from the power of sin and a resumption of our communion with God” then our act of pardoning is similar to God’s!

From this we can quickly draw some very disconcerting conclusions:

1) when I ask God for forgiveness, I ask and receive it from God himself.  
2) when I ask a brother for forgiveness, I ask God to inspire him and motivate him to forgive me; and that I become aware that he forgives and accepts me!

3) when I forgive a brother, I am always accepting God, because “it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (cf. Phil. 2, 13). Therefore, it is He who gives me the desire to forgive, and while I am accepting him (a brother) in the Lord, I am offering him the forgiveness that Christ gave to the good thief by drawing him to Himself.

So, every pardon and request for pardon is an act of requesting God. Any other way of conceiving pardon is simply termed as an act of weakness or indolence, even something to be despised! Offering and receiving pardon are very powerful gestures with impressive results.

### God’s Pardon when Pardoning our Perpetrators

God desires “all men to be saved...” (1 Tim 2, 4) Jesus confirms this when he says: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Lk 5, 32). This holds true for those whom the brother has offended as in the case of ‘the good thief’ (Lk 23, 41ss).

Naturally even the Church has the same desire, the salvation of each

# Spaces

## DON

nio Rudoni

and every one, and she wishes that we pray for this without excluding even those who have committed serious offences (cf. *Liturgy of the Hours, Vespers* of Sunday and Monday in the second week and *Vespers* of Monday in the third week). But there are still some Christians who think that the pardon that God offers those who have done wrong is an injustice against those who have been offended. Is not this the attitude of the elder brother of the prodigal son? (cf. Lk 15, 25ss). He is livid before the magnanimity of the Father and refuses to join in the great banquet prepared by him for that profligate son, however reformed. The father then comes out "to plead" with this jealous son in the hope that those who are hurt are also in need of conversion!

In fact, it is important to note that the Lord graciously forgives the sinner whoever he is, when he accepts to be converted, but should a sinner refuse to repent he expresses the wish not to be reunited to Heaven! Heaven is the house of love and the one who does not want to love God (and therefore his neighbour) does not wish to live in a world of love!

Instead, the one who has done wrong but repents and returns, begins to love again so as to be able to "compensate" for the wrong done to his brothers! On the other hand, if he decides not to repent he wishes to remain in hate and so suffer a punishment that serves no one!

Therefore wouldn't it be much better to begin to love again rather than suffer the pain of hate? That is what Christ really meant when he said: "I desire mercy not sacrifice!" (Mt. 9:13) His mercy for a 'reformed' sinner will bring about salvation for him but it will first produce an attitude of love that benefits everyone while those who choose to suffer will be damned ("sacrifice") and that benefits no one and it certainly not what God wills. It is certainly the foolish who make such a choice, preferring to be condemned and even disparaged.

To pardon those who have hurt us is an act of mercy and further, it is also an act of justice not only because it leads them to the embrace of peace - though late, but because it finally leads the individual to be united to God. They are now capable of doing their brothers more good than the evil they formerly perpetrated. □



*Forgiveness restores everyone, those who are offended and those who offend*

# Family Secrets

Helen Morgan

**Concluding episode:** *Sarah Williams' life has been turned upside down. At the age of 26, she has lost those whom she thought to be her parents, in a car crash. Although Tom and Bridie brought up Sarah to believe she had no living relatives, a tip-off from a family friend leads her to hitherto unknown extended family in the Irish town of Killpatrick. There, she uncovers a hidden past: her parents' mixed marriage, the death of their firstborn child and her own adoption. During this traumatic time, she forms a bond with a young journalist called Kevin, a man who has also known heartache. It is a disorientating time. Returning to England, Sarah enlists Kevin's help as she seeks to track down her birth mother: It transpires that Sarah wasn't formally adopted at all, but abducted by Tom and Bridie. The abduction appears to have caused her family of origin to disintegrate, and the only hope for Sarah lies with her grandmother an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimer's disease in*

*a nursing home. While visiting her Sarah makes a surprising discovery...*

Sarah could hardly believe her eyes; apart from her clothes, the girl in front of her was the mirror image of herself. Remembering the old woman's words earlier, she realized this was who she had meant.

'Joanne?' she asked timidly.

'Yes,' replied the girl. 'Who are you?' she asked, bewildered.

Just then Kevin came hurrying towards them.

'Thank God, I got here in time,' he said addressing Sarah. 'I had just been told about your twin sister when I suddenly saw her enter the hospital.' He acknowledged Joanne with a smile.

'My twin sister?' asked Sarah incredulously.

'Are you Jane?' Joanne immediately asked.

'Yes,' she replied stunned.

She heard her mother's words

once again: 'If you have two of anything, always give one to someone who has none.' It suddenly occurred to her that this was how Tom and Bridie had justified their crime to themselves.

Sarah spent the next few hours with her sister in the hospital canteen learning about her past.

'Dad was in the Merchant Navy but he took a shore job after you disappeared as Peter - our brother - and I were being neglected. Mum never got over losing you and blamed herself. She started to drink to forget. This caused endless rows between our parents. When I was seven, Dad left with Peter and I never saw them again.

Mum died when I was eleven. The death certificate said cirrhosis of the liver but she really died from a broken heart.'

Sarah listened attentively to everything Joanne told her. She wanted to know every last detail of her background. As well as a sister, she now had a brother who was two years her senior.

'After Mum died, Gran took me to Southport to live with her,' continued Joanne. 'Six months ago, Peter contacted me from New York where he now lives. Since Dad died two years ago he has been trying to find his family.'

Sarah realized that by abducting her, Tom and Bridie had destroyed an entire family.

There was no question that if she had not been taken her mother would still be alive as she would have had no need to seek refuge in drink.



For the next few months, Sarah remained in Southport so that she

and her sister could get to know each other. She spoke to her brother by phone and was now a frequent visitor to her grandmother. Kevin travelled regularly from Ireland to visit her and she made occasional visits to him in Dublin. By now she was hopelessly in love with him and wondered if he had ever really got over Clare.

She heard from her former work colleague that Jonathan had moved to London. She acknowledged that her feelings for Kevin were far deeper than anything she had ever felt for Jonathan. In time, she forgave Tom and Bridie as, despite their shortcomings, she still loved them. They were the only parents she had ever known and they had loved her dearly. From the depths of her subconscious mind, Shakespeare's words rose to the surface: 'Love is not love which alters when it alternation finds.'

At Christmas Joanne went abroad with her boyfriend while Sarah accepted an invitation from Nuala in Ireland. Kevin met her at the airport and together they drove to Killpatrick.

She told him she had sold the house in Kingsborough to pay for private care for her grandmother.

As the car approached Killpatrick, Kevin left the main road and drove up a side road which led to a magnificent lake surrounded by purple mountains. Sarah was overwhelmed at the splendour of the scenery before her which was not diminished by the cold wet winter's day.

'This is my favourite place,' he said as they got out of the car.

'Oh look Kevin,' said Sarah excitedly as she saw a huge

rainbow form overhead. 'It's beautiful,' she added spellbound.

'Not nearly as beautiful as you,' he replied. Then taking her two hands in his, he looked lovingly into her eyes. 'Will you marry me Sarah? I fell in love with you the first time I saw you in Killpatrick'. Her heart overflowed with joy.

'Yes Kevin,' she replied.



Sunlight spilled through the church windows painting patches of gold on the mosaic floor as Sarah - dressed in bridal white, a bouquet of pink roses in her hand - took her place beside Kevin in front of the main altar of St.

Fintan's Church, Killpatrick.

Behind them family, friends and well-wishers filled the seats as the organ played Schubert's Ave Maria. The young fair-haired priest welcomed the couple before beginning the opening prayers: 'Dearly beloved we are gathered here today in the sight of God and his Holy Church to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony...'

Sarah looked at the man she loved: so handsome in his morning suit, his dark hair brushed back and his face radiant with happiness. She knew that she had finally come home.

*The End*

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## 8. THE HEART OF THE MATTER *continued from page 6*

died for all mankind, for every single human being. And so, his love must be made available to all, not necessarily in the same way or by using the same means.

Are there any applications of this lesson closer home to us other than to tribals? To discover this, all we need to do is to listen deeply to what the Lord says to us as we celebrate Eucharist or spend time in prayer before the Sacrament. Both of these are oriented first and foremost towards transformation of the human heart more deeply and questioningly, or better train ourselves. Maybe we would also need to look around more deeply and questioningly, or better train ourselves to think 'out of the box' or engage in de Bono's brand of 'lateral thinking.' Like blind Bartimeus we need to humbly yet insistently cry out to him: 'Lord, grant that we may see - the plight of our brothers and sisters waiting for your redemptive touch!' And we can be sure that when we ask with faith, our prayer will be granted.

Then comes the toughest part of the job: to make the new vision operative in our own surroundings and in our own little way.

Demanding as all this is, it will one day lead us to hear the encouraging words of the Father: 'I was neglected and illiterate and you came to my rescue... come, enter into the joy of the kingdom prepared for you...!' This blessedness can well be ours only if we move out of our comfort zone and dare to think and act differently. There is every likelihood that we will be considered as fools by our neighbours and relatives, but we recall that God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong, the simple and humble to put to shame the wise and the learned. Jesus even thanked the Father for hiding these things from the learned and the wise and revealing them to little ones! That blessedness is ours for the asking! Could the Eucharist we celebrate make us dare to think and act differently? □

# *Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts*

## **DON BOSCO AT PINEROLO IN 1884**

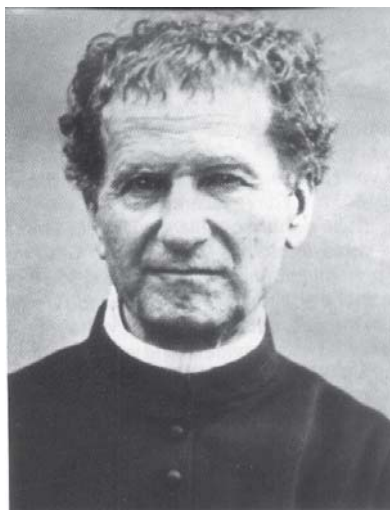
by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

**I**n the summer of 1884 the doctors and the Salesian superiors were concerned about Don Bosco's rapidly declining health. They persuaded him to leave the oppressive heat of the Turin summer and take to the more pleasant climate of Pinerolo where he could rest a bit and recover his strength. Don Bosco harboured fond memories of his stay there without being too far away from Valdocco it also possessed a healthier and cleaner air.

It was the bishop of that diocese, Bishop Philip Chiesa who, in his affectionate veneration for the man of God, who had led to the choice of this locality by graciously offering his hospitality in his Episcopal villa at *San Maurizio*.

### **His Stay at Pinerolo**

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1884, Don Bosco left Turin at ten o'clock in the morning and was met at the station of Pinerolo by the bishop himself, and then made to climb into the coach driven by a pair of horses. Don Bosco was accompanied by Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne and Father James Ruffino (who was replaced a few days later by Charles Viglietti, the cleric). The young prelate treated him with every possible attention from the beginning, and was delighted to see how he regained



*Don Bosco in 1884*

his strength day after day.

Viglietti wrote to inform Father Michael Rua on August 7<sup>th</sup>: "Apart from his heart trouble,



*Souvenir of  
The man with the iron mask*

which worries me considerably, Don Bosco is well now. He takes a walk with me, he sings and tells me a lot of interesting anecdotes and we say the rosary together. We are all by ourselves because three days ago, Father John Baptist Lemoyne went to preach at Fenestrelle."

By August, he was already able to walk again by himself without support, but naturally, he moved slowly and, at times, he liked to sit down in the middle of the meadows.

Near the Bishop's villa there was a pear tree and a monument to Luigi Aghemo a legendary "character" of French antiquity, who was imprisoned at "donjon" and known as the "man in the iron mask". That pear tree was pleasant shade during the warmest part of the afternoon. Don Bosco's two acolytes kept him cheerful with their jovial temperaments. But at times, he taught them beautiful songs and delighted them, especially with his pleasant stories.

## The Visit to the Monastery

The Visitation Sisters had come to Pinerolo as early as 1634. St. Frances de Chantal who visited the sisters in 1639 in their poor residence, pointed out the Palace of the Marquis Porporato that was built on the hillside and recommended that they should purchase it. That was how the actual monastery came into existence and the prophecy of St. Francis of Sales was fulfilled. When he was a guest of the Porporato family in 1622 and he had said: "My daughters will be here one day!"

On July 31<sup>st</sup> 1884, at 8.30, Don Bosco, accompanied by Mons. Chiesa, the spiritual father of the sisters, Canon Valletti and their confessor, visited the Monastery of the Visitation. The chronicles of the Monastery that I was able to consult give a detailed description of the event beginning with the words: "31 juillet, jour memorable,



*St. Frances de Chantal*



*The hostel and monastery  
at Pinerolo, today*

*date solennelle!* (31<sup>st</sup> July, a memorable and solemn day). Those words already reflect the fame and holiness that accompanied Don Bosco. Unfortunately we are unable to translate the entire document for this article, but some fleeting remarks should suffice.

Don Bosco was welcomed by the boarders who occupied part of the hostel that was annexed to the monastery. He climbed onto the stage that was prepared for him, for the monsignor and an assistant, to witness a gymnastic display and a few songs. When the performance was over Don Bosco was invited to distribute the prizes. He had a kind word for each of the winners and finally said with a smile:

“So many prizes! And nothing for me?”

After this he visited an exhibition of handicrafts made by the boarders and was guided to the quarters of the community that were duly decorated for the occasion. As they reached the main hall Don Bosco needed a chair to sit for a moment. He then slowly made his way to the chapel of the Sacred Heart. Later Don Bosco blessed the novitiate and after that they led him into the community room.

Two nuns who were ill eagerly awaited him and were overjoyed to hear his words of comfort. As they passed by the refectory he peeped in from the threshold and saw the nuns in the kitchen all dressed in white. They knelt before him and Don Bosco blessed them, barely stirring. They finally reached the main hall. There the Monsignor and Don Bosco blessed the sisters who then went back into the cloister.

On August 20, Don Bosco went to celebrate Mass at the church of the Visitation. The simplicity, the purity and the enthusiasm of that celebration were all recorded faithfully in the chronicle of the Monastery of the Visitation at Pinerolo. That would give anyone some idea of the great respect with which Don Bosco was held. The discreet and humble aspect of the Bishop of Pinerolo, Mons. Philip Chiesa, only confirms those sentiments.

### **Don Bosco's Birthday**

Don Bosco's birthday was celebrated in Pinerolo on August 15. He wanted to go to the Cathedral to celebrate the feast of the Assumption. To honour Don Bosco, the bishop held a banquet in his honour at the Episcopal palace to which he invited his canons.

After lunch Don Bosco went to sit in the garden where he suddenly received two letters. The first one requested him to pay back a loan of 30.000 lire, and the second was from a lady from Belgium asked him to accept the sum of 30.000 lire! Don Bosco pointed out to the bystanders the evident intervention of Divine Providence which paid for the feast.

He stayed in Pinerolo up to August 23 (*cf. EBM 17, 185-204*). □



## NEWSBITS

### VATICAN

Anna Nobili, the 38-year-old used to be a lap-dancer, and spent many years working in Italian nightclubs.

She is now using her talents in a rather different way - for what she calls "The Holy Dance" in a performance on the evening of 7th April 2009 at the Holy Cross in Jerusalem Basilica in Rome, in front of senior Catholic clerics including Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, head of the Vatican's Cultural Department.

Miss Nobili told the BBC World Service that the transformation from podium lap dancer to nun happened gradually.

"It was my mother who went about getting me involved in the faith - she had a powerful vision of Jesus," she says.

"At first I didn't want to know, but then Jesus appeared to me too, and I fell in love with him."

Several years ago, she swapped her old life for the Church, after a visit to the shrine of St Francis in Assisi, a place of pilgrimage for millions of Catholics in Umbria.

Sister Nobili, then joined the order of nuns called the Working Lady Nuns of Nazareth House, and it is through them that she tours prisons and hospitals performing her modern Christian dance.

She says the Church is very open to what she does.

"They understand that our hearts belong to Jesus, that means our moves also show that he is alive, and that he is a God of joy, not one of sadness," she explains.

"He is a God who dances not



one who stands still."

Sister Nobili adds that it is for these reasons she has noticed that bishops, and priests in general, are struck by this new form of expression.

She does use some of her past life in her new shows, telling young people in the audience the story of how she converted.

Referring to the actual dancing she does today, with her group, the Jesus Dancers, Sister Nobili says it is different from what she did for her nightclub shows.

"My body has changed, so the way I dance has changed too." *BBC NEWS*

### MARSHFIELD, MASS.

A simple prayer changed the life of Deacon John Sullivan, 70, of Marshfield and could later forever the legacy of Cardinal John Henry Newman, through whose intercession Deacon Sullivan says he was cured of a debilitating back injury.

If confirmed by the Vatican as a miracle, Deacon Sullivan's healing could be the miracle needed to beatify Cardinal Newman, a 19<sup>th</sup> century British Cardinal who converted to Catholicism from Anglicanism. (*Don Bosco's Madonna*, December 2006, pg. 12)

A British newspaper reported on April 28 that the Congregation for Saints' Causes had ruled unanimously that Deacon Sullivan's healing was a miracle due to the intercession of Cardinal Newman. As of April 30, the Vatican had not released an official statement on the matter.

If the miracle is confirmed, Cardinal Newman could be beatified as early as this summer.

In 2000, Deacon Sullivan was in the middle of his diaconal studies at St. John's Seminary when he began experiencing severe and incapacitating back pain. Tests and scans revealed that several of Deacon Sullivan's lumbar vertebrae and disks were squeezing his spinal cord and affecting the nerves going to his legs. Doctors told him that, without surgery he could become paralysed.

Not only was Deacon Sullivan shocked by the diagnosis, but he was also devastated that he could not return to his diaconal studies.

"I enjoyed the first two years of process and my heart was really set on being ordained because I wanted to be of service to the Church and to serve God in the way that I knew how," he said.

To distract himself from his pain and disappointment, he left his doctor's office and went home to watch television. A programme the beatification process for Cardinal Newman happened to be the

Eternal Word Television Network.

After the programme, Deacon Sullivan said he decided to recite this simple prayer to Cardinal Newman: "Please, Cardinal Newman, intercede with God to help me go back to classes and be ordained."

When he awoke the next morning, Deacon Sullivan was pain-free and could walk upright for the first time in months. His doctors had no medical explanation for that turn of events.

He returned to his diaconate classes and remained free of back pain for the next eight months.

In April 2001, the day after his diaconal classes ended for the year, the pain returned in "full fury", said Deacon Sullivan. A cortisone injection to the spine provided no relief and his doctor again recommended surgery to repair his back, which the doctor said was the worst he had ever seen.

In severe pain after the surgery, Deacon Sullivan again prayed to Cardinal Newman to help him to walk so that he could finish his internship and be ordained with his class.

"I felt a very warm sensation and a tingling all over that lasted about five or 10 minutes and a tremendous sense of joy, exuberance and confidence," said the deacon, adding that he immediately became pain-free.

"There is no other explanation than that Cardinal Newman interceded for me." Deacon Sullivan's doctor confirmed that there was again no medical explanation for his recovery. CNS □



Reflecting  
on  
Mary

## TRUST IN MARY

by Doris Azzopardi

*We have a loving mother to protect us and guide us.  
A mother's love has no bounds.*

**H**ave you said the three Hail Marys?" my mother often asked, as she tucked me into bed. This was after we had prayed the Rosary as a family, after supper. In addition to the five decades, we prayed one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be (each) to St. Francis and St. Anthony for my brother's perseverance in priesthood, to St. Dominic and St. Catherine, St. Joseph to save us from sudden death, for the souls in Purgatory, the Pope's intention and in time of exams to St. Joseph of Cupertino. This ended with the Litany.

From an early age, my mother instilled in me great devotion and love to our Blessed Mother. She patiently taught me the Hail Mary, Salve Regina, the *Memorare*, Rosary and other prayers. "Repeat after me, and you'll learn," she would

say. I smile as I remember her "lessons."

My mother had great devotion to Our Lady and St. Anthony who was blessed with great affection for the Mother of God. Mom taught me long ago that the three Hail Marys were in honour of the privileges conferred by the Holy Trinity on the Blessed Virgin. Her Immaculate Conception, Divine Motherhood and glorious Assumption into Heaven. As I grew older I learned that St. Anthony of Padua was one of the first to say the three Hail Marys and recommend them to others. His special aim in this practice was to honor the spotless virginity of Mary and to preserve a perfect purity of mind, heart and body in the midst of the dangers of the world. Later on St.

Leonard of Port Maurice recited the three Hail Marys every morning and evening in honor of Mary Immaculate and to obtain the grace to avoid mortal sin during the day or night. After these two great Franciscan saints, St. Alphonsus Liguori adopted this pious practice and gave it his most ardent support.

I was born in Malta, and devotion to Mary was (and still is), celebrated with great love. All year round before the evening Mass, the Rosary is prayed followed with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On an area of 122 square miles (316 km) there are 376 churches, Basilicas, Cathedrals and chapels. Many of these churches were built in honour of Our Blessed Mother, seven of which are dedicated to the Assumption of Mary into Heaven.

August 15 is a public holiday, and a holy day of obligation, which is celebrated with a feast fit for the Queen of Heaven. Three days prior to the great day, a life-size statue of Our Lady, depicting the Assumption, would be brought out and set on a pedestal in church. This is surrounded with flowers, and votive lights burning in front of it.

On the 15th, there is a procession with the statue, which is carried on a palanquin, on the shoulders of eight men. This procession goes around the village streets preceded by religious societies, for example Legion of Mary, Holy Name and St. Joseph's Aid, altar servers and local clergy praying the Rosary and singing Marian hymns.

Throughout the ages, our Blessed Mother has helped the Maltese in

difficult times and, in gratitude, we always celebrate her feast days. There is a special event which I would like to share with you. My parents, uncles and aunts all tell the story.

During World War II, the Maltese were starving and it was time for a convoy to be sent to Malta, with the much needed food supplies. The convoy sailed from England, through the Strait of Gibraltar, strongly escorted. But this convoy was relentlessly attacked throughout the voyage. Only four of the merchant ships eventually reached the Grand Harbour, which were welcomed by the cheering crowds that had gathered on the shores. This happened on August 15, 1942. The Maltese attribute the miraculous safe arrival of the four ships to a special grace from the Mother of God, whose Assumption into Heaven they were celebrating that day. Up to this day it is still known as "*il-Convoy ta Santa Marija*" -the convoy of St. Mary. This event is recorded in the Maltese history.

When I came to Canada, I couldn't understand why August 15 is not a holy day of obligation, while it is in the USA. Devotion to Mary came from Europe.

Anyone who reads about Columbus will know that he had a special devotion to the Blessed Mother. His main ship was named Santa Maria and every evening, Columbus and his crew sang the Hail Mary as they crossed the Atlantic. The

first Christian prayer ever said in this part of the world was the *Salve Regina*, which was also recited by Columbus.

Catholic Christians coming to these shores as discoverers or searchers for opportunities, brought with them intense love for our Lady, the Mother of our Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Without doubt also the Jesuit missionaries known as the Canadian Martyrs, who brought the Faith to Canadian shores, brought with them great love for Mary.

We Catholics are often criticized because of our love and devotion to Mary. Yet this devotion is an integral part of our faith, because without devotion to Mary, one would be ignoring a powerful way in which God's love is communicated to us.

Can we show too much love for Mary? Can children show too much love for their Mother? Mothers remind us of tenderness, goodness and love. The Blessed Mother reminds us of all the above. Throughout the ages, the Blessed Mother of Nazareth showed us her love. She has appeared in many places always asking us to pray, and as the world grows increasingly evil, we need to seek the comfort of her mantle. You and I are in danger. Our families, children, old people are in danger. Our planet is in danger. Anxiety, tension and distrust permeates the world. But there is hope and a remedy, and that remedy is Mary.

**Trust in Mary.** Like a loving mother, she is with us. She is there to protect us and help us grow

closer to her Son, Jesus. Is there anyone more considerate than a mother? So let us pray to our heavenly mother to give us peace in our heart, family, home and country, and in the world. Only our Blessed Mother and not politicians and armies can give true rest and peace to the world which yearns for it so much.

Two of my mother's favourite prayers were the *Salve Regina* and *The Memorare*. *Salve Regina* is the Latin for Hail Holy Queen. The authorship of the prayer is disputed, but the time is the 11 century. In the *Salve Regina*, many titles are given to the Blessed Virgin Mary to inspire the faithful to place confidence in her, and beseech her aid in the trials of life. The *Memorare* too is the prayer of complete trust in our Blessed Mother. So, let us pause for a moment and pray slowly and devoutly these two beautiful prayers. We need to pray them more often.

It is unfortunate that Major Marian feasts-March 25, August 15 and December 8, no longer draw large crowds. Instead, we have small modest celebrations, considered "special," have replaced them. But why wait for a special day -September 8, Mary's birthday-or month-May, October, to tell our Blessed Mother "I love you" and celebrate her love for us when she is there for us any time we need her?

Pray to Mary and honor her with three Hail Marys every day. All holy Doctors of the church are unanimous in saying: "A

devout of Mary shall never perish."

As our thoughts turn heavenward, let us reflect on what St. Bonaventure had to say: "The gates of heaven will open to all who confide in Mary's protection," and St. Fulgentius confirms this by saying, "confidence in Mary is a ladder uniting heaven and earth."

While it is crucial to pray directly to Jesus, the prayers to Mary have been given a special power against one particular evil of our times and are there for the asking.

We are still in the infancy of this millennium and as we face the challenges it might bring, nothing should discourage us because we have a loving mother to protect us and guide us. A mother's love has no bounds.



**Trust in Mary.** She is the perfect disciple who makes the loving Word of God Incarnate, and through her adoption at the foot of the Cross, she became our mother too (cf. John 19:27).

Pray to Mary. Pray especially for our brothers and sisters who strayed away from the Faith, and for all the faithful that they will be strong to confess our faith without blushing, and while we trust in Mary's intercession, let us sing her praises and look forward to the happiness of our heavenly home where She awaits us to lead us to Jesus. □

*So let us pray to our heavenly mother to give us peace in our heart, family, home and country, and in the world. Only our Blessed Mother and not politicians and armies can give true rest and peace to the world which yearns for it so much.*

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Thank you for a safe deliver and for a healthy baby. Dear Mama Mary keep our baby under your mantle of love and protection.

*Palmeera Rodrigues, Dubai*

My sincere gratitude to our dearest Mother Mary for a safe and successful operation of J. Dias. Mother protect and keep her safe under your loving care always.

*M. Coutinho, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for helping my niece to find a suitable partner and for taking care of my child during her heavy bleeding. Continue protecting us.

*G. Monteiro, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for a miraculous escape from a car accident on May 1st, 2009. May Our Lady protect us always.

*Harold and Lourdes Jacinto, Mumbai*

My knee was giving me much trouble. I was told by the doctor that I would have to have it operated. I prayed to Mother, Mary Help of Christians and my knee is OK. My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians.

*L.C. D'Almeida, Mumbai*

My sincere and deep gratitude to Our Lady for helping me to select a life partner.

*A Devotee, Mumbai*

Because of the recession my son was laid off and he was desperately looking for some re-employment. I decided to pray the **three Hail Marys** and within a week my son was employed at a good establishment. My grateful thanks to Our Lady.

*Mrs. E. D'Souza, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary for granting us so many favours. Do continue to bless us with your maternal love and care.

*Mrs. B. Barretto, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the miraculous favours granted to us. I will never fail to seek your help.

*Riona James, Australia*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for all the favours and graces received.

*Leema Daniel, Vashi, Navi Mumbai*

Belated but grateful thanks to Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my son a good job after losing his first job in Dubai.

*Molly Pereira, Mumbai*

I am sincerely grateful to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping dissolve an abscess. I faithfully pray the 3 Hail Marys and continue to do the same.

*Mrs. Laura Lazarus, G.O.C Trichy TN*

Dear Mother Mary thank you for the gift of a healthy baby girl and for all the blessings showered on us.

*Ferlin & Dorelle Caszo, Melbourne, Australia*

## THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



*The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion. Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.*

Through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys, my daughter's health has improved.

*Mrs Yvonne Rodrigues, Australia*

For many years I was trying hard to sell off my property in the suburbs but in vain. In my distress I turned to my dear Mother Mary by reciting the 3 Hail Marys. Very soon my wish was granted. My sincere thanks to you dear Mama Mary. Please do continue interceding for me and my family.

*Mrs. P. Lobo, Mumbai*

My belated thanks to our Blessed Mother for saving my husband's finger from being amputated through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*G. Gomes, Thane*

Thank you, Jesus and Mother Mary for miraculously granted a job to my husband which seemed impossible at the time of this recession. This came about through the most powerful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. I thank you for all the other graces received.

*Lancy Menezes, Goa*

Everytime we travelled by car we recite the "Three Hail Marys" imploring Our Lady for her protection. Last month my daughter's father-in-law expired. As soon as we got the news we left in a hurry forgetting to pray the "Three Hail Marys". After making the arrangements to keep the body in the morgue and while returning my husband was driving very fast on the old Mumbai-Pune highway. Suddenly a motor-bike came very close to the car and to avoid colliding with it my husband swerved a little but the car hit a divider and turned turtle. All the occupants of the car were saved miraculously with no major injuries. We are sincerely grateful to Our dear Mother for her protection and for giving us all a new lease of life.

*Annie Parakka, Mumbai*



**THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO  
OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO**

My sincere gratitude to the miraculous Infant Jesus, Our Lady, Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the miraculous cure of my granddaughter from spinal cancer and for all the special favours received in the family. Keep us always under your protection.  
*P. Noronha, Bangalore*

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my son pass his twelfth standard examinations and for the many favours received through your intercession.  
*Mrs. Louisa D'Souza, Goa*

Our grateful thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary Help of Christians and St. John Bosco for helping my son pass his HSC exams in 2007 and for all the other favours received.

*Francesca Gomes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the numerous graces and blessings that have been showered on our whole family and very specially for helping my nephew pass his Std. XII exams. Please continue to shower your blessings on us all our near and dear ones.

*Miss Judith Pereira, Goa*

My belated thanks to Mary Help of Christians Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby boy.

*M.A. Joseph, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl to my daughter and son-in-law and for all the favours and graces granted to me and my family.

*A. V. Pereira, Mumbai*

Thank you to our Dear Mother Mary, and Don Bosco for saving my mother from serious injuries and hospitalisation after a bad fall.

*Riona James, Australia*

Many thanks to Jesus, Our Lady and Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery and the gift of a healthy baby girl. Mother Mary keep us under your protection.

*Jacinta D'Souza, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with a suitable job and for granting my son success in his board examinations and for the numerous other favours received.

*Philomena D'Souza, Mumbai*

Sincere thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for the numerous favours received. Bless us, Mother and keep my children and their families in good health.

*Mrs .C. Armstrong, Hyderabad*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to Dominic Savio for the favours received.

*Januarius Gomendes, Goa*

I lost my second baby after birth. After I conceived again, I prayed to St. Dominic Savio for a normal, healthy and lovely baby boy. Thank you St. Dominic Savio.

*Odette P. Rocha, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and blessing my daughter with a gift of a healthy baby boy. *Violet Gomes, Mumbai*

Thanks dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of my niece and for a healthy baby. Bless and keep the baby always under your care and protection.

*Gracy D'Souza, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for helping my daughter complete her final LLB, also for helping us solve our house problem. Thank you for everything we have received.

*F. Fernandes, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting so many favours to me and my family.

*Nifa Sequeira, Goa*

Dear St. Dominic Savio thank you for the gift of a healthy baby boy and girl after three years of marriage.

*Lionel and Edwina Pereira, Goa*

Thank you to our Dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for miraculous numerous favours granted to us. I will never fail to always seek their help."

*Riona James, Australia*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

AUGUST 2009

**General Intentions:** *That public opinion may be more aware of the problem of millions of displaced persons and refugees and that concrete solutions may be found for their often tragic situation.*

**Missionary Intention:** *That those Christians who are discriminated against and persecuted in many Countries because of the name of Christ may have their human rights, equality and religious freedom recognised, in order to be able to live and profess their own faith freely.*