

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*Every liturgical  
celebration recalls  
the events of our salvation  
wrought by Christ,  
the Son  
of the Virgin Mary.*

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**Cover: *The Risen Saviour  
in Prayer  
for all humankind***



## From The Editor's Desk

### *Struggling to Bless*

Many is the parent who would love to stand before a 16-year-old, a mother before an adolescent daughter; a father before his teenage son and say in these or similar words: "I'd like to bless you," but the complaint I sometimes hear is: "I don't think they want my blessing!" Some parent or grandparent might complain saying: "They see me as a burnt-out middle or aged idealist" while everything in their attitude and body language seems to communicate that they simply want the elder to disappear and give them space!

That's also true for many others: the teacher before her adolescent students, the priest in the face of a less-than-appreciative congregation. It's not easy to bless someone who, seemingly, does not want your blessing, before whom it would seem a flat-out lie to say what God said to Jesus at his baptism: "*In you I am well pleased!*"

It would seem that many of the young do not want our blessing which is our affirmation of them as persons who we love. But is this so?

Not really. We must distinguish between the various levels at which we want something. On the surface, clearly, young persons often do not want the blessing of their parents, elders, teachers, and clergy. But that is the surface; they have deeper wants and needs.

Young people may not openly want the blessing of their elders, but they desperately need it. We should not be put off by the surface of things when they seem to give the impression that elders have nothing to offer them. Actually they desperately need that blessing.

And what does it mean to bless someone?

We see the prototype for blessing at the beginning of both the Old and New Testaments. The Bible opens with the creation story and, there, we see that at the end of each day God looks at the world and pronounces it: "good". Jesus' ministry begins with his baptism and there, we are told the heavens opened and God looked at him and said: "*You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased!*" We bless others whenever we look at them in this same way.

When the young people in our lives give us the impression that they neither want nor need our blessing that is precisely the time when, ironically, they probably need it the most. Their very aloofness is partly a symptom of the lack of blessing in their lives and a plea for that blessing.

We need to give that blessing. When we bless the young, especially when it seems that they do not want our blessing, we help lift a congenital constriction off of their hearts, like a mother cow that has just given birth to a calf turning around and licking the glue-like constricting afterbirth tissue off of her young. And we need to do it, too, to lift a certain depression within our own hearts. God blesses. When we act like God we will get to feel like God - and God is never depressed. So go ahead, bless and be blessed too!

*Fr. Ian Doultton sdb*

# 11. THE CROSS TRANSFORMS LIFE

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

Gene D'Silva is a familiar, almost household, figure in the now famous or infamous Chitah Camp at Chembur, a suburb of north Mumbai. He stumbled across his life's mission there as he took to assisting a HIV infected woman and her children monetarily and in other ways. Having contracted the virus unwittingly from her husband, she and her hapless children were grappling both with the disease and also with the stigma he bequeathed them. "I learnt of her through an infected eunuch at Asha Daan - the Mother Teresa relief centre at Byculla, where I volunteered my services regularly. After her husband's death, she became an untouchable to all in the area; in fact, soon after her husband's death and cremation the neighbours all congregated and unceremoniously sprinkled phenyl down the lane," he recalls. Thus Gene began a new chapter in his life, with a long haul to Chembur everyday, carrying for his friends the food he cooked himself. Earlier, he had been catering home-cooked meals to the starving slum-dwellers of Reay Road and Wadi Bunder for quite some time. The astonished neighbours at Chitah Camp watched him eat out of her plates and play with her children, and wondered how he hadn't yet contracted HIV. Unabashed, they asked and he explained in a straightforward manner - thus began his vocation in community development at Chitah Camp!

## **Life's Energizing Misfortunes**

Gene's conscription into community service was the outcome of a personal battle. A right arm stricken with palsy cost Gene who was then a strapping athlete, a steady job and a place and name in corporate football teams. But his greatest disappointment was his rejection at the 1984 Olympics for the differently abled. His hopes and ambitions shattered, he progressively slithered down the drug and alcohol gradient only to recover two long and painful years later. "All this while, my mother never stopped praying and urging me to get out of it," he reminisces. But he credits his eventual turnaround to his daily morning visits to the Church for spiritual sustenance.

Backed by his own personal experience of the numerous insidious paths to evil so readily available to the dispirited vulnerable, he took to providing social relief to unfortunate victims with a missionary zeal: as he continues to search for a permanent solution to alcoholism and chemical dependence, he offers his friends at least a little interim aid. "I have to," he observes nonchalantly, as if summing up his life's mission in that pithy phrase!

## **Towards Fullness of Life**

"I don't just want to eradicate one evil and turn away from the scene, while the other evils continue their ravaging spree; but

like UNICEF, I need to approach all associated issues in a given area," he professes as he goes down the by-ways of his work at Chitah Camp. "You can't sustain welfare without development" – is one of the bedrocks of his belief system. He began with AIDS awareness and went on to children's education by renting a tiny room, hiring three local teachers and gathering an eager student body of 90. With every new venture he took on – drug abuse, alcoholism, unemployment, women's oppression, crime-prone youth – he realised more acutely the need for more hands. "One needs to work with affiliated organisations to achieve something substantial," he philosophises. So World Vision, Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, Salvation Army and Don Bosco Shelter all were harnessed to lend their own expertise to Chitah Camp. In 2005, he formalised and streamlined his varied activities through Jeevan Dhara, an organisation he founded, through sponsors like PN Writer, Lotus Trust, HDFC Bank, Don Bosco, Kripa Foundation including several generous individuals. Even his sister in Canada raises charity for Chitah Camp, but she tries to downplay the name – its reputation for schooling terrorism has evidently travelled far and wide.

### **Eucharistic Stimulus**

The amount of moral strength and purpose a person of high ideals like Gene can draw from the core of the Eucharistic celebration is plain for all to see! His is an almost lone road to personal and social redemption which should

be by now familiar to those who celebrate Eucharist frequently. Time and again he would have heard during the Eucharist the life-giving words of Jesus: "Take and eat, this is My body which is given for you!" But after having eaten of this life-giving bread and the saving Cup, and refreshed himself into a new way of life, he would have understood better the words that follow: "Do this as a memorial of Me!" And what he has set out to do is precisely 'this' – in imitation of his divine Master, to break of himself as Jesus did, and give to the hungry multitudes around him.

### **Hungering for Love**

It is significant and noteworthy that in his initial gracious gesture of love, he carried food daily to his HIV infected friends at Chitah Camp. Wasn't he literary saying to this ill-fated victim and the family: "Take and eat – this is myself, my very life, given for you?" To that unfortunate woman he brought not only physical nourishment, but also a sense of dignity and worth in the eyes of a scoffing and condemning Society. To those conversant with the Gospels, this story inevitably provides a flashback of Jesus' unique way of dealing with the woman taken in adultery – Jesus too gave the sinner woman a new reason to live by his compassionate approach.

Another Eucharistic trait visible in Gene is his insatiable love for his luckless and doomed brethren. Did not Jesus explain: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what

stress I am under until it is completed! (Lk 12:49-50). It is this inner fire that drives him to extend his helping hand to so many afflicted in different ways. He does not limit himself to just one malady – he will not rest until all evils in the chosen area are either eliminated or at least mitigated.

A further Eucharistic dimension visible in this story is the humility and simplicity with which Gene networks with others. There is little pride or self-seeking visible in his ventures, but rather the focus is on the immensity of the task at hand. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ‘For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:4-7). When even highly respected and well-trained clergy often find it difficult to collaborate with other persons of goodwill, Gene’s mission is an outstanding example of how Jesus would go about his work of saving people today.

### **My Contribution**

The inevitable question that comes to mind on reading such a story is: ‘What does our Sunday/ daily Eucharist inspire us to do for others? Why is it that we can celebrate Eucharist so often and yet be unmoved by the plight of those around us? What is missing in our life that makes us so

uncaring and self-centred? How can we remain unmoved by the plight of so many suffering people around us?’ Possibly what is missing is the Cross of personal suffering which has not yet entered our lives in a sufficiently redemptive manner. It has not yet shaken us to the roots of our being, leading to the all-important question: ‘What is life all about?’ A possible remedy would be that the next time we celebrate Eucharist, we stare hard at the Crucifix above the altar till the words of Paul burn into our consciousness: “He loved me and gave himself up for me!” Is there anyone whom we love to the point of giving our life for them?

We recall the words all of us will hear as we stand before the judgment seat of the Father: “I was hungry and you gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink ... or you did not give me anything because you were too busy looking after yourself only!” How would we feel then about the innumerable times we celebrated Eucharist so piously and devoutly but without even a fleeting thought of the plight of others? Would it help then to plead: ‘But Lord, we ate and drank with you and you taught in our streets ...’ to which the Master will reply: ‘Away from me all you evil-doers... I do not know where you come from! (Lk. 13:25-27). What do we need to change while there is still time? ‘The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind!’ It is written in the very fabric of your life – you don’t need to look far and wide for the answer. But look you must – and that too, *today*, for tomorrow would be too late! □



## WHO IS A SALESIAN BROTHER?

*Br. P.M. Thomas sdb, a Salesian brother for 54 years and presently an English Teacher at the English Academy at Don Bosco, Lonavla*

The Salesian Brother is a consecrated lay person who vows publicly to live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He is fully a Religious living the charism of Don Bosco, working for the poor and abandoned youth. He is also fully a lay man, living the life of a lay Christian. He does not lead the life of a priest nor does he do those duties assigned only to a priest such as celebrating Mass or hearing confession. He does not wear a cassock, but always and everywhere dresses himself in lay attire.

There is in him a beautiful blend of the religious and lay states. There is such a unity and integration of the Religious life with the lay life that it becomes a single united vocation, a marvel. There is a special beauty in this fusion of a Religious and a lay life. It gives him the freedom to move in all circles, even these averse to the clergy.

The Salesian Brother lives in a religious community of priests and brothers, sharing its joys and difficulties. He prays, eats, relaxes and works for the apostolate with and through the community.

Both, the Salesian Brother and the Salesian priest share responsibilities, shed a lot of ego, co-operate as team members using their own talents.

In dealing with youth, he is creative, innovative and he practices the preventive system of Don Bosco, based upon reason, religion and loving kindness. They say that: ***The Salesian Brother is a genial creation of Don Bosco.*** He is therefore friendly, warm and



pleasant with all those who come in contact with him, especially with youth.

The Salesian Brother is engaged in all type of activities. In India, we find brothers as principals of schools, professors, teachers, managers of workshops, renowned social workers, youth directors and counsellors, farm managers, financial managers of undertakings, missionaries, catechists, infirmarians, at the disposal of the community for any type of work, administrators of institutions, chartered accountants, even builders. The field of the apostolate of the Salesian Brother is as vast as the world. He is a man of God for others and he does all types of God's work – high or low according to his talents and the needs of the congregation.

Why don't you come and join the Salesian Brothers? □

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# GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF PRAYER

By Michael Paul Gallagher

PRAYER IS FOR YOU (5)

Dear Eileen,

Thank you for your letter. 'I might sound like my teenage children,' you write, 'but am I meant to get something out of prayer? If I am I'm not sure what it is. I feel a duty to pray, to honour God, to ask a blessing on our family, and so on. Recently I heard someone interviewed on the radio, and he was talking about experiencing God as consolation. Am I missing something?'

## An Expanding Relationship

Thank you for your honesty. I think many people will echo your question. My simple answer would be: yes, perhaps there is more to prayer than you were brought up to expect. But isn't that true of many things?

When I took vows as a Jesuit, at the age of twenty-four, early one October morning, I thought I knew all about them. And then with the years I've found out much more - in the school of life. Living those promises is deeper and tougher and more joyful than I imagined at the outset. Perhaps you could say the same looking back on your marriage. So why be surprised if our relationship to God also changes and expands with the passing of time?

There are many reasons for prayer, but the angle your question raises has to do with the 'fruits' of prayer. Are we meant to be different because we pray? Surely the answer is yes. Here we are in the Ordinary Season of the year between Easter and Pentecost. What we celebrate these

days is all about new life in Christ and the gifts of the Spirit. It's not just something way back in history that we celebrate. It's a reality offered to each of us now, and prayer is a key way of making it real in our daily lives.

## Something Understood

You mentioned the person on the radio who was talking about 'consolation' through prayer. That word can mean many different things. It can mean enjoying God's presence, even with quiet and deep feelings of happiness. Or it can mean something less special and more ordinary: finding strength to live the Christian life.

George Herbert, an Anglican minister, was also a great poet. He once wrote a sonnet on prayer. It's famous for having no sentences, just phrases that describe prayer in many different ways. Sometimes, he says, prayer is like a battering-ram against the Almighty. At other times it can be compared to hearing heavenly music. I think that. Herbert is deliberately giving eloquent descriptions in order to surprise us with his simple conclusion. The last words are *Something understood*. Prayer is something understood.

I like that. It suggests that when I pray the heart understands something in its own strange way. Even if the going is tough. Even if I don't feel much. I don't think Herbert means that I have worked something out with the mind. Instead, I have grasped something more deeply: about God, or about

love, or about myself, or about others.

### **The Fruit of Prayer**

Do I get something out of prayer? Yes, my horizon expands and my attitudes get healed by being in the presence of God. So an important fruit of prayer is genuine peace and the courage to love. And that can happen even without strong feelings.

Consider it in another way. In the famous scene of the annunciation, which has prayer at its core, notice Mary's change of attitude. At first Mary is described as 'deeply disturbed' by the angel. Perhaps we forget this moment of panic and struggle, because so many artists have shown the scene in a beautiful golden light. They show it as a scene of consolation. And it is, but only later. It comes after questioning ('How can this be?') listening ('The Holy Spirit will come') and surrendering ('Let it be done'). Indeed we could say that Mary arrives at 'something understood': she understands something extraordinary at the centre of human history.

I think our prayer can often have the same pattern: confusion, searching, listening, acceptance, something understood in the heart.

### **Darkness into Light**

You can see a similar pattern in the resurrection scenes that we hear at Mass the Sundays after Easter. Isn't it striking how Jesus shows himself to his friends at moments when they are 'down', as we say nowadays? - locked in the Upper Room because of fear, or walking away in disillusionment. Take, for example, the great scene at the lake-side. It comes at a

moment of failure. These experienced fishermen have spent a whole night without catching anything at all. Suddenly, when they heed Jesus' voice on the shore, all changes. He suggests that they try casting the net on the other side. Suddenly that net is full, fuller than ever before.

All these are stories of emerging from darkness into light, from emptiness to fullness. As St Ignatius of Loyola liked to stress, the risen Lord comes always as consoler. And yes, prayer can repeat that drama. We can, and should, expect to receive consolation or strength for the journey - to get something out of it. Not in some extraordinary way of hearing voices. Not in any childish way of wanting self-satisfaction. Not focusing on results, for the core of prayer is being with God. But being with God has effects on us, side-effects if you like. We find ourselves changed and set free to live in everyday love.

Try it and see. Take one of those passages - the annunciation (Lk 1: 26-38) or the scene by the lakeside (Jn 21: 1-8) - and enter into it personally and slowly. Expect and ask to arrive at 'something understood'.

In your letter, Eileen, you talk about prayer as a duty. That's a slightly cold word. It can suggest a distant or cold God. If it's only a duty in this sense, then prayer can suffer from low expectations. It can seem as if you're left to yourself, and as if you have caught nothing all night. But there is a Stranger on the shore, inviting you to try the other side. And the Stranger has great expectations of what he wants you to find... □



# walking with the Church



## *Abraham, Praying for the Dead, All Souls Day...Holy Water...*

*by St. Martin's Messenger*

**Q.** *Why are we told in Church readings that Abraham sacrificed his only son? Did Abraham not have a son by the slave girl?*

**A.** Abraham's wife Sarah had borne him no children so she told Abraham to take her slave girl Hagar and have a child by her. Abraham did as she said and from that union Ismael was born. Sometime later because of his kindness to passing travellers, Abraham was told by them that his wife Sarah would have a son. She gave birth to Isaac. Difficulties ensued between the two mothers. So Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and her child away. Abraham was reluctant to do it, for ancient law ordinarily forbade the expulsion of a slave wife and her child. God intervened saying "grant Sarah all she asks of you for it is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. But the slave girl's son I will also make into a nation for he is your child too." (Gen. 21:12). Far from disowning his son, Abraham was obeying God's instruction. Isaac was Abraham's only son by a free woman.

**Q.** *I know some people visit cemeteries during the month of November. I can*

*understand people going to clean up the family grave but, if we can pray for our deceased in Church and at home why go to the cemetery? It seems unnecessary and maybe a little bit morbid to me. I don't know.*

**A.** Apart from cleaning up the grave I think a good reason for all of us to go to the graveyard at least once a year is to honour the memory of our deceased relatives and friends. Visiting a cemetery also reminds us of our mortality - that one day we too will go to our graves, that the life given to us by God should not be wasted, and that we should use our lives for good. Finally while we do pray for the deceased at mass and at home, a visit to the grave is a more forceful reminder not to forget them and indeed also that we are united with them in the communion of saints. We pray for them and ask them to intercede for us.

**Q.** *For the past thirty years I have some problems which worry me a lot and stop me from approaching the altar. What advice would you give me?*

**A.** Find a kind and patient priest and talk it over with him.

Considering your faith and your very evident desire to lead a good life your actions may not be as serious as you feel. I'm sure that with prayer, the Mass and the sacraments, God will help you to find a solution to this problem.

*Q. My mother and father have been dead now for a number of years -in both cases before the end of 1980. I loved them both and pray for them but how long should I keep praying or rather is it necessary for me to keep on praying for them?*

**A.** The Church leads by example in praying for the dead. In every mass we pray for all our deceased brothers and sisters and this is part of our Christian tradition and has been going on for a long time. From the beginning, Christians have believed in the 'Communion of Saints' which is a union with those who have died before us as well as those who are still here on earth. Because of the 'Communion of Saints' we believe that prayers offered to God for the deceased and for the living are, in God's providence, helpful for those for whom they are offered.

Your question about why do you have to keep on praying can only be answered by reflecting on the nature of God. Our God is eternal without beginning or end. Time like 'days' or 'years' only relate to us here on earth. With God everything is present. There is no past or future. From the beginning of what we describe as time to the end of our world is all one ever present moment for God. So for example, the prayers which we hope and believe will be said for us after we are dead are present to

God now and will be applied to us the moment we die.

This is what we believe. So in continuing to pray for our deceased relatives and friends and indeed for all the holy souls, we are following the example of the Church believing, as the church does, that our prayers do help to bring them closer to that final and complete union with God.

*Q. When I was young I remember my mother sprinkling the house with Holy Water every night. I have kept up this practice in my own house and my children (with whom I get on very well) laugh at me and say that this is all superstition. Please tell me am I doing right?*

**A.** Thank you for your letter and for your good wishes. As regards your question the simple answer is 'yes' you are doing right. However it needs a few words of explanation. Holy water, like a medal is a sacramental. Like a medal, it is an item over which the Church has prayed - when the object is blessed - asking God to accept the prayers of the church for those who use it with reverence and respect. There is no magic, no special power in the water itself or likewise in the case of a medal.

It is not a good luck charm. When using Holy water the faith of the person sprinkling Holy Water or blessing themselves with it is strengthened and supported by the prayers of the Church. Using Holy Water can also remind us of our baptism and our commitment in that sacrament to follow Christ. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## ST. ANDREW (NOVEMBER 30) The brother of Simon Peter

*Catechesis of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on 14-06-2006 (ed.)*

**T**oday we shall speak of Simon Peter's brother, St Andrew, who was also one of the Twelve.

The first striking characteristic of Andrew is his name: it is not Hebrew, as might have been expected, but Greek, indicative of a certain cultural openness in his family that cannot be ignored. We are in Galilee, where the Greek language and culture are quite present. Andrew comes second in the list of the Twelve, as in Matthew (10: 1-4) and in Luke (6: 13-16); or fourth, as in Mark (3: 13-18) and in the Acts (1: 13-14). In any case, he certainly enjoyed great prestige within the early Christian communities.

From the Fourth Gospel we know another important detail: Andrew had previously been a disciple of John the Baptist. He was truly a man of faith and hope; and one day he heard John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus as: "the Lamb of God" (Jn 1: 36); so he was stirred, and with another unnamed disciple followed Jesus, the one whom John had called "the Lamb of God". The Evangelist says that "they saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day..." (Jn 1: 37-39).

Thus, Andrew enjoyed precious



*In the Gospels Andrew emerges as a man endowed with practical sense and attention to facts*

moments of intimacy with Jesus. The account continues with one important annotation: "One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus" (Jn 1: 40-43), straightaway showing an

unusual apostolic spirit.

Andrew, then, was the first of the Apostles to be called to follow Jesus. Exactly for this reason the liturgy of the Byzantine Church honours him with the nickname: "Προτοκλετοσ", [protoclete] which means, precisely, "the first called".

The Gospel traditions mention Andrew's name in particular on another three occasions that tell us something more about this man. **The first** is that of the multiplication of the loaves in Galilee. On that occasion, it was Andrew who pointed out to Jesus the presence of a young boy who had with him five barley loaves and two fish: not much, he remarked, for the multitudes who had gathered in that place (cf. Jn 6: 8-9).

In this case, it is worth highlighting Andrew's realism. He noticed the boy, that is, he had already asked the question: "but what good is that for so many?" (*ibid.*), and recognized the insufficiency of his minimal resources. Jesus, however, knew how to make them sufficient for the multitude of people who had come to hear him.

**The second occasion** was at Jerusalem. As he left the city, a disciple drew Jesus' attention to the sight of the massive walls that supported the Temple. The Teacher's response was surprising: he said that of those walls not one stone would be left upon another. Then Andrew, together with Peter, James and John, questioned him: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" (Mk

13: 1-4).

In answer to this question Jesus gave an important discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and on the end of the world, in which he asked his disciples to be wise in interpreting the signs of the times and to be constantly on their guard.

From this event we can deduce that we should not be afraid to ask Jesus questions but at the same time that we must be ready to accept even the surprising and difficult teachings that he offers us.

**Lastly, a third initiative** of Andrew is recorded in the Gospels: the scene is still Jerusalem, shortly before the Passion. For the Feast of the Passover, John recounts, some Greeks had come to the city, probably proselytes or God-fearing men who had come up to worship the God of Israel at the Passover Feast. Andrew and Philip, the two Apostles with Greek names, served as interpreters and mediators of this small group of Greeks with Jesus.

The Lord's answer to their question - as so often in John's Gospel - appears enigmatic, but precisely in this way proves full of meaning. Jesus said to the two disciples and, through them, to the Greek world: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I solemnly assure you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (12: 23-24).

Jesus wants to say: My death on the Cross will bring forth great fruitfulness: in the Resurrection the "dead grain of wheat" - a symbol of myself crucified - will become the bread of life for the world; it will be a light for the peoples and cultures.

In other words, Jesus was prophesying about the Church of the Greeks, the Church of the pagans, the Church of the world, as a fruit of his Pasch.

Some very ancient traditions not only see Andrew, who communicated these words to the Greeks, as the interpreter of some Greeks at the meeting with Jesus recalled here, but consider him the Apostle to the Greeks in the years subsequent to Pentecost. They enable us to know that for the rest of his life he was the preacher and interpreter of Jesus for the Greek world.

Peter, his brother, travelled from Jerusalem through Antioch and reached Rome to exercise his universal mission; Andrew, instead, was the Apostle of the Greek world. So it is that in life and in death they appear as true brothers - a brotherhood that is symbolically expressed in the special reciprocal relations of the See of Rome and of Constantinople, which are truly Sister Churches.

A later tradition, as has been mentioned, tells of Andrew's death at Patras, where he too suffered the torture of crucifixion. At that supreme moment, however, like his brother Peter, he asked to be nailed to a cross different from the Cross of Jesus. In his case it was a diagonal or X-shaped cross, which has thus come to be known as "St Andrew's cross".

This is what the Apostle is claimed to have said on that occasion, according to an ancient story (which dates back to the beginning of the sixth century), entitled *The Passion of Andrew*:

"Hail, O Cross, inaugurated by

the Body of Christ and adorned with his limbs as though they were precious pearls. Before the Lord mounted you, you inspired an earthly fear. Now, instead, endowed with heavenly love, you are accepted as a gift.

"Believers know of the great joy that you possess, and of the multitude of gifts you have prepared. I come to you, therefore, confident and joyful, so that you too may receive me exultant as a disciple of the One who was hung upon you.... O blessed Cross, clothed in the majesty and beauty of the Lord's limbs!... Take me, carry me far from men, and restore me to my Teacher, so that, through you, the one who redeemed me by you, may receive me. Hail, O Cross; yes, hail indeed!"

Here, as can be seen, is a very profound Christian spirituality. It does not view the Cross as an instrument of torture but rather as the incomparable means for perfect configuration to the Redeemer, to the grain of wheat that fell into the earth.

Here we have a very important lesson to learn: our own crosses acquire value if we consider them and accept them as a part of the Cross of Christ, if a reflection of his light illuminates them.

It is by that Cross alone that our sufferings too are ennobled and acquire their true meaning.

The Apostle Andrew, therefore, teaches us to follow Jesus with promptness (cf. Mt 4: 20; Mk 1: 18), to speak enthusiastically about him to those we meet, and especially, to cultivate a relationship of true familiarity with him, acutely aware that in him alone can we find the ultimate meaning of our life and death. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Roof Leak

Mr. Gable had a leak in the roof over his dining room, so he called a repairman to take a look at it. "When did you first notice the leak?" the repairman inquired.

Mr. Gable scowled. "Last night, when it took me two hours to finish my soup!"

## Back To School

After raising 4 kids, and losing one husband, I decided to return to college and get the degree I had started, but never finished. And so, on my first day of college, eager with anticipation, and more than a little nervous, I took a front row seat in my first class in over 40 years, a literature course.

The professor told us we would be responsible for reading five books over the course of the semester, and that he would provide us with a list of authors from which we could choose.

He ambled over to the lectern, took out his class book, and began "Baker, Black, Brooks, Carter, Cook..."

I was working feverishly to get down all the names, when I felt a tap on my shoulder.

The student behind me whispered, "Slow down! He's just taking attendance!"

## Just Visiting Here

The tall, handsome, confident gentleman walked over to the girl and made a disparaging remark about the men who had been chatting her up.

She laughed gaily, "When I don't want a man's attentions," she confided, "and he asks where I live, I just say, 'I'm visiting here'."

"Ha-ha," he laughed, relishing her

humour. "Where do you really live?"

"I'm just visiting here."

## Paper Eater

A minister delivered a sermon in ten minutes one Sunday morning, which was about half the usual length of his sermons. He explained, "I regret to inform you that my dog, who is very fond of eating paper, ate that portion of my sermon which I was unable to deliver this morning."

After the service, a visitor from another church shook hands with the preacher and said, "Pastor, if that dog of yours has any pups, I want to get one to give to my minister."

## Ice Cream Flavors

The young man entered the Ice Cream Palace and asked, "What kinds of ice cream do you have?"

"Vanilla, chocolate, strawberry," the girl wheezed as she spoke, patted her chest and seemed unable to continue.

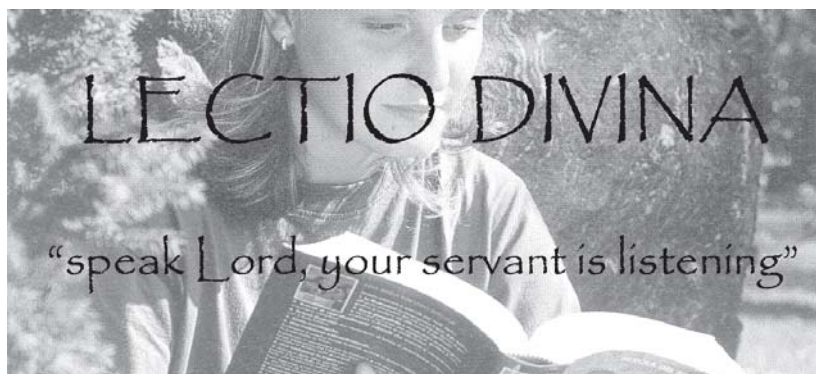
"Do you have laryngitis?" the young man asked sympathetically. "Nope," she whispered, "just vanilla, chocolate and strawberry."

## Funeral Weather

As with many funerals, it was a cloudy, rainy day.

The deceased was a little old lady who had devoted her entire married life to fussing at her poor husband. When the graveside service had no more than terminated, there was a tremendous burst of thunder accompanied by a distant lightning bolt.

The little old man looked at the pastor and calmly said, "Well, she's there." □



# Hear, O Lord and Answer Me

*Psalm 86*  
by Roberta Fora

**T**his psalm may be defined as a prayer of supplication. In fact, for well over fifteen times the psalmist turns to God, invoking him and imploring him with faith.

However, if one attentively reads the verses one also notes a uniquely marvelous song addressed to God.

*“Thou art my God.” (v. 2)*  
*“You abound in steadfast love.” (v. 5)*

This prayer is directed to God who is full of love to those who invoke him. It would almost seem that there is a poetic dialogue between God and a person who is “in love.”

So we may reflect on the characteristics of our prayer, on the way we daily turn to the Lord.

How many times do we pray, saying empty words that are meaningless?

Our most common mistake is to pray instinctively, out of habit, repeating an action like some kind of a daily routine. We do not realize that we are conversing with God, and not some theoretical image we call a “real



presence.”

Speaking to God, deeply conscious that he is really present is quite another thing. It changes our hearts, refreshes our lives and gives us a taste of Paradise.

*“Incline thy ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.” (v. 1)*

At times we can and must pray sincerely from the depths of our weakness and our inner poverty.

Only God can turn our anxiety into joy and put back the smile on our faces!

Yet, prayer is not just a “personal gesture” it involves the whole world, it is “universal.”

*“All the nations thou hast made shall come, And bow down before thee O Lord.” (v. 9)*

This verse reminds me that no prayer excludes a communion with the brotherhood of humankind. Therefore, to pray means to unite one’s own solitary voice to the chorus of every people who hope and believe in God

*Increase in us, O Lord, the yearning to pray.*

*Change our lives, so that no day goes by without ample opportunity to dialogue with you.*

*Let our prayer be a strong urge coming from the depths of our beings, becoming the pivot of our existence.*

*Holy Spirit, illumine and sustain our voices, joining them into a harmonious choir so that the whole world may be filled with a yearning for peace and for God who is always with us from the beginning to the end of our lives. □*





DEDICATED TO  
THE MOTHER OF  
SORROWS

Quiet

## MOTHER OF ALL

by Fr. Giuseppe

**S**tanding by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." (Jn. 19, 25-27).

This was not just an act of filial piety. John was not asked to take care of Mary - on the contrary, it was John who was entrusted to Mary. We see her role more clearly now: that of woman, mother and virgin. Because of this superior role John takes her to his home. That was such a crucial moment that the evangelist wrote: "from that hour" - meaning by that, that the action was something decisive. It was something that had been anticipated and was now being fulfilled. John symbolizes the whole of humanity when he welcomes Mary into his home. He (on behalf of all of us) received the salvation that Christ won for us on the Cross.

At the beginning of his Gospel John wrote that the Word "pitched his tent among us" to symbolize God's presence in human history, yet humanity refused to welcome him. At the end of his life, when Jesus was sacrificed on the cross, outside the city of Jerusalem the symbolism is clear again, that mankind once more refused the salvation that only Christ could offer.

Now, at the foot of the cross it is John, this man, who welcomes Mary - woman, virgin and mother, into his home. He welcomes her out of obedience for the One whom humanity rejected.

At the hour when man refused the salvation offered by the Father, here is John who becomes a son, recognizing the mother from whom he has been born anew. He is now the son who welcomes Mary into his home. He welcomes her whom the Crucified One called 'Woman.' She is participating in the salvation of humanity because it was she who gave mortal flesh to the immortal God and it was she who gave the invisible God a visible face.

In that moment, "at that hour" Mary and John meet. John the apostle is like a child who is born again and is welcomed by Mary who is mother of all the living. He welcomes her into his house as a symbol that humanity has accepted Salvation and so she becomes his mother.

But when John welcomes Mary he is not a son welcoming



# Spaces

## ALL THE LIVING

ope Pelizza

a lonely widowed mother into his home, but much more. The words for this gesture that the evangelist uses evoke nuptial overtones. The "takes to himself," "into his own home" have a nuptial significance. In fact, from that moment, Mary will beget new children for the Head, Christ crucified and risen. These new members will form his Mystical Body, the Church.

These allusions therefore are not of pain but of a kind of nuptial joy. Her face is a picture of one absorbed in contemplation of a scene not filled with sorrow but one of surprise that the New Creation is being realized before her eyes. All human iniquity is taken on by divinity when He immerses Himself into the torment of human suffering for our eternal salvation.

And Mary was fully aware of the gravity and the responsibility of accepting the Cross. She was fully immersed in the mystery of redemption. Thus she emptied herself to be totally open to the glory of the Father and she was totally immersed into that event so she could identify herself completely with the Passion of Jesus.

Thus, mother and Son are in perfect union and their unity is the fruit of the total fusion of their hearts and their lives. There was just one Cross on which both Christ and his mother were simultaneously crucified.

It was at that moment that Mary became aware of a new annunciation. At the first annunciation she represented humanity waiting for redemption when the angel offered her the possibility of becoming the mother of God. At the second annunciation all humanity is united to her 'yes' and to the 'yes' of her Son as she becomes an oblation offering herself with him. She offers her Son all that He could ever want from his mother. Mary is that part of humanity that is already saved and is united to the work of salvation for the rest of mankind. Even if Mary is saved in view of the merits of Christ, nevertheless, now her Son wants his mother to be united with him in the work of redemption. This is because the Son, whose love is enough to save the world, willed that his mother, the purest of all creatures, be united with Him in the salvation of the world.

Even in this act, there is just one 'divine concern:' that the Son wishes that his mother be united with him becoming not only a new creature, but truly the mother of the new creation. □



## Concluding Part

# The Tree of Happiness

by Pierluigi Menato

*Martina, a young and bright youngster finds a friend while roaming about her family's country estate. They share their childish secrets and suddenly their worlds are torn apart and Stephen is left wondering what has happened to his friend. He has grown to love her and his life has taken him to the heights of his profession - yet the void within remains to be filled...in time.*

Stephen kept going to the little patch of trees outside the town...hoping that the girl he met would reappear. Martina seemed to be on his mind, but then – as Stephen said – life has to go on. He had finished school and with the help of a teacher who saw that Stephen had an inclination to study and through the good auspices of a professor in the local medical college Stephen was admitted to the full programme.

He was so thrilled, but he felt lonely. The only one he could have shared his joy with (besides his dear Mother) was Martina, but, where was she? He was sad that her entire estate had now gone into the hands of someone else. He was no longer allowed to enter the little wood outside the town. Everything was fenced and the security around the perimeter of the property was guarded zealously. So years passed, Stephen graduated and became a doctor. After a year's internship he was attached to the local hospital at least till he found his bearings. He was working now and so, with a little help he was able to buy a more comfortable apartment for his mother and himself.

Stephen was growing tall and handsome. Except when he had

to read some fine print he never wore glasses. Every Sunday morning when he and his mother came out from church he would notice that there was a hush among the young girls and boys standing around. He had an impressive and sober personality. How he wished that Martina was around. He would walk proudly with her and his mother, arm in arm...

As his skills came to be known both in the town and around he was compelled to establish his own practice. By now he was also the chief physician at the local hospital. His private practice too was coming along nicely. He had a large clientele, what more could he ask for? There was one thing, but he had not spoken to anyone about his one unfulfilled desire.

"Why don't you choose a nice girl for yourself, Stephen?" His mother said one evening breaking the silence as the two of them had dinner together.

"There's still time, mama."

"I'm growing old, the years are passing. I would like to cradle in my arms that baby of yours, and to be able to kiss its cheeks."

A frown crossed Stephen's face.

There was a name that was deeply etched in his heart, one that couldn't be erased.

"Martina, my dear, where are you?" He wondered late in the night when he spent many a sleepless night wondering about the little girl he once met under the old tree in the forest.

It was better not to speak of it. The names his mother proffered didn't interest him at all. They were all good girls, no doubt. But there was a void in his life that had not yet been filled... that first love that he had never forgotten. He even noticed that he was graying at the temples... Was he working too hard? But that did not make him less handsome - his perfect features, his strangely penetrating eyes preserved his childish innocence. His mother said nothing, she perhaps had guessed.

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What a day it was! ...But it was finally over.

It was a delicate operation and he was nervous to the very end,



but everything turned out alright. It was a struggle tearing the young boy from the clutches of death and he hoped he had won, with the help of God. He returned the boy to his mother. The poor lady! She was white as a sheet as she anxiously waited. Finally some colour returned to her cheeks as she sat by his bedside, still as a statue watching her son's breathing. Stephen was not yet ready to leave the clinic, he had already telephoned his mother to tell her he would be a little late.

He was still in his white coat absorbed in a thousand thoughts, when he suddenly heard the siren of the ambulance followed by the long alarm heralding the arrival of a serious case.

Stephen was off like a shot. What about his exhaustion? A life was in danger. His assistant was already there ready to do his part. The stretcher was carefully removed from the ambulance

wheeled to the examination room... a short gasp escaped Stephen's lips: "Martina," That was Martina, but she had changed! It was a serious case of peritonitis and the patient was weak.

"Good God!" Stephen said, "Why did I have to find her again and like this?" She was extremely weak. He gave crisp orders and took control of the situation.

"Prepare her! I will operate immediately."

He clenched his jaws and with a twinge of pain he cut through the tender flesh. A few beads

of perspiration appeared on her pale forehead. – Soon everything that could be done was done and he checked her pulse...looked at her closed eyes and that dear face.

For three days Martina struggled unconsciously between life and death. She had no will to live, she didn't want to recover. This certainly did not help her recovery. Finally, when what Stephen believed was an opportune moment, he gently took her hand and gently called out her name twice. Two large eyes opened wide and her pale face brightened up.

"Stephen!" she replied in a whisper smiling weakly.

"Stephen..." He placed his hand on her warm forehead and looked tenderly into her face. He read in those eyes the answer that he had been waiting for, for such a long time... there was no need for another word.

"My dearest Martina, you won't leave me ever again, will you? That gift you offered me so long ago, I think I can accept today. Will you marry me? Mother will be so

glad to hear this."

Hot tears rolled down both their cheeks.

"I need nothing or no one else, Stephen... I am so poor left to myself. I realized how poor I was when I abandoned you beneath that tree."

"You've suffered so much, Martina!"

"Believe me, I really have. And the only comfort was the thought of having met you."

"Martina, my dear, now forget everything. I'm graying slightly but my heart has always been yours, only yours."

"Thank you so much Stephen. If you knew how much better these words make me feel!"

"Now rest, I'll send mother to visit you." And he bent down and kissed her forehead.

She had been in the dark for three days...and now a huge weight had been lifted from Stephen's chest. He seemed rejuvenated. Martina was safe! How good! She's safe!

With her he found happiness once more. □

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## *Fussy People*

**D**id you every wonder if among the thousands of people Jesus fed with a few fish and five loaves of bread, some complained about finding bones in the fish or lumps in the bread?

Some people seem unable to be happy about anything. There may be truth to the notion that those who spend their energy being grouchy all day, always barking about something, are likely to be dog-tired at night.

The book of James has a lesson regarding complaints and misuse of our tongues. "How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire." (James 3:5-6a)

As Christians, let us use our tongues to light the fire of Good News rather than fires of discontent.

St. Paul believed that God had given him "the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:18) We have the same ministry. Let us be reconciled with one another and reach out in Christian love to others.

*The Master Key, Florida (USA)*

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

## **DON BOSCO: WANDERER AND DREAMER**

by Enzo Bruni (T/A:ID)

**D**on Bosco completed three years of extra studies at the Ecclesiastical College of Turin and the boys of his first 'Oratory' continued to increase. He then accepted the "obedience" of Fr. Cafasso which was to take up the chaplaincy of the little hospital of the Marchioness Barolo in the district of Valdocco.

Don Bosco "obeyed" but with some "reluctance" because of the uncertainty of finding a place for his boys. Where would he gather them? How was he to break the news to them that they had to move?

### **The Dream Returns**

October 12, 1844 was a Saturday and Don Bosco writes: "The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart. I had a similar dream to the one I had at Becchi at the age of nine. I dreamt that I was standing in the midst of a multitude of wolves, goats and kids. They made quite a din. I wanted to run away when a lady dressed as a shepherdess signaled me to follow her and accompany that strange flock while she went ahead. Each time we stopped, many of the animals were turned into lambs, and their number grew.... Worn out, I wanted to sit down beside a nearby road.

"But the shepherdess invited me to continue the trip. I found myself in a large courtyard with porticos all around and a wondrously big



church. The number of lambs was great. Several shepherds came along to take care of the flock. Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were transformed into shepherds. As the number of shepherds became great, they split up and went to other places to gather other strange



*Don Borel*

animals and guide them into other folds....

"I wanted to be off but the Lady asked me to look again. I saw a wondrously big church. There was a choir and an orchestra. Inside the church hung a white banner on which was written in huge letters, "*Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea.*" (This is my house and from here my glory goes forth). .

"I wanted to ask the shepherdess where I was. "You will understand everything when you see in fact with your bodily eyes what you are looking at now with the eyes of your mind. Thinking I was awake, I said, - I see clearly, and I see with my bodily eyes. I know where I'm going and what I'm doing. - But at that moment the bell of the church of St. Francis sounded the *Ave Maria*, and I woke up." (MO p. 210-211)

Don Bosco recognized the words he had heard also in the dream at the age of nine. He concludes: "I put little faith in it. But I understood little by little as the dream began to come true."

The sound of the *Angelus* brought Don Bosco back to reality.

The 13<sup>th</sup> October was a Sunday. In the afternoon he broke the news to the boys that the Oratory would be moving and they were upset. He tried to encourage them that the place was just waiting for them and it was spacious enough to play. Then they eagerly looked forward to the new place.

The following Sunday a mob of youngsters of all ages and conditions descended on Valdocco. "Where's the Oratory? Where's Don Bosco?" they shouted to all and sundry.

No one knew anything. They believed that this was some kind of ugly joke. Matters were getting out

of hand when Don Bosco heard the bedlam. Together, Don Borel and Don Bosco raced to meet the boys. It was a moment of great joy. Even trying to explain the mood would not be possible. They were satisfied that Don Bosco was with them.

But on the following Sunday, so many pupils from the locality came in addition to the old ones, that there was no longer room to gather them. Don Bosco's room, the stairs were all thronged with boys. Some were playing, some making their confession. Some were putting order while others were creating chaos. There was so much joy, but so much confusion. Fr. Borel shook his head and commented: "We can't go on like this; we really must find a more suitable place."

For the moment, to resolve the problem, the Marchioness put the little hospital that was under construction at Don Bosco's disposal.

"That was Providence," wrote Don Bosco. "The Oratory has its own place and its own name, the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales" - a name that would remain from then on.

But why St. Francis of Sales? In *The Memoirs of the Oratory* Don Bosco explains why. At the place that the Marchioness made available to Don Bosco, she had commissioned a painting of St. Francis of Sales which can still be seen at the entrance and second because of his extraordinary meekness.

"Our own ministry, calls for great calm and meekness and we put it under the protection of this saint in the hope that he might obtain for us from God the grace of being able to imitate him in his extraordinary meekness in winning souls...."

The 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1844 is the feast of the Immaculate. Don Bosco well recalled that it was on that day that he met Bartholomew Garelli three years earlier at the church of St. Francis of Assisi. The Oratory was "born" with "that Hail Mary!"

The new centre of the Oratory was filled with boys. During the Mass he wept out of relief because the Oratory seemed to have found its place... He would be able to finally gather his youngsters and lead them on the path to goodness. There would be seven more months to reach Paradise.

But his wanderings were soon to commence.

### **Like Transplanted Cabbages**

On 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1854 the Marchioness was to inaugurate her little hospital and begin her much awaited work.

It was on a warm Sunday in July that the boys had to move to a place near the church of St. Martin of the Mills. The place was made available to him by the Municipality of Turin after Don Bosco and Don Borel turned to the Archbishop for his assistance. They took all that that they had gathered for the running of the Oratory and made their way towards the mills. This is how Don Bosco narrated that amusing incident:

"Imagine us then, on a warm Sunday afternoon in July 1845, making our way laden with benches, kneelers, candlesticks, some chairs, crucifixes and pictures large and small. ... With laughter and din and misgivings we marched out to establish our headquarters in the place just indicated. Don Borel

was himself also amused at the transfer and he gave this timely talk before we set out on another transfer:

"My dear boys cabbages never form a big and beautiful head unless they are transplanted... The same is true of our Oratory. So far it has been moved from one place to another many times, but in every place where we have stopped we have always grown bigger. The boys have been helped spiritually by way of confessions, catechism classes, sermons and games and Gospel classes. On the fields we'll play happily. Let's throw all our worries into the Lord's hands; he'll take care of us. It's certain that he blesses us, helps us and provides for us."

Don Bosco comments: The words of Don Borel were heard by most of the boys.

But for how long would they stay at St Martin of the mills? Going by past experience the question was permissible. But whatever happened they all took comfort from the words of Don Borel about "transplanted cabbages."

In fact, the wandering of the oratory of Don Bosco hadn't ended yet. □



*St. Martin of the Mills  
one of the stops of the Oratory*



## NEWSBITS

### MAYDEN-SHA, Afghanistan

Over his military career, Sgt. 1st Class Jared Monti, 30, won dozens of awards for valour, for achievement, and for sheer grit and ability – but this one will be his last.

Monti, a Catholic who was confirmed at St. Ann Church in Raynham, Mass., will be honored posthumously with the Medal of Honor in September. It is the crowning measure of an American military hero. It is the United States' highest military honour.

Many of Monti's fellow soldiers have been redeployed back to Afghanistan – where he died. In interviews gathered on the battlefield, they remembered a lighthearted, fun-loving man who could whip soldiers into a unified fighting force capable of handling any situation with confidence.

For these men, the award is a bittersweet but well-deserved honour.

"Those are the awards no one wants because it hurts," said 1st Sgt. Gary Hunsucker, 44, in an interview in eastern Afghanistan.

Hunsucker was Monti's commanding officer in the Army's 371st Cavalry, 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. He is an imposing man, with a gruff manner and a quick wit, but his voice softened slightly when he recounted the evening of June 21, 2006.

"We were planning to go into a hornet's nest of insurgents," he said.

According to Hunsucker, Monti led a group of 15 scouts on a

reconnaissance mission in Gowardesh. Hunsucker was in charge of planning the mission, watching back at the base. Monti was in charge of the soldiers.

Suddenly Hunsucker's radio crackled loudly. It was Monti – call sign "Chaos 35."

"He says, 'We're being pinned down by RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades), and we're getting our butt handed to us because of the amount of fire,'" recalled Hunsucker.

Hunsucker radioed back, asking for a location to send help.

"The last comment I got from him was, 'I can't raise my head or I'll get it blown off,'" he remembered.

It was the last time anyone heard from Monti.

According to accounts gathered from other soldiers who were present that night, Hunsucker said Monti and another sergeant fought hard to keep the enemy from advancing. Monti then pulled Pvt. Brian Bradbury to a waiting medevac helicopter. But in the process, he was exposed to enemy fire. An RPG landed close



*Monti was killed by enemy fire in 2006, while helping Pvt. Brian Bradbury to a waiting medevac helicopter in Afghanistan*

to him, killing him.

When he died, Monti held the rank of staff sergeant, and was promoted to sergeant first class posthumously.

According to his father, Paul Monti, in his last moments, he said the Lord's Prayer and told the men around him to "tell my family I love them."

"We lost a leader," said Hunsucker. "Society lost a good human being."

On Sept. 17 President Barack Obama presented Monti's family with his award. Monti's fellow soldiers will be watching and participating in a parallel ceremony in Afghanistan at the site of his death. Hunsucker hopes it will provide closure for the men who knew Monti. But he believes that the best way to honour Monti's sacrifice is to continue his care and commitment to American soldiers. "I'd take him before I'd take the award," said Hunsucker. (CNS)

## BHOPAL

A Church tree-planting initiative among students in central India has sparked enthusiasm not only among them but in the wider community as well.

The initiative, dubbed **Matr Chhaon Abhiyan** (shading mother earth movement), was launched in 50 Catholic schools in Madhya Pradesh state on July 29 and will be expanded to cover all 500 Catholic schools in the state.

Under the project, students from grades five to nine will each plant at least one sapling and care for them over three years.

Each student who is successful in nurturing their tree will gain



*Students of St. Francis Convent Senior Secondary School in Bhopal plant a sapling in their school compound as other students look on.*

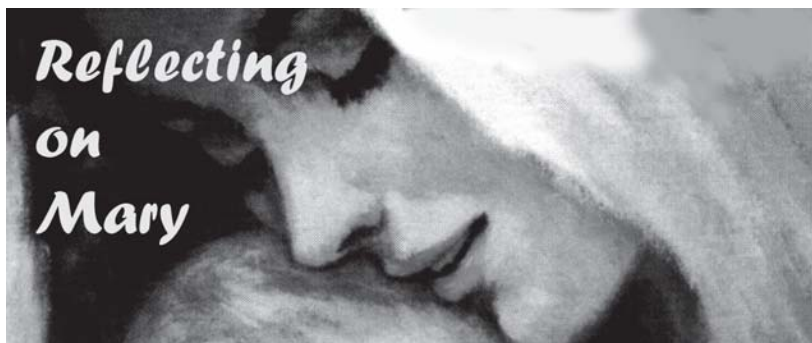
additional credits in the final practical examination on environmental study, said programme director Father Anand Muttungal.

He added that he plans to ask the state government to include the programme in the formal academic curriculum to promote environmental protection, and will also write to the prime minister, members of parliament and chief ministers of others states on the initiative.

"To protect nature is our collective responsibility. Future generations will not forgive us if we fail to do this," the priest said.

Pradiksha Mahurkar, a ninth grader of Bhopal's St. Mary Senior Secondary School, described the project as "motivational." She joined the campaign for an additional academic credit but within a fortnight her motives changed.

Her mother, Vasundra, a government school teacher, said the Church initiative inspired her to tell her own students to plant saplings. Her younger son, Pradhesh, a fourth grader, had joined in after being inspired by his sister. (UCAN) □



## ALIVE - BUT BURIED

by Sr. Theresa Cuzzola, DHM

**I**t all began with Grandmother's dream. It was Monday, the night of December 28, 1908. The place: Reggio Calabria, Italy. My mother, then thirteen, her brother, ten, and their parents were fast asleep. Suddenly, Grandmother, a devout woman who daily attended Mass, was awakened by a frightening dream. Before her, stood a woman dressed completely in black, her face reflecting great anguish. In a solemn tone, she addressed Grandmother: "This night," she began, "you must all die."

Instinctively, Grandmother asked, "I, too, will die?"

"No," answered the mysterious lady, her features still betraying her sorrow; "You will not die this night but very many will!"

Then the lady vanished. Grandmother was jolted out of her sleep. Relieved that this had been "only a dream," she tried to return to sleep. Sleep, however, would not return to her.

At 5:20 A.M., with little warning, the household was vehemently roused from sleep by a deafening rumble and a violent quivering of

their beds. "Quick! Everyone out," shouted Grandfather; "It's an earthquake!"

As furniture and wall pictures began to fall around them in their simple first floor home, the four family members, cautiously but speedily, made their way out the front door and into the street. This they did just in time to witness the house across the road shiver, then shatter-as fragments flew across the street directly in their pathway, though luckily eluding them.

Even in the winter darkness, my mother managed to spot, with great relief, her older sister, carrying in her arms her four month old baby. Her sister's young husband was leading them with a lantern, which flickered eerily in the somber dark amid the panicky crowd, the ruins at their feet, the confusion and the cries of distress.

Grandfather led his family and other willing neighbours to an open field where they would, for the present, be reasonably safe, if not warm. Immediately afterwards, he began running from house to house to assist whomever

might be in need. His first painful duty was to help lift a heavy stone which had fallen on a twelve-year old girl. She gasped as the stone was removed. It was her last breath.

Later, a neighbour explained that a special family event was being celebrated in her home, and the girl, her niece, having been invited to stay overnight, had persuaded them in these words: "Leave all the dishes; tomorrow I will rise early and take care of everything." Her kindness was appreciated and so the family went to bed. Thus, this young girl had uttered her last words-words of good will, and words which my mother was never to forget, for she repeated this story some seventy years later, not long before her own death.

My father, then eighteen, lived a little distance from my mother in a somewhat rural area, though the two had not as yet met. He boarded in one small, narrow room, which had a low ceiling and was on the second floor of a house across from his own small home, where his parents and two sisters lived. "There was no room for him," my mother related with a bit of a smile.

As for my father, before he realized what was occurring, one side wall of his bedroom had fallen against the other, the falling debris fastening his blankets down so securely, he could not move. Alarmed, my father realized he was not only trapped; he was buried as well.

In reality, the fallen wall was a blessing in disguise. It protected my father against the loose and tumbling rubble. All day he waited for help but none arrived. Crammed into his small bed between two walls forming a lopsided triangle over him, my father spent his time in reflection, sleep and prayer. Now guilt overcame him for having abandoned the Sacraments.

His mother, to whom he was especially devoted, was a faithful Catholic, and as he later testified, he was moved by her good example, "Therefore," my father recounted with a smile, "as I lay there I prayed as never before. I vowed to God that I would make a pilgrimage to a shrine in Italy in thanksgiving if I were rescued."

Day two arrived and no one had so much as come near the collapsed house where my father lay buried. At least he had heard no voices, no activity in his little enclosure, nor had he any idea what time of day or night it was. Toward evening, however, matters changed for the better-if not for the best.

As my father lay half-asleep from shock and weakness, he not only heard voices but familiar voices, belonging to two brothers whom he knew by name. As loudly as he was able, he cried out their names, begging for help. The response he heard not only surprised but disappointed him deeply.

"We are here to search for our father," called out one of the afflicted brothers, slightly irritated, "and we cannot dig you out now." My father lapsed into silence, an immense lump in his throat.

Soon, however, the other brother pleaded, "We know Francesco is alive but we don't know if our father is. Let's get him out." Now hope and despondency alternated at fever pitch within my father's breast, as the brothers' words, disputing his possible life sentence, filtered through the cracks of the smashed house.

For a few minutes the boys argued but soon settled on a

truce. They would continue searching for their father tonight, but early the next morning they would return to rescue my father. Thus on the following day, the third day of my father's burial, true to their word, the boys returned. Carefully they removed the confining rubbish and lifted my dazed father out of the wreckage that once was his boarding room. After accustoming his eyes to the light and capturing his first view of the sky, my father took a deep breath and uttered his great concern. "Is my family all right?"

"We don't know," answered the boys nervously and almost simultaneously. "You'll have to inquire." My father sighed deeply as he caught the uneasy edge in their tone, which the brothers were unable to conceal.

Twenty-two relatives on my mother's side had died, though her immediate family were unharmed. My father, however, was less fortunate. He lost his father and one of his sisters, a surviving twin whose sibling had died young. His mother happily was spared, though she suffered two broken legs.

So traumatic was the entire experience, that my father rarely spoke of his deceased father and never of the sister he lost; yet, the only visible signs of his three-day ordeal were painful bruises.

In the meantime, the townspeople of Reggio Calabria had set up a large tent, in which Grandfather, his family and about twenty-five others lived. They had also built a make-shift

oven and a shelter to protect the oven against the elements. Grandfather, who worked in the stockyards, slaughtered cattle in order that the people might have a bit of meat in their diet. Red Cross provided cans of prepared food. Water was scarce and therefore very precious. Consequently, snow or rain, clean or dirty, was preserved. Unclean water was allowed to rest a while until the dirt had settled. Later, the cleaner water on top was scooped up and used for cooking spaghetti, which, somehow or other, the people had managed to obtain. Thus, did these people live for thirty days, until their homes were sufficiently rebuilt to enable them to be inhabited or, until other suitable shelters became available.

The "Mystery Lady" in Grandmother's dream had prophesied accurately. Tens of thousands had died that night in Reggio Calabria and the surrounding area. With good reason, therefore, was "The Lady" dressed in black, a symbol of deep mourning to these people, who, by custom, expressed their grief for deceased loved ones by clothing



*Frank & Catherine Cuzzola before the statue of O.L. of Grace at Reggio Calabria on 6 July 1952*

themselves totally in black.

My father left Italy not long after the earthquake, apparently to seek employment in America, the Land of Hope for immigrants. He continued to be devoted to his mother and only surviving sister, and regularly assisted them through financial gifts.

About ten years later, however, my father returned to Italy with the intent of searching for a suitable bride. Successful in his endeavor, my parents came to America where they set up, what in time, became their-and our-permanent home.

Eventually my father did return to the Sacraments. In my youthful indiscretion, though, I had asked him, "What about your vow; did you ever fulfill it?"

Sheepishly, my father bowed his head, shaking it several times. Without a word, his "No" was eloquently spoken.

When I was in my mid-twenties, my parents surprised their, four offspring by announcing that they were planning a trip to Italy to visit our relatives, in particular their two sisters, who by now had many children. Only later did I realize that my father had had another motive in mind. Once in Reggio Calabria, he, accompanied by my mother and a number of relatives, made a pilgrimage to a much-loved shrine of Our Lady of Grace. A photo that was given to me of my parents, standing before Our Lady's statue, was sufficient evidence of this. My father had at last fulfilled his vow!

Seldom did my parents speak of their early experiences in their homeland; it was too painful, I had speculated. However, as I began to put together bits and pieces that I knew of my parents' twenty-plus years in the beloved land of their birth, their story, in outline form, was

conceived.

Several months after my parents' forty-eighth wedding anniversary, my father spoke strange words to my mother one evening: "I am ready now," he said calmly. My startled and grief-stricken mother understood only too well the meaning of his words-words he dared not utter openly. The following evening, in my mother's presence, my father took his last breath, collapsed on to his bed and died peacefully.

As for my mother, the nightmare, i.e., the Earthquake of 1908, continued to be deeply imprinted within her soul. Thirteen years after my father's death, and not long before her own death at age eighty-six, my mother confessed that every year on December 28th, she was unable to sleep. The distressful scenes and sounds of the earthquake raced before her imagination in quick succession, like a movie that was being played in fast forward mode. To rise and throw herself into work or other activities had been her only relief. Nevertheless, at my request, and in order that this event might be recorded before her passing, my mother had consented to relate to me whatever details she recalled of the 1908 earthquake, thereby making our parents' story more complete.

To date twenty-five descendants, begotten of my parents have been given life in America. May we appreciate the sufferings and hardships of all those who have long ago paved our way, as we likewise relish with gratitude, the blessings and opportunities, our country can offer us. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Thank you dear Mother Mary for your intercession through which we were able to settle in the USA and for the numerous blessings that we have received. *Sibin and Gail Marattil, USA*

Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for protecting us from all danger and being our guide. *Dorothy D'Souza, Bangalore*

I had applied for an 'educational' loan three years back but it was held up for some reason. My mother constantly prays to Mother Mary and she was praying that the loan come through.

We had to pay back the loans we had borrowed from our neighbours. After waiting for two long years the loan finally arrived. I have now passed my engineering with honours. We are grateful to Our Blessed Mother for granting us this favour.

*Ronnie Fernandes*

My grateful thanks to Mother Mary for showering her blessings on me and my family and for protecting me from 3 minor accidents in a single day. She has always been there for my family and me.

*Flynn Pinto, Mumbai*

We were returning in a van from a picnic and at a cross road both our driver and one on the other crossroad wanted to go first as a result of which there was a collision. There was such an impact that the other van was lifted into the air and turned over. There was a family with a baby inside. Miraculously with the exception of the driver being stunned and suffering minor injuries both the other occupants were unhurt. It was later that my mum who was also with us mentioned that she was silently praying. Mother Mary saved us!

*Lillian D'souza, Goa*

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for the gift of a son-in-law.

*Celine M. Thane*

Thank you, Mother Mary for the numerous favours received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys, for the happy marriage of my daughter and for my successful surgeries.

*D. Rodrigues, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for giving my nephew a job and for all the blessings showered on our family.

*Safira Fernandes, Mumbai*

Thank you, dearest Mother for a clear report to my daughter-in-law and for curing my son from a severe fever.

*Piedade Gomes, Mumbai*

Our deepest gratitude to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for all the blessings and favours received. Do continue to bless and guide us with your presence in our lives.

*Mrs. Azilda Fernandes, Goa*

## 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.*

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for helping me get my bonus from the company and for all the other favours received.

*Sweebert Dantes, Bahrain*

I was visiting my mother in Ahmadabad who had met with an accident on 14<sup>th</sup> December and I had torn a ligament in my leg and I found it difficult to walk. On my way to see the doctor I held on to my daughter who was rather lively. In order to do so I had put my purse behind me in the auto-rickshaw. In the hurry to get off I left the purse behind when I alighted at the doctor's clinic. Only a few minutes later did I realize that I had left it behind. I was very upset. What were important were all the documents that were in the bag. I fervently began praying the **3 Hail Marys**. On reaching home I asked the drivers at the rickshaw stand if they had seen that particular rickshaw. They made a few phone calls and traced that particular driver who came by some time later and returned the purse intact. During this time my little daughter tried to console me by telling me that she had prayed to "Mama Mary" and she would get us back the purse. Eventually the driver arrived with the purse. No one had touched it even though two other passengers had hired the rickshaw after I had alighted. Even the rickshaw drivers at the stand agreed it was a miracle. I was reminded of this when my husband lost his wallet while we were in a movie theatre. After the late night show we searched as much as we could till about 1.30 in the morning but we found nothing. On returning we received a phone call from someone asking us to come to a particular place and collect the purse. My husband had a picture of Our Lady in his wallet. Even on this occasion my little daughter and I prayed fervently the **3 Hail Marys**. We are so grateful to Our Lady for these graces.

*Reena Francis, Adiput, Kutch*

Thank you dear Mother Mary help of Christians for always protecting our family.

*Mrs. Jessie D'Souza, Goa*



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

Thank you, dear Jesus and Mother Mary and Don Bosco for a successful major surgery and for taking care of a deep wound on my abdomen. Keep us under your constant protection.

*Merril Muller, Alleppey*

Thank you, dear Don Bosco for keeping me and my children in good health.

*Jean Fernandes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings received.

*C. Fernandes, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary and Don Bosco for granting my petitions and for all the graces received.

*Kistu D. Fernandes, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the blessings received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Jennifer Aranjó, Thane*

My son was without a job for nearly three years. I prayed to Jesus and Mary and Don Bosco and through their intercession I was granted this favour.

*Alvarinho Figueired, Goa*

My son was suffering from an eye ailment and the doctors had given up on him. I prayed to the Divine Mercy of Jesus and Don Bosco and my son has been miraculously cured. I am most grateful for their powerful intercession.

*A Devotee, Mysore*

My sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping my grandson Sherwin secure a first class in his TYBCom exams and for granting him admission to the MBA in a good college.

*M. D'Souza*

I am grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for having been protected from a car accident.

*Denver Dias, Mumbai*

Thank you, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my son success in his examinations.

*Mrs. C. D'Souza, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping us to start our own gym though we thought it would never come true.

*Sharon Binny, Mumbai*

Thank you for the gift of my daughter's marriage and please keep us always in your care.

*Indu Balkrishnan, Mumbai*

Thank you Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for all the favours received.

*Rosy Furtado, Goa*

Thank you, dear Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the favours received.

*Mrs Jose,, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for healing my granddaughter Vanessa.

*Mrs. C. Fernandes, Mumbai*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Thank you, dear Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for favours received. *Vijay Aranha, Moodubelle*  
Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby girl.

*Alex & Audrey Rodrigues, Goa*  
My belated thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio through the recitation of the three Hail Marys my brother was cured.

*Rita Fernandes, Goa*

Our sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a healthy baby boy and a new job.

*Mrs Cynthia Pereira, Mumbai*

A big thank you to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting me a visa to the US on my second attempt.

*Alisha & Glen, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a child and for all the favours received.

*Mrs. Luana Noronha, Pune*

My sincere gratitude to Jesus, Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the publication of my books.

*Mary Alphonsa Wates, Australia*

I was pregnant and was advised to abort the child. I prayed fervently and used Dominic Savio's scapular and I had a healthy baby boy. I have named him Bosco. *Mrs Cecilia Coelho, Mumbai*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 2009

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## **MARY WAS THERE**

On 27th June we, (my husband and two daughters and I) were travelling out of the city by car. We had sped through all the flyovers and when we reached teh city limits we realized the brakes had failed. Thankfully we found ourselves in the outermost lane where the traffic was minimal. Whenever we travel we make it a point to pray the Rosary as a family. It was the feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and we thank our Blessed Mother and her Divine Son for granting us that miraculous escape.

*Mrs Olga Crasto, Mumbai*

**Don Bosco's Madonna**, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay.

The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (*Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail*). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors. Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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