

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*The Christ Event  
is complete  
through Mary.  
That is why  
the Christian  
natures  
a filial devotion  
to her.*

Cover: **The Risen Christ**



## From The Editor's Desk

### *A Humble Daisy!*

Some years ago, I was giving a retreat to a group of senior school students. As it was a lovely bright October day and the monsoons had practically ended, it was only natural that our discussion should turn to the beauties of creation in the countryside around.

Many of the youngsters talked about how they found God in nature, and how refreshing it was to go for a quiet walk in the country, along the footpaths or up a hill-side, listening to the birds or just soaking in the scenery.

We began eventually to talk about the different kinds of flowers, and how each one had its own beauty. We discovered that each of us had a favourite flower. Most people chose the rose; others preferred the gladioli or the lily; someone else liked the orchid, another, the dahlia, and so on.

There was some consternation and amusement in the group when I said that my own favourite flower was the yellow daisy. "The daisy?" someone said with a grin. "That's hardly a flower at all - more like a weed." "And a nuisance too," someone else added, "when you have to do some weeding you find it sprouting every second day." I'm afraid the poor little daisy got short shrift from the rest of the group too, and my taste in flowers was dismissed as abysmal.

Later in the day when we gathered together, however, I found that opinions about the humble daisy had changed. Most of the group had gone outside, and had stooped to look closely at the daisies that were growing everywhere at that time of the year. And yes, they all had to admit - with reluctance - that there was something beautiful about the daisy after all, with its perfectly formed bright yellow centre surrounded by delicate yellow petals and hardy stalks.

"I suppose we don't appreciate the daisy because it's too common," one of the boys suggested. "And because it's free," added one of his companions. This comment set all the heads in the group nodding, and an enthusiastic discussion followed about how easily we value the things that cost the world, and take for granted all the good things that are given to us for nothing; like the humble daisy.

I remember, later that evening when I was by myself, thinking over that discussion, and calling to mind all the 'daisies' in my life: those priceless gifts that have come my way freely, and which I so easily take for granted. I thought of the mysterious gift of life itself, and of the good health I have enjoyed. I thought of my parents and family, the neighbours and friends I have known and my many teachers. I thought of the gift of faith, and the privilege of being called to serve God's people. And I felt a surge of wonder and gratitude within, and - perhaps for the first time in my life - I said a truly heartfelt 'thank you' to God.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## 4. SENT ON A MISSION

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

**R**eflecting on the readings of the early Sundays in the Ordinary of the year, it struck me that there are two ways in which the Lord generally calls people to his service. In the first, he gives them no choice about accepting the mission entrusted to them: examples of these are Moses, Gideon, Elijah, Jeremiah, the mythical Jonah, and perhaps also Simon Peter among others. In the second way, people are called undoubtedly, but the response is left entirely up to them – and in this category we have Isaiah, the bulk of the apostles, the rich young man and several others down the centuries.

The difference between these two approaches seems to lie in the purpose of the call – the first being a call to mission (and here through his intransigent God expresses his love for his suffering or abandoned children), while the second is a more personal call to intimacy with God and a consequent or derivative call to mission. Hence in the case of the personal call, there is room for a very personal choice, but not in the other, since it concerns the good primarily of others. However, it is worth noting that these two ways of being called are not mutually exclusive. More importantly though, is the fact that the Lord's ways of calling us today remain the same. The following account adapted from a story shared by a member of the Metro Denver Hospice could be an example of being called and driven on a mission:

### **Unusual Experience One Evening**

"I recently had one of the most

amazing experiences of my life. I was driving home from a meeting one evening about 5, stuck in heavy traffic, when my car started to choke and splutter, and not long after completely died out on me. I barely managed to coast into a gas station, glad only that I wasn't blocking traffic and would have a somewhat warm spot to wait for the tow truck. Before I could make the call, I saw a woman walking out of the building, and it looked like she slipped on some ice and fell into a Gas pump, so I got out to see if everything was okay with her.

When I got there I realized she was a young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her. It was a nickel. At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient Suburban crammed full of stuff with 3 kids in the back (1 in a car seat), and the gas pump reading \$4.95... She said amidst sobs that she was driving to California and that things were very hard for her right now. I said, 'So the Lord heard your prayer and sent me to help.'

I attended to her immediate needs while she told me her name, that her parents lived in California, that she was going down to live with them and try to get on her feet there. As I was walking over to my car, she observed, 'I guess you are like an angel or something!?' To which I

shyly retorted: 'At this time of the year angels are really busy, so sometimes God uses regular people.'

It was so incredible yet exhilarating to be a part of someone else's miracle. And of course, when I got to my car it started right away and got me home with no further trouble. I felt sure that when I got to the mechanic the next day to check he wouldn't find anything wrong with it! I couldn't help recalling the text "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved" (Ps 55:22), nor marvel at the truth that, had I not stopped to investigate what was wrong with the woman who had fallen, things would have been quite different both for her and her children and also for me!

### **Mysterious but Real**

This little incident reminds us that God's call missioning us need not, nor does, always come while we are in Church or at prayer. His SMS comes to us anywhere, anytime He finds someone who is in need and we are around and ready to help. The important point seems to be that we are eager and open to listen to his call, even if it means re-arranging our own schedules to accommodate the new task. It is true that we do not always respond positively to his strange calls to mission, but when we do, we certainly leave the world a far better place than it was before. In some mysterious way we become the 'good samaritans' of the modern world!

### **Obstacles**

What seems to prevent people from collaborating with the Lord more generously is their preoccupation

with their own agendas and needs. These are not necessarily selfish or self-centred in the sense that they crowd out other possibilities. It is just that one can get so caught up with one's present 'business' that one fails to recognize the opportunity to reach out to another. Possibly another related reason would be that we believe that we are alone, having to fend for and take care of our needs all by ourselves... or that if we don't take care of ourselves, we will be stranded and out on a limb. Often we would realize though, that deferring our own satisfaction in order to reach out to someone in trouble (even when and especially when not specifically asked) is the surest way to enlist God's help in our own most pressing needs.

The man in the story mentioned above does not tell us how he himself was rewarded for being a 'samaritan' to the lady in need, yet we can be quite sure that he would have been most handsomely rewarded by the Lord, who does not allow himself to be outdone in generosity, especially when it comes to helping one of the 'least of these my brethren!' The help we are called to render again need not always be financial or material. It could also be spiritual in the sense of advising someone who finds him/herself at a crossroad in life or career, consoling or befriending a person teetering on the brink of life deluged by suicidal thoughts, inviting another to a change of life that is more in keeping with God's designs - the possibilities are endless; what is most important is that we see ourselves called and also equipped for the job.

### **Preparing for Eventualities**

One way to make the most of the

calls the Lord gives us would be to equip ourselves to the full by taking an active interest in any and every matter that comes our way. One would not need to be an expert in every field, but knowing enough to be able to get on to the wavelength of the needy person is all that it takes. What is important is that the beleaguered person needs to have confidence in the helper if he is going to open up and accept help. There are so many people today who ostensibly come forward to help another in need, but actually end up taking advantage of the person in distress that, in general, most people are wary to expose their need to a stranger.

Further, when one is reasonably close to the Lord, one will not only be directed (often in strange ways, like the car refusing to budge in the story above) to the person in need, but also the Lord will himself create the openness and trust needed for effective help. When the intended 'helper' is totally at God's disposal, all the preliminaries are worked out by him in seemingly simple yet marvelous ways. It is as if the virgin Mary were being told all over again: 'Do not be afraid, Mary for the holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...' (Lk. 1:35-37).

### **For the Recipient**

While all that is said above applies more to the person called to render help, we could also find a message in it for the one in need. Often when in a desperate situation, fear and helplessness can almost paralyze us into believing that we have been abandoned by all, even by God (as

when Jesus himself cried out on the Cross: '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*'). Yet that is when we need to recall that God 'does not crush the bruised reed, nor snuff out the smouldering wick' (Is 42:3), that 'He did not create us in order to destroy us, for we are the work of his hands....', that he is the God of the oppressed and that the more difficult the situation, the more ready he is to help us come out of it. That is when we need to turn to him in faith and allow him to work things out his way. Our fear-inspired desperate attempts often only make things more difficult.

It is bewildering in such situations to know from which direction our help would come. Like the psalmist we need to cry and wait: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains, whence shall help come to me? (Ps. 121:1). The psalmist goes on to pray: "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore (2-8). Such faith will certainly pull us out of whatever difficulties we encounter as we journey along through life.

"May the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6:25-26). □

**"STRUGGLE IF YOU MUST, YOU WILL DO IT"***Fr. Thomas D'Costa, sdb**Rector of Don Bosco Apostolic School, Lonavla*

**I** am the fifth of eight children and I was born at Chulna, Vasai. Till Std. VIII I studied at the Zilla Parishad School in Marathi. As an altar server I was very fond of our Parish Priest the late Fr. Dominic Fernandes. After Std. VII at village school I was preparing to go to the neighbouring village for Std. VIII. One day after Mass my Parish Priest tapped my shoulder and said, "Thomas you are a good boy, would you like to go to the boarding at Lonavla?" "Sure I said". "Youngsters go there to become priests or brothers", he said. "Okay, I will become a Priest I said". I asked my mother who agreed. It was he who took me to Bombay to help me purchase all I needed for the boarding. Six days later I arrived at Lonavla. My big challenge was learning English. Being from the Marathi medium I was put to learn English along with the other youngsters coming from Marathi medium schools. To my surprise, for the first time in my life, I received a zero in all my subjects. This devastated me and to add to this I couldn't afford the school fees, so I thought it best to return home. My mother was determined and said that I was clever and I could manage. "Struggle if you must, you will do it. For the funds, we will sell the rice at home for extra money which you need." Back at Lonavla, my rector, Fr. Olivio Miranda, understood my family situation and was gracious enough to grant me a concession.



After completing my high school I was accepted to enter the Salesian Novitiate. I had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Fatima and she has constantly stood by me.

This year I am celebrating the Silver Jubilee of my Priesthood. Great are the works of the Lord. I am really grateful to Him who has been generous and kind to me – a simple boy, from a small village.

Many people misunderstand our work to harvest vocations. Vocations are calls from God, inviting us to do His work. It is God who calls one to be a priest, a brother or a sister. All we need is the courage to take that first step and the trust in God who will guide us. Take that first step and seek out someone to talk to, someone who will help and guide you. □

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# THE JOURNEY OF PRAYER

## PRAYER IS FOR YOU (10)

By Michael Paul Gallagher

Dear David,

In brief, the answer is 'yes'! Your comments on this series of letters are very welcome. For other readers, I'll quote a few sentences from your letter: *'I've said my prayers always, but reading your monthly articles I begin to wonder if I've missed something. I suppose I have learned to rest a bit more with the Lord, and not always to splatter him with words. But I have no plan, and perhaps I haven't grown as much as I could. Does my prayer need to change?'*

It's amazing how many readers pray in some way every day, according to the statistics - and not just here. It's great that they keep going and growing as well.

### Made for Change

I think it has to be said loud and clear that we are made by God for change. Remember that parable of Jesus about the little seed that slowly becomes a tree, and is able to give shelter. It's about how God comes to be more central in our lives. Prayer is one crucial way in which that seed of love gradually grows, so that we are able to give shelter to others.

Put that side by side with its opposite in the parable of the talents. In that story, one man felt so inadequate and afraid that he buried his gift in the ground. The story pictures God as wanting us to develop our freedom, and not just opt for a 'safety first' policy of no risk and no growth. (You'll find those parables in Matthew's Gospel, chapters 13 and 25).

Or take St. Paul. He often insists that we are 'not to be childish', and that we should get beyond baby

food in faith, towards maturity in Christ. (See for instance, 1 Cor 3:2; 14:20). Again, there is a famous statement of Cardinal Newman that *'to live is to change, and to have lived fully is to have changed often'*.

### Early Stages

What are the typical changes that we can expect in the journey of faith? I'll mention four possible developments.

Most of us start by inheriting our faith as a passive belonging through our family to the Church. This is the normal situation for a child, and so we learned to 'say our prayers' as a custom. But once we move on from childhood that level of faith and of prayer is seldom enough. It's a matter of 'enlarging the tent', to use a phrase from the prophet Isaiah.

The young adult has different needs: to find faith as a relationship to Christ, leading to a decision to live his way. At this time of life, prayer can become more personal, nourished by the Jesus of the Gospels. His loving impact does not arise just from an ancient story. All the events in the Gospel are being rewritten in the present tense for us, if we allow them prayerfully to sink into the heart.

### Middle Years

Later, in the so-called middle life, unexpected and darker shadows often arrive. People feel tired, and nothing seems as simple as we once imagined. It's like the stage in the Gospels when the apostles were shocked to hear Jesus speak about his dying. They had many struggles within themselves before they accepted what the Kingdom

really meant.

So, in these middle years of life, prayer may have a touch of agony and of Gethsemane about it. More positively, we can become more at home with quiet, letting go of older hopes of controlling everything, including ourselves. One writer calls this a 'sacrament of self-disappointment', which bears fruit in more compassion for human suffering and more concern for the injustices of the world.

### Later Life

Finally, in later life, a different *serenity* or *wisdom* often becomes possible. I've often noticed how, in comparison with parents, grandparents seem much less anxious about their grandchildren. In God's providence, old age can bring another expansion of the heart. In spite of new weaknesses and burdens - or even because of them - the self becomes less central, and prayer relaxes into a gentle trust in God, 'without many words' as the Gospel says.

Some old people find that the borderline between prayer and non-prayer fades, and that they have a new sense of God in the ordinary things of life. After all the struggles, sharing one's life with God now seems natural, like a flowing river drawn by the ocean, as they say in the East; learning to let go at the end into Love, by learning to love with God now.

### Into Loving Attentiveness

But, David, I hope you are reading all this with a sense of gratitude rather than of guilt. My four stages are far too neat, but they suggest how faith and prayer may unfold for people. Perhaps you can recognize something of your own journey there.

Of course, there are more invitations to grow than we usually grasp. We can live below our best, and below God's hopes, but don't underestimate what you mentioned in passing: that you have learned to rest with God in prayer. That's marvelous. You now have the courage to let go of words that 'splatter' the Lord - I like that word of yours - and so you can be there in inner quiet and 'loving attentiveness'.

### Towards Simplicity

In general, I think life invites us to more simplicity in prayer. Because of fear, we can keep ourselves 'stuck' in a form of praying that was suitable once, but doesn't really suit any more. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying that you should give up saying vocal prayers like the Rosary. But make sure you say them in a way that allows a quieter sense of God to develop. The words can become background music for the heart that watches the mystery.

As well as this, don't be afraid to pray without set forms. You mention having no plan: even reading about prayer can encourage you to try out some different approaches. Above all, use Scripture as a starting-point to listen to God in silence.

Yes, over the years our sense of God changes. I like the story told by a friend of mine who approached a hermit for advice on prayer, expecting to 'hear much wisdom. He only got four words from the holy man: 'Pray in, not up'. He went away a bit disappointed, until he discovered that they contained a nugget of gold. It makes a world of difference to realize that God is not only beyond you but, as Jesus said of the Spirit, with you and within you' (John 24:17). □

# walking with the Church



## *The Beatitudes, Meeting God in the Community, The Angelus*

*by St. Martin Magazine, Ireland*

*Q How important are the Beatitudes?*

**A.** The Beatitudes are at the heart of Christ's teaching. I think you could describe them as being the central proclamation of his teaching. In the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5 Jesus spells out what real Christianity is all about and goes on to add that only in such a way of living will we find happiness - true happiness. 'Happy the pure in heart, happy the gentle, happy the merciful, happy the peacemakers...' What Christ tells us in the Beatitudes is a complete reversal of what present day society tells us. The world in which we live today keeps hammering home to us that money, power, position, possessions, drinking a particular brand of whatever liquor and radio are the way to happiness but Christ tells us otherwise. Our true happiness He says lies in unselfish lives of Justice, Mercy, Gentleness and Peace.

### **Guidelines**

God made us to be happy but He also made us free - and lest we go about the wrong way achieving

happiness, He gave us the Beatitudes to be our guide - these happy attitudes are our guidelines: *be merciful, be peacemakers and so on.* They are ideals - they are the heights we aim at and measure our standards by. We are very fortunate in the fact that the history of our Church throws up examples of individuals who lived the beatitudes - like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Therese of Lisieux. In our own times we have the example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. There are millions of unseen others whom we know nothing about. We, through the intercession of these powerful models are able to walk the same paths as they did.

*Q. I heard a friend of mine saying that you can meet God in nature, in the hills and streams, in trees and in flowers, on the factory floor and in the street and so on and so there is no need to go to Church. What can I say to him?*

**A.** We can meet God everywhere, but there is more to Christianity than meeting God in various

events of our life and there is more to Christianity than just communing with nature which is God's gift to us. In Jesus we meet God face to face and are able to have a truly personal relationship with him. When Jesus was here on earth he gathered disciples around him. He taught them - he prayed with them. They listened to him as a group, and went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath with him to hear the scriptures and to pray. When Christianity was just starting after the death and resurrection of Christ the Christians who believed in him and who wished to live by his word used to come together to hear the word of God, to celebrate the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection, to worship God together. They came together to listen to the word of God, hearing it explained to them, and to share the things which distinguished them as Christians. At a time of persecution they found strength in worshipping and being together to share their problems and their common faith. We who live two millennia later need to come together for the same reasons. Furthermore we need to come together regularly to be healed as a community, not just as individuals but as a community and to grow more fully into becoming the People of God. The Vatican Council reminds us that God wishes to save us as a people, as a family. "He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness." (CCC 781) "All men are called to belong to the new people of God, so that, in

Christ, men may form one family and one people of God." (CCC 804)

**Q.** *What is the meaning of the Angelus and why do we say it in the morning at 12 noon and at 6 pm?*

**A.** I quote from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "The history of the Angelus is by no means easy to trace with confidence, and it is well to distinguish in this matter between what is certain and what is in some measure conjectural. In the first place it is certain that the Angelus at midday and in the morning were of later introduction than the evening Angelus. Secondly there can be no doubt that the practice of saying the Hail Marys in the evening somewhere about sunset had become general throughout Europe in the first half of the fourteenth century and that it was recommended and indulged by Pope John XXII in 1318 and 1327."

The recitation of the 3 Hail Marys was a pious custom practiced by the people to honour Our Lady in her singularly exalted role as the Mother of God. This was done towards evening, usually, as the bell rang when religious in local monasteries were chanting that part of the Divine Office called Compline. Through the years this practice was expanded to include a morning recitation, then another at noon. Later, holy details from the scene of the Annunciation - during which moment the incarnation took place - were inserted before and after the Hail Marys, and a closing prayer was attached. This is the form of the angelus that we say today. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## **BL. MARIA GABRIELLA SAGHEDDU, (OF UNITY) (1914 - 1939) 23 APRIL**

*by Mario Scudu (T/A I.D.)*

**W**ho was Blessed Maria Gabriella of Unity? Many of our readers today would probably ask such a question.

This is probably due to the fact that the Blessed lived such a short life (1914-1939). Yet on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1983 the late Pope John Paul II declared her blessed just 44 years after her death. One knows how laborious and cautious the procedures for this process are.

Various sources attest to the holiness of Blessed Maria Gabriella in just 25 years. She was one of those who came out of the movement of Catholic Action in Italy. She was among the youngest members to come out of Sardinia. But she is remembered most of all for her name in religious life: Maria Gabriella of Unity because of all she did for the Unity of Christians during her short life which she offered in sacrifice for Christian Unity (It was not for nothing that her beatification took place on the final day of the Unity Octave on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1983).

### **A Radical Change at 18**

Maria was born on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1914 at Dorgali a large agricultural and tourist resort on the east coast of Sardinia (close to the famous



Gonone Cove). Her mother's name was Caterina Cucca and her father, Mark Anthony Sagheddu was a shepherd by profession employed by a rich city merchant. Maria was born into a large family (two brothers and two sisters older than

her and two sisters and a brother who were younger). They lived a fairly comfortable life, but soon the icy winds of suffering began to blow. At the age of five she lost her little brother and a year later her father who was barely fifty. In 1932 she lost her sister Giovanna Antonia who was a little younger than her and to whom she was like a mother. This was very painful. Such family tragedies could either crush one spiritually or they could be sources of spiritual maturity. Mamma Caterina was a strong woman and refused to lose heart. She made enormous sacrifices for the sake of her family.

From the time she was a child, Maria was strong willed though often given to capricious or impertinent behaviour. She enjoyed studying especially mathematics. Unfortunately, due to the straitened circumstances at home she had to discontinue and stay home to support the family.

At the Parish of St. Catherine of Alessandria in Dorgali, there was a large Catholic Action group and it seemed almost logical that Maria would enlist herself but she repeatedly refused the invitations to join. Perhaps she felt unworthy or she didn't understand its significance. However, in 1932, at the age of 18, much to the surprise of everyone, she finally joined the Catholic Action. Her love for Jesus increased and also her love for the Madonna, especially through her recitation of the Holy Rosary. About this time, those who knew Maria noticed a definite change in her. Of her own free will she decided to consecrate herself totally to Jesus through the religious life. *She wanted to belong "always to God" as she confided to one of her relatives a*

*year before she made that momentous decision.*

She had no idea of how to follow the Lord through the religious life (she did not even know which religious order to enter). She only wanted to devote herself totally to God, all the rest was secondary. It was her assistant parish priest Fr. Basilio Melons who was her confessor and spiritual director who recommended that she join the Trappists, a suggestion she promptly and gladly accepted. There would be others who would follow in her footsteps and also gladly give their lives to God from Dorgali.

### **My Life for the Unity of Christians**

Maria entered the Trappist monastery of Grottaferrata (not far from Rome) on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1935 where she took the name Maria Gabriella (in honour of the Annunciation, the mystery on which she often meditated). The following year on 13<sup>th</sup> April she made her solemn profession and received the religious habit. She wrote to her family: *"Pray for me always, pray that I may always be faithful to my duties and to my rules. Pray that I may always do the will of God without offending Him so that I may live in his house joyfully all my life."*

In her brief religious life Maria Gabriella distinguished herself in seeking always to know and love God more and more, an element that should distinguish every Christian. Her constant thought and her only love was for Christ the bridegroom of her soul. She wanted to prepare herself for her eternal espousal to him. She constantly prayed to the Madonna for this grace. Another trait of Maria Gabriella, the religious, was her prompt obedience to her superior

and her sincere devotion to her. She wrote one day: "I could desire nothing other than the wish of my superior." She lived her days in obedience, prayer and humility (especially when she was reprimanded, she was always ready to admit her own mistakes with the famous quote, "*Mea Culpa*").

The year 1937 was to be the most decisive year of her life. On the feast of Christ the King she made her religious vows and that day she wrote: "*In the simplicity of my heart I joyfully offer myself to you O Lord...I thank you with all the fervour of my soul and in pronouncing my holy vows I surrender and dedicate myself entirely to you. O Jesus, help me remain faithful to my promises.*" And so she did.

The next significant event was the Week of prayer for Christian Unity (which we have to this day). There were two animators for this week of prayer: Fr. Francis Wattson but more especially Abbot Paul Couturier.

It was in 1938 that her Mother Abbess read to the community the exhortation of Dom Couturier: "The universal prayer for Christian unity." Those words deeply touched Maria Gabriella. She was moved to volunteer herself to this noble spiritual and ecclesial cause. The Abbess, Maria Pia Gullini, was a wise and good woman. She had already announced that there were some who offered their lives for this cause. When she first heard of Maria Gabriella's intention she was doubtful. Probably there was need of greater discernment. Was this perhaps some temporary spiritual fervour or just an emotional urge? Maria Gabriella was therefore asked to pray and reflect further.

After a few days Maria Gabriella returned to say that she felt inspired: "*It seems to me that the Lord wants it. I feel urged beyond my own volition.*" The Abbess replied: "I say neither 'yes' nor 'no' I offer you to the will of God." So saying she recommended Maria to the Chaplain of the Monastery. After this she made a solemn and irrevocable offering of her life to God and God took Maria Gabriella seriously because she was extremely serious about the irrevocable gift of herself to him after the example of Christ. On the evening of the day she suddenly developed a painful sore on her back. It was tuberculosis. This was the beginning of her painful ascent to Calvary, first at the hospital and then at the infirmary of the monastery. *She once told the infirmarian: My illness is my treasure, I cannot give it to anyone.*" In moments of acute pain she was accustomed to whisper: *My God, your glory.*" *And internal peace and relief returned to her.* She wrote to her mother Catherine: I am happy to be able to suffer everything for love of Jesus... There is no greater happiness than to be able to suffer anything for love of Jesus and for the salvation of souls."

Offering her sufferings for love of God she ended her young life on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1939. Her remains lie in the chapel of Unity at the Monastery of Vitorchiano.

In declaring her blessed in 1983, the Church recognized the sacrifice of the life of Maria Gabriella offered for the unity of Christians. It was a high price for a young trappist woman to pay - a sign of true holiness, in communion with and in imitation of Christ the Victim of the Father for the salvation of the world. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Summer Job Hunt

My brother wants me to find him a summer job. He asked me to check with my boss, my friends, my business associates.

Then he asked me to run off 100 copies of his resume, call up the employment agencies, and write an ad for the Positions Wanted section of the newspaper.

I asked him what he wanted to call himself in the ad.

He said, "A self-starter!"

## Directions

A friend was thinking about buying a new house in the country and asked me to come out and look at it. We found the town, but we couldn't locate the road. We drove over to city hall, where a community get-together was going on, and asked around, but no one had heard of the road. Even the policemen and fire personnel were stumped.

We went in to city hall and consulted a map, with no luck, until finally one young man came to our aid. He pointed to the map, showing us exactly how to get there. I thanked the young man and asked if he was with the police or fire department.

"Neither," he replied. "I deliver pizzas."

## The Congregation Replied

Down in the south, there are many churches known as "answer back" churches. When the preacher says something, the congregation naturally replies.

One Sunday, a preacher was

speaking on what it would take for the church to become better. He said "If this church is to become better, it must take up it's bed, and walk." The congregation said "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk."

Encouraged by their response, he went further. "If this church is going to become better, it will have to throw aside it's hindrances and run!" The congregation replied, "Let it run, preacher, let it run!"

Now really into his message, he spoke stronger. "If this church really wants to become great, it will have to take up it's wings and fly!" "Let it fly, Preacher, let it fly!" the congregation shouts.

The Preacher gets louder. "If this church is going to fly, it will cost money!"

The congregation replied. "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk."

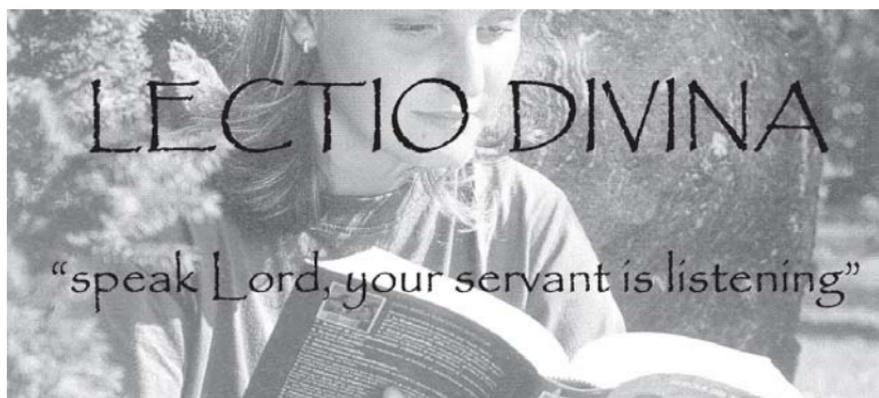
## 50 Years from Now

Three elderly gents were talking about what their grandchildren would be saying about them fifty years from now.

"I would like my grandchildren to say, 'He was successful in business,'" declared the first man.

"Fifty years from now," said the second, "I want them to say, 'He was a loyal family man.'" Turning to the third gent, he asked, "So what do you want them to say about you in fifty years?"

"Me?" the third one replied. "I want them to say, 'He certainly looks good for his age.'" □



## A WALL OF NAMES

by Dermot Connolly

**I**n its original design, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC in the USA is formed by two tapering walls of black reflective granite, seventy-five metres long, set at an angle and struck into the earth like the blade of a plough. On the walls are etched the names of all the members of the U.S. armed forces who were killed in that war. Long after the memorial was dedicated in 1982, thousands of people still come every day, to find the names, sometimes to touch them or kiss them, or to leave small tributes of flowers or ribbons or other mementoes at the base of the walls.

There were other slaughters in the twentieth century, and other war memorials and lists of names, in cities and small towns and market-places, on the walls of churches and civic buildings in many countries. They too give the names, and sometimes the age and rank, of the fallen. Heroic or tragic statuary can impress - and some

were added to the original starkness of the Memorial Wall in Washington - but a name is closer to the heart than any statue; a name makes connections. A wall of names is a chorus of meeting and remembering, though many memorials are from so long ago now that few recognise the names any more.

Sometimes the remembered names cannot be seen but rather are heard. The *Yad Va Shem* Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem honours the almost six million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis in the Shoah. "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a **memorial** and a **name** [**yad va shem**] that will never be cut off" (Isaiah 56:5). In the Children's Memorial, all the Jewish children who perished in the death camps are remembered: endlessly and without remission, their names, ages and places of origin are recited over and over again, in a dark space lit only by a few candles reflecting like stars in



the Prayer, headed by “the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ”.

Dying a martyr’s death is not necessarily the same as a soldier dying on the field of battle, but they do share some things. The same pain and horror and agony, the same loss and sundering from their families and living friends, the same desolation and pride among those who are bereft of their love and laughter. Neither martyrdom nor being killed in action come cheaply, down to our own day.

The names of the martyrs in the Roman Canon have lost their charge of grief, and are remembered as saints. But the liturgy goes farther than that. As the new translation has it, in the Mass we are “in communion with those whose memory we venerate”. Not only the martyrs and saints, but the whole Church, including those “who have gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace”. We don’t just remember them; we are in union with them, as we are with Christ, in praising the wonders of God’s works. I suppose, in a sense an amount of that happens at the Memorial Wall too. But we are never so near our dead as we are when celebrating the Eucharist. □

sheets of glass. “The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord” (Proverbs 20:27). Over and over and over their names are spoken into the darkness, carried on a wall of sound.

Eucharistic Prayer 1, the Roman Canon, is the most densely populated of all the Prayers; it contains more names and refers to more people, past and present. Here are angels and patriarchs - Abel, Abraham, Melchizedek; the Pope and bishop of our time and place; the living and the dead. And uniquely there are two lists of apostles and martyrs, two walls of names etched on the fabric of

DEDICATED TO  
THE RISEN CHRIST

Quiet

## 'MY LORD AND MY GOD'

by His Holiness P

*On Easter Sunday morning 8 April 2007 after celebrating Holy Mass in St. Peter's Square, this was the Holy Father's message given in Italian and translated into English.*

**D**ear Brothers and Sisters throughout the world, men and women of good will!

Christ is risen! Peace to you! Today, we celebrate the great mystery, the foundation of Christian faith and hope: Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, has risen from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures. We listened with renewed emotion to the announcement proclaimed by the angels on the dawn of the first day after the Sabbath, to Mary of Magdala and to the women at the sepulchre: "Why do you search among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here, he is risen!" (Lk 24:5-6)

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of these women at that moment: feelings of sadness and dismay at the death of their Lord, feelings of disbelief and amazement before a fact too astonishing to be true. But the tomb was open and empty: the body was no longer there. Peter and John, having been informed of this by the women, ran to the sepulchre and found that they were right. The faith of the Apostles in Jesus, the expected Messiah, had been submitted to a severe trial by the scandal of the Cross. At his arrest, his condemnation and death, they were dispersed. Now they are together again, perplexed and bewildered. But the Risen One himself comes in response to their thirst for greater certainty. "Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'peace be with you!'" (Jn 20:19)

At these words their faith, which was almost spent within them, was rekindled. The Apostles told Thomas who had been absent from that first extraordinary encounter: Yes, the Lord has fulfilled all that he foretold; he is truly risen and we have seen and touched him! Thomas, however, remained doubtful and perplexed. When Jesus came for a second time, eight days later in the Upper Room, he said to him: "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing!" The Apostle's response is a moving profession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:27-28).

We too renew that profession of faith of Thomas. I have chosen these words because humanity today expects from Christians a renewed witness to the Resurrection of Christ; it needs to encounter him



## AND MY GOD'

*Pope Benedict XVI*

and to know him as true God and true man. If we can recognize in this Apostle the doubts and uncertainties of so many Christians today, the fears and disappointments of many of our contemporaries, with him we can also rediscover with renewed conviction, faith in Christ dead and risen for us. He lives in the Church and guides it firmly towards the fulfilment of his eternal design of salvation.



We may all be tempted by the disbelief of Thomas. Suffering, evil, injustice, death, especially when it strikes the innocent such as children who are victims of war and terrorism, of sickness and hunger, does not all of this put our faith to the test? Paradoxically, the disbelief of Thomas is most valuable to us in these cases because it helps to purify all false concepts of God and leads us to discover his true Face: the Face of a God who, in Christ, has taken upon himself the

wounds of injured humanity. Thomas has received from the Lord, and has in turn transmitted to the Church, the gift of a faith put to the test by the passion and death of Jesus and confirmed by meeting him risen. His faith was almost dead but was born again thanks to his touching the wounds of Christ, those wounds that the Risen One did not hide but showed, and continues to point out to us in the trials and sufferings of every human being.

By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24). This is the message Peter addressed to the early converts. Those wounds that, in the beginning were an obstacle for Thomas's faith, being a sign of Jesus' apparent failure, those same wounds have become, in his encounter with the Risen One, signs of a victorious love. These wounds that Christ has received for love of us help us to understand who God is and to repeat: "My Lord and my God!", Only a God who loves us to the extent of taking upon himself our wounds and our pain, especially innocent suffering, is worthy of faith. How many wounds, how much suffering there is in the world! I affectionately renew to them the expression of my spiritual closeness.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, through the wounds of the Risen Christ we can see the evils which afflict humanity with the eyes of hope. He has left us the love that does not fear death, as the way to peace and joy. "Even as I have loved you", he said to his disciples before his death, "so you must also love one another" (cf. Jn 13:34). May Mary, Mother of the Risen Christ, obtain for us this Easter gift. Happy Easter to you all! ☐

## Tim's Best Friend

by Frank Fiore

### A Divine Appointment

**I**t had been my intention all along to stop by and visit Tim on my way home from jury duty. As I drove, I prayed that I would serve God's will in whatever way he wanted me to. I also felt a desire to comfort Tim's sister and father. I didn't know why, because I hardly knew them. We hadn't seen each other in years.

Well, guess who was there with Tim as I walked into his hospital room. His sister, Virginia, and his father, Jim. I could tell that they didn't recognize me, so I reintroduced myself. Then, I tapped Tim on the leg and said, "Hi, Tim." He gave a slight grunt (which I took as a greeting) as his eyelids quivered, but didn't open.

Virginia asked me to step into the hall with her, and she asked if I knew the seriousness of Tim's condition. I told her I did, and went on to explain my day at jury duty and at the church. Then she asked, "You're Catholic?"

I suddenly recalled a phone conversation with my sister-in-law the night before. She told me that Virginia wanted no one praying with Tim except for a Catholic priest. I didn't agree with Virginia's view, but I had to consider her feelings during this period of stress. I told her I was Catholic and quickly summarized my involvement with the church. Then I turned to Tim. I put my hand on his hand momentarily, and then laid it on his head and held it there, praying a silent prayer.

As I lifted my hand from Tim's head, I turned toward Virginia and Jim to find them staring at me intently, tears welling up in their eyes. I felt so honoured that they were trusting me, a person whom they hardly knew, with their dying brother and son. I smiled, hugged them both, and left.

As I walked into the hall, I could hardly contain myself. I returned home and told my wife and daughter that I felt in my heart that Tim would die that night. Six hours after I left him, we received a phone call informing us of Tim's death.

### Let No One Be Lost

Suddenly, the events that took place the day before began to come into focus. I began to understand how Jesus uses all of us, sinners that we are, to be his hands and his voice to everyone we are in contact with. I began to realize: Jury duty was simply God's way to get me to church. Confession, Mass, benediction, the chaplet—they were all means of purification before I was used as an instrument of God's mercy and love.

During my drive to visit Tim, my hunger to comfort his sister and father was a precursor of what would actually take place. The same hand that I envisioned as kissing the cheek of Jesus during benediction became the same hand God used to kiss Tim's head.

Tim did not receive the sacrament of the sick prior to my visit. Is it possible that God used

my silent, wordless prayer, as I held my hand to Tim's head, as a kind of "last rites"?

Jesus never abandoned Tim! Tim wasn't aware of it, but now that I look back, I can see how he ministered to me in his last hours by showing me the faithful friendship of Jesus. Through all that had taken place, Tim was an awesome witness to me of God's great mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and love. He left us

all with hope that we can all hold on to, joyful hope that is confirmed in Jesus' own words: "It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost" (Matthew 18:14). We are his little ones as long as we seek out the truth and the way, which is Jesus. And if it is the Father's will that none of us be lost, then it is his will that we be saved. And if it is the Father's will that we be saved, then we will be, as long as we seek out Jesus. □

## The Bus Passenger

*Author Unknown*

**T**he passengers on the bus watched sympathetically as the attractive young woman with the white cane made her way carefully up the steps. She paid the driver and, using her hands to feel the location of the seats, walked down the aisle and found the seat he'd told her was empty. Then she settled in, placed her briefcase on her lap and rested her cane against her leg. It had been a year since Susan, thirty-four, became blind.

Due to a medical misdiagnosis she had been rendered sightless, and she was suddenly thrown into a world of darkness, anger, frustration and self-pity. Once a fiercely independent woman, Susan now felt condemned by this terrible twist of fate to become a powerless, helpless burden on everyone around her. "How could this have happened to me?" she would plead, her heart knotted with anger. But no matter how much she cried or ranted or prayed, she knew the painful truth her sight was never going to

return. A cloud of depression hung over Susan's once optimistic spirit. Just getting through each day was an exercise in frustration and exhaustion. And all she had to cling to was her husband Mark.

Mark was an Air Force officer and he loved Susan with all of his heart. When she first lost her sight, he watched her sink into despair and was determined to help his wife gain the strength and confidence she needed to become independent again. Mark's military background had trained him well to deal with sensitive situations, and yet he knew this was the most difficult battle he would ever face. Finally, Susan felt ready to return to her job, but how would she get there? She used to take the bus, but was now too frightened to get around the city by herself. Mark volunteered to drive her to work each day, even though they worked at opposite ends of the city.

At first, this comforted Susan and fulfilled Mark's need to protect his sightless wife who was

so insecure about performing the slightest task. Soon, however, Mark realized that this arrangement wasn't working, it was hectic, and costly. Susan is going to have to start taking the bus again, he admitted to himself. But just the thought of mentioning it to her made him cringe. She was still so fragile, so angry. How would she react? Just as Mark predicted, Susan was horrified at the idea of taking the bus again. "I'm blind!" she responded bitterly. "How am I supposed to know where I'm going? I feel like you're abandoning me."

Mark's heart broke to hear these words, but he knew what had to be done. He promised Susan that each morning and evening he would ride the bus with her, for as long as it took, until she got the hang of it. And that is exactly what happened. For two solid weeks, Mark, military uniform and all, accompanied Susan to and from work each day. He taught her how to rely on her other senses, specifically her hearing, to determine where she was and how to adapt to her new environment. He helped her befriend the bus drivers who could watch out for her, and save her a seat. He made her laugh, even on those not-so-good days when she would trip exiting the bus, or drop her briefcase. Each morning they made the journey together, and Mark would take a cab back to his office. Although this routine was even more costly and exhausting than the previous one, Mark knew it was only a matter of time before Susan would be able to ride the bus on her own. He believed in her, in the Susan he used to know before she'd lost her sight, who

wasn't afraid of any challenge and who would never, ever quit.

Finally, Susan decided that she was ready to try the trip on her own. Monday morning arrived, and before she left, she threw her arms around Mark, her temporary bus riding companion, her husband, and her best friend. Her eyes filled with tears of gratitude for his loyalty, his patience, his love. She said good-bye, and for the first time, they went their separate ways. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday...Each day on her own went perfectly, and Susan had never felt better. She was doing it! She was going to work all by herself!

On Friday morning, Susan took the bus to work as usual. As she was paying for her fare to exit the bus, the driver said, "Boy, I sure envy you." Susan wasn't sure if the driver was speaking to her or not.

After all, who on earth would ever envy a blind woman who had struggled just to find the courage to live for the past year? Curious, she asked the driver, "Why do you say that you envy me?" The driver responded, "It must feel so good to be taken care of and protected like you are." Susan had no idea what the driver was talking about, and asked again, "What do you mean?" The driver answered, "You know, every morning for the past week, a fine looking gentleman in a military uniform has been standing across the corner watching you when you get off the bus. He makes sure you cross the street safely and he watches you until you enter your office building. Then he blows you a kiss, gives you a little salute and walks away. You are one lucky lady." *(Continued on pg. 32)*

# THE JOY OF SAYING 'YES' TO GOD

by Gianni Asti (T/A:ID)

## The Thought Makes Me Tremble

**T**he counsel that Don Bosco gave his boys concerning the mandatory advice of the confessor regarding the choice of one's vocation, especially towards the priesthood or the religious life was one he had experienced personally. We note what he narrates it in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* concerning his state of mind as he approaches his ordination: *When I think now of the virtues required for the most important step, I am convinced that I was not sufficiently prepared for it. But since I had no one to care directly for my vocation, I turned to Fr. Cafasso. He advised me to go forward and trust in his advice. I made a ten-day retreat at the House of the Mission in Turin. During it I made a general confession so that my confessor would have a clear picture of my conscience and would be able to give me suitable advice. Though I*



ADVICE TO HIS BOYS

DON BOSCO'S

*wanted to complete my studies, I quaked at the thought of binding myself for life. Before I took the final step I wanted to receive the full approbation of my confessor. (The Memoirs of the Oratory, Transl. by Daniel Lyons SDB., KJC Publication, pg 89-90)*

The fear of making the wrong decision, of not succeeding, of not being faithful is common even among couples preparing for marriage. For this they need the encouragement of a priest who knows them completely and who accompanies them up to the threshold of their marriage.

We can imagine how much this is necessary for a youngster who is preparing to give his life completely to the Lord. What frightens him is the fact of the word "*forever,*" that his vocation involves.

Having taken this definitive decision to follow the Lord, the young man is filled with joy and an inner peace that is evident on

the face of the one who has consecrated himself. Don Bosco describes this as he recalls the day of his priestly ordination and the subsequent celebrations of his first Masses.

Contrary to what happens today, the celebration of the priestly ordination was reserved to the bishop and the candidates only while the celebration with the candidate's parents, the parish community and his friends was reserved to the first Mass.

Don Bosco chose to celebrate his first Masses recollecting in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, at the shrine of the Consolata and at the church of St. Dominic in Chieri, assisted by the priests who had accompanied him during his years of study.

### The First Mass

*"My ordination day was the vigil of the feast of the Blessed Trinity. I said my first Mass in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, where Fr. Cafasso was dean of the conferences. Though no priest had said his first Mass in my home place for many years, and my neighbours were anxiously waiting for me to say mine there, I preferred to say it without fuss in Turin. **That day was the most wonderful day of my life.** At the Memento in that unforgettable Mass I remembered devoutly all my teachers, my benefactors – spiritual and temporal, and especially the ever-lamented Fr. Calosso, whom I have always remembered as my greatest benefactor.*

*On Monday I said Mass in the church of Our Lady of Consolation to thank the great Virgin Mary for the innumerable graces she had obtained for me from her divine Son Jesus.*



*On Tuesday I went to say Mass in St. Dominic's church in Chieri, where my old professor Fr. Giusiana was still living. With fatherly affection he assisted me. I spent the whole day with him, one I can call a day in paradise.*

*Thursday was the solemnity of Corpus Christi. I went home and sang Mass in my local church and took part in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The parish priest invited to dinner my relatives, the clergy, and the people standing in the vicinity. They were all happy to be a part of it because my compatriots loved me very much and they were all glad*

*everything had turned out well for me. I went home that evening to be with my family. As I drew near the house and saw the place of the dream I had when I was about nine, I could not hold back the tears, I said: "How wonderful are the ways of Divine Providence! God has truly raised a poor child from the earth to place him amongst the princes of his people."*

The youngster, having reached his priestly ordination or his/her religious profession, relives that moment as perhaps the most beautiful of his/her life; the entire journey, the events, the people who have accompanied the young person, the deceased family members who had dreamed of seeing the day and who had assisted in preparing the youngster.

They are moving memories for the members of the family as they were for mamma Margaret, the mother of Don Bosco, and he remembered that day so well: *That evening, mamma Margaret found a moment to talk to him alone and she said: "Now you are a priest, you are very close to Jesus. I have not read your books, but remember that to begin to say Mass is to begin to suffer. You will not realize this immediately but gradually and you will realize that your mother spoke the truth. From now on think only of the salvation of souls and do not worry about me."*

The consecrated person experiences his "honeymoon" and enjoys his first days as a priest of the Church. He is certainly not thinking of the suffering that he will have to share with Christ because he has given up the world.

For now... what a joy to celebrate Mass, to hold in his hands the consecrated host which is the

body and blood of Christ!

What a joy to belong always to Him, imitating Him in His poverty, chastity and obedience!

What a joy to practice that spiritual fatherhood in the ministry of confession and spiritual direction, to guide youngsters, to visit the elderly, the sick and to serve the poor!

What joy the Lord gives to his consecrated ones in moments of prayer and meditation, in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament! They are moments of nuptial intimacy that assuage the loneliness of those who give up family in order to follow Christ.

Don Bosco describes this joy he experienced during the first days of his priestly ministry.

*"I found the work a great pleasure. I preached every Sunday, I visited the sick and administered the holy sacraments to them, except penance since I had not yet taken the exam. I buried the dead, kept the parish records, wrote out certificates of poverty, and so on.*

*My delight was to make contact with the children and teach them catechism. They used to come from Murialdo to see me, and on my visits home they crowded around me. Whenever I left the presbytery there was a group of boys, and everywhere I went my little friends gave me a warm welcome."*

Every young consecrated person can recount his/her own little love story, one that s/he writes daily with the Lord. His/her joys are also mingled with sufferings that come from following the Lord faithfully but only He knows how to repay these with much consolation for the many renunciations made out of love for him. □

## NEWSBITS

### HONG KONG

The wife of disappeared human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng** — missing for almost a year — says there was no way government authorities could have lost track of her husband and must know his fate.

Gao was taken from his home in Shaanxi on Feb. 4, 2009 and has not been seen since.

Geng He, wife of the Protestant human rights lawyer, told UCA News from her home in the United States that the only thing she had heard about her husband's whereabouts was when public security officers told Gao's elder brother in December that Gao was lost on Sept. 25.

The explanation was "totally unacceptable," she said.

More recently (Jan. 21), a spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry told media that Gao was in "the place where he should be" when answering an inquiry on the lawyer's whereabouts.

"If my husband is in the place where he should be, he should be at home," Geng told UCA News.

Geng said officials must know his fate as the Chinese authorities dog his every movement.

Geng said her husband needs permission from security officials to leave his home and has to report again when he returns.

Public security officers shadow him everywhere he goes.

Geng and her two children were given asylum in the US 10 months ago.

### KOERAPUKUR, India

An 80-year-old Catholic widow continues the mission she began with her former alcoholic husband to help addicts.

June and her husband John Pathickaden, founded St. Joseph's Rehabilitation centre in Koerapukur in West Bengal's South 24-Parganas district to help alcoholics and drug addicts through a "deeply spiritual programme."

June directs the centre after her husband died in 2003 at the age of 66.

She said some 300 men and women have gone through their programme since they began it in 1986. Some 50 people were also trained to offer this programme to alcoholics and drug addicts.

She said her husband was helped by Alcoholic Anonymous in Kolkata some 25 years ago, and wanted to help others through its 12Steps rehabilitation programme.

"Most of the people who had received training at the centre are offering the same programme successfully in their respective places," June said.

"In fact, some of the Religious men and women who came to get training at the center later realized they themselves were addicts, and therefore required the program to remain sober," she told UCA News.

Sanjay Ganguly, 43, a textile engineer, said he had been an alcoholic for the last 12 years, but the centre's programme based on prayers and meditations helped him "think of greater goals in life."

June charges 2,500 rupees (some US\$55) a month as programme fees,

which includes board and lodge. She claimed the charges were the "least" in comparison to any other rehabilitation centre.

Eight alcoholics and two drug addicts are currently undergoing the programme at the centre that functions under Baruiapur diocese.

Bishop Salvatore Lobo of Baruiapur, said the centre "had been offering great help to alcoholics and drug addicts, and the programme was a great success, but after his death it has taken a beating."

He said the diocese has been supporting the centre's work from the beginning, helping it get funds. He said he appreciated the centre's efforts in networking with Religious congregations and training priests and nuns in addressing alcoholism.

### COLOMBO

A choral society is keeping alive the tradition of hymns in Latin in the country with the help of visiting musician and liturgist Father Robert Tyrala from Krakow in Poland.

Father Tyrala, president of the Swiss-based *Foederatio International Pueri Cantores*, visited Sri Lanka recently to promote the singing of traditional hymns in both Latin and local languages – Tamil and Sinhala – as well as English.

On the final day of his visit some 400 singers attached to the society's local chapter, the Sri Lanka Pueri Cantores Federation (SLPCF), gathered at the chapel in St. Joseph College, a prestigious lake side Catholic school in Colombo to share their music.

"It was to promote church music at a different level and in different languages, especially Latin," Father Indika Joseph, the SLPCF secretary based at St. Joseph College, told UCA

News. For many it was a nostalgic experience.

The Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 replaced the traditional Latin Mass (also called the Tridentine Mass) in favour of a Mass in the local languages. While that has generally appreciated, there has been a move by some to hark back to the old ways after Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 removed restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass.

Father Tyrala and Father Joseph presided over a Tridentine Mass at the event.

Older members of the audience particularly appreciated the music and the Mass.

"When I see violence and uncertainty in this modern world there is something soothing about participating in ancient rituals practiced by so many boys and girls," Queenie Anandappa, 69 a retired teacher, told UCA News.

"Hearing Latin again filled me with nostalgia. I have the feeling of re-uniting with our global Catholic family in the same weekly Mass," music teacher Priyani Rajakaruna said. Her choir from De Mazenod College of Kandana was one of the participants.

Father Joseph pointed out that the aim of the local federation is to propagate and promote Church music, especially in the Latin tradition.

"For young progressive Catholics ancient music is still exciting and attractive," the priest said.

Francis D' Almeida, the National SLPCF coordinator, told UCA News that he hoped to increase membership of the federation by enrolling members from schools and parishes. □



## PRAYER: METHOD OR LIFE?

*By Robert Ostermann*

**N**ot to be rude, but if you really want a prayerful relationship with God, you might consider putting aside all the books and manuals and discussions of prayer that you have ever looked at. They are worth keeping if your interest is in learning more *about* prayer. Becoming a better “pray-er”, however, does not happen through study. Becoming a better “pray-er” starts with learning about yourself, the person who prays.

The first lesson one must learn is perhaps the hardest to accept. Although prayer manuals tend to play down the obstinacies of prayer, we humans, in fact, are not naturally praying creatures. There is excellent evidence that prayer is not a breeze.

Even Jesus’ closest friends and followers had a tough time with prayer. Remember the scene in the Garden, when Jesus several times asks his companions to watch and pray. It is the time of history’s greatest betrayal, and yet only the air hears the Lord’s appeals. Each time, Peter and the others once again return to sleep.

Writing to the Thessalonians,

Paul is driven to urge his neophyte Christians to “pray without ceasing.” One imagines that their lazy ways may have been showing and Paul wants to be clearly understood. He will not tolerate the slightest sign of indifference from these new followers of Christ. Saints as unlike each other as the activist Catherine of Siena and the detached, contemplative Bruno or John of the Cross did not hide or disguise their own difficulties with prayer.

Prayer is no different for us in our time, and I, a convert to the Faith, illustrate all the worst of it.

During my conversion preparation in the late 1940s, I had my own contentious run-ins with the conventional instruments of faith. Prayer, for example, faced me stubbornly like a sentry blocking my path, and my efforts to get round the obstacle or to dissolve it failed.

In the 18 months or so before baptism, I studied many books on living a Catholic life and acquiring a Catholic mind and attitudes; their authors had unimpeachable academic or

scholarly credentials. When it came to prayer and praying, their accounts were invariably dramatic, thoughtful, confident, positive. They stressed prayer's significance as an essential feature of a life centered on Jesus. I filled my journals with many, many pages of notes drawn from this reading.

These writers, specialists and leaders in their fields, offered a variety of prayer techniques and methods aimed at covering all possible problems. They counselled perseverance in periods when prayer seems a waste of time-just keep going, no matter how badly you feel. They cautioned against discouragement in those even more desolate moments when the heart seems dry, cold and untouchable and prayer is as agreeable as sand in the teeth.

Bored, disillusioned, depressed when God seemed to have fallen silent, I could find a full catalog of the methods saints have used to circumvent such experiences. Many writers compiled packages of sample prayers to try when one's own efforts came up dry.

It took me forever, or so it seems now, to appreciate that the devout expositions of my wise, patient, knowledgeable authorities failed to touch me in my distress. Putting it simply, their discussions of prayer did not seem to have me in view. The examples they used were totally strange to me. I felt an immigrant. The language spoken was not my language.

More to the point, the various "Ways," "Paths," "Methods," and the like-the how-to's of prayer that one or another authority urged me to honour and to emulate struck me as immaterial and unproductive,

misleading. What I needed, I sensed, was a prayer-life that matched my history and experience.

I was stupid to have been surprised by what appeared to be happening to me. After all, I knew that one does not read a book to learn how to build a computer circuit board or, even, to ride a bicycle - not if one really wants to acquire the necessary skills. Trouble was that I had learned this simple truth back when I was in my teens and trying to help my father keep our old Buick running.

Background is important here, and I must say something about it if you are to see my situation as I was living it at the time. The year this is happening is 1947 and I was an incompletely adjusted ex-soldier.

I had spent a substantial part of my World War II years fighting across Europe in an armoured cavalry unit of George Patton's Third Army. Like thousands of other soldiers, I had yet to put completely aside the memories, the habits and patterns of thought, the quick as-a-blinking-eye reflexes that combat typically burns into a fighting soldier.

Here's the truth of the matter. My mentors were in no position to illuminate my way. I was not walking where their lamps shed light. They could not see the shadows I had brought with me from the war and through which I still walked.

The result, for that distant, post-war me was that prayer was not living up to its glowing press and offered nothing to me. Living in harm's way teaches one self-reliance. Pre-packaged prayers, like messages from a fortune-cookie,

were too generalized.

At the same time, I was insufficiently at home in the Christian life to find a personal prayer-language. I longed to be able to speak both from my heart as well as to my desire to be closer to Our Lord. It never struck me to consult the men and women who had become "experts" in prayer the hard way; who had learned by doing prayer.

### **Time for an embarrassed confession**

I had to travel a long road in my new life before I even began to understand that the place to look for obstacles to prayer was in me, not in prayer. The commonsense conclusion I finally reached struck me like a blow to the heart. I had been cheating prayer.

Take the phrase "cheating prayer" in its most literal sense. I had not dealt fairly with prayer and praying.

Here's what I now realize must have happened. In my confusion, I assumed that one reserved prayer for select times, needs, places, emotions, and so forth. "Pray when it's called for" was the advice my counsellors had given me, as doctors instruct one how to take the prescribed medicines.

I had isolated prayer as a separate act in the Christian life. Prayer might have been a skill one must acquire, like those that had meant survival during the war-marksanship, keen hearing, map-reading, hand-to-hand combat, disarming a land mine, the like. I had made prayer a "specialty of the house," when the simple fact is that prayer is the house, the house one occupies every minute of the day.

I wince when I recall how long it took me to realize that the God I

prayed to was as close to me as my breathing and required no special tactics to reach. What fool I had been not to see that it must be the same for prayer. If we never are independent of God, never totally cast off, even when we are vile and despicable, then prayer must always be there, too.

There is no escaping the sense of failure that writing these words revives in me. For I had all along been more ignorant and more foolish than ever I had thought. The perfect model of prayer, the perfect praying person, had never been far from me, from the very first moment of my Catholic existence.

There was this young Jewish woman, hardly more than a girl, whom I had first read about when I was not even sure I intended to become Catholic. Throughout her story as I followed it, until she left the story behind her, life and prayer in this girl/woman were inseparable. Hers was the very model of a life lived within prayer. She far exceeded the action we familiarly call "saying prayers."

Mary was prayer

Her life on earth, from birth to death, turned into an anthology of danger, hardship, pain, suffering, anxiety, loss. By the simple expedient of praying, however, she was able to find the way to her own destiny through the most awesome as well as the most humble events of which she was a part.

Mary's prayer - that is to say, her entire life-drew its power from the words she uttered in her first encounter with the unimaginable reality of God: *Let what you have said be done to me.*

It is this woman Mary, the

priceless Mother of God, who sums up everything one can possibly know about praying. It is she, in her every appearance in the Gospels, who makes the truth of prayer visible despite all its mystery.

Whether one petitions God in trust, glorifies Him in praise and gratitude, or speaks to Him in loving acceptance, prayer declares one's deepest longing never, never to fall out of tune with God's will.

Oh, that I had had this insight earlier....

And so I am brought to where I am today.

The prayer I finally came to understand as mine in those far-off years turned out to be the beginning and the end, continuous, uninterrupted, for all my ways, all my times and days, at any age and any ability. Prayer, as Mary teaches one in her person, suffuses life as dye stains the fabric or it is no more than noise in the air or in the mind. Prayer, like dye, is unequivocally, inseparably present to one.

In any workplace-home, office, field, factory, hospital, fast-food joint, dry cleaner, gas station, newsagent; in any employment, career, or profession; in responsibilities great and small, actions local and universal, individual and communal, wherever one may chance to be selfless prayer presents everything that one is and has known: failures, frailties, strengths, successes, lost and fearful of never being found, all that one is before God, stripped of disguises and deceptions.

Prayer, I hold to this day, is offered in one's most private voice. Its "amens" are quiet, muted. It does not shout or call attention to itself, as if approval, or fame, or celebrity were at stake. Prayer speaks in every accent of love, from gratitude and



Madonna and Child by F. Lenhart

praise to appeal and uncertainty and fear and loss.

Prayer proceeds through every permutation of human need, all the way through to the desolate cry of the lonely, frightened child, the abandoned lover. *I am yours. Do not leave me. It is awful to be alone. Where are you? I can not bear being apart from you. I was a fool to think I could live without you. I know better now. I am nothing, unless I am yours. Living without you is dying, not living.*

Prayer, if we give it half a chance, makes of each of our lived moments an acceptable offering to God.

The timeless Eucharistic sacrifice is (I, a pilgrim now for more than 50 years, cling to this) the true and perfect model for all prayer. Like that sacrificial offering, in which each of us has an active role, our modest private prayer too is an act of love, faith, hope, and trust.

And, like the Eucharist, our prayer gradually imports into our deepest being the true, for-all-times, perfect love. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My family was going to Velankanni and on the way the car in which we were travelling skid off the road and crashed into a tree almost falling into a ravine. We were saved by the wonderful intervention of Our Lady, of this we are certain and so we are most grateful for her protection. Our family always prays before we begin a journey.

*Mathews Joseph, Trichy*

Thank you dearest Mother for granting me a child after three years of marriage. I humbly ask for a safe delivery and a healthy child.

*Gretta Almeida, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for blessing my daughter with a child and for all the other favours granted.

*Amelie D'Silva, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for all the blessings and graces showered on my family.

*B.J. Crasta, Kundapur, Udipi*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 I met with a scooter accident. As I was returning from Margao to my village of Carmona at 7 pm, all of a sudden a dog ran across my path and I was thrown off my vehicle some 4 metres away. My left knee was swollen. Someone nearby called an ambulance and I was taken to the hospital. The X-Ray was taken and they found no fracture! I was taken back home and from there I went to another hospital where I remained for 8 days. Even there after three XRays there was no fracture found. I am quite well. I always carry my rosary with me and I am grateful to Our Lady for protecting me.

*Antonio G.J. Pinto, Carmona, Goa*

Thank you dearest Mother for the special healings received and for the wonderful blessings showered on us.

*Sharon Raikar, Mumbai*

Thank you dearest Jesus and Mary for the gift of a healthy baby boy to Royston and Elisa.

*Rosie D'Silva, Mumbai*

Thank you dearest Mother for the gift of a healthy baby boy.

*Eulalia Rebello, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for granting my son a good job and for numerous other favours received.

*Mrs. C. Pereira, Mumbai*

**The Bus Passenger** (Continued from pg. 22)

Tears of happiness poured down Susan's cheeks. For although she couldn't physically see him, she had always felt Mark's presence. She was lucky, so lucky, for he had given her a gift more powerful than sight, a gift she didn't need to see to believe - the gift of love that can bring light where there had been darkness.

God watches over us in just the same way. We may not know He is present. We may not be able to see His face, but He is there nonetheless! Be blessed in this thought: "God Loves You - even when you are not looking." □

## 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.*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for blessing me with an excellent job.

*Francis D'Souza, Doha, Qatar*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for helping me solve my relationship crisis.

*Ciena, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary for giving me so many graces through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Jarata Lily, Sabah, Malaysia*

My sincere thanks to dear Mother Mary, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys, I have received so many blessings and special favours. My family also thanks you for your guidance and protection.

*Mrs. R. Rebello, Mumbai*

My grateful thanks to Mother Mary for all the graces and blessings received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Mrs. Bridgette Fernandes, Ajmer*

My belated thanks to Mother Mary for a safe delivery of my daughter and for all the other favours received.

*Cecilia Mascarenhas, Mumbai*

Heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for the rich blessing of a baby, Lourdes-Maria and Lizelle-Ann and for good health on all of us.

*Glenn and Sheryl D'Souza, Mumbai*

For the countless favours bestowed on me and my family in every instance of our lives.

*L. Sequeira, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for the clear reports of my dad.

*June Monteiro, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary for all the favours granted to me.

*Brian Monteiro, Mumbai*

I had a road accident while travelling from Hassan to Mangalore but with the mighty protection of the Infant Jesus and Our Blessed Mother I escaped with minor injuries and I am most grateful.

*Cleta F. Prabhu, Mangalore*

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my prayer in helping my nephew to secure a change of job in the company of his preference and many other favours received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. Please continue to shower your blessings on our family.

*Margarida Faria, Goa*

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

I am most grateful to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the graces and favours received by me and my family.

*A. Annamarydass, Bangalore*

My sincere and wholehearted thanks to Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Don Bosco for helping me to clear my MEO examinations and for all the blessings showered on me and my family.

*Janius Fernandes, Nellai, Tamil Nadu*

Dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio my sincere thanks for the gift of a baby girl: Sarah Grace.

*Nazario and Adelina Menezes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to dearest Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for all the favours received.

*Paula Carr, Bangalore*

A million thanks to almighty God, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for giving my son good health, for curing him from epilepsy and for many other graces and favours received.

*Aleixo Lourdine Silveira, Goa*

My humble and sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians and Don Bosco for answering my prayers in the happy settlement of my daughter in marriage. I also thank dear Dominic Savio for the gift of a sweet baby girl to her. Kindly keep our family in your dear care and protection.

*Mrs. V. Fernandes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother and Don Bosco for the many blessings and favours received.

*Santu S. Fernandes, Sankeshwar, Karnataka*

Grateful thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for a quick recovery from a problem of kidney stones and for many other favours granted to me.

*Hilda Antao, Goa*

My thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for curing my father of a continuous cough that has persisted for more than 3 months.

*P. Alvares, Panaji, Goa*

**Mary was There**

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> almost 2 and half years after having undergone a bypass surgery, I was advised an angiograph by my family doctor. I had been complaining of heaviness in the chest and difficulty in breathing for which I was hospitalised for a few days. After having recuperated, I went for the angiograph accompanied by my son. I had been praying to Mother Mary all through the process and the doctor told my son that there was absolutely no reason to worry and that my heart was functioning normally. I have been an ardent devotee of Mother Mary and I believe it was my prayers to her that has seen me through the most difficult moments of my life.

*Mrs. Teresa D'Cunha, Bhayandar*

# THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of my two grandsons. Please keep my family in your loving care.

*Filomena Fernandes, Goa*

My humble thanks to dear St. Dominic Savio for my daughter's safe delivery of a baby boy and for curing him of a fever. *Charlotte D'Rosario, Tiruchi*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a healthy grand daughter.

*Martin D'Souza, Kholapur*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours granted to me.

*Edna Pereira, Salcete, Goa*

I sincerely thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for gifting my son a healthy baby girl and for curing me of an ankle ailment.

*L. D'Souza, Mumbai*

Thanks to the scapular of St. Dominic Savio, I am happy to inform you that my family and I are cured from so many illnesses after praying to Dominic Savio. My son's severe stomach pain, a blood clot in my uterus, my daughter-in-law's eight and a half hour successful operation, a baby girl and a son were born to my son after eight years of marriage, recently I was cured of a gum disease. I am most grateful. *Annie Xavier, Mumbai*

My daughter Aurelia and her family landed in Canada. She was going to meet her brother and his family after 4 years. The luggage she was carrying was excessive and we were sure that she would have many problems, but we placed our trust in St. Dominic Savio. I put a scapular of the saint in the luggage when she left for Canada. On arrival there the customs officer told her that his duty was over and she was free to go without any check. This was definitely a miracle and I am sincerely grateful.

*Mrs. Clotil D'Sa, Goa*

My sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for the blessings and graces received.

*John and Olivia Roxburgh, Auckland, New Zealand*

Our grateful thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my niece and the birth of her son.

*L. Pinto, Mumbai*

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APRIL 2010

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## **MARY WAS THERE**

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009 our son Dominic was travelling in an autorickshaw from his home to the station. All of a sudden a private bus hit the autorickshaw and it overturned causing the driver and my son to fall out. By the grace of God, both of them emerged without even the slightest hint of a scratch. All praise and thanks to Jesus and Mary Help of Christians!

*Peter Dias, Andheri, 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.

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