

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

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*May Christ's peace  
descend on your home  
this Christmas  
and remain with you  
throughout  
the New Year!*

**Cover:**

*The Crib at the Shrine Office  
of Don Bosco's Madonna,  
Mumbai*



## From The Editor's Desk

### A White Christmas!

The practice of giving presents at Christmas time is so ancient that it is hard to know when exactly it started. One tradition is that it began with St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myria in Lycia in Asia Minor, modern Turkey. Following his shining example, the practice of sharing gifts spread to the whole Christian world, especially at Christmas when we recall God's generous gift to us of his Son. The Christmas spirit of goodwill is now evident far beyond the frontiers of Christianity.

*'It is more blessed to give than to receive'* (Acts 20:35). Christmas generosity is surely an indication that these words attributed to Jesus by St. Paul have made their way into many hearts. The best gift that anyone can give another, at Christmas or indeed at any other time, is good example. Parents should give it to their children, priests to their parishioners and teachers to their pupils. It is far more important than any good advice and more helpful than any material gift. There is no substitute for it. It is not putting on an act but it is simply a manifestation of who we are. For a Christian, this means living according to the lights and graces we have received. For a Catholic, a step in this direction at Christmas is to attend Mass and prepare for it by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*going to Confession*).

There is a deep longing for the whiteness of innocence in every heart, even the most sullied. Without it there is no peace. On the first Christmas night the angels proclaimed that it was on offer to all men and women of goodwill. It is there in all the Christmas carols. Years after his death, the instantly recognizable voice of Bing Crosby still haunts the airwaves of the world as he dreams about a *White Christmas*, the most successful single record ever produced at over 50,000,000 copies. In the warmer climes of the world people probably wonder what's so special about a White Christmas or what could possibly be meant by *'sleigh bells in the snow'*. Everyone who listens to Bing, however, can catch the nostalgia for an ideal world, regardless of geographical location, ethnic origin or religious persuasion. White is a universal symbol of innocence and purity, something every human heart has been hankering after ever since it was lost all those ages ago in a Garden. It was given back to us in another Garden.

There is now no reason why *'all our Christmases cannot be white'*. The Dawn Mass on Christmas Day reminds us of this consoling truth. *'When the kindness and love of God our Saviour for mankind were revealed,'* it was to save us *'by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit'* (cf. Titus 3: 4-7).

The Prince of Peace fulfils our deepest yearnings, movingly expressed in the prayer of King David when he realised the error of his ways.

*'O purify me, then I shall be clean; O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.'* (Ps. 51: 7)

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

## 12. WISDOM FROM SPIRITUAL GIANTS

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Many of us would be familiar with Rick Warren author of *'Purpose Driven Life'* and pastor of Saddleback Church in California. In a recent interview he shared some of the insights that drive his own life - from which we undoubtedly can learn a lot! When asked, 'What is the purpose of life?' Rick responds sagaciously: 'In a nutshell, life is a preparation for eternity. We are not made to last forever here on earth, and God wants us to be with Him in Heaven... One may live sixty to a hundred years on earth, but each of us is going to spend trillions of years in eternity. Life on earth is the warm-up act, the dress rehearsal. God wants us to practice on earth what we will do forever in eternity.'

We were made by God and for God, and until we figure that out in concrete terms, life isn't going to make much sense. As St. Augustine said so pithily, 'Our hearts were made for you, Lord, and they will remain restless until they rest in you!' Through every problem we encounter, God is shaping our character rather than providing us with comfort; God is always more desirous of making our lives holy than in making us happy! And that is our goal in life: to grow in character, in moral stature and Christ-likeness!

Rick confesses that he earlier believed that life for most of us is like a see-saw alternating between hard times and good times. But he doesn't believe that anymore. Rather, he figures now that life is like the two rails on a railroad track. At all times, we have something good and something equally bad or worse going on in our life. No matter how pleasant things are today,

there is always something bad alongside that needs to be worked on. And no matter how horrible things are another day, there is something glorious tucked away in a nook or cranny somewhere waiting to be discovered - for which we can thank God and rejoice.

Each of us has the option of focusing through the day either on our purposes or on our problems: If one chooses to concentrate on problems, one ends up becoming self-centered, which means that we choose to sing the chorus 'my problems, my issues, my aches and pains' all day long and for days on end. But one can easily get rid of pain by shifting the focus off oneself onto God and others. When his wife Kay was struck with terminal cancer, Rick enjoyed the opportunity of testing his grasp and practice of this principle. He soon realized that in spite of the prayers of hundreds of thousands of people, God was not going to heal Kay or make it any easier for her. But then through that duel with cancer God wanted to strengthen her character, give her a ministry of helping other people, enable her to bear testimony, draw her closer to Him and to other people. She could make a difference in the lives of thousands right there, from her bed of pain. One has to learn to deal with both the good and the bad of life: that is the secret of a purpose-driven life!

Sometimes though, learning to deal with the good is much harder. For instance, this past year, all of a sudden, when his book *'Purpose Driven Life'* sold 15 million copies, it made Rick instantly very wealthy. So he began to ask God what he wanted

him to do with this money, publicity and influence. The answer came in the form of two different passages that helped him to decide what to do, 2 Cor. 9 and Ps. 72. After much prayer and soul-searching, Rick decided that first, in spite of all the money coming in, the family would not change their present lifestyle one bit. No major purchases were slated for the near future. Second, about midway through the year, he stopped taking a salary from the church. Third, he set up foundations to fund an initiative called *The Peace Plan* which works to plant churches, equip leaders, assist the poor, care for the sick, and educate the next generation. Fourth, he added up all that the church had paid him in the twenty-four years since he started, and gave it all back. It was liberating to be able to serve God for free.

He further asked himself what he often asked of others: 'Am I going to live for possessions? Popularity? Am I going to be driven by pressures? guilt? Bitterness? Materialism? Or am I going to be driven by God's purposes for my life?' He adds, 'When I get up in the morning, I sit on the side of my bed and say, "God, if I don't get anything else done today, I want to know You more and love You better." God didn't put me on earth just to fulfill a to-do list. He is more interested in what I am than in what I do. That is why we are called human beings, not human doings.'

### **By Their Fruits**

Many are familiar with other great men and women who have started mega projects to bring God closer to the ordinary person. And yet, so few examples are available in which a person practices what he preaches, where s/he does not use his/her God given talents primarily for his/her own personal benefit.

While it is true that the labourer deserves his wages (Lk. 10:7) and that one must not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain (Deut 25:4) yet it is inspiring to see a person who preaches trust in the Lord actually live out that principle in his own life, especially when he has resources poured into his lap as God's own gift for his labours! To side-step the lure of money and all that it can bring, power no less than opportunity of every kind, is a sure sign of one's closeness to the Lord.

How could the example of Rick Warren help us make our lives more fruitful and Christ-like? For one thing, we could reflect on life being like a set of railway lines - both present in parallel fashion in our lives. When we find ourselves on cloud nine because of some resounding success we have achieved, can we use that extra energy to tackle a knotty problem that lurks in the background? And also, when we lie almost beaten by a difficult and persistent problem, could we search for something good and praiseworthy in all that goes to make up our life, for which we can genuinely be grateful to the Lord? If we do only this much, we will have certainly improved the standard of our living!

Further, is there any bountiful blessing that we could turn to the advantage of many others around us? When we talk of sharing our blessings, our minds inevitably go to material riches - of which most of us must have a meager share. But that is not all that we can and are called to share - what about our health and energy, our learning, wisdom and experience of life, our time especially when one has retired from active service, our strength of character forged through prolonged and painful suffering which came upon us unasked! To each person, the Lord

has entrusted some talent or other – to some he gives five, to others two and to some only one – but there is no one who can say, ‘I really do not have anything that I can invest in other people.’ Generally, it is our suffering that opens our eyes to the possibilities that lie hidden but close enough for us to discover with a little generosity and patience! Innumerable people around us show us the way, especially those who themselves are deprived of what some would see as necessities, like limbs, sight and so on.

### **Eucharistic Inspiration**

Besides, each Eucharist we celebrate invites us into Covenant with the Father who promises, ‘All that I have is yours!’ ‘Give yourself totally to me,’ God pleads, ‘as I give myself totally to you – take and eat, this my body (my very self) given for you... my blood poured out for you! I shall be your God and you shall be my people.’ So God in his goodness provides us with everything we need to share with others. In fact, that is what Jesus taught us to pray for when giving us ‘The Lord’s Prayer.’ The daily (epiousios) bread we talk of there is none other than the Eucharist – the very special characteristic bread of Christians! But what makes the Eucharistic bread so special and distinctive is not so much that it contains Christ himself in all his splendour, but that it is ‘bread broken to be shared.’ So what we actually ask the Father to grant us is all the necessities of life in abundance, not just for ourselves and our own personal comfort, but so that we might share them with others. Now if we eagerly receive all that the Lord showers on us lavishly but do not share with others, then we are in for a surprise

like Dives the rich man who feasted sumptuously each day but did not share with his poor neighbour, Lazarus the leper. Dives after death found himself in Hades! (Lk. 16:19-31).

All God asks of us, therefore, is our generosity to break out of our comfort zones and reach out, even if and especially when it hurts. He assures us, ‘For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their lives? Indeed, what can they give in return for their lives? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels’ (Mk 8:35-38).

We know that God wants to pour out his blessings on all humankind. But if our hands are full holding on tightly to the little we possess, how can we possibly receive and enjoy all that the Lord continues to give us? Don’t we have to first empty our hands and only then be able to receive something new and better? So, it is to our advantage to keep emptying out our barns and storehouses, not to mention bank accounts and stock holdings, if we wish to experience the fidelity of God who promises, “I will never forget you, My people. I have carved you on the palm of My hands. I will never forget you, I will not leave you orphans, I will never forget My own!” *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back”* (Lk 6:37-38) □



A SALESIAN PRIEST OF MANY TALENTS!

*Fr. Aloysius Furtado, sdb  
Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady of Dolours, Wadala &  
Golden Jubilarian of Salesian Life!*

I always knew that Don Bosco's words were true that *'It is a sheer gift of Mary Help Of Christians for a youngster to enter a Salesian House'*. She called me from the tiny island of Zanzibar (East Africa) in the year 1950. I was the eldest of five boys in my family. Since my dad handled the correspondence for the Shrine at Matunga, I came to know and later joined Don Bosco's in 1951. In 1956 I was sent to the minor seminary at Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu.

A gallant band of priests and brothers at the boarding in Matunga, Mumbai, not only encouraged me but helped me to develop my talents.

I became a Salesian on 24 May 1960 and completed my philosophical studies under the friendly guidance of Fr. Mauro Casarotti. After this I was sent as a teacher, bandmaster and sports coach to Don Bosco, Matunga and for 3 years I was also the organist at the shrine too. After this I was sent to St. Bede's Chennai for a year to work with the Anglo-Indians.

I was ordained at Don Bosco, Panjim on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1970. I carry very happy memories of my appointments at Borivli and later at Matunga after which I moved to parish ministry from 1979 onwards.

In 1988 I was appointed the parish priest at Dominic Savio Church, Antop-Hill for six years and in 1994 I as the Parish Priest of our young parish at Don Bosco Borivli. After this I was given another innings at Antop-Hill after which I have been at Our Lady of Dolours, Wadala since 2005.

Now it's time for a sabbatical; to refresh myself mentally, physically, spiritually and intellectually so I don't



get fossilized. After this I would love to return to the ministry dear to my heart: youth and music.

I am grateful for the powerful presence of Jesus through His Word and in the Holy Eucharist and I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the unfailing assistance of Mother Mary too. For the innumerable friends and relations all over the world who have always blessed me with their hospitality and homeliness I am sincerely grateful.

I now appeal to all parents to generously foster vocations in their homes because you need to remember that *"God can never be outdone in generosity."* My dear **Youngsters** God has give you tremendous potential. Don't be carried away by the sights and sounds of this world but listen to His voice inviting you to dedicate your life to his work thus making it fruitful and purposeful.

- Give thanks to the Lord for He is so good! (Ps 136) ☐

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# A GOOD START IN LIFE

by Marie Gahan

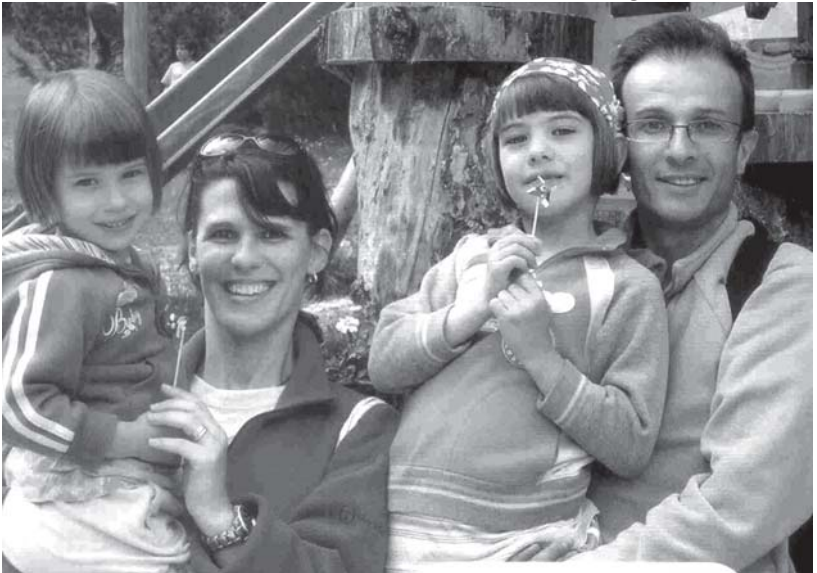
**I**t wasn't until my first child was born that I fully realized what a family is all about. Although I had been brought up in a close family, I never really appreciated until then the depth of love and commitment that family life demands, especially of parents.

## Unsparring Attention

My husband and I had been a devoted couple before then, but when this little pink bundle came into our lives, it solidified the very foundation of our relationship. All of a sudden, we were totally responsible for another human being. She was dependent on us for everything, and we were committed to seeing that she got all she needed.

I think now of the sleepless nights and childhood ailments we endured. Nights out were severely rationed. As time went on, I saw my husband putting in extra hours at work in order to provide for her needs. I also saw myself doing without little luxuries, so that she could have something extra for a special occasion.

We both gave our time unsparringly to this beloved little extension of ourselves, and not for the world would we have chosen to revert to our former free and easy life. Without knowing it, we had ourselves grown. Our priorities had changed. Imperceptibly, our approach to many things had altered, and we were all the stronger for it.



## **A Network of Loving**

I noticed how my relationship with others took on new meaning. In particular, my parents and I became closer. Realizing how much they had sacrificed for me, I began to appreciate them all the more.

As the years went by, and other children arrived, I was touched by their love for each other. Although always close to my own brothers and sisters, I now found that they became dearer to me still. I loved their children because they were part of them, and they in turn loved mine. A whole network of loving and caring grew and deepened. It was like throwing a stone in a pond, and watching the ripples widening into infinity.

## **Lasting Influence**

The joy my parents derived from their grandchildren brought me great happiness, and my children's love for them gave me great delight. They had a special relationship with their grandparents that I knew was enriching for them, and would last right through their lives.

My parents' frailty in old age brought out an inner strength in me that surprised me, and when they passed away I had no regrets. Although heartbroken, I treasured the memories they left, and felt proud to walk the path on which they had set my feet. They will always be a part of me, and I will always carry something of their very essence within me.

As my own children now grow up and start to move away from me, I know that I have given them the best start in life that I could. In the years to come, they too will mature and appreciate more what

it means to be part of a family, with its joys and demands and struggles.

## **The Home at Nazareth**

If we want to appreciate the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, there is surely no better way to begin than by appreciating more deeply our own families. The worries, fears and joys of Mary and Joseph appear more sharply when we understand the problems our own parents had to face, or recall the concerns we knew ourselves when rearing our children.

Thinking of our own families can help us to understand the awful worries of Joseph and Mary when they heard of Herod's order to have all the baby boys killed. ~ We can feel the weight of responsibility Joseph must have felt as he fled with Mary and Jesus into the safety of another jurisdiction. We can understand how Mary filled the little home at Nazareth with love, and how she taught Jesus, by word and example, the values she cherished in life. It was at Mary's knee that Jesus learned to say his first prayers, and it was in the safety of her care that he came to know his great mission in life.

Mary and Joseph must have been saddened by the terrible things Jesus would have to endure, and they must frequently have feared for him. But it surely helped them to know that his sufferings were accepted out of love for God and others, and that it was from them that he had first learned that love, by being loved. They had given him the best start possible in life. They had played their part to the full. □



# walking with the Church



## *The Advent Wreath and Silent Night*

*by St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland*

**Q.** *Could you explain to me the meaning of Advent and the origin of the Advent wreath with its four candles?*

**A.** Advent is the season of Waiting for Christ. We wait in joyful expectation and preparation. We remember Christ's first coming and wait for his coming at the end of time. The liturgy of Advent urges us to pray and to be spiritually ready.

**THE ADVENT WREATH:** The origins of the Advent wreath are found in the folk practices of the pre Christian Germanic peoples who, during the cold December darkness of Eastern Europe, gathered wreaths of evergreen and lighted fires as signs of hope in a *coming spring and renewed light*. Christians kept these popular traditions alive, and by the 16th century Catholics and Protestants throughout Germany used these symbols to celebrate their hope in *the coming Christ, the everlasting Light*. From Germany the use of the Advent wreath spread to other parts of the Christian world. Traditionally, the wreath is made of four candles in a circle of evergreens. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Three candles are purple and symbolise prayer, penance,

and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, when the priest also used to wear rose vestments at Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolises the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

**Q.** *Who wrote the Christmas carol 'Silent Night'?*

**A.** Silent Night was written in 1818 by an Austrian assistant priest Joseph Mohr. He was told the day before Christmas that the church organ was broken and would not be repaired in time for Christmas Day. Saddened, he sat down to write three stanzas that could be sung by choir to guitar music. "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" was heard for the first time at that Midnight Mass in St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. Today, Silent Night, Holy Night is sung in more than 180 languages by millions of people.

## 'IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE...'

A friend of mine named Paul received a car from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, Mister?" he asked.

Paul nodded, "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish..." he hesitated.



Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that."

Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he added, "Would you like to take a ride in my car?"

"Oh yes, I'd love that." "You will have to tell your mother first." Paul said. After a short ride, the boy turned and with his eyes aglow, said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbours that he could ride home in a big car. But Paul was wrong again. "Will you stop where those two steps are?" the boy asked.

He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little invalid brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

"There she is, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a dime. And some day I'm going to give you one just like it...then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shingled-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when he had said, "It's more blessed to give..." □



# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## ST. STEPHEN (DECEMBER 26) HE DIED FORGIVING

by Fr. Antonio Scudu (T/A I.D.)

**T**his month we dwell on St. Stephen and how his tomb was discovered. It has now been established without a doubt that it is located at a place called Beth Gemal on a property owned by the Salesian Fathers some 30km West of Jerusalem.

Two key dates that need to be kept in mind: Kfargamla in 415 and Bet Gemal in 1916.

The first date is 415 (AD of course!) when a certain priest named Lucianos, "the pastor" who was a Greek living in Palestine at a place called Kfargamla, wrote a letter to all the Eastern and Western Churches announcing his great joy at having discovered the tomb of the martyr Stephen together with those of Nicodemus (Jn. 3), Rabbi Gamaliel, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin and the uncle of Nicodemus (Acts 5: 34 - 39) and of one of his two sons, Abibos. The letter begins: "Lucianos, in need of God's mercy and a presbyter of the Church of God at Kfargamla in the vicinity of Jerusalem, to the Church and to all the saints who are in Christ Jesus, throughout the world, I greet you in the Lord."

### Go to Bishop John

Lucianos wrote further that on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> December in the year 415 while he was asleep close to the baptistry in the church a very tall person appeared to him richly dressed in priestly vestments. After making the Sign of the Cross he went on to say: "*Go into the city called Elia (that is Jerusalem) and speak to Bishop John, tell him: How long are we going to remain locked up inside? It is imperative that during your tenure as bishop you must bring to light our mortal remains that are lying abandoned and forgotten. I am not worried for myself but about those others with me who are saints and worthy of honour.*"

When he was questioned the person said: "I am Gamaliel. It was I who taught Paul, the apostle of Christ. I taught him the law in Jerusalem. Next to me is Stephen who, because of his faith in Christ, was stoned by the Jews and the Chief Priests of Jerusalem outside the North gate of the city that leads to the Kidron Valley. Because of the wicked leaders of the people Stephen's body remained exposed

for an entire day and a night without being buried. It could have been devoured by animals but it was the will of God that no wild animal, bird nor dog touch him. I, Gamaliel, who greatly admired Stephen, wanted to share his faith, so I sent my servants in secret to carry Stephen's body on my own carriage to my estate of Kfargamla (meaning owned by Gamaliel). It was 20 miles or 30km from the city. I instructed them to bury his remains in my own tomb at my own expense."

Gamaliel went on to describe that the one who was buried next to Stephen was his nephew Nicodemus who was baptized by Peter and John (he later came to their defence) and for this he was persecuted by the Jews.

Finally, he mentioned his son Abibos who had embraced Christianity with him while his other son and his wife remained Jews and were buried in the hometown of his wife. After the vision appeared a third time, Lucianos received a sharp rebuke for his disbelief and so he decided to try. Going by the information received in the apparition he actually found the tomb, not too far from the church where he lived. There he found the remains of the four: Stephen, Nicodemus, Gamaliel and his son Abibos. As he had been instructed or perhaps at the order of Bishop John these remains were taken to Jerusalem and buried in the church of Hagia Sion or the Church of the Cenacle. Lucianos then succeeded in getting some of the relics of the deceased and he preserved them in a monument or mausoleum that John built in their memory.

In the year 614 the Persians

destroyed all the churches in Palestine, the large and the small ones. The church of Kfargamla was also sadly destroyed like so many other places of historical or biblical importance.

### **The Work of Fr. Antonio Belloni**

Let us now jump ahead to the year 1850. Fr. Antonio Belloni, an Italian priest of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem founded the Congregation of the Holy Family to help orphans. This congregation had its base in Bethlehem where a large plot of land was bought in a Muslim village called Beth Gemal on the slopes of the hills of Judea bordering the plains of Shefela (Philistine property).

In 1891 Fr. Belloni became a Salesian and his houses (Bethlehem, Beth Gemal, Cremisan and Nazareth) passed over to the Salesians. In 1916 the Salesians at Beth Gemal, decided to build open-air baths next to the playground where the orphans played. But as soon as they began the excavations they uncovered some mosaics. Fr. Maurice Gisler, a Swiss Benedictine of the monastery of the Dormition on Mount Zion at Jerusalem came to see the excavations. He said that the mosaics were from the floor of a Byzantine Church of the V Century.

The Salesians together with Father Gisler, aware of the letter of Lucianos, (mentioned above) made the link between the name Beth Gemal and Kfargamla. In their view not only were they the same but the word "beth" meant 'house' while "Kfar" meant village or settlement. The distance of 30km corresponded with the distance mentioned in Lucianos' letter.

Convinced that they had found the tomb of St. Stephen, in 1930 the Salesians built a church on the same lines as the old one and called it "the church of St. Stephen."

But not everyone accepted this connection of Kfargamla and Beth Gemal. Among the toughest opponents were the Dominicans of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem who spoke of Jammal some 30km North of Jerusalem. The dispute was only recently resolved in favour of Beth Gemal and this was how.

In the fall of 1999, Fr. Andrew Strus, a Polish Salesian and professor at the Pontifical Salesian (UPS) began excavations at a place called Jiljil which was still the property of the Salesians some 300 metres from the Salesian residence. There he found the remains of a round structure. According to Fr. Strus this was a monument of some kind, a mausoleum in honour of an important person or perhaps a saint. He believed that this round structure was the monument that John, Bishop of Jerusalem had built at Kfargamla to guard the relics of St. Stephen, when his body was brought to Jerusalem. It was a fine hypothesis but how was one to prove it?

### **The Opinion of the Epigraph Expert**

Near this round structure, some ten years ago, an architrave (a beam) in stone was found. It had something carved on it. It was written clearly but was defaced by the vagaries of the weather so nothing could be identified with the naked eye. This would be the fact for the layman but not for the expert. More recently after Fr. Strus, Pere Peuch came to Beth Gemal. He was an expert on ancient epigraphy

from the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. Having placed some wet paper pulp on the beam he got a kind of negative which he studied for months. The result of his research was well documented in *La Revue Biblique* - the Biblico-archeological journal of the *Ecole Biblique*. It was not only a source of joy to the members of the Salesian community but to Fr. Strus just before his death. The words written were:

"DIAKONIKON  
S T E P H A N O U  
P R O T O M A R T Y R O S "

"Diakonikon" means the place where relics are kept. We can therefore say without any doubt that the ancient Bet Gemal - Kfargamla was where Stephen was first buried.

What was St. Stephen's message? In the church at Beth Gemal, above the apse there is a painting of Jesus on the cross and at the foot of the cross are the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John. Next to the cross, written in large letters are Jesus' words to his Father: "Pater dimitte illis," - "*Father forgive them.*" In their enthusiasm at having discovered the tomb of St. Stephen, the Salesians recently planned to restore the mosaics in the Byzantine church and to build a larger shrine dedicated to "Christian Forgiveness."

When you read the news of the Middle East, one certainly notices that there is always need of forgiveness. In order to seek peace or to teach peace, John Paul II said: There is "no peace without justice and there is no justice without forgiveness." May the Lord, through the intercession of St. Stephen move the hearts and minds of these two peoples to seek peace. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## 40 Year Difference

When I was a 20-something college student, I became quite friendly with my study partner, a 64-year-old man, who had returned to school to finish his degree. He confessed, with a wink, that he had once thought more than friendship might be a possibility between us.

"So what changed your mind?" I asked him.

"I went to my doctor and asked if he thought a 40-year age difference between a man and woman was insurmountable. He looked at my chart and said, 'You're interested in someone who's 104?'"

## Cheap Rhymes With Jeep

A guy bought his wife a beautiful diamond ring for Christmas.

A friend of his said, "I thought she wanted one of those pretty 4-Wheel drive vehicles."

"She did," he replied, "But where in the world was I going to find a fake jeep!!"

## Tennis Ball Lesson

A college professor had the mysterious habit of walking into the lecture hall each morning, removing a tennis ball from his jacket pocket. He would set it on the corner of the podium. After giving the lecture for the day, he would once again pick up the tennis ball, place it into his jacket pocket, and leave the room. No one ever understood why he did this, until one day. . . .

A student fell asleep during the lecture. The professor never missed a word of his lecture while he walked over to the podium, picked

up the tennis ball and threw it, hitting the sleeping student squarely on the top of the head.

The next day, the professor walked into the room, reached into his jacket, removed a baseball. . . No one ever fell asleep in his class the rest of the semester!

## Young Patient

A pediatrician in town always plays a game with some of his young patients to put them at ease and test their knowledge of body parts.

One day, while pointing to a little boy's ear, the doctor asked him, "Is this your nose?"

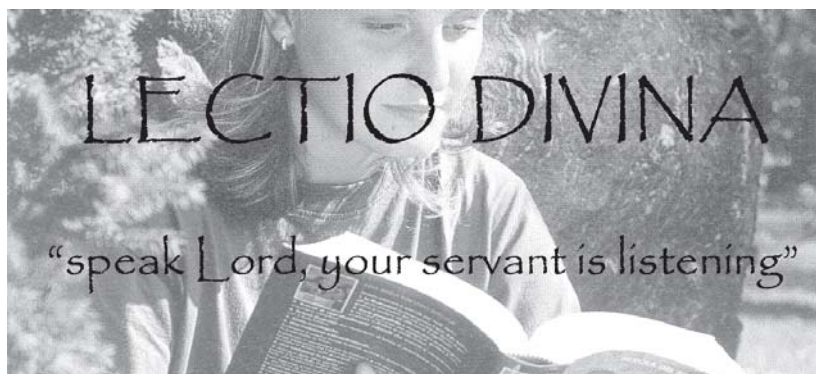
Immediately the little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mom, I think we'd better find a new doctor!"

## Ship Movie

On many U.S. Navy ships the movie screen is suspended amid-ship so that it can be viewed from both sides. This procedure makes it available to larger crowds at popular movies, but usually the junior officers get a reverse image from 'the wrong side of the screen.'

One evening at dinnertime an enterprising young ensign passed the following word over the officers' IMC circuit: "The movie to be shown in the wardroom tonight for the senior officers is on the right side of the screen - The Right-Handed Gun, starring Paul Newman."

"For the junior officers on the wrong side of the screen - The Left-Handed Gun, starring Namwen Luap." □



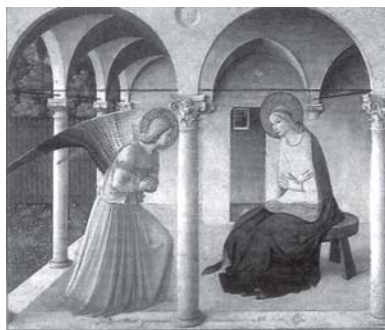
## 'LET IT BE'

by Brendan Clifford OP

*The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth...  
...And the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38)*

**I**nvite you to think about your calling in life. You may say “I don’t know if I have a calling in life. I have just gone from one thing to another over the years and I struggle on from day to day.” Yet when you think about your present state in life as a married or a single person, as a parent or grandparent, you may recognize a calling from God in that. Likewise in the work that you do and in the contribution you make, you may say with confidence, “God meant me to do this.” One definite calling may have shaped your life, or there may have been more than one, some big and some small.

You may be encouraged when you look at the story of Mary’s calling at the Annunciation and find that you have experienced something like that in your own life. Of course Mary’s calling to be the mother of God is unique, yet the Gospel presents her as the perfect model for all of us; the way God calls us is like the way He



called her, and we are moved to respond the way she did.

There are nine different moments in the story of Mary’s calling; you may recognise some or all of them in your own experience of being called.

1. Mary was in Nazareth, an unknown place in her day; you may think of the places you were in when you were called to make important decisions about your life. God’s call comes to us in a particular place and at a particular time in our lives.

2. The angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Rejoice so highly favoured, the Lord is with you." Mary is assured that she is deeply loved and favoured and that God is with her. Often a call begins with a deep experience of God's love and blessing. I am reminded of the young woman I met on a train as she travelled home from where her boyfriend had asked her to marry him. "I am a very happy girl," she said, and the words came from the depths of her heart.

3. Our experience of God's great goodness and love makes us aware of our littleness and unworthiness. We know that we do not deserve these blessings. That was why Mary was not only surprised but deeply disturbed by the words of the angel.

4. The angel told Mary what her calling was: she was to bring Jesus into the world. Nobody but Mary was asked to do this, yet each of us in the lives we live and the work we do and the talents we use, makes present some aspect of Jesus: his love, his courage, his wisdom, his endurance – we bring Jesus into our world.

5. Mary put her difficulties about this calling to the angel. When

Mother Teresa heard her God's call to go and live among the poor in Calcutta, she must have foreseen many obstacles, and it may have taken some time before the Lord showed her the way forward.

6. Mary was given the information she needed and the assurance that God would make it possible: "the Holy Spirit will come upon you..."

7. Mary was further reassured through a surprising event that had happened: her elderly cousin was pregnant. At important moments in our lives some small good thing sometimes happens that assures us that God is taking care of us: the sun shines unexpectedly, or a friend contacts us, or we remember a line from the Bible that fits exactly in our present situation.

8. Mary gave her free and wholehearted response to God's call.

9. The angel left her. The angel's task was successfully completed. Mary was now left to face and live out the consequences of her decision. This may have been your experience too. □

## PRAYER

*Father, all-powerful God,  
your eternal Word took flesh on our earth  
when the Virgin Mary placed her life  
at the service of your plan.  
Lift our minds in watchful hope  
to hear the voice which announces his glory  
and open our minds to receive the Spirit  
who prepares us for his coming.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen*



DEDICATED TO  
THE BEAUTY OF  
CHRISTMAS

# Quiet CHRISTMAS: GO TO HUMAN

by Holiness, Pope

*On Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2009, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Holy Father introduced the prayer of the Angelus with the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square with comments on Bethlehem and the prophecy in the Book of Micah concerning the Saviour's birth. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection which was given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Lord's Birth is at hand. With the words of the Prophet Micah, the Liturgy invites us to look at Bethlehem, the little town in Judea that witnessed the great event: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, / too small to be among the clans of Judah, / From you shall come forth for me / one who is to be ruler in Israel; / Whose origin is from of old, / from ancient times" (Mic 5:1).

One thousand years before Christ, Bethlehem had given birth to the great King David, with whose presentation as an ancestor of the Messiah the Scriptures agree. The Gospel according to Luke tells that Jesus was born in Bethlehem because Joseph, Mary's husband, being "of the house and lineage of David," was obliged to go to that town for the census, and in those very days Mary gave birth to Jesus (cf. Lk. 2:1-7).

In fact, Micah's prophecy continues precisely by mentioning the mysterious birth: "Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time ' when she who is to give birth has borne, / And the rest of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel" (Mic. 5:2).

Thus there is a divine plan that apprehends and explains the times and places of the coming into the world of the Son of God. It is a plan of peace, as the Prophet announces further, speaking of the Messiah: "He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord, / in the



# Spaces

## GOD'S RESPONSE CITY'S HOPES

*Benedict XVI*

majestic name of the Lord, his God; / And they shall remain, for now his greatness / shall reach to the ends of the earth; / he shall be peace" (Mic. 5:3)

Precisely this aspect of the prophecy, that of messianic peace, leads us naturally to emphasize that the city of Bethlehem is also a symbol of peace, in the Holy Land and in the world. Unfortunately, in our day, it does not represent attained and stable peace, but rather a peace sought with effort and hope. Yet God is never resigned to this state of affairs,

so that this year too, in Bethlehem and throughout the world, the mystery of Christmas will be renewed in the Church.

A prophecy of peace for every person which obliges Christians to immerse themselves in the closures, tragedies, that are often unknown and hidden, and in the conflicts of the context in which they live, with the sentiments of Jesus so that they may become everywhere instruments and messengers of peace, to sow love where there is hatred, pardon where there is injury, joy where there is sadness and truth where there is error, according to the beautiful words of a well-known Franciscan prayer.

Today, as in the times of Jesus, Christmas is not a fairy-tale for children but God's response to the drama of humanity in search of true peace.

"He shall be peace", says the Prophet referring to the Messiah. It is up to us to open, to fling open wide the doors to welcome him.

Let us learn from Mary and Joseph: let us place ourselves with faith at the service of God's plan. Even if we do not understand it fully, let us entrust ourselves to his wisdom and goodness. Let us seek first of all the Kingdom of God, and Providence will help us. A Happy Christmas to you all! □



# CONSTANCE AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

*by a Parish Visitor Sister*

**I**t was a beautiful Christmas tree, a dream-tree, as tall and straight out there in the Square as though it still stood in majesty upon an Adirondack mountain-top. It was filled with multicolored lights and surmounted by a star.

It was the most beautiful Christmas tree you could imagine - almost wonderful enough to make up for the aching certainty that you wouldn't have one of your own this year. Almost - but not quite, thought Kathleen, looking up at its tall, otherworldly beauty through tear-filled eyes.

Mom confided in her because she was the oldest, and Mom had to talk to someone. The other three were too small - they wouldn't understand.

So Kathleen had bundled up the three younger ones in the shabby snowsuits which were the best they had, and had shepherded them bravely through the crushing Christmas rush crowds over to see the tree. At least they could look at the beautiful tree in the Square; it was free and if you got there at the right time you saw the lights go on and change a workaday city street into a fairy-land.

You could close out all the dirt and drabness of life; you could even forget the worried look on Mom's face if you looked at the tree very hard and thought about it and didn't let any other thought get in.

Kathleen was standing there, letting herself be pushed and shoved by the hurrying shoppers but all the while keeping a firm grip on young John and Mary Ann. Patrick, the six-year-old, had red hair and a chin to go with it and

was beginning to be able to take care of himself. The girl stood there now, trying to fill up all the aching emptiness inside her with the loveliness of the tree, her round eyes awe-filled and bright with unshed tears.

"It is lovely, isn't it?" Kathleen turned to find a young woman smiling down at the four of them, a young woman dressed in dark blue, wearing a veil.

"Yes, Ma'am," Kathleen answered politely, her eyes already straying back to the tree. "It's prettier'n anything else I know," She paused and then whispered in a burst of confidence, "I brought my brothers and sister over to see it 'cause we're not going to have one." She stopped, suddenly shy, remembering that this friendly young woman did not know her or Mom or Patrick or John or Mary Ann. Brief and bitter experience had taught Kathleen that other people didn't care about how hard things were at home since Daddy went away.

But it seemed this one was different. "Not having a tree? You - believe in Christmas, don't you?" The young woman looked at the chubby Irish faces with a sinking heart. Surely not the children of an atheist!

"Oh, sure!" The idea of anyone's not believing in Christmas was so outlandish as to be funny to Kathleen. "Sure we believe in Christmas, ma'am, only - Mom says we can't afford a tree this year."

Relief showed clearly in the young woman's face, rosy with the damp December wind. "Well, anyway, the tree isn't the most

important part of Christmas! Do you know why we have a Christmas tree?"

"No! Why?"

"Because it's the Baby Jesus' birthday, and He is God, so He'll never die, and the tree is the kind that's called evergreen because it stays fresh and new all the time - like Him in that way, you see. The big star up on top is like the one that led the Three Wise Men to the Baby Jesus' Crib! It's supposed to lead us there, too!"

Just then a surprised voice broke into the conversation. "Good evening, Sister. I didn't expect to see you in this crowd!"

Sister looked up. Constance! The girl who had decided to profess atheism and now informed her friends that the Church was capitalistic, a "money-making racket!" But Constance still liked the Parish Visitor, even though she now condemned the Church that Sister loved and championed because it was God's. "Good evening, Constance. How are you?"

The girl nodded and smiled and was swept along by the surging crowd. But Sister stood and looked after her thoughtfully, and then looked down at the children before her. "Now, I wonder"

Nine-year-old Kathleen was looking up at her with new interest. "Are you a *really* a Sister?"

"Yes, I am, and I'd like to come and see your mother. Will you tell me where you live? When I come, I'll bring you each a picture of Baby Jesus, because He's the real part of Christmas, the only part that really matters! It's His birthday, you know!"

It was an oddly-assorted pair who climbed the steep stairs to the

apartment in the late afternoon a few days later. For with Sister was the protesting Constance, heaped with unwieldy packages.

Sister, whose own arms, too, were filled, looked over her shoulder, her eyes twinkling at her companion.

"It's only two more flights, Constance," she encouraged, and continued blithely, "It was so nice of you to help me with all these packages. People often give us these made-over toys around Christmas-time and they will be wonderful to the children!" One would have thought that it had been Constance who had offered to help, rather than Sister.

"I don't know why I bothered to come with you!" Constance declared honestly, glancing with some concern at her high-heeled shoes and the littered stairs. "But I just can't seem to say 'No' to you, Sister. Must be for old times' sake," she added almost to herself.

They were at the door. Mother welcomed the gift-bearing strangers wearily but with the vestiges of shy good manners left over from happier days in her Middle-Western hometown. When she looked at the gifts, she was almost tearfully grateful that the children would not have to be disappointed, after all. Practical clothing provided by wealthier families in the parish, tied in attractive Christmas wrapping, was there among the toys.

The young mother was quite willing to confide in the Sister. She and her husband had had frequent disagreements after he had lost his job about six months ago. Worry over unpaid bills, fear of a worse tomorrow, and the anxiety of being alone in a great unfriendly city told on them both. One day, after a sharp quarrel, the young husband had

simply walked out. He had not come back.

Now things were worse than ever. Mother had secured a job as a waitress, but that left the children alone, except for an occasional neighbour's "looking in on them" until Kathleen came from school, and Kathleen only a baby herself! The hours at the lunchroom were long and the wages barely kept them fed and with a roof over their heads. Landlords weren't interested in hard-luck stories. Neither were grocers.

Mass? Oh, one got so discouraged and tired that there didn't seem much point. Yes, Kathleen went - sometimes. Communion? Kathleen had been ready and eager to receive last Spring. But even then her father was working only part-time and they could not afford a white outfit. Dad's fierce pride would not let him ask for help from the parish and Kathleen had been kept home on First Communion Day - in tears.

Before the Sister left, arrangements were made for Kathleen to receive her First Holy Communion on Christmas Day, fittingly attired in a white dress and veil supplied by the kindly Pastor. It was agreed that she and her mother would attend Mass every Sunday from now on.

Mother decided to go to Confession and Communion, remembering that she had not had that consolation since her arrival in the city five years ago. "It's just what we've been needing, Sister; you're absolutely right! Funny how you forget those things just when you need them most! And if we all pray together, maybe Tom will come back to us - he's a good husband. I don't blame him for running, we got so discouraged!

"Now that I won't have to use the money I had saved to buy them stockings for Christmas - it was all they were going to get, but you have brought such nice ones - maybe I can find a Christmas tree, one of the little spindly kind that don't sell so good, for a dollar or two! They sure have their hearts set on having a tree!"

Constance felt a strange thrill as she mounted again the same steep stairway, up the interminable flights to the family's apartment. It was a warmth about her heart, a happiness that shone straight out of her eyes, a lightness that made her sure that nothing would ever be heavy or burdensome again. No, not even the packages she held in her arms - awkward, cumbersome packages that they were! The fun of trimming a Christmas tree for the family explained a little of it, but only a little. The Crib that she was bringing to set under the tall silver pine she had ordered explained a little more.

But the real reason for her joy was her long meditation on the visit she had made with the Parish Visitor only a few days ago. Here, she thought, was a little unheard-of Sister whose Community was quietly undertaking the practice of what Constance's atheistic friends only stood on the street-corners and shouted about - social justice and the brotherhood of man. There was one difference. The Sisters knew, too, about the Fatherhood of God.

It had been the apparent idealism of the atheistic doctrine that had won her. It was the belated realization that the idealism was only a front for an organized and tyrannical godless despotism that had opened her eyes again to her Faith.

*(continued on pg. 32)*

# A VERY VALUABLE DIAMOND

by Gianni Asti SDB

## Preserving the Precious Virtue of Purity

After he has praised a youngster's spiritual beauty, his sterling character, his propensity to love and his ability to live a pure life, Don Bosco now offers his boys some clear guidelines to preserve and defend this virtue.

Anyone reading this today will probably smile knowing of the disasters that our morally permissive society is causing even as we try to convince ourselves that our youngsters still try to live pure lives while our society does precious little to help.

Don Bosco's suggestions are given here and adapted to today's youngster.

## Traps and How to Overcome Them

This is what Don Bosco put into the prayer book that he wrote for his boys:

"But - my dear boys - this virtue that makes you like the angels of heaven and pleases Jesus and Mary so very much, is besieged by the enemy of your soul. He tries to entrap you and rob you of your perfection or at least he strives to lead you to that point. For these reasons I suggest some guidelines or spiritual weapons that will certainly help you to repel the



ADVICE TO HIS BOYS

DON BOSCO'S

enemy, keeping the tempter at bay.

The foremost is a sense of reserve: your purity is a very precious gem and if you go about flaunting it in front of a thief you run the risk of even being murdered for it."

A youngster is naturally restless and he feels like breaking free from the protection of his family so he can enter the attractive world of his friends who will introduce him to devious and frivolous forms of entertainment that will certainly endanger him and even expose him to precocious sexual experiences.

The problem that parents and Christian educators raise is how to reassure the sensitive hearts of their youngsters when the media is constantly bombarding them with such negative messages.

It is not enough that we educate our youth to the critical use of these means of communication but we need to defend their fragility by calling upon our

political leaders to put in place appropriate legislation and safeguards.

If we begin to think like youngsters rather than adults then we should not be surprised to see sexual violence telecast and printed in our newspapers and splashed across our TV screens. If one dresses provocatively we only send a dangerous message to our young people. When we adults dress modestly we send a prudent message to our youngsters but if we adults violate this modesty for whatever reason, we permit promiscuity to run rampant.

### **Frequent Confession and Communion**

“Add to a sense of reserve, frequent confession, frequent fervent Communion and a flight from those whose deeds and speech show no respect for this virtue.”

We cannot sufficiently emphasize the help that Confession offers in the preservation of this virtue. When shame prevents the youngster from confessing certain shortcomings or not being able to find words to express oneself, s/he remains silent and is left confused and ashamed sometimes for years.

Conversely if the youngster meets a confessor who evokes his confidence and inspires him to be honest, he becomes aware of the joy that this sacrament affords and which makes him stronger and more consistent in this struggle.

Encouraged and supported by a good spiritual director he will serenely pass the critical years of his adolescence.

For Don Bosco, frequent

confessions were made once a fortnight, though he invited his boys to approach Holy Communion every time they came to Mass. Such a suggestion could seem exaggerated but consider: is it possible for a youngster to remain pure for months without the assistance of the sacraments? We probably know of some churches where the confessions for youngsters is scheduled perhaps two or three times a year and attendance of youth at Sunday Mass has decreased because they are out late the previous night partying or spending weekends at picnics far away from church.

Regarding the advice to avoid bad companions, we will treat that subject soon.

### **The Custody of the Senses**

“Therefore, in order to prevent the assaults of the devil, recall Our Lord’s words of warning: *“This kind of demon (or temptations against purity) is only overcome by prayer and fasting.”* By fasting is meant the mortification of the senses, the custody of the eyes, tongue, shunning idleness and not pampering the body with more rest than is strictly necessary.”

In regard to fasting and mortification youngsters should be helped to train their will power in areas that are perhaps far away from the sphere of sensuality but which are nonetheless a great help in strengthening the will to overcome assaults against purity.

Our youngsters should be trained to control their eyes towards negative curiosity, meaning by that, that they should be taught to forego the urge to satisfy the sense of sight of

perfectly lawful pleasurable sights. It is a very good exercise.

Controlling oneself against exaggerations in eating and drinking especially at night is not only standard advice for a good sleep but an excellent safeguard against temptations at night.

Ask students always to keep themselves busy with their studies, other chores or games so that their minds are free of thoughts that could otherwise impede their academic performance.

It is believed that youngsters are in danger when, contrary to their nature, they become silent and withdraw to places that are not supervised by their elders.

Prolonged and exaggerated periods of sleep either in the morning or immediately after lunch are a real danger to youngsters especially when they are left alone.

To control one's thoughts is very difficult. Youngsters have a very lively imagination and when it is given free rein it inadvertently gathers up unwanted or dangerous images.

At times some thoughts associated with what we saw or heard could come back to our minds even after several years and they might still cause us to fall.

### **The Importance of Prayer**

Don Bosco continues: "Jesus recommends unceasing, fervent and trusting prayer until such time that the temptation has been expelled.

Then you have some formidable weapons in the form of ejaculatory prayers e.g. invoking the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Frequently say: "My Jesus, mercy. Jesus, save me! - O Mary conceived

without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. - Mary Help of Christians, pray for me. - Sweet heart of Mary, be my salvation. - Sacred Heart of Jesus, may I never offend you again".

You could also kiss the Crucifix, the medal or the scapular of the Blessed Virgin Mary".

These are valuable aids because in time of temptation you cannot make long prayers. Short prayers are more effective to ward off, even if only for a few minutes, because by now the temptation loses its aggressive power.

An invincible weapon that Don Bosco still suggests is the thought of the presence of God:

"But if all these weapons are not enough to ward off the temptation, then resort to the most invincible weapon of all which is the presence of God in whose hands we are and who sees everything. He is the absolute master of our lives and we can call on him at any time. Would we dare offend him if we were in his presence? ... And then you might add:

"How can I commit this sin in the presence of God, my creator and my Saviour...?"

I believe it is impossible to succumb with thoughts of the presence of God." (From "*Il Giovane Provveduto*" - The Companion of Youth)

For Don Bosco this was not a presence that instilled fear but assisted the youngster to become aware of how much he is loved by God who knows his struggles and his weakness and who is ready to help him because he has experienced this true love. □



## NEWSBITS

### CHENNAMANGALAM - KERALA

The State of Kerala is already a magnet for tourists coming into India. From tropical beaches, the land rises to the Western Ghats, where nature and forest reserves bring delight to many a jaded city dweller. The farming areas are a patchwork of shades of green, growing spices and other tropical products.

Cities like Calicut and Kochi (formerly known as Cochin) are famous in the centuries-old spice market and brought traders from China, Europe and Arabia. There is a special remnant of Chinese visitors, who brought a particular style of counter-weighted fishing net, which is still used in Kochi. The locals call them Cheena vala.

Trade brought settlement. Jews and Muslims lived peacefully alongside local Hindus, especially in the nearby area of Chennamangalam, where you can still visit an ancient synagogue and a more modern mosque, as well as the old royal palace of a tolerant Hindu monarch.

You can also visit some important Catholic places in



*The Facade of the Holy Cross Church in which Fr. Matteo Ricci was probably ordained*

Chennamangalam, where the Catholic Church of the Holy Cross still functions, and the remains of a 16<sup>th</sup> century seminary. Late in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits established a chapel and the seminary-college. With a modern touch, they set up India's first printing press and published in the local language. The Jesuits are no longer in Chennamangalam and the Holy Cross church is operated by the Catholic Syro-Malabar rite. However, you can still see the Jesuit insignia on the wall and an ancient baptismal font.

It was the probable ordination place of the famous missionary to China, Father Matteo Ricci, who arrived at the Jesuit College there. In 1580, he was sent to Kochi where he continued his work for some months. It was in Kochi, and probably in Chennamangalam that he was ordained a priest. Shortly



*The ancient baptismal font with the Jesuit Insignia beside it*

after, his superiors called him to Macau, where he joined and later became the leader of the Jesuit mission to China.

This year, we celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

Most visitors to Kochi just visit the historic remnants of the Portuguese settlement around Fort Kochi. One of these is the famous Church of St. Francis of Assisi, which would have been a Catholic church in the time of Father Ricci. However, later it was taken over by the Dutch Protestant tradition by the Church of South India.

However, visitors who are especially interested in the life of Father Ricci may like to hire a car and travel the 40 kilometres to Chennamangalam. *SUNDAY EXAMINER*

### VATICAN CITY

Vacationing Catholics must learn to see nature as God's handiwork and ensure that they do not disrupt the delicate balance of creation, a Vatican office said.

"Nature and biological diversity speak to us of God the creator," said a message from the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travellers.

The Catholic Church "reiterates insistently the responsibility of the human being in the preservation of an integral and healthy environment for all;" said the message released on World Tourism Day this year. The United Nations-affiliated World Tourism Organisation chose "Tourism and Biodiversity" as the theme of the 2010 celebration to highlight the care that must be taken when



*Tourists disembark to visit the Mediterranean Isle of Capri*

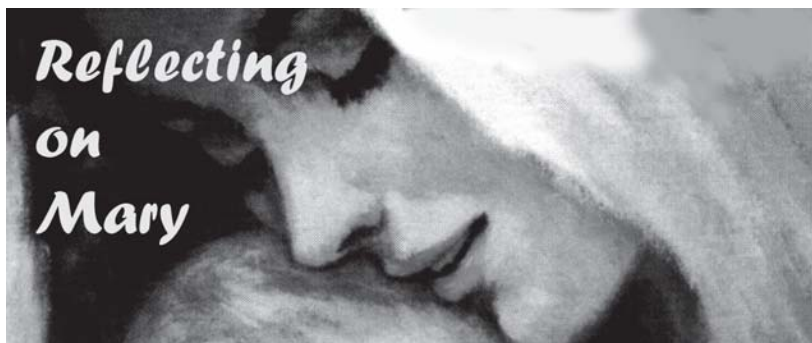
wilderness areas, oceans and deserts are tourist destinations.

"Recent studies indicate that on a worldwide level, 22 percent of mammals, 31 percent of amphibians, 13.6 percent of bird life and 27 percent of reefs are threatened or in danger of extinction," the statement said.

Tourism is an important growing sector of the economy, but it has "some major effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity", which brings with it "serious environmental impacts - especially in regard to the exorbitant consumption of limited resources, such as potable water and land, and the enormous generation of pollution and residues", the statement said.

The Pontifical Council called on governments to carefully regulate tourist development in sensitive environments, urged businesses to ensure sustainable land use and told tourists that they "must be conscious that their presence in a place is not always positive."

It also called on pastors to educate their faithful to help them discover God's sign in the great wealth of biodiversity. *CNS*



## REFLECTIONS ON THE "HAIL MARY"

*(exegetical & inspirational) - Part II*

*by Richard Loehrlein, S.M.*

**T**he Holy Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses was *Yahweh*, I AM. This Name was so sacred that the Jews would not say it. They would write it, but not speak it. Instead of speaking the Holy Name, they would say in Hebrew, "*Adonai*," which is "*Kyrios*" in Greek, and "Lord" in English. Usually, in our English translations of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Holy Name, *Yahweh*, is substituted with this other word and printed with capital letters, like this: LORD. That means in the Hebrew, you will find *Yahweh*; however, when they read it, they will speak, *Adonai*, and in the English print you will see LORD. Later, after the resurrection of Jesus, after the Christians came to realize that Jesus was God, they gave the name *Kyrios* to Jesus also. So, we call him "Lord" to mean that he is God. But here, at the annunciation, *ho kyrios meta sou means* "Yahweh, LORD is with you."

In effect, the angel was saying to her, "*Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is now with you, Mary, as really as he was with your forefathers! Do not be afraid. *Yahweh*, *Kyrios*, the LORD was speaking to her through the angel. And *Yahweh* would accomplish his purposes through her.

This little girl is walking with Moses, who saw the burning bush and heard the Voice of God. She is walking with Abraham, her father. God spoke to Abraham in an angel. Zachary her cousin was struck dumb because he didn't realize who was speaking to him. Mary knows and is energized. By saying, "I am your servant, let it be done to me according to your word," she entered into a Covenant of Love with God, and the fruit of her womb is the Son of God. Elizabeth will declare her blessed because she believed, even as

Abraham was declared blessed because he believed. And Sarah conceived because of the Word of God, for nothing is impossible with God. And when Mary became a pregnant woman, *ho kyrios meta sou* took on a second dimension and meaning. Mary was blessed at her conception and also in the Incarnation.

Yahweh was present to his people. The people knew *Yahweh* as a God of the Covenant, a God who was present to them with loving kindness and fidelity. And Mary's son would inherit that reputation as is said in Matthew's Gospel, "He shall be called *Emmanuel*, a name which means 'God is with us.'" Mary already knew the favour of God. She was filled with God's Grace at her conception. *Kecharitomene*. From her conception she lived in God and God lived in her, but soon there would be a new meaning to the presence of God in her, for God would indeed live within her flesh. She would become the Ark of the New Covenant. In a physical way she would bear God's Holy Presence within.

Many people are not aware that the New Testament means *The New Covenant*, and presents Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant. From the time of Moses, the Ark was the earthly throne of God. At God's direction, Moses made this beautiful box to contain the Word of God written on stone tablets, the Ten Commandments. The Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, an inner room of the temple, where God would sit upon it. Sometimes it was called his Mercy seat and sometimes it was called God's footstool. The Book of Ezekiel tells us that God's Presence

left the Temple of Jerusalem before Babylon destroyed it. The Second Book of Maccabees 2 tells us that Jeremiah took the Ark to Mount Nebo and hid it. Now the New Testament tells us how God's Presence was restored to his people when the Word of God took flesh in Mary, the *Kecharitomene*. As the sacred writers asked themselves, "Who is this woman?" one of the answers they found was that she was indeed the Ark of the New Covenant. By her faith she conceived the Son of God and became the Ark of the New Covenant. More precious than finely beaten gold, Mary, the all-holy one, bore about within her the Divine Presence, "*Ho kyrios meta sou*. The Lord is with you." And Elizabeth would say, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Already Elizabeth recognized who Mary was and Who lived within.

Twice Luke presents Mary as the Ark. The first time is when the angel said to her, "The power of the Most High will take you under its shadow." Fr. de la Potterie writes, "This is an allusion of the cloud (symbol of God) which covered the tent of the Covenant (Ex 40:35); the Ark of the Covenant was thus designated as the very place of the presence of God. Mary will be from now on like a new 'Ark of the Covenant,' because she will bear in her womb the Son of God" (de la Potterie, p. 30).

*Mary proceeded in haste into the hill country of Judah.*

Is this why Catholics pray to

Mary? She has the Spirit of God within her. Luke carefully records for us: "Thereupon Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah where she entered the house of Zachary and greeted Elizabeth." Having been advised by the angel of Elizabeth's pregnancy, "for nothing is impossible with God," Mary set out in haste on God's mission to fulfill in the house of Zachary and Elizabeth what the angel of God had begun six months before in the temple of Jerusalem. Luke records three things that happened upon Mary's arrival: "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe leapt in her womb, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out in a loud voice." Why do Catholics pray to Mary? Because they know they can depend on her. She is there even before they ask for her.

Look at similar incidents in the Scriptures where Mary's presence is recorded, in particular, at Cana, at Calvary and in the upper room where the apostles and other first Christians assembled after Jesus had ascended to his Father. Mary is present in order to fulfill God's purposes. At Cana, she said to her son, "They have no more wine." At Calvary she was standing near her son in his agony. In the Upper Room she was gathered in constant prayer with the apostles and some women and brothers of Jesus. While a human need was cared for in each case, something else occurred which surpassed the human desire or expectation. At Cana Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him. At Calvary, when Jesus saw her, he proclaimed her to be the mother of

his beloved disciple and breathed his Spirit upon this new union. In the upper room, the apostles took the authority of Jesus and began their ministry, while the Holy Spirit came upon them. What we are witnessing here is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of Genesis 3:15: "The woman and her offspring." It is not just a matter of Mary's presence, but of Mary bringing people to be present to Jesus.

Now let us return to Luke's account of the incidents that occurred when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe leapt in her womb, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out in a loud voice." In a very direct but sensitive manner, Luke describes Mary's arrival in the house of Zachary as the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant.

In a small book in French printed in Africa, *Je vous salue, Marie...priez pour nous...* (Edition Lindonge-Kinshasa 1999), pp. 50-51, Fr. Raymond Halter, SM, explains how with great delicacy Luke portrayed Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant coming into the home of Zachary and Elizabeth, just as the Ark came into the home of Obed-Edom when David was bringing it to Jerusalem. Read 2 Samuel 6. Just as Mary hastened into the hill country of Judah, so David was bringing the Ark up into the hill country of Judah. When Mary entered the house of Zachary, she brought blessing upon that house, as when the Ark was

taken into the home of Obed-Edom, his house was greatly blessed, David and all the people celebrated with great joy on that occasion. While David danced before the Ark, Luke tells us that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, "the baby leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit," the Spirit of Joy. Then, Luke chose his next words with great care: Elizabeth "cried out with a loud voice." This is an exact clue to the comparison Luke is making between the visit of Mary to the house of Zachary with the visit of the Ark to the house of Obed-Edom. In the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Bible made before the time of Christ, this verb "cried out" is used only when the Levites came before the Ark. And in the New Testament, this is the only occasion when this Greek verb is

used. When Mary, bearing the Word of God, came into her home, *Elizabeth cried out in a loud voice* in the presence of the Ark of the New Covenant.

In the story of this visit, Luke is making a statement of faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, which was realized in Mary. Elizabeth says, "But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" "Mother of my Lord" - how did Elizabeth know that except by the Holy Spirit within? Mary is the mother of Yahweh who saves, the Mother of God. St. Matthew tells us that he was to be called "Jesus" because he would save his people from their sins. He is the Saviour. □ (To be continued)



## LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My most sincere thanks to the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother Mary for granting me two special favours. *Mrs. deSouza, Australia*  
My belated, but grateful thanks to the Divine Mercy of Jesus and Our Blessed Mother Mary for a miraculous healing of the retina in the left eye of my son. *A Devotee*

My belated thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians for helping my daughter to be happily married. *Mrs. P. Fernandes, Mumbai*  
My sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians for the blessings and favours received and for a happy married life.

*Mr. & Mrs. Dominic and Rosy Alfonso, Mumbai*

Thank you Heavenly Father, Jesus and Mother Mary Help of Christians for the marvellous miracle. My son passed his T.Y. B.Com exams without going to college or any other classes.

*McQuinn Soares, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary for protecting my daughter who was pregnant and driving her car with my two grandsons from a near-fatal accident. She prays the 3 Hail Marys regularly. *R. Wickiemasekar, S. Lanka*

### *Constance and the Christmas Tree - Continued from pg. 22*

The thought of the Parish Visitors spending themselves so that this family and their neighbours might receive not only material aid, but something no atheist could ever give them - peace and joy of heart - that had been the clinching argument. Constance had made her peace that afternoon with the God she had denied. She would receive Him in Holy Communion at Midnight Mass! No wonder she was so happy! No wonder her heart was as light as the big soft snowflakes that were drifting down to make it a perfect Christmas Eve!

Weeks later, the Parish Visitor's familiar voice greeted Constance over the telephone. "I thought you might want to go down and say good-bye to your friends, Constance. They're moving back to their hometown tomorrow. Dad returned to them on the Feast of the Three Kings, appropriately enough, bearing gifts!

"He had hitchhiked back to his home and swallowed his pride

enough to ask for a job in his father's store. At first, he had come to New York to show his father he could make a success of his life "on his own" you know.

"His father is delighted to have his son take over the business, now that he is getting older. His wife died a year ago, and he wants his son's family to come back to the old homestead. The children will be a comfort to his old age, he says. But his son waited until he was sure he would be a success at the business before he even told his wife where he was! However, she understands and seems already to have forgotten the hardships of the past few months.

"You should hear the children - they're so thrilled to be going to live in a house all their own, with a yard and trees! Their father has promised them they may go to the parish school out there. The children's prayers brought things out all right, after all. Faith can move mountains - and Daddies!" □

## 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.*

Due to excessive vomiting and diarrhoea I was admitted to the ICU in an unconscious state and with no pulse rate. The diarrhoea continued for nearly 5 days and finally a CT scan was advised. It was then that I recited the 3 Hail Marys for a clear report. Since the doctors could not find anything wrong they discharged me because it was Good Friday, I always recite the Three Hail Marys and I know that Our Lady never fails.

*A Devotee*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*A. Simoes, Macau S. China*

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to Mother Mary, Help of Christians for the favours and blessings received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Mario D'Souza, Goa*

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians for helping us pay up our home loan.

*Bhooma*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the graces received and for guiding me during some difficult days.

*Roshni D'Souza, Mumbai*

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.

*Miranda, Canada*

Thank you, dear Mother, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio, for granting my daughter the gift of a healthy baby and for granting my son a good job, and for all the other favours received.

*Serena Godinho, Goa*

I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady for all the favours granted to me through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*J. Pacheco, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother who cured me of a slip disc after the prayerful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Juanita Cardoz, Goa*

My husband never leaves home without praying the 3 Hail Marys. On May 26<sup>th</sup> this year his car was hit by a trailer and pushed on to a divider. I am certain that he was saved because of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Mrs. Ramos, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Cajetan Mendes, Canada*



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

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for helping me to pass my 2nd Semester BE exams with a distinction. Thanks for helping me in my workshop practice which was very tiring and discouraging. Please continue to be with us always.

*Cleta D'Souza, Mangalore*

Heartfelt thanks to Our dear Lord, Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a grandson (*Jarrold Fernandez*).

*Mrs. F. R. Fernandez, Chennai*

I am very grateful to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my husband get a job in the Gulf and also for making it very easy for him to get a visa without any difficulty.

*Lucia Alexander, Chennai*

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for granting my daughter-in-law a safe delivery of a baby boy and for granting my son a job and an understanding life partner.

*Mrs. Anna D'Souza, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for curing my son completely of his urinary infection.

*C. Fernandes, Mangalore*

My sincere gratitude to Our Lady for curing my mother of a severe stomach pain.

*Maria Mendes*

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping both my grandsons pass their board examinations by reciting the 3 Hail Marys.

*Liban Crasto, Mumbai*

My grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians (*the devotion of the 3 Hail Marys*), Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe confinement and the delivery of a healthy baby girl - Richelle Marian.

*Dominic & Shirley Figueiredo, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Sweebert Dantes, Bahrain*

A million thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and all the other saints for curing my son Neel of his severe throat infection. Thank you dear Mother and keep us constantly in your care.

*Mrs. B. Colaco, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to the Divine Mercy, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery to my daughter and the gift of a healthy baby boy and for all the other favours received.

*Annamary Dass*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and all the other saints.

*Alphonsa, Mumbai*

Our thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my daughter pass her B.Com examination with 55%.

*E. Mendonca, Mumbai*

My heartfelt thanks to the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a healthy baby boy to my sister.

*Bridgid D'Souza, Mumbai*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



I am most grateful to Our Lord, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for healing me from my kidney problem. *Mini George, New Delhi*

My sincere thanks to Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my nephew Savio get a job on a ship after many years. *Marcelina Rebello, Goa*

My special thanks to Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received. *D.A. Gomes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary (*the three Hail Marys*) Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the innumerable favours granted to me and my family.

*Mrs. Emilia Fernandes, Goa*

My daughter Dionne Saviola Almeida had met with an accident and had suffered a head injury, internal fractures and her condition was very serious. But through the intercession of Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio she has made a speedy and miraculous recovery.

*Mrs. D. Almeida, Goa*

Our sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a healthy baby boy on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

*Tixy Jijo, Vytilla*

A million thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. The doctors had diagnosed lumps in my breasts. I wore the scapular of St. Dominic Savio and implored his assistance. Though the doctors had diagnosed the lumps, when I was taken to the operating table it was found that there was a lump on only one breast. The doctors had to operate only on one breast the other had disappeared. I also received the gift of a beautiful baby girl after 8 years of marriage and I have named her Christine.

*Ms. G. Pereira, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a successful operation of my 1<sup>1/2</sup> year old son and for the success of my son and daughter in their board exams. *Marilanda S. Britto, Goa*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

DECEMBER 2010

**Holy Father's General Intention:** *That our personal experience of suffering may be an occasion for better understanding the situation of unease and pain, which is the lot of many people who are alone, sick or aged, and stir us all to give them generous help.*

**Missionary Intention:** *That the peoples of the earth may open their doors to Christ and to His Gospel of peace, brotherhood and justice.*

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### **MARY WAS THERE**

My son and his family have settled in Holland. One day on his way to work (a distance of 2 hours) he felt drowsy at the wheel and lost control of the car. He hit a divider and his car was smashed both in front and from the rear. Not only was my son miraculously saved without any injury, no other vehicle involved was harmed either. His car was a total wreck but his life was saved. I am so grateful to Our Blessed Mother for this. From my childhood I have been strongly devoted to Mother Mary and I attend the Novena at Mahim regularly. Even now I recite the Novena prayers always. I shall always be grateful for the protection of Our Lady.

*(Indira Panicker)*

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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