

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*Mary's divine
maternity is the
source of all her
privileges and she
is a model to all
believers*

Cover: **The Madonna
of the Olives**



From The Editor's Desk

The Centre of the Universe

I'm writing this at the tail end of the summer holidays here in the seething heat of Mumbai – the house is rather quiet as many of my colleagues are out on their holidays and I can take the liberty to indulge in a 'flight of fancy'. So here goes...

At this time of the year (the summer) it is a phenomenon of any modern city that many people must have booked for holidays much in advance to their '*native places*' in the far-flung parts of the country or abroad. Such travel can have many obvious advantages but we can be surprised by something that is altogether unexpected. I realized this when several years ago I had travelled from the airport to the city, almost an hour's journey. Mumbai's vast main railway station was crowded with an enormous number of people and I felt totally alone and isolated. It wasn't frightening; rather, astonishing that such a multitude of people could exist unbeknown to me. Maybe more astonishing was that I was not just a stranger; I was *the* stranger.

We are so accustomed to being the centre of the universe that we cannot fathom that we are at the periphery of someone else's world or as in my case in Mumbai of those days, even worse still: of having disappeared off the outer edge of their universe. In an effort to recover my position, I fantasized that this great throng of people had been peacefully sleeping somewhere for all these years until they were awakened by word of my immanent coming and had begun to move about purposefully. My imagination even provided a satisfactory conclusion: when I go aboard my train to leave, a whistle would blow and they would all return to their silent slumbers – until maybe I should care to disturb them again in many years time.

Apparently I was not the only person to have such an experience, and reading St. John's gospel one day, I was struck by how this experience was in some ways like Christ's as he came into the world as man. It should have been a familiar place for him. After all, '*He was in the world that had its being through him,*' but still, '*the world did not know him*'. As is so obvious from St. John's gospel, the Father was the centre of Christ's world. But the people he met were so often the centre of their own lives to such an extent that they were unable to accept Christ or his Father. '*He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him.*' He did not abandon them to a world without God, as I was prepared to abandon that huge crowd of people in my fantasy, senselessly sleeping as I got on the train for my destination. '*But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God.*' He came into a strange world but he did not run away from it: '*The Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory.*'

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

9. SHARE YOUR BLESSINGS

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

There would hardly be any Christian who is unaware that the core of the Eucharist is the call to share of one's blessings with anyone in need. This is precisely the 'Eucharistic command' which the Lord gave to his followers on the night he was betrayed - and this sharing of our very selves with one another is the way we make Jesus continue to be present in our midst. But, often the problem tends to be, 'how exactly am I called to share, and what do I share with others?' In general the answer will always be something like, 'share whatever costs you most - even your very life itself!' The following story gives us one shining example of the call to share what could be considered by some as something more precious even than life itself.

There was a farmer who grew superior quality and award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won honour and prizes. When interviewed by a newspaper reporter he revealed something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered, to his great surprise, that the unconventional yet wily farmer actually shared his seed corn with his neighbouring cultivators.

"How can you possibly afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbours when you know they will enter the corn they grow in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked in amazement!

"Why, sir," the farmer answered nonchalantly, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and carries it around from field to field. If all that my neighbours grow around me is inferior, sub-standard and poor

quality corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my own corn-fields. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbours grow good corn too." Thus, this simple farmer provides us with a superb example of the win-win philosophy of life born out of common-sense, maybe, but also based on solid Eucharistic principles. Hasn't Jesus told us, '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 6:38). Yet how few of us really trust this principle and act on it in our day-to-day living!?!

No Man is an Island

The farmer and his approach to life also jolts us into a deep realization of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbour's corn also improves. If we are to grow good quality corn, we must help our neighbours grow good quality corn too. And so it is in other dimensions of life as well! I cannot imagine that I will make progress on my own and without reference to anyone else around me. Instead, 'the more we are together, the better it shall be!' Thus if I wish that honesty prevails in our neighbourhood, then it is not enough for me alone to seek to be honest; I would need in some way to help others also to appreciate and live by the same principle of honesty.

Unfortunately, isolation is the order of the day. Sociologists use the term "anomie" to indicate the feeling a person nurtures of 'not

belonging', of 'isolation', of 'disconnectedness'. The level of anomie is on the rise in our cities the world around to an alarming degree. The gaping hole in our security in times of natural disasters or man-made calamities like terrorist attacks is born out of our disconnectedness from what goes on in our neighbourhoods. We need a resurrection of a true and deep community spirit.

There are three pillars upon which a civic rebirth or comeback is possible: individual commitment from and by every single member, the spirit of volunteerism and a deep sense of community. If we are to bring this about we would first need a dramatic change in our collective mentality. We would need to train ourselves to think not just in terms of 'I-Me-Myself' but of a 'We-Us-Ourselves!' But, difficult and almost impossible as this is, if and when this happens we will find ourselves stopping to help the next time we witness an accident on our crowded roads, a fallen tree obstructing traffic, a stranger in our neighbourhood moving around suspiciously, or an unusual object lying unattended in an isolated corner. When this kind of thinking is a reality among us, the next time a terrorist lands on our shores and someone happens to ask them, 'what are you doing?', we will not take 'Mind your own business' for an answer and turn away. We will be committed enough to respond, 'It is my business' both in word and in action. This transformation in our mindsets is not going to come easily. It will first of all require that each of us learns from the Lord to break of oneself and share with the other. We would need to heed the great Eucharistic command he gave us: 'Do this as a memorial of me; as often as you do this (break yourselves for the other) you proclaim the death of

the Lord until he comes!' (1 Cor. 11:26-28). Unless we all stand together, we will fall together in a heap, as happens so often today.

Begin Today - Now

So while we rightfully express our fury with protests, petitions and prayer, we also need to invest in important long-term results. Each of us has to move beyond the romantic idea of democracy as a 'they-will-do-it' agreement and put our shoulders to the hard work of building our democracy - through values of citizenship, volunteerism and community. The world is made strong by its populace. It is people who build a resilient society that rallies round with courage and leadership during times of crisis. The best response to the divisions and disconnectedness in our world is a better understanding and living of what we celebrate in each Eucharist.

It is not as if we do not have any evidence of these three qualities among us today. The real problem is that we do not have enough of them to make a noticeable difference. We do have heroic examples of courageous young people who wouldn't think twice about risking their very lives in order to prevent a woman from being raped or a senior citizen from being waylaid and robbed! But, these tend to be the exceptions to the rule of lethargy and apathy that characterize our approach to life. As long as our own boat is not rocked and our own personal lives aren't at risk, we couldn't care less what happens around us, and who does what doesn't strike us as our business too!

Eucharist Makes the Church

It is said that the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church. This simply

means in practice that the way we celebrate Eucharist shapes the kind of Church we eventually become. If our celebrations are basically self-centred and self-oriented, then why wouldn't we tend to be self-centred the rest of our lives? And when all is said and done, isn't almost all our worship basically to ensure our own happiness now and here-after? The degree of self-concern stands out clearly when any Christian present at Eucharist is asked this simple question: 'When you receive Jesus in Holy Communion, who gets the grace of this sacramental encounter?' Promptly comes the answer, without even the batting of an eyelid, 'Why, me, of course!' They might even think that the one asking such a question is out of his mind!

When these same people are invited to reflect how things work out on the natural level, gradually they begin to see the truth. When one has a meal, the parts of the body directly involved with the act of eating are mainly the eyes, hands, mouth and stomach. Yet, two or three hours after the meal, no one dare say that only these limbs get the nourishment or strength that the food eaten provides - it seems quite natural that the entire body should derive this nourishment. And the reason for this way of thinking too is plain for all to see - the human person is one organic unity and hence what affects one part naturally affects the rest of the body, for better or for worse! But this kind of thinking would hardly be applied to society as a body or unity! If this corporate unity does not apply to the whole of mankind, should it not at least apply to the Church which is rightly called 'the mystical Body of Christ'?

Hadn't Jesus told us emphatically, 'What you do to the least of my brethren you do to me?' And hasn't

the Poet admonished us that 'When the bell tolls do not ask for whom it tolls! For when anyone dies, a part of you dies too!' But in the hurly burly of life, all this seems to be nice rhetoric with little practical consequence. And that is why we pay dearly for our gross negligence every now and then, only to wake up with wails and moans that 'they' into whose hands we invested our security and well-being have failed us again! And after a veritable storm in a teacup, we settle back again to our self-contained living, without having learnt anything worthwhile. Our Eucharists too will continue to be the same - basically petitions that we be granted various material favours which will make our life on earth a heaven.

But Eucharist is a call to action. The heart of the Eucharist is a wake-up call reminding us that the salvation of the world will depend on how much each of us is prepared to 'take the bread' of our daily lives, 'give thanks' for all the blessings we already possess, 'break the bread' of our talents and gifts and offer them to those in need saying 'take and eat this is myself, broken and given for you!' And further, our saying and doing this during the Eucharist doesn't end it all - rather this is only the beginning, the ritual expression of what we commit ourselves to do in life and the pattern of our daily living. And so it is that we step out of the Church, to build the church in our neighbourhood, to be a light to all around us of how people can live in peace and harmony because each of us cares about the quality of life we experience. '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 6:38).□



THE FAMILY THAT SURRENDERS TO CHRIST IN LOVE
Sr. Caroline D'Souza, FMA - General Coordinator of MM Mumbai and
Fr. Cletus D'Souza SDB - Rector, Don Bosco Apostolic School Lonavla

It was at home that we took our first steps in the Faith. As family we attended Mass regularly; besides, Dad's and Mum's active involvement in the church as Legionaries and Eucharistic Ministers, all this and more paved the way for us to be attuned to God when He called. In fact, we grew up in a culture of Faith. Our family was the seed-bed of our Salesian vocation!

The Journey of Caroline and Cletus

While doing my Junior College at St. Xavier's, Dhobitalao, I felt Jesus calling me through the book of 1 Samuel 3: 1-10 "Speak Lord, I am listening." I was stirred ...afraid...I did not know what to do...whom to approach and I began praying daily: "Dear Jesus, help me meet someone who will bring me closer to you!" Over the years as family, we would visit the Shrine of Don Bosco's, Matunga; and in 1979, I had made the novena to Don Bosco with a very special intention of meeting someone who will take me closer to Jesus. When we were at the crossroads of life...I had completed Std. XII and Cletus, Std. VII, and wondering like "Alice in Wonderland" which road to take. God sent us

a wonderful messenger in the person of dear Fr. Oscar Misquitta sdb, who led us both by the hand from St. Francis Xavier's Church, Dabul to Don Bosco's, Matunga, and Auxilium Convent, Wadala. Thus with his inspiration, fatherly guidance and direction we were able to answer the call of God. The Lord had literally heard my prayer and in a mysterious manner, through my younger brother, Cletus, had led Fr. Oscar Misquitta sdb, to our doorstep. By this time I had just completed my exams and was awaiting my results when one day, my brother told us that Fr. Oscar would be visiting our home.

On meeting our parents, he turned to me and asked: "What's your name? What are you doing? Don't you think of becoming a Salesian Sister?" I was shocked... wanting to be a Sister? Yes! But how did this priest know that? And



For further information contact Fr Brian Moras sdb: frbrian@rediffmail.com

a Salesian Sister – what did that mean, ‘Salesian’? He told me not to worry, and that he would take me to the Salesian Sisters at Wadala. It was as simple as that. My Dad was not surprised that I wished to be a Sister for he said that he had always wanted to be a priest but having been the only son of his parents, he could not. Then on he always prayed that some day God may call his daughter or son to be a Sister or a Priest. A few years later when Cletus had to make his final, mature decision to follow Jesus as a Salesian Priest, Dad and Mum’s joy knew no bounds.

We both left home on 15 June 1979 but this called for an immense leap of faith for our dear parents because we had a physically and mentally challenged brother in Cyro . The question often at the back of our minds was: “What would happen if Mum and Dad die?” In simple yet profound faith they replied: “*If God is showing you the green signal, we will never make it red. You just respond to God and God will take care of us.*” With these words of assurance we entered our respective Aspirantates – I after my post-XII went to Katpadi in Tamil Nadu and Cletus entered Std. VIII at Don Bosco’s, Lonavla. Thus began our common search to respond to our Salesian call until the day of our first Profession – an important milestone, which took place on 24 May 1984 in Bangalore and 31 May 1985 in Nashik respectively. Since then Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello have become stars in our family orbit! They continue to be our hope and courage when the going gets tough! In these 25 Silver Years in the service of God and the young, especially girls, I have tangibly experienced

the words of St. Paul, that “God works all things unto good for those that love God” (Romans 8:28).

Our life as Salesians have been joyful and challenging! Varied experiences have formed the tapestry of our lives for which we have no regrets but all we can say is that they have helped us grow in faith and realize in our lives ‘that for those who love God all things truly work together unto good!’ We are deeply grateful to God and to Mary our Mother, for the gift of our precious vocation, and to our dear parents and family. Our infinite thanks to our great Formators in the persons of Sr. Helen Fernandes, Sr. Ethel Rodrigues, Sr. Caroline Fernandes, Fr. Mauro Casarotti, Fr. Joseph Casti, Fr. Cajetan Lobo (Jimmu), Fr. Joaquim D’Souza, Fr. Amarildes Siggay and Fr. Vincent Rasquinha who were tremendous signs of God’s foreseeing love for us! Life with the young has been beautiful and making a difference in their lives has always been our dream. Besides, we always want to be Salesians who are fully human and alive like our Father, Don Bosco and our Cofoundress, Mother Mazzarello!

Mum and Dad, on this your Golden Jubilee of wedded love – 01 May 2010, together we can say that the torch of Faith that you lit in our hearts fifty years ago, burns brighter as we share that faith in our faith-formation ministry, the beacon of Hope yet glows amidst the darkness in our lives and torrents of Love that you showered on us ever so lavishly, keep having a ripple effect...we are happy that our united Salesian journey by God’s Grace is on...and we are still on this beautiful path of Salesian religious life, 25 grace-filled, silvery years the MM/DB way! □

TESTING OUR LIMITS

by Antonio Rudoni

A little crystal ball has a tiny surface area and it is in contact with very little (air or water as the case may be)...which are not part of it. That little crystal ball may consider itself important even though it doesn't realise that it experiences only a miniscule part of reality.

Instead, a larger crystal ball is more aware of what surrounds it and is able to distinguish larger objects that are around it. Similarly, the more a student knows about a subject the more aware he is of things beyond him and so his yearning to research could go on and never end!

This also applies to the saints: the more they know and love God, the more they realize how little they know and love Him. He gives himself completely to us but we are unable to comprehend Him fully while we are on this earth. Down here, the closer we try get to God, the more we realize how far we are from complete union with God! This should not discourage us but make us wonder and wait for that moment when "We shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3, 2).

However, when we don't fervently yearn for Him we are unaware of how great the distance is that separates us from Him, and what is more, we don't even think much of it at all. We are so small and we often think we are so great or so rich (cf. Rev. 3, 14-22; in particular verse 17: "You say: I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing" and in verses 19-20 we have the Lord's reply: "Behold, I

stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.")

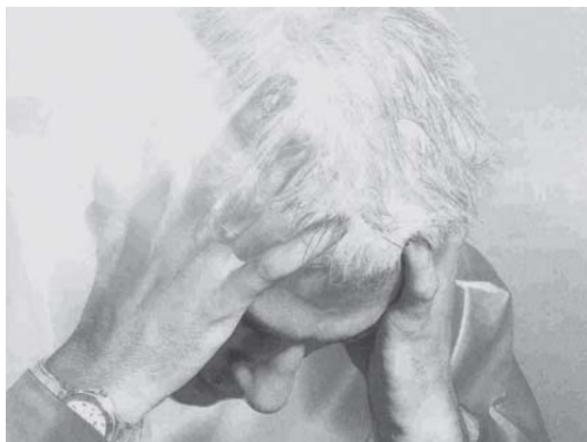
But what if we should encounter suffering in our life-situations? That does happen frequently or maybe we don't speak about the several times that we have been "tested" in various ways; there may have been sickness of many kinds, physical infirmities, psychological ailments, emotional or moral traumas; even grief that simply devastates us.

Reflecting on this so far, I have come to realise - as I never have before - that God really loves me: certainly He hasn't meant any suffering as a punishment, even though I know that I have deserved it many times over, instead all he desires is for me to be happy! Truly, today I am immensely content and even physically I've never felt better.

My life experience corresponds so much to what Sacred Scripture says: "In everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8, 28).

In fact, if a situation is willed by God, born out of his love then He, as a good parent, can only want my greatest happiness! (cf Jn. 10, 10)

If the situation is willed by a spirit of evil it would seek to rob us of our Faith... but if this same situation was willed by God he would most certainly have prevented it, but if he doesn't it is because he doesn't want to lose



Those who have faith in Christ are never "afraid" because if we are united to God, everything works for our good!

the good that would emerge from that situation (such as patience, the offer of forgiveness, etc.). This was Christ's intention when giving us the parable of the weeds and the wheat, where the owner of the field did not immediately harvest the weeds that were sown by his enemy for fear that the good grain would be uprooted (cf Mt 13, 24-30 and 36-43). Jesus himself calls "God's will" even something that he is initially opposed to but something that God "tolerates" only for our benefit. Just think of Passion of Our Lord when He pleads with His Father "not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) He knew that He had to suffer for the wickedness of many, but also knew that the Father allowed Him to suffer the injustice of His enemies and so reach the Resurrection that would be promised to all those who were united to Him.

Therefore, those who have faith in Christ are never "afraid" of

anything! We are protected by an ironclad guarantee! Let us often tell ourselves: if we are united to God, everything works for our good!

Psychologically, however, it is normal for us to be afraid in the presence of pain. Even Jesus experienced sadness and anguish in the Garden when he had a glimpse of His future torment. (cf. Mt 26, 37) Indeed, psychology is not dependent on my reasoning or my Faith!

Therefore I should not feel guilty or confused because I am afraid: these fears come not from my spirit or my free will, they come from my body and my human condition. However, I will experience a certain "psychological serenity" when I think of the Lord and in those difficult moments it will serve us well. Then, in His presence I will be able to say: "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother's breast." (Ps. 131, 2)

In conclusion: We are great when we accept these situations as gifts from God. Then we become aware of our limitations and we try to overcome them (always gracefully). The humbler we are the more we become aware of our limitations and therefore "to those who have given more and will be given and to the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Mt 13, 12). When we recognize our littleness before God we are already on the road that leads to heaven! □

walking with the Church



Mary, Ark of the Covenant, The Apparitions of Our Lady

from St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *Why, in the Litany of Loreto, is Our Lady called 'Ark of the Covenant?'*

A. Thank you for your question. The Old Testament of the Bible tells us that Moses and the Israelites built the Ark of the Covenant to house the tablets of the Decalogue, i.e. the tablets on which were written the ten commandments (Ex 25: 8-16). The Lord instructed His People to also place manna that He had given them in the desert on the Ark (Ex 16:32-35). Centuries later, when King Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant signified the Presence of God.

The Fathers of the Church, who were steeped in the Bible, after prayerfully reflecting on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in salvation history, acclaimed her as the Ark of the Covenant. They saw the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament as a type of the Blessed Mother. The first Ark contained the Law of the Old Covenant and signified the presence of God for the Jewish People while Our Lady conceived,

carried in her womb for nine months, and gave birth to her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. God was present in her, just as God, for the Jews, was present in the Ark of the Covenant.

Q. *Our Lady is reported to have appeared in many places in the world, Lourdes being the most famous of these. My question is (1) are people cured at these places and (2) why are people asked to do penance and to pray so much?*

A. Miracles have been reported at many of the Shrines of Our Lady around the world. Lourdes is exceptional in that the Catholic Church has officially recognized 67 miracles and 7000 inexplicable cures at Lourdes since the Blessed Virgin appeared there in 1858. All of these were analysed scientifically before being accepted as cures.

Prayer and penance are an integral part of a good Christian life and are mentioned in many of the places where Our Lady is reported to have appeared. This follows on Our Lord's repeated mention of the need for prayer and penance in our lives. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. THERESE COUDERC (1805 - 1885) LIKE SIMPLE FLOWERS

with contributions from the Monks of St. Joseph's Abbey, Flaviigny

"Our souls must be at Our Lord's feet like these humble and simple flowers are at the foot of the mountains... I ask God that we never do anything for show, but do our good in the shadows, always seeing ourselves as the littlest ones in the Church of God." These words from Saint Therese Couderc, the foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cenacle, reveal her own life, a hidden life of stunning humility.

Marie- Victoire Couderc was born on February 1, 1805 in the hamlet of Sablières, a village in the Ardèche (France), into a family of neither the nobility nor the peasantry. On Mas, their vast estate, they led a peaceful but hard-working life. The parents were committed to providing their ten children with a good Catholic education. Madame Couderc did not balk at getting up very early to go to Mass twice a week. When they were still quite young, the two eldest children, Jean and Marie-Victoire, began to feel the first touch of God's call. The still recent stories of the persecution of priests and religious during the Terror strengthened their ardent desire to

give themselves to God.

At the end of March 1825, a mission was given in Sablières, at which Marie-Victoire met Father Jean-Pierre-Etienne Terme, a missionary priest. She confided to him her desire to become a nun. A few months later, Father Terme received her into the novitiate at Aps, a house that he had founded for the formation of nuns dedicated to teaching in rural areas. Marie-Victoire took the name Sister Therese. At this time, Father Terme was organizing a pilgrimage to St. Francis Regis' tomb in La Louvesc. One day, the thought came to him to establish a house to receive women who were on pilgrimage, to avoid many scandals. At the time, the local innkeepers lodged pilgrims of both sexes in the same rooms. He had a building constructed and placed there three religious from the novitiate in Aps: Sister Agnes, Sister Therese and Sister Regis. In spite of her youth (she was twenty-three), Sister Therese was named Superior. The nuns of La Louvesc would have a double role: in the winter, they would attend to teaching in the

countryside, while in the summer, they would devote themselves to welcoming female pilgrims.

A Profound Impression

In 1828, Father Terme made an Ignatian retreat that marked him deeply. On his return to La Louvesc, he preached a retreat for the Sisters and announced that from then on, Saint Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises would be given to the female pilgrims received in their house. Soon, the number of retreatants became considerable.

After Father Terme's death in December 1834, the work of the retreats was entrusted to the Jesuit Fathers. Soon, Father Terme's daughters separated into two congregations—the teachers would call themselves the "Sisters of Saint Regis," and those who took care of the retreats, the "Sisters of the Cenacle."

Merciful Purposes

On October 23, 1838, an incorrect financial report written by a scheming Sister, led the Bishop of Viviers, Bishop Bonnel, to doubt the abilities of Mother Therese. He relieved her of her duties and put in her place a novice in whom he had great hopes, conferring on her the title of "Foundress Superior!"... The humiliation was profound for Mother Therese. But the conviction grew in her that God's will for her life would be realized through the effacement of her own person, and she accepted her removal from office to live in obscurity. For her, humility was not an end in itself but a privileged means of uniting oneself deeply with God and being a docile

instrument of His most holy will. This attitude proceeds from a certainty of faith. "We must confess and believe," Mother Therese would write, "that everything God does is done well, and moreover that He always has merciful purposes in all He ordains or allows... Everything that comes from the good Master is good like He is."

The new Superior, who had not the slightest idea of religious life, remained in charge for only a few months, because soon, in the face of the disarray that she brought to the house, the bishop understood that she had to be replaced. Under the influence of Mother Therese, the community elected Mother Contenet, who thought it fitting to relegate the true foundress, still only thirty-five years old, to the lowest rank. She often humiliated her, even in front of the novices who, outdoing this example, ridiculed this woman who was no longer anything in the house that she had founded. The Sisters who witnessed these humiliations were astonished at Mother Therese's docility. Sister Regis would say, "For a long time she was responsible for the cellar and the garden, weeding and watering like a little servant." She was kept at a distance from everything, continually kept busy at jobs that left her separated from recreations.

A More Intense Suffering

In the midst of these trials, Mother was careful not to become angry. Sometimes she spoke the simple words: "That's fine," then, lowering her eyes, she took up her work again or went away with her habitual calm. A piece of advice given to a sister reveals to us the

fundamental disposition of her soul: "To console Our Lord, often tell Him: 'Give me the grace to love being scorned, and so resemble you a little...'"

Yet Mother's interior battles transpired in these words: "We must always be ready to accept in advance everything that the Lord allows or ordains. Only in this spirit can one find rest or peace... I am ashamed of my weakness and above all, of my lack of virtue, I who receive the cross grudgingly when it draws near."

The Fruit of Humility

In 1842, Mother Therese was sent to a new foundation in Lyons. For almost eighteen months, alone with one sister, she fulfilled the lowest duties in an unsanitary house. But Providence used her to purchase another property located close to the sanctuary of Fourviere, and much more suitable for holding retreats. Then she returned to obscurity for several years, most of which were spent in Lyons. However, after the death of Mother Contenet in 1852, a serious crisis erupted in the house established in Paris. Mother Therese was sent there and, by dint of patience and prayers, she managed to redress the situation. In November 1856, she was named Superior in Tournon to prepare the sale of the house there owned by the Congregation. Her time as superior, which lasted several months, can be summed up in one word: kindness. Kindness, the expression of charity, seems to flow from the practice of humility.

After her stay in Tournon, Mother Therese returned to La Louvesc, then to Lyons. On October 20, 1859, a Jesuit Father gave a retreat to the

Sisters that touched her deeply.

Offering Ourselves Up

Toward the end of August 1860, Mother Therese was sent to the house in Montpellier where she had an intense illumination. In the years that followed, the Good Lord granted Mother Therese many graces of prayer and lights on her own nothingness and on the divine Holiness, such as this one: "All of a sudden, I saw written, as in letters of gold, the word 'Goodness' ...I saw it written on all creatures animate and inanimate, rational or not... I then understood that all the good in creatures, and all the services and aid we receive from each of them, are a benefit that we owe to the Goodness Who communicated to them something of His infinite Goodness, so that we might encounter it in everything and everywhere."

"I will follow You without this!"

In 1867, the Cenacle in Montpellier was closed, and the Mother Foundress returned to Lyons. For several years, God led her on the path of participating in Jesus' agony in Gethsemane.

During her last years, Mother Therese spent her time in a straw armchair doing various tasks as she prayed silently.

At the start of 1885, Mother Therese fainted and was unconscious for several hours.

After a difficult agony, Mother Therese peacefully rendered her soul to God on September 26, 1885, at the age of eighty. The pilgrim to La Louvesc can see her body there, still intact, apparently simply asleep, her face radiating calm and serenity. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Allergy Medicine

During a revival, the visiting evangelist arrived without his allergy medicine.

Our pastor put him in touch with a doctor in our church for an emergency prescription to get him through the week. The evangelist was so appreciative of the doctor that during the last service, he recommended the doctor to the entire crowd. The ensuing laughter was a mystery to him until after the service.

That was when the host pastor informed him that he had just recommended the local OB-GYN.

Planting Time

A prisoner in jail received a letter from his wife: "I have decided to plant some vegetables in the back garden. When is the best time to plant them?"

The prisoner, knowing that the prison guards read all mail, replied in a letter: "Dear wife, whatever you do, do not touch the back garden. That is where I hid all the money."

A week or so later, he received another letter from his wife: "You won't believe what happened. Some men came with shovels to the house and dug up all the back garden."

The prisoner wrote another letter: "Dear wife, now is the best time to plant the vegetables."

Laundry Comments

A young couple moves into a new neighborhood.

The next morning while they are eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbour hanging the wash outside.

"That laundry is not very clean," she said. "She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap." Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbour would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments.

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband: "Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?"

The husband said, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."

School Notes

The following notes from parents excusing their children from attending school have been around a while but if you haven't seen them, I'm sure you will get a kick out of them:

"Please excuse Freddie from being away yesterday because he had the fuel."

"Please excuse Michael from being absent on January 30 because he was aleing."

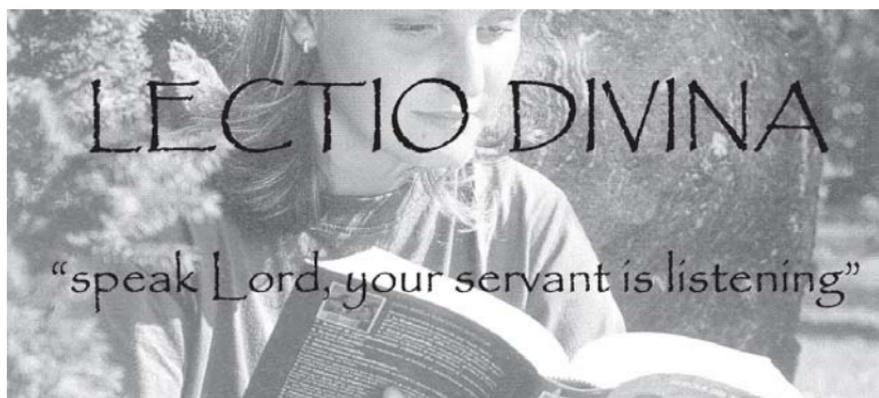
"George was absent yesterday because of a sore trout."

"Please excuse Betsey from being absent. She was sick and I had her shot."

"Joseph has been absent becuz he had two teeth taken off his face."

"My son is under doctor's care and should not take fysical education. Please execute him."

"Please excuse Ralph from school on Friday. He had very loose vowels." □



GOD'S SPEECH OR GOD SPEAKS?

by Fr. Stefano Martoglio

What is the Word of God? What is “Lectio Divina”? We talk about it so much but most often it’s very unclear. For this reason, here is a three-step ‘guide’ – though profound it is especially meant to help youth.

All that we have been given primarily is our Faith. Though it is an objective reality necessary for our spiritual growth it takes over our very lives. *“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”* (Jn. 16, 12-15) One of the hints that should help our growth in the Faith is precisely the Word of God. Let us begin with a single consideration: the Word is not given to me personally or directly by God. It is the Church that gives me the Word of God. “For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts

as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they have God as their author” (*Dei Verbum*, III, 11).

A Little Used Gift

So, what is the “*Lectio Divina*”? There is so much spoken of it. “From the very beginning” in Church circles it was referred to as the “lectio.” In the first place it is important to note that the “lectio” is food that nourishes. The second thing that seems to be the other side of the coin, though unfortunate, is that quite a few people are unfamiliar with the Bible. The Bible is one of those gifts that we hardly use in everyday life. What is more, a copy that was presented to a youngster at his Confirmation has never been opened. We might add something that is not fiction: for many of us

our familiarity with the Word of God is at best very scant and the texts we know are very few considering that they are the Word of God that we ought to love! This expression might most certainly make us smile: 'to love' God's Word? But of course, we do love it. Do you remember 'registered' letters that were given a



priority? So, why does the "Word" coming from God not receive the same priority? I think we should reflect on this fact for a moment. Why not put yourself in the presence of God? Now just reflect: Everyone must live by (or for) something... all of us do. If we don't live for something then we live for something else. Each day, we Christians are presented with copious doses of the Word of God to nourish us. Listen to what the Prophet Ezekiel says. What do you think of it: *And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."* So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. *And he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.* (Ez. 3, 1-4)

A Love Letter

Think of a lover, out of sheer love, writes a letter to his/her beloved. The beloved receives it, goes through it carefully, studies it, notes the points, discovers the mistakes, the poor punctuation which may or may not even exist altogether. Then he/she replies! Seen from the point of view of the Bible - when you receive a letter

that's so perfect what can you say? You ask for the motive of the lover... why does s/he love you so much. That's perhaps what we do with the Word of God. Instead of seeing the love contained in those lines we've done a complete dissection of the Word and what is worse we have completely forgotten the message contained therein. Look, instead, at what the Prophet Hosea tells us about the love contained in the Word of God for each of us: *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Ba'als and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down and fed them... My people are bent on turning away from me; so they are appointed to the yoke, and none shall remove it. How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim. My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender.* (Hos. 11,1-4,7-9).□

DEDICATED TO
THE HOLY SHROUD

Quiet

THE IMAGE OF GOD US FROM THE HOLY SHROUD

by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

On Sunday evening, 2 May, the Holy Father went to the Cathedral of Turin and before the solemnly exposed Shroud where he gave this Meditation.

Dear Friends:

I take this opportunity to share with you a brief meditation inspired by the subtitle of this solemn Exposition: "The Mystery of Holy Saturday."

One could say that the Shroud is the Icon of this mystery, the Icon of Holy Saturday. Indeed, it is a winding-sheet that was wrapped round the body of a man who was crucified, corresponding in every way to what the Gospels tell us of Jesus, who was crucified at about noon, died at about three o'clock in the afternoon. At nightfall, since it was *Parasceve*, that is, the eve of Holy Saturday, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and authoritative member of the Sanhedrin, courageously asked Pontius Pilate for permission to bury Jesus in his new tomb which he had had hewn out in the rock not far from Golgotha.

From that moment, Jesus remained in the tomb until dawn of the day after the Sabbath was chronologically brief (about a day and a half), but immense, infinite in its value and in its significance.

Dear brothers and sisters, in our time, especially after having lived through the past century, humanity has become particularly sensitive to the mystery of Holy Saturday. The concealment of God is part of contemporary man's spirituality.

After the two World Wars; the lagers and the gulags, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, our epoch has become - increasingly - a Holy Saturday: this day's darkness challenges all who are wondering about life and it challenges us believers in particular. We too have something to do with this darkness.

Holy Saturday is a "no man's land" between the death and the Resurrection, but this "no man's land" was entered by One, the Only One, who passed through it with the signs of his Passion for man's sake: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis*. And the Shroud speaks to us precisely about this moment - testifying exactly to that unique and unrepeatable interval in the history of humanity and the universe in which God, in Jesus Christ, not only shared our dying but also our remaining in death - the most radical solidarity.

In this "time-beyond-time," Jesus Christ "descended to the dead". What do these words mean? They mean that God, having made himself man, reached the point of



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OD THAT RIPPED ANDS OF DEATH

Pope Benedict XVI

entering man's most extreme and absolute solitude, where not a ray of love enters, where total abandonment reigns without any word of comfort: "hell."

We have all, at some point, felt the frightening sensation or abandonment, and that is what we fear most about death, just as when we were children we were afraid to be alone in the dark and could only be reassured by the presence of a person who loved us.

Well, this is exactly what happened on Holy Saturday: the voice of God resounded in the realm of death. The unimaginable occurred: namely, Love penetrated "hell." Even in the extreme darkness of the most absolute human loneliness we may hear a voice that calls us and find a hand that

takes ours and leads us out. Human beings live because they are loved and can love; and if love even penetrated the realm of death, then life also even reached there. In the hour of supreme solitude we shall never be alone: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis.* (The suffering of Christ is the suffering of humanity)

This is the mystery of Holy Saturday!

This is the power of the Shroud: from the face of this "Man of sorrows," who carries with him the passion of man of every time and every place, our passions too, our sufferings, our difficulties and our sins - *Passio Christi.*

Passio hominis - from this face a solemn majesty shines, a paradoxical lordship. This face, these hands and these feet, this side, this whole body speaks. How does the Shroud speak? It speaks with blood, and blood is life! The Shroud is an Icon written in blood; the blood of a man who was scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and whose right side was pierced. The Image impressed upon the Shroud is that of a dead man, but the blood speaks of his life. Every trace of blood speaks of love and of life - especially that huge stain near the rib, made by the blood and water that flowed copiously from a great wound inflicted by the tip of a Roman spear. That blood and that water speak of life. It is like a spring that murmurs in the silence, and we can hear it, we can listen to it in the silence of Holy Saturday.

Dear friends, let us always praise the Lord for his faithful and merciful love. When we leave this holy place, may we carry in our eyes the image of the Shroud, may we carry in our hearts this word of love and praise God with a life full of faith, hope and charity. Thank you. □



poster for
of the shroud

Short Story

BRING ME BACK A ROCK

by Adrienne C. Reynolds

*Man is harder than rock and more fragile than an egg.
~Yugoslav Proverb*

Seven years have gone by now, yet in my mind's eye I can still vividly recall every detail as if it happened yesterday. Your small round face, never quite clean enough, stringy blond bangs hanging over sad brown eyes. Clothes always wrinkled and too small on your bony shoulders, and sockless feet inside worn-out sneakers with no shoelaces. You maintained an almost invisible identity, always fearful of others who whispered as you walked by and nicknamed you "ragmuffin."

Having a daughter your exact age made my heart ache for you even more. What if I couldn't afford the things for my little girl that your parents couldn't provide for you and your five brothers and sisters? I wanted to do something to help but I didn't know how or what I could do. Besides, I was just your teacher. And then from out of nowhere it hit me — that's what I can do. Along with teaching you reading and maths and spelling, I'll teach you some everyday skills that might improve the quality of your life and other people's perception of you.

First I had to reverse your self-induced disappearing act and make you visible again. Others needed to see the real you, a seven-year-old boy who didn't always behave himself but who always said he was sorry when he didn't. I brought to school a grooming bag complete with soap, towel, comb,

toothbrush and toothpaste and discreetly sent you to the boys' room every morning to get cleaned up. I appealed to my friends who had little boys to give me their hand-me-down clothes and shoes. Sneaking crackers into your backpack for snack time and secretly paying for you to have "doubles" in the school cafeteria became everyday rituals.

Our classroom became your home away from home, your safe haven, a place where you could escape and be a child, at least for a little while. Then at 3:00 PM the dismissal bell would ring. And like the midnight gong that interrupted Cinderella's dance at the ball, I gave you a goodbye hug and smile and sent you back to your world. The world where, hopefully unlike what happened to Cinderella, I prayed you wouldn't change back into a ragamuffin.

I worried about you all the time, even on the weekends. I remember one cool, crisp North Carolina Saturday morning, right before the weather turned cold; my daughter and I went out shopping for her new winter coat. This was an annual battle we had engaged in since she was four years old. For me the perfect winter coat had to be long and wool and thick enough to shield her from the winds that got bitter cold from the months of December to March. An attached hood would also be nice,

since leaving home wearing a cap didn't necessarily mean she'd come home with it.

In her eyes, the perfect winter coat had only one requirement. It had to be pink. After many hours and hundreds of try-ons we finally found a coat we could both agree on. It was long, thick, hooded, and yes, it was pink.

Filled with a sense of accomplishment, all I wanted to do was pay for the coat and hurry home to curl up on the couch with a good movie or book. Instead, for reasons beyond my understanding, I grabbed the pink coat in one hand and my daughter's hand in the other and said, "Now we have to go to the boys department and buy a coat for Johnnie."

That's what life was like for us during the two years I was your teacher. But it was worth it. Things were definitely looking up for you. You gained weight, you smiled more and you even began to risk raising your hand in class to answer questions. You trusted me enough to know I would always lead you to the correct answer. But your trust in others was still a little shaky and it was time to fix that, especially since you would be promoted to the next grade and you weren't going to be my student next year.

I began to plan partner projects and group activities that required you to communicate with your classmates and work as a team. At first, you refused to work with anyone else but me and you even got mad at me when I insisted you work with someone else. But with a lot of time and a lot of coaxing you eventually started to relax and have trust in your peers.

That is until one cool breezy fall

day in November, the last school day before the Thanksgiving holiday. The classroom buzzed with the electricity of children hardly able to contain their excitement. All they could think about were the intriguing adventures awaiting them over the holiday. By afternoon, with only one more hour of school, no one was in the mood for learning. So I ditched the video of *The First Thanksgiving*, which they had seen every November since kindergarten, and instead decided to have a sharing time where everyone got a chance to tell about their plans for the upcoming holiday.

You sat in your usual place, right next to me, and listened while your peers told about cruises to the Bahamas, trips to Disneyland and visits to Grandma in New York and other faraway places. With no one else left to share, I turned to you and asked, "Johnnie, would you like to tell us what you're doing over the Thanksgiving holiday?"

"Yes," you said proudly. "I'm going to Kernersville to visit my aunt." The words were barely out of your mouth when the class erupted with laughter. Everyone knew Kernersville, about twenty minutes outside of Winston-Salem, was nowhere special to go. You froze in embarrassment and began to retreat back inside yourself.

I rushed to your rescue, "REALLY!" I yelled out over the laughter. "Would you bring me back-a-a-rock," I stuttered. "I could really use a nice rock." The room became perfectly still with an uncomfortable silence as you silently nodded, "Yes, Mrs.

Reynolds.”

Thanksgiving break, like all vacations, ended much too soon. Children returned to school with stories, pictures and items to share, each child trying to outdo the other with tall tales and embellished stories. This time I knew better than to put the spotlight on you and ask you to share, but without warning you stood up and began to slowly walk to the front of the room. The shock and fear I felt for you made me hold my breath so hard, I believe my heart actually skipped a beat. For a moment you just stood there looking down at your feet and then without saying a word, you reached into your coat pocket and pulled out a rock. A rock washed and polished until it shined like a new penny, a rock just small enough for two tiny trembling hands to hold. A rock that neither you nor I could possibly know would change our hearts forever.

The entire class silently awaited my reaction. They were obviously confused and taking their cues from me on how to react. “WOW!” I said, reaching out with the kind of hands used to hold a newborn infant or something priceless and delicate. “It’s absolutely perfect. This is exactly the kind of rock I was hoping for. Please tell us all about it.”

Hesitantly, you began to tell about the rock — where you found it — why you chose it. With every word, your voice grew stronger and your stance grew taller. At long last, all eyes and ears belonged to you. At the conclusion of your share, classmates applauded with enthusiasm and someone yelled out, “Johnnie, YOU ROCK.” I watched you like a proud mother bird watches her baby bird take

flight for the very first time. I knew it was time to let you go.

Finally, you had found your wings and it was time for you to soar.

Needless to say I received many rocks that year. So many that we began a classroom rock collection. Some rocks came from volcanic mountains and underground canyons. Other rocks came from local restaurants or a relative’s backyard. Every rock had a story and earned another pushpin on the map. By the end of the school year the class had collected nearly fifty rocks and had learned more about the world and themselves than any number of books could have ever taught them. Students from other classrooms came to know us as the rock experts and you, Johnnie, you were the rock master.

As fate would have it, your family moved away that summer and left no forwarding address. So I never got to see you again or say goodbye. But the rock tradition continues. Every year I tell the story of “bring me back a rock” to my new class of students. I tell them that all rocks from previous class collections are boxed up and put away except for the rock inside this clear plastic cube. This rock has a permanent place on my desk and in my heart. As I hold up the rock I explain that it may look ordinary and insignificant but it’s by far the most precious rock of them all. This rock represents love, courage and acceptance of others. It is the very rock that started it all and it was given to me by someone who will always be near and dear to my heart.

Thanks Johnnie, and wherever you are, “bring me back a rock.” □

VIRTUES IN THE YOUNG

by Gianni Asti (T/A:ID)

Don Bosco expects us elders to advise youngsters with the same advice that he gave to help them uproot from their lives those bad habits that so easily take control of their souls.

Of course there are some habits and tendencies like sports, music, theatre and the arts that must be cultivated. Youngsters should strive to excel in them. Don Bosco knew the art of discovering these traits in his boys and he helped them to develop them. That was why music, games, song and theatre flourished in his institutions. He also knew how to nurture in their young minds and hearts a great love for God and for the salvation of their souls. He did this by making them appreciate the opportunities to do good to their companions or those who were sick in body or depressed in spirit.

Sowing a wind and reaping a whirlwind

Listen to what Don Bosco says concerning evil tendencies that take hold of the souls of youngsters:

"Holy Scripture also says: *When they sow the wind they shall reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8, 7)*. Wind symbolizes the passions; if you allow budding passions to dominate you now, they, like weeds, if not uprooted, will grow and, I can assure you, will arouse storms and tempests in your heart. For heavens sake, never let any passion take root. Remember that the strong passions which dominate men that make them commit so many evil and wicked



ADVICE TO HIS BOYS

DON BOSCO'S

deeds were not always strong and violent. They were once insignificant, but they grew little by little. When passions begin to show up in a boy and he makes no effort to control them, but instead says, "Oh! They don't amount to anything," I fear. It is true that they are not violent yet, they are like weeds that have barely sprouted, but if they are left there, they will grow and flourish. The harmless cub grows into a fierce lion; the cute little bear cub into a frightful bear; the cuddly-looking tiger kitten into the most ferocious animal of all.

What I have said applies to every passion. But above all, I beg of you to tear from your hearts everything that is contrary to the beautiful virtue of purity. It may be a mere trifle, but one can never be too careful in protecting this beautiful virtue. On the other hand, the contrary vice is so bad a seed that if it is allowed to grow it is fatal. Be reserved in your looks, your deportment, your conversation and

in everything. (EBM XI 233-234)

We will revisit this virtue, so precious in a teenager's life and for his future; it is also a virtue that is much threatened today. As educators and parents we find it so difficult to protect our youngsters who have already been bombarded by the media. We should not be surprised, because for years we've been subjected to sexual perversion, pornography and violent images in our newspapers and magazines.

We could take up that discussion but for now we will follow Don Bosco's plan to preface this virtue with obedience. This virtue indicates how a youngster should live in relation to his teachers and parents.

Obedience: The First Virtue in a Youngster

While talking to his boys Don Bosco once told them:

"You're asking me if obedience is an important virtue. Yes, the virtue of obedience contains and embraces and preserves all the other virtues so that you may not be lost, says St. Gregory the Great. Exercising the virtue of Obedience makes us more grateful to God for all the gifts he has bestowed on us, freedom being the greatest of them all. Now, when obeying we are sacrificing our free will, subjecting ourselves to the will of another. Our will is our most precious gift and when we do this we are most pleasing to God." (MB 6, 14-15).

When speaking of prompt, cheerful and bold obedience he added:

"The easiest way is this: to see God's Will in all that our superiors command us and in all that befalls us in our life Obedience is the key to all the virtues. We are obedient

and we have the patience, love and purity, which especially is the prize of humility. Do you want to be happy always? Be obedient... do you want to advance in holiness and head for heaven? Be faithful and obey in even the smallest things." (EBM 7, 152)

Perhaps in trying to help his boys to reflect on the virtue of obedience he recalled the resolutions he made at his First Communion and this was reported in his *Memoirs*:

"From that day I seemed to have become a little better. Earlier I felt a great reluctance to obey, to accept the decisions of others. I always had something to say about a command or a piece of advice given to me."

Guides on life's journey

Therefore his reflections were the fruit of his experience. His first recommendation was that a boy should be docile to the one whom the Lord sends to him as his guide. "My dear boys, even though a sapling is placed in good soil in a garden, if it takes one bad turn it will end up deformed if it is not cultivated, so to speak, or guided. It will tend to evil unless it allows itself to be guided by those who seek the good of his soul. You have this guide in the person of your parents or those who take their place. You should humbly obey them. "Honour your father and your mother and you will have a long life in the land," says the Lord.

But what does 'honour' mean? It means to obey, to respect those who are in charge of you. So, when you are asked to do something you do so promptly without showing any reluctance or revealing any displeasure like grumbling, shrugging, shaking your head...or what is worse even insulting. This

behaviour hurts the parent and offends God himself since it is the parents that express the will of God. Though Our Saviour was omnipotent he had to be taught obedience in everything by being subject to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. He had to be a humble carpenter. Being obedient to his Heavenly Father he even accepted his agony and the cross. He was obedient up to his death on the cross.

You must also show great respect to your father and mother and not take anything without permission nor express any impatience in their presence... or with their defects... You have to learn to give your parents a hand with domestic chores when you are able, much more than just giving them money. You should lend a hand and do whatever they ask. You also have a solemn duty to pray for your parents at your morning or evening prayer that God grant them both spiritual and temporal consolations.

Just as I told you about Obedience and respect for your parents, you

must also respect your ecclesiastical superiors, your secular superiors and therefore your teachers because everything they do is done for your benefit and by your obedience to your superiors you are following the example of Jesus and Mary" (From *Il Giovane Provveduto - The Companion of Youth*).

A boy's natural guides are his parents who are assisted by his educators, teachers, youth workers and those who assist him in his recreational and spiritual activities etc. It was to the confessor that Don Bosco reserved a special role. He is to be the boy's spiritual guide and the boy must have the utmost confidence in him. You might remember Francis Piccollo who was found in the church of the Consolata in Turin trying to find a confessor other than Don Bosco. He did not want to hurt the feelings of Don Bosco who would be distressed if he heard that Francis stole some bread. This was what Don Bosco told him in the confessional in that church, "*Don Bosco prefers your trust and your confidence.*" □



NEWSBITS

POLAND

Poland's Catholic Church is remembering its 3,000 Catholic priests killed during World War II, under Communist rule and in mission territories with a book entitled 'The Priest's Vow', listing the names of the dead that has been presented to the Black Madonna at Jasna Gora Marian Shrine.

The presentation by Polish priests was the highlight of a pilgrimage for priests held from 30 April to May 1 to the shrine of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa, as part of events for the Year of Priests, *Fides* reports.

The book also contains the names of seminarians killed in similar circumstances.



*Martyred Polish Priest
Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko
was beatified by Pope Benedict
on June 6, 2010*

wikimedia commons photo

The priests presented the Blessed Virgin Mary with a special urn containing earth from the place where the Polish priests were persecuted and killed.

The pilgrimage included a prayer vigil in the Chapel of the Black Madonna at Jasna Gora and a Priests' Prayer in the Cathedral of the Holy Family of Nazareth, in Czestochowa, with the participation of about 50 Polish Bishops and 3,000 priests.

Among those present were Cardinal Claudio Hummes, who made a vibrant appeal in his homily to the priests of Poland, urging them to carry the Gospel to all the different areas of social life and cultural environments: "You must go to families, to work places, to schools, to university environments, you must seek out those who have no faith."

NEW YORK

Archbishop Mitsuaki Takami of Nagasaki, Japan was an unborn child in his mother's womb on August 9, 1945, when the second atomic bomb obliterated his hometown. The blast killed about 75,000 people and brought an end to World War II.

On May 2, the day before he was to take a joint message from himself and Bishop Joseph Atsumi Misue of Hiroshima to the United Nations to call on world leaders to "take a courageous step toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons", the archbishop brought perhaps one of the most compelling artifacts of Nagasaki's inferno to St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he concelebrated

Mass.

The scorched head of Mary is all that remains of the statue that had once graced the main altar of Nagasaki's Urakami Cathedral before it was destroyed in the blast.

The month-long UN Review Conference of Parties to the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* began May 3.

"We as the bishops of the Catholic Church of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the only country to have suffered nuclear attacks, demand that the president of the United States, the Japanese government and the leaders of other countries make utmost efforts to abolish nuclear weapons," the statement reads in part.

"How sad and foolish it is to abuse the progress that humanity has made in the fields of science and technology in order to destroy lives as massively and swiftly as possible," it adds.

As a first step, the Japanese prelates called upon U.S. President Barack Obama to establish a policy of "sole purpose", which would "limit the purpose of retaining nuclear weapons to deterring others from using such weapons only".

Archbishop Takami said he hoped the statue would focus attention on the enormous destructive power and inhumanity of nuclear weapons and on the importance of working toward their elimination. The partial bust exudes a haunting and tortured beauty; the eye sockets black and empty like the eyes of those who gazed into the fury of the initial flash.

"My message in bringing the statue is to ask, through the



Archbishop Joseph Mitsuki Takami of Nagasaki. Right: The remains of the statue of Our Lady that survived the bombing of Nagasaki

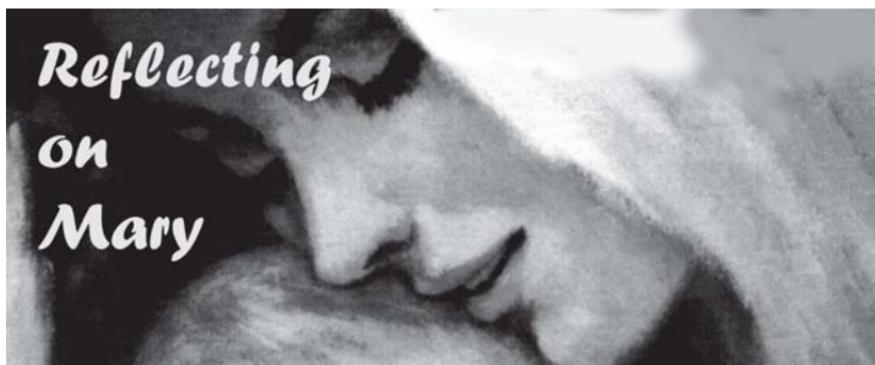
intercession of Mary that such weapons no longer be used, that we work for peace," he told Catholic New York, the archdiocesan newspaper through an interpreter after a Japanese-language Mass on May 2 this year for New York's Japanese Catholic community at St. John the Evangelist Church.

"Too many (of these) weapons exist," he said. "First we have to abolish all these weapons to eliminate the danger of war. And then there are many things to do."

Archbishop Takami has more than a purely spiritual or philosophical rationale for seeking the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Nagasaki blast claimed the lives of two of his aunts and his grandmother. A cousin died 14 years after the war from bomb-related illnesses.

He was born on March 6, 1946, and raised in the long shadow cast by Nagasaki's mushroom cloud. "My mother spoke about it, but not so many times," he recalled.

"Because she didn't want to speak about it. Her experience was so sad." CNS □



THE PASSION OF CHRIST AND THE SORROWS OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

by Fr. Benedict D. O'Cinnsealaigh

While the international media attempted to make the "movie" about Mel Gibson, only Catholic and Christian media understood that the issue was not Gibson, but Christ. Christian media asked the real question: How does Mel Gibson's movie help us to better understand Christ?

Before its general release, most of the seminarians at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary of the West, Cincinnati, had already seen the movie. Their reactions were: "incredible," "amazing," "tremendous," "unforgettable," "violent," - "passionate," "outstanding," "convincing," "moving" and "breathtaking." All were moved by what they saw. All spoke of tears and silence. "Father," one seminarian said, "When we saw the movie, the theater was filled with priests, there was not a dry eye in the house." It seemed to be an

observable fact, when the movie ended, people departed in silence.

These reactions convey that the "movie" communicated something of Christ's meaning and message. Surely, this was Mel Gibson's purpose. By approaching it from the perspective of his-own, personal faith, the movie develops into evangelization, not mere entertainment. While Gibson seeks to be true to the historical text of the Gospels, (occasionally taking some poetic license to emphasize spiritual realities), eagerly he draws out the spiritual, mystical, and theological meaning of these events to explain the fundamental meaning of the Lord's Passion. The violence of the scourging, the weight of the cross, the mocking of the Roman troops, and the nailing of Jesus to the cross, on one level, present

the brutality of man, while at the same time, emphasizes the depth of Christ's love for the Father and His absolute resolve to save God's children. The savage brutality of the Roman soldiers, their constant mocking, jeering and vindictive taunting of Jesus is so effective that I found myself saying audibly: "Leave him alone, can't you see He can't go on?" And yet, Mel did go on. He walked, staggered, fell and crawled all the way to his place of execution.

After seeing the film, it struck me that Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of The Christ*, is not a movie in the traditional sense. What Mel Gibson has produced is a cinematic meditation on Christ's Passion. What's the difference? A movie can be a number of things; it can simply be the telling of a story, an escape, a fantasy, or it can be reflective. Even when movies purport to be educational they almost always intend to entertain. Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ* is not intended to be simple entertainment or education. Gibson's meditation evangelizes and intends to communicate a message. Gibson wants the viewer to understand, not only what Jesus did for us, but also why Jesus suffered.

One of the most important lines Gibson puts into the mouth of Jesus are words, which appear at the end of the Book of Revelation, that speak about the new creation. This happens during the encounter between Jesus and his mother as Jesus carries the cross to the place of execution. Encountering mother by the side of the road, He looks at her, a pitiful figure, and says: "Mother! Look! I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5) After the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ,



nothing is the same. All things are made new. Sin and death no longer bind humanity. Through Christ there is an alternative-life in Christ.

Mary in the Passion

The use of "flash-back" scenes to provide context and insight for the film is particularly meritorious. Gibson's innate Catholicism and Marian devotion is apparent throughout the production. Throughout the film, a portrait of Mary is woven into the ministry and life of Christ. In this, Gibson, advised by a "cohort" of Catholic theologians, hits on a fundamental principle of Marian theology: Mary's role in the Christian community is fundamentally seen in the light of Christ's life and mission. As Mary says in her own words: "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38). Mary's life is one of service to God, and to God's Son, who is her Son and her Lord.

Gibson portrays Mary as a multidimensional figure. He does not present us with a caricature, rather, we see the Blessed Virgin as a real woman, a real person, and in particular, a real mother. For me there were three aspects of Mary's presence that were particularly poignant:

A natural and human familiarity between Jesus and Mary

The movie describes a close and intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary. In a single scene Jesus completes the making of a table. His mother calls Jesus to eat but He continues working, so she goes out to get him. The charm of the scene is remarkable. She comments on how high the table is. He discloses that people will sit at the table in chairs. She repeats the action of sitting at the table and tells him: "It will never catch on." Obviously, the mother of the Lord was not a prophet. What happens next is truly insightful on the part of Gibson. As Jesus walks toward their humble home to eat, it is the Jewish mother who reminds him to take off his dirty apron and to wash his hands. In fact, she pours the water so he can become ritually pure before he enters the house and eats his meal. Mary, Jesus' mother, is also his teacher. The words of Luke ring true: "and He went with them and grew in grace and wisdom!" (Luke 2:51-52). Mary taught Jesus in the ways of God. The humanity of their relationship is brought home when the Lord playfully splashes his mother with the water she pours out for him and she runs away from his playfulness. What a joyful home and a happy relationship!

Mother of the disciples

Throughout the movie Gibson presents the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Disciples. Mary is always with Mary Magdalene or John the Disciple, while Peter moves in and out of her company. After Peter's denial of the Lord, he cannot bring himself to face the mother of God. Mary, on the other hand, reaches toward him, she wants to be his comfort, she wants to touch him and reassure him. While Mary is concerned for the disciples, they are also concerned for her. On a number of occasions throughout the day, John calls the Blessed Virgin Mary, "mother." On that last dreadful "Good Friday," the Mother and the disciples accompany each other as they follow in the footsteps of the Lord. Mary cares for the Lord's disciples and they care for her. As Jesus dies on the cross He sanctifies and universalizes this relationship between His Mother and His disciples. She will be the mother of all and they will be her children.

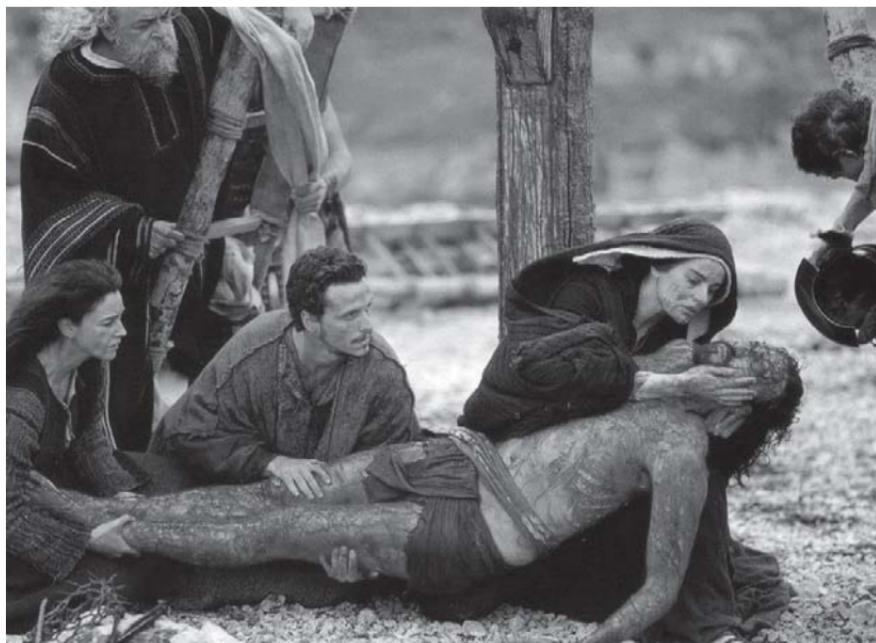
Woman of suffering

The film portrays Mary as a heroic figure, the Mother of Jesus and a disciple of the Lord. However, the most profound image of Mary is the Mother of Suffering and Sorrow. The Blessed Virgin is a central witness to the events of Good Friday. A most heart-wrenching scene and yet the most profound, finds the Virgin at the pillar where Jesus was scourged. The ground is covered with the blood of her Son, the precious blood of the Savior. The mother, whose blood He received in the womb,

had fallen to the ground. The mother of Jesus collects the blood of salvation, her son's blood, in the pure white towels given her by Claudia. This is not a scriptural scene but Gibson tells us he inserts it as a sign of respect and reverence for the Precious Blood of the Lord. As Mary follows the Lord, she remains silent. She does not speak. She bears witness. Throughout the day she is a constant presence. She is clearly a disciple because she follows him. She follows him, in particular, on this day, the day of suffering, the day of salvation, the day of redemption. She accompanies him in His Passion. Gibson presents Mary as the "suffering Madonna." As the movie progresses the image of the Mater Dolorosa comes into clear relief. She is spared nothing of her Son's Passion. As a mother she suffers with him and for him. This suffering of the Virgin, so sensitively depicted

in the movie, recalls a theme in Catholic theology, which holds that Mary so profoundly joined herself to the suffering of her Son that His passion became her "martyrdom."

Every step of the way Mary accompanies, watches and suffers with her Son. She follows as a disciple, a witness, but most of all she follows as his mother. Along the way she is, in fact, recognized and named as his mother. When asked who she is, one of the soldiers replies as he points to Christ, "she is his mother." She is a mother, a suffering mother, a faithful mother, a courageous mother. Compelled by love, He walks the way of the cross. Compelled by love Mary follows in his footsteps. She never loses faith. As she witnesses his suffering, as she suffers herself, she believes. □



**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My sincere thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. John Bosco for special favours received through their powerful intercession.

Mrs. L. Lobo, Mumbai

My son was very sick, totally dehydrated and he wouldn't take a drop of water. He was advised to be admitted to hospital. I was afraid he had contracted swine flu. I prayed fervently to Our Lady and I found that all the tests came out negative and he was discharged from the hospital in a couple of days. I am most grateful to Our Lady for this grace.

Patsy Vaz, Goa

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for all the graces received.

Clint Fernandes, Vasai

My son had lost all his original documents (Std. X & XII original certificates and a demand draft) and they couldn't be found for several months. I prayed to Don Bosco and Our Lady and I kept on praying. Then all of a sudden I found the documents in a bag left outside my main door. I had promised Our Lady that should I find the documents and the draft I would donate the entire amount of the draft for the support of seminarians. I am grateful to Our Lady Help of Christians for the wonderful favour and for all the blessings that we have received.

Mrs. Luiza Rosario, Mumbai

Thank you dear Infant Jesus and Mother Mary for curing little Melanie of her recent illness.

L. Ahimaz, K.L. Malaysia

Dear Mother Mary thank you sincerely for helping me pass my ICSE examinations.

Lisa-Marie Aranha, Mumbai

Sincere thanks to our Dear Lord and Our Blessed Mother for granting me the grace to secure a good and much needed job in Singapore after many attempts to secure it.

Alan Pinto, Mumbai

My heartfelt thanks to Our Mother for her intercession for my successful urethrascopy and lithotripsy.

Mrs. Genoveva I.R. Fernandes, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to the Holy Spirit, the Divine Mercy and Mother Mary, Help of Christians and please bring peace to our family.

Mrs. Hollarene Parrie

We are most grateful to Mary Help of Christians for all the blessings and graces received. Dear Mother do continue to bless us.

Irene Pinto, Mumbai

Thank you dearest Mother for the safe delivery of my sister and for the gift of a beautiful baby girl on 23/05/10.

Sharon Raikar, Mumbai

My sincere thanks for all the graces and favours received through the intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians and I am most sorry for having delayed in acknowledging my gratitude.

Mrs. Janet Santos, Mumbai

On 6 December 2008 I was protected from a dangerous autorickshaw accident and I am sincerely grateful to Our Blessed Mother. On 2 December 2009 our Heavenly Mother saved me from a mishap while I was boarding a train. Thank you dearest Mother. *P. D'Souza, Nalasopara*

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 for all the favours received. *Sweebert Dantes, Bahrain*

My belated grateful thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and Mother Mary for helping both my sons to pass their respective examinations, for saving us from road accidents several times and for all the graces and blessings in our day to day lives. *Leena Atkins, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys I have received numerous favours and blessings. *S. de Souza, Mumbai*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary Help of Christians. Through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys my son was cured of a cyst on his head without any operation. *Mrs. P. Jacob, Mumbai*

I had a fish bone stuck in my throat and it was going deeper. I was beginning to panic. I continuously prayed the 3 Hail Marys. I was relieved from this anxiety. I am most grateful to Our Lady for protecting me from any complication. *Mrs. Anna Thomas, Cochin*

My husband was diagnosed with cancer after the first biopsy results. When we asked for a second opinion and we had another set of tests done, there was no trace of the cancer. We continuously prayed the 3 Hail Marys when we received the first results. Thank you, Mother Mary for all the favours we have received. *Mrs. Zemira Mohan Jagtiani*

Our ancestral property had remained undivided with the family for over 50 years. There are 11 heirs to the property and since it had not been divided none of them could benefit from the usufruct as there seemed to be no hope of any division. In the year 2009, being the eldest I filed inventory proceedings. During this time my husband and I had constant recourse to the 3 Hail Marys. There were several problems during this time. Today the proceeds of the auction have been amicably and peacefully settled among the heirs. Without the intervention of Mother Mary it would have been impossible. We could feel her hand in this settlement. We trusted and believed that Our Mother would intercede with her son Jesus. *Celia Silveira, Goa*

Thank you dearest Mother for all the graces and favours received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. *Mrs. Gemma Noronha, Mumbai*

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

Our heartfelt thanks to the Divine Mercy, Mamma Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints for helping our son Rohan to clear his paper that was given for revaluation and for the numerous graces received.

Aranha and Family

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and all the saints for favours received by all our families.

O. Rodrigues, Thane

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for gifting my son a healthy baby girl, Catherine Rose. Kindly keep our family in your dear care and protection.

A Devotee, Australia

We are immensely grateful to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours we have received and for a safe and normal delivery and the gift of a baby boy.

Savia and Cajetan D'Souza, Goa

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a healthy baby girl to my niece and for many other favours we have received.

Mrs. V. D'Sa, Mumbai

I am most grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for protecting me and my kids and for blessing us always.

Olga Coutinho, USA

Heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the happy marriage of my daughter, the gift of a bonny baby girl in the first year of their marriage. Mother Mary protect our families and grant us good health, peace and harmony.

Mrs. & Mr. Whittle, Secunderabad, AP

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe delivery to my daughter and the gift of a healthy baby boy after she started experiencing labour pains from the fifth month of her pregnancy and was advised to abort her child. Thank you dearest Mother for all the graces we have received.

Mr. & Mrs. Fatima Almeida, Goa

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

Mr. & Mrs. Tanzia Fernandes, Goa

Triumph of the Cross 14th September

Christians "exalt" the Cross of Christ as the instrument of our salvation. Adoration of the Cross is the adoration of Jesus Christ who suffered and died on this shameful Roman instrument of torture for our redemption from sin and death. The Cross - because of what it represents - is the most powerful and universal symbol of the Christian faith. Placing a crucifix in churches and homes or wearing this image on our persons, is a constant reminder of Christ's ultimate triumph, His victory over sin and death through His suffering and His death on the Cross.

We remember Our Lord's words, "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."

Dying, you destroyed our death; rising you restored our life. Save us by your cross, Christ our Redeemer.

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio, I'm 3 months pregnant! *Margaret, Mumbai* Million thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the gift a sweet baby girl to my sister and also a normal delivery after some minor complications during her pregnancy. Dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio always keep us under your care and protection.

Annette D'Souza, Goa

Our grateful thanks to St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of a baby boy.

Alison and Floyd D'Cruz, Australia

Our thanks to Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. Dominic Savio whose scapular I wore, for a safe delivery of my second son Shane Joe in snow-clad Syracuse alone. I was far away from my home and my dear ones. Dear Mother, please continue to protect and bless us all.

Jubie Savio Soares, USA

My sincere thanks for providing me with an excellent medical report. I am most grateful for this piece of good news. *Caroline Sequeira, Canada* My sincere thanks to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a son, Savio.

Felix and Esilda, Goa

I am most grateful to Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl, Doris.

Urbano and Emelda, Goa

Many thanks to Mama Mary and Dominic Savio for granting us the gift of a baby girl. We have named the baby Saviyanna Maria. Dear Dominic Savio do intercede for Saviyanna and her parents that they remain peaceful and healthy and grant all their spiritual and temporal needs.

Sr. Flory Padua, Thiruvananthapuram

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted.

Thelma Hodges, Haryana

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

SEPTEMBER 2010

General Intention: *That in less developed parts of the world the proclamation of the Word of God may renew people's hearts, encouraging them to work actively toward authentic social progress.*

Missionary Intention: *That by opening our hearts to love we may put an end to the numerous wars and conflicts which continue to bloody our world.*

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MARY WAS THERE

I was on a holiday from the Gulf. On 23rd November 1994, together with a friend of mine I went to visit some friends and relatives on a motorbike. On our return we were spared a terrible accident on the National Highway. The front tire burst and both of us were thrown off the bike but neither of us had so much as a scratch on us. I thought of what a terrible accident could have taken place if there was a truck or a bus behind us! In Bahrain I always attend the Wednesday Novena service and before I leave home I always pray to Mother Mary to grant me a safe journey. I am most grateful for her protection and I apologise for this delay in acknowledging my thanks.

John D'Souza and Franky Pereira, Goa

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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http://www.donboscosmadonna.org/www.dbmshrine.org**