

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

AUGUST 2011

VOL.13 NO. 4

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: - <i>The Memory Remains</i>	3
8 - The Least Shall Be The Greatest - <i>Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS</i>	4
The Rationale of the Relic - <i>Missioni Don Bosco, Torino</i>	8
Salesian Saint of the Month: Zeferino Namuncura (1886-1905).....	10
From the First Steps to Following Christ - <i>Fr. S. Swamikannu, sdb</i>	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>St. Peter Julian Eymard</i> - <i>Abbye St. Joseph de Clairval</i> ..	12
Lectio Divina: Remember What Jesus Said (Lk 24:1-12) <i>Marco Rossetti</i>	17
Quietspaces: The Assumption: A Woman Clothed with the Sun - <i>Pope Benedict XVI</i>	18
Short Story: <i>The Saint of Devil's Island</i>	20
Don Bosco's Characteristics: Don Bosco's Sufferings - <i>Natale Cerrato</i>	24
NewsBits.....	26
Reflecting on Mary: Mary, Ladder, Bridge and Door - <i>Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA</i>	28
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i>	15
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco</i>	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio</i>	35



*Mary is the contemplative
par excellence because
"she pondered
on all these things
meditating on them
in her heart."*

**Cover: Welcome
to the relic of Don Bosco at the
Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna,
Matunga, Mumbai
by William Fernandes**



From The Editor's Desk

The Memory Remains

And, of course, you know him... A kind person introducing me might include my name. That is a blessing for someone like me whose memory needs to be jogged from time to time because I have a difficulty when I've got to attach names to faces. A gracious person spying my hesitation may helpfully chime in with, 'of course, I do. We've *met* recently a couple of Sundays ago after the evening Mass'. Surely this hint will jog my memory! If even that fails - and my confused face can't hide it, I am left feeling ashamed and they are at least disappointed, if not downright insulted.

If we are not remembered, can we really say we ever met?

I am tempted to become complacent, saying it is natural that with the amount of people we have to meet, can I really be expected to remember each one by name? Or there may be the other well-worn excuse that with the passing years, I remember less and less. Occasionally we suspect that we might be too indulgent in this judgment, and the worry that our memory is poor, is really laziness. I have even got some tips from professionals that claim my memory will improve if I follow their suggestions. Sadly I cannot remember when the hints last worked for me.

I have reflected on meetings which I have never forgotten - and I made some surprising discoveries: it always involved going to *meet* that person. Sometimes it meant a physical journey; more often it was just recalling the circumstances of our *meeting*. Maybe it was a *meeting* free from expectations or formalities; an openness, not hampered by reservations and surprisingly hospitable.

If we are seated, we rise to meet someone. It is gesture of going out to *meet* the person. Just as we stand for the gospel of the Mass. That is perhaps one of the few times we stand at Mass. It is a moving forward to *meet* Christ.

The gospel passage does not list rules; rather it recounts more often than not a meeting Christ has with a man in pain or a woman in distress. He *met* them. They knew that he would not forget them. And the meeting was so important for them that it was endlessly repeated, and then written down and preserved in the gospel story - and it is read year after year to the people of God.

To meet Christ in the scriptures we must hear him as those people did, must know that what he says, is said to us today. And we must grasp the fact that no matter whoever else forgets, he will never forget.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

8. THE LEAST SHALL BE THE GREATEST

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Many people seem to think that in our times the teachings of Jesus are outdated, having no relevance in our post-modern age of prolific technological growth and advancement. We recall here some of the findings of world-famous corporate leaders who share with us some of their own personal findings in the matter of advancement and success in the corporate world.

Fear or Inner Strength?

"In chaotic times, an executive's instinct may be to strive for greater efficiency by tightening control. But the truth is that relinquishing authority and giving employees considerable autonomy can boost innovation and success at knowledge firms, even during crises. Our research provides hard evidence that leaders who give in to the urge to clamp down can end up doing their companies a serious disservice."

When one views the above situation dispassionately, what we notice is that the tendency in critical times to clamp down and introduce greater control and restrictions actually stems from a sense of fear, of loss of control, of finding oneself out of depth and eager to press the panic button. This inner fear, even if unexpressed, is instinctively conveyed to all down the line, and inevitably they too begin to panic resulting in a greater tendency to err and increase the sense of loss of control even more. The end

result of this is predictable: a total breakdown sooner or later! The opposite line of action which is being suggested could be seen as better sense prevailing over the instinctive reaction. However, it presumes certain basic principles – at least for the believing Christian.

With the Resurrection of Jesus, all forms of evil have been conquered and he has shared his victory with all his followers, to the extent that they care to receive! He desires that we benefit from this victory already here and now, even though this can be done to a certain degree only. Nevertheless, for anyone sharing in the Resurrection of Jesus, there is no question of capitulating to the forces of evil or negativity. The power of the positive is shown in our belief that the Spirit of God works through every person of goodwill, even when this person does not explicitly subscribe to the Christian faith! Thus, when the leader shows trust and confidence in his subordinates, seeks their advice and contribution, he somehow taps into a fund of positive energy which will certainly produce much better results than would a flood of negativity!

However, this approach must not be seen as just another strategy that is guaranteed to infallibly bring success. Those in authority must themselves believe deep within their beings

in what Jesus has said, "Do not be afraid... and remember I am with you even till the end of the age!" (Mt. 28:10-20). For this, it is not absolutely necessary that they subscribe to all that Jesus stands for. If they can believe in the goodness of their own persons and genuinely and wholeheartedly align themselves with 'a higher power' not seeking their own selfish ends, they can be sure that a higher divine power for good is at work in their activity.

Lead From the Front

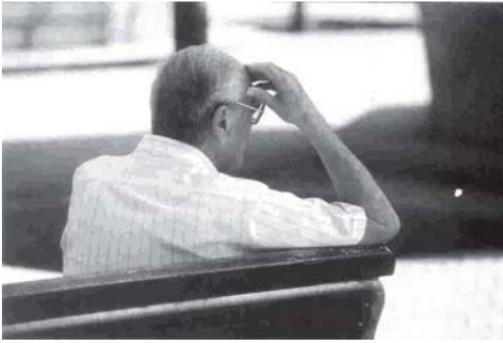
"Although business thinkers have long proposed that companies can engage workers and stimulate innovation by abdicating control in times of crisis, guidance on implementing such a policy is lacking. So is evidence of its consequences. Indeed, companies that actually practice abdication of control are rare."

Such guidance can come only from persons who possess a deep inner strength of character and who firmly believe in themselves. One of the misconceptions of most people is that the leader must have superior knowledge, expertise and skills. However, time and again it has been proven that leadership is not about professional authority and control, but about creating an atmosphere of confidence and trust at all levels. The leader is responsible for making every member feel part of the entire enterprise. Each must feel that he contributes positively to the benefit of the whole, that no one is a mere cog in the wheel and ultimately that God's Spirit can speak through any member no matter how high or low he be on



the hierarchical ladder.

Leaders sometimes feel that they would lose respect if they consult their subordinates or accept their suggestions as coming from equals. They believe that every good and beneficial idea can come only from the top. However, for almost fifty years now, Japanese Corporate companies have been promoting the idea of "kaizen" and reaping the benefits in plenty. As it is said, "you can buy a person's back but you can't buy his mind!" It is only when he freely and with a sense of pride participates in the thinking of the well-being of the entire company that a man will give of his best, even to the point of sacrificing his own personal welfare for the benefit of the entire group. Trying to clamp down rather than open up in such crisis situations is like driving a car with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake. Most people try to control this difficult situation by depressing the accelerator more instead of removing the foot that is on the brake! They try to apply more pressure, use more eloquence, and supply more



responsibility for the business. Each employee must come to see the entire organization as his very own! This applies mainly to knowledge organizations, no doubt, but others, even production-oriented companies can benefit from having employees who feel more empowered and engaged because of a deep and personal sense of belonging.”

logical information to strengthen their own position. They fear listening to others because they want to dominate and manipulate while emphasizing that they are in charge. But the situation will only change when there is synergy - and that cannot thrive in such a centralized atmosphere!

So, leaders will themselves have to learn from their personal experience how they can capitalize on the strengths of each employee. This is what the experts say was true at least in some instances, *“In response to poor financial performance in 2007, CSC Germany, a division of the \$17 billion worldwide IT consulting and services firm, at first took the usual approach of increasing control and efficiency. The result was a further decline. When the division’s leaders did the opposite – relaxed control and gave employees the freedom to do things as they saw fit – the outcome was resounding success.”*

A Sense of Belonging

“Furthermore, it has been discovered that contrary to what many CEOs assume, leadership is not really about delegating tasks and monitoring results; it is primarily about infusing the entire workforce with a sense of

If decentralization of authority is to provide value for the corporation, however, individuals must be self-motivated. For this they must feel wanted, respected and valued for their particular skills and aptitudes. *CSC Germany tried this out by allowing employees to work on the one of five topics that best utilizes their talents and excites their interest. This involved joining a topic community, such as the one focusing on strategy and innovation. Issues were discussed in these groups until all participants came to an agreement, and leadership within the groups shifted frequently, settling on individuals who had the most competence in the areas of focus and were accepted by others as leaders.*

“We call such practices “mutualism.” It involves measuring workers not against revenue or other numerical goals, which we have observed to be ineffective as motivational tools, but against qualitative values such as trust, responsibility, and innovation. And it implies that leaders don’t dictate vision or strategy; instead, they enable employees to create a common vision through, for example, off-sites for discussion of strategic

issues and regular feedback and education. Hitting numerical goals has been the natural outcome.”

Evidently, all these approaches work because of a fundamental trust and bonding that evolves among employees at all levels. But none of this happens effortlessly or in the twinkle of an eye! It takes years and constant effort to build up the level of trust among every single worker and calls for personal integrity and high moral standards among the leaders. Returning to our spiritual reflection, it is no wonder that Jesus personally undertook the training of his chosen Twelve and taught them more by his own personal example than by theoretical principles.

Every Problem is an Opportunity

Relaxation of control can benefit any knowledge company, but particularly in certain circumstances: when the organization begins to miss opportunities because it can't understand or respond to market demands; when work is impaired because employees feel excessively pressured and harbor dissatisfaction; and when crises imperil the business. Then mutualism is the best way to unleash the power of employees' creativity. And so, difficulties and obstacles need not be seen as hindrances but rather as an opportunity to revise one's own approach, to deepen one's faith in oneself and in the others who collaborate, to work at bringing all on board as partners in the enterprise.

Whenever this happens, isn't that a sign that the triumph of the Risen Lord is at work? Typically enough, this approach works when each individual decides that



s/he is going to live by the age-old principles of honesty, integrity, respect for all people, and the like. Where Self is allowed to run wild, cracks of division, competitiveness, jealousy, back-biting and the like will show. If we can bring ourselves to collaborate during the Eucharist itself making of it a true community action, we will be well on the road to learning how to sink our egos and work for the good of the whole Enterprise not only at the place of work, but almost anywhere.

Besides, to move faster in this direction of being able to handle a crisis situation while respecting each member's contribution, it would be helpful if we could mean each Eucharist we celebrate. There has to be some conscious, deliberate 'dying-to-self' in each celebration, else it is very difficult to build up a solid habit of working selflessly. But when approached with courage and disciples, it can be done and quite effectively too!

Where there is a will, there is a way - because He has risen indeed!☐

THE RATIONALE OF THE CASKET

by *Missioni Don Bosco, Torino*
(T/A - ID)

The Salesian Congregation, in Italy and some other Provinces, have already had the experience of the pilgrim casket of St. Dominic Savio. In 2004 the Rector Major used the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of Dominic Savio to re-launch youthful holiness, precisely through the example of the life of the youthful saint. The Salesian *Motto for 2004: "We propose anew to all youth with convinced joyfulness the commitment to holiness as the highest level of ordinary Christian life.."*

In those years Pope John Paul II was proposing to the whole Church, and especially to youth, the perspective of holiness, as the foundation and central point of the pastoral programme for the new millennium.

"Young people of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! Be contemplative, love prayer; be coherent with your faith and generous in the service of your brothers and sisters, be active members of the Church and builders of peace" (*Message for XV World Youth Day 2000*).

The pilgrimage of casket was *an*

extraordinary occasion to rediscover the testimony and the example of Dominic Savio. Praying before the casket, the small and great alike placed in his hands so many prayers and intentions, asking that he who had so loved the Lord might intercede for them.

So many hopeful mothers prayed for their children, certain that Dominic their protector would plead before Jesus to hear their petitions that were attuned to the will of the Father. So many young people once again took in their hands the life of Dominic Savio written by Don Bosco, which had already done so much good to generations of young Christians, including bishops and popes.

Faith, prayer, the desire for holiness and special graces are the most beautiful fruits that the Father, through the intercession of Dominic, desired to pour upon the faithful who came to visit the pilgrim urn.

The significance of the pilgrim casket of Don Bosco

We now come to the conclusions that must already



Don Bosco Lead Us On
The World-Wide Relic Pilgrimage of Don Bosco visits
The Shrine of
Don Bosco's Madonna,
Matunga, Mumbai
August 13 - 16, 2011



seem clear to the reader.

Also in this instance the occasion is extraordinary. The Salesian motto for 2008 has invited us to “educate with the heart of Don Bosco”; the 26th General Chapter, in the same line, has asked us to return to the sources of our charism according to the motto of our Founder, “*Give me souls; take away the rest.*” The Rector Major wants the *whole Salesian family* to continue evangelizing the young whom the Lord has confided to us with these same sentiments. To achieve this it is necessary that we *reflect upon our own very identity*. It is then fundamental to keep loving and deepening our knowledge and love for Don Bosco. The Salesian motto for 2009 reads this way: “*Let us commit ourselves to making the Salesian Family a vast movement of persons for the salvation of the young.*”

Two great events justify and enrich the choice of the Strenna for 2009:

- the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation

- the preparation for the bicentennial of the birth of Don Bosco (1815-2015) With the 150th anniversary of the Salesian Congregation we also begin the preparation for the bicentennial of the birth of Don Bosco. Such a celebration will mean a renewed fidelity to Don Bosco, to his spirituality, to his mission; it will be a “*Salesian Holy Year.*”

The pilgrimage of the casket will be an occasion to take up once again in our hands the life of Don Bosco as desired by the Rector Major. The testimony of his life will help us to imitate his faith, his love of the Lord and his zeal for all people, but above all for the young and the poor. The worldwide Salesian Family will come to pray before the casket, forming a community of faith called by Christ to holiness, a family which desires to sanctify itself following the example of Don Bosco. Praying before the casket, little ones and grown-ups alike will place in his hands so many prayers and intentions asking that he who loved the Lord so much would intercede for them. □

SALESIAN SAINT OF THE MONTH

ZEFFERINO NAMUNCURA 1886 - 1905

Zefferino Namuncurà was born on August 26, 1886 at Chimpay, on the banks of the Rio Negro. His father Manuel, the last great cacique of the Araucano Indian tribe had surrendered three years earlier to the troops of the Argentine Republic. For the first eleven years of his life Ceferino roamed freely with his friends after which his father Manuel Namuncurà sent him to Buenos Aires to study because he would soon have to defend his people. He fell in love with the family spirit of Don Bosco at the Salesian College. It was there that he grew spiritually and expressed a desire to become a Salesian priest in order to convert his people. He chose Dominic Savio as his model and during the next five years he made a special effort to try and fit into this new culture, making himself another Dominic Savio. This youngster, who found it difficult to "get in line" or to "obey the bell" gradually became a model student. He excelled in the fulfilment of his duties and prayer. During recreations he took up the role of the referee: his companions accepted his decisions. The meaningful way in which he made the sign of the Cross, as if meditating on every word impressed his companions. He even taught his companions to do the same. In 1903 - at the age of 16 and a half, when his father was 80 years old - Msgr. Cagliero accepted him into a group



of aspirants and sent them to Viedma. It was the capital of the Apostolic Vicariate. There the young aspirants began to study Latin. Because of his poor health, Msgr. Cagliero decided to take him to Italy where he could continue his studies more seriously in a more conducive atmosphere. In Italy he met Don Rua and Pope Pius X who was moved and gave him his blessing. He attended the school at Turin and later at the Salesian College of Villa Sora, in Frascati. He studied hard in order to enter class two. A serious bout of tuberculosis undermined his efforts. On March 28, 1905 he was taken to the Hospitaller Brothers at Isola Tiberina Rome, where he died peacefully in May that same year. His mortal remains were returned to his homeland in 1924. They are enshrined at Fortin Mercedes, where crowds of pilgrims flock to venerate them. □

**FROM THE FIRST STEPS TO FOLLOWING THE LORD**

*Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu, sdb
Provincial emeritus, Province of Chennai*

As the fifth child of the family, I grew up in a happy and religious ambience created by my simple, illiterate but wise and saintly mother who had to face the entire responsibility of our upbringing since my father, a silent and caring person, had to be the breadwinner of the family by serving in the Indian Army. The seed was sown in the family and in the primary school. The general religious and friendly ethos of the village, school and the family were contributing factors for this I should say in hindsight.

I was sent to St. Anne's Boarding School, Tindivanam, Tamil Nadu. During the three years that I spent in the boarding I was guided in my vocation. Looking back, they were indeed formative years for my future religious and priestly life.

That I landed with the Salesians of Don Bosco, humanly speaking, was just an accident. The casual visit of Rev. Fr. Stephen Bernard SDB, to my rather remote village in Tamil Nadu, and his simple invitation "Would you like to become a Salesian?" extended to me prompted me to say that first hesitating "Yes!" On receiving my SSLC results I went straight to meet him. I landed at midnight not knowing the exact distance. The watchman announced my arrival to Fr. Stephen Bernard, who came down at that part of the night and the first question he put to me was "Did you have your dinner?" That kind gesture had left an indelible



mark on my life as a Salesian even today!

I am a happy Salesian today, having spent several years forming young salesians in their years of philosophical training for priesthood and having completed my six year tenure as the 12th Provincial of the "Glorious Province of Chennai!"

No miracles! No Spectacular interventions! But a loving and God-fearing family ambience, a good school with an interested priest who nurtured the vocation already sown in the family and the simple but very powerful gesture of kindness of a Salesian priest forms the backdrop for my vocation as a Salesian!

My dear young friends, 'If God is calling you to be a Salesian, do speak to a Salesian priest or Brother who can guide and help you'. □

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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD

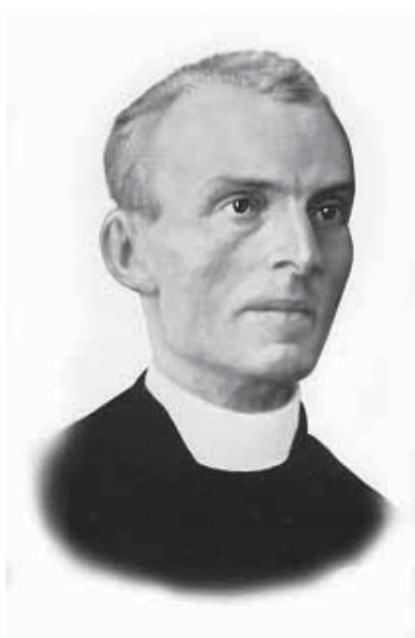
(2 August)

by Contributions from Abbaye Saint-Joseph de Clairval

“Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, the Church has feared no ‘extravagance’, devoting the best of her resources to expressing her wonder and adoration before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist. (John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, EE: April 17, 2003, no. 48). Saint Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, wrote in the same vein: “We will consecrate to Him everything we have - the Eucharistic King truly deserves it.”

His head against the Tabernacle

One day in 1804, a knife grinder arrived in the little town of La Mure, in the diocese of Grenoble, France. His name was Julian Eymard. Death had wreaked havoc in his family, in which only two children, Antoine and Marie-Anne, had survived. Marie-Anne was 12 when Peter Julian was born on February 4, 1811. Mr. Eymard had the newborn baptized the next day. Peter Julian’s mother didn’t let a day go by without going to kneel a few moments in the church, - she took little Peter Julian there in her apron, and offered him to Jesus. As soon as the child could



walk, he accompanied his mother to the church, and soon went there all by himself several times a day. Marie-Anne once discovered him there behind the altar, on a stool, his head leaning against the tabernacle. “It’s because I listen, and I hear Him better up here,” explained Peter Julian. An extraordinary passion for the Blessed Sacrament took

root in his heart. However, he was not without his faults-stubborn, quick-tempered, nose-y. But his loyal nature could not live a lie.

The much-anticipated day of First Holy Communion arrived when Peter Julian was already 12 years old. "What graces the Lord gave me that day!" he would tearfully write, 30 years later. It was at that time he heard the call to the priesthood. The young man spoke to his father of his wish to enter the seminary, but his father did not understand the honour God was giving him in calling his son.

In the Marian sanctuary of Our Lady of Laus, Peter Julian met Father Touche, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate who, seeing the beauty of the young man's soul, advised him to direct his life towards the priesthood by studying Latin and receiving Communion more often. Filled with joy and hope, Peter Julian returned to the mill and studied Latin grammar in secret. Providence put him in contact with Father Desmoulins, who obtained Mr. Eymard's permission to take Peter Julian with him to Grenoble to study there for free, in return for some duties. There, the child suddenly learned that his mother had died, and threw himself in tears at the feet of the statue of the Blessed Virgin. "Oh! From this day on, be my only Mother," he exclaimed. "But more than anything else, this grace: that I might be a priest someday!" The day of the burial, his father, himself overcome, begged him to stay with him. He acquiesced but on March 3, 1828, after having asked his son's forgiveness for his

opposition to his vocation, Mr. Eymard rendered his soul to God. Peter Julian then entered the major seminary in Grenoble. He was required to present his parish priest's written recommendation, which the priest gave to him sealed. Suspecting something, Marie-Anne, unaware of the imprudence of her action, opened the envelope. The letter described the candidate as "mindless and incapable." By common consent, they burned the unfair testimony. Confident in the grace of God, Peter Julian left for Grenoble, where, providentially, he met Bishop de Mazenod, the holy founder of the Oblates of Mary. Peter Julian told him everything. "So," said the bishop, "I'm the one who will present you to the superior of the seminary." The young man could then follow his vocation, and was ordained a priest at the age of 23, on July 20, 1834. He was entrusted with the ministry of vicar, and then of parish priest, in the diocese, but secretly Peter Julian wanted to be a religious.

On August 20, 1839, with his bishop's permission, he entered the novitiate of the Marists, a congregation founded by Father Colin. He noted in his diary his favourite themes to meditate on: "Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Heaven." In 1850, he became superior of the high school in La Seyne-sur-Mer, close to Toulon. In all his work, as a secular priest or as a Marist religious, Father Eymard always encouraged the souls under his care to practice adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The results were remarkable, for children and youth as well as for families.

Society as a whole was regenerated by it.

Inestimable value

God inspired Peter Julian with the idea of founding a congregation of men and women religious devoted to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the propagation of this devotion among the laity. It was at the feet of Our Lady of La Salette that he conceived the plan for this foundation. This would be the great preoccupation of his life. Pope Pius IX, with whom he succeeded in obtaining an audience, affirmed to him, "Your work comes from God, I am sure of it. The Church needs it." But what obstacles to overcome! If God had not pushed Father Eymard, he would never have dared embark on an adventure that, in human terms, had no chance of succeeding. His Marist Superior General, after having examined the plan at length, released him from his vows, in order to allow him complete freedom to establish his foundation. Peter Julian explained his idea to the Archbishop of Paris: "We adore, no doubt, but we also want others to adore. We must attend to the First Communion of adults." With these words, the Archbishop's face lit up. "The First Communion of adults!" he exclaimed. "Ah! This is the work I am missing, the work I desire." The cause was won - the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament received its first approval before it even existed.

The Decisive Sacrifice

In 1864, setbacks and trials further united Father Eymard to

the redeeming Cross, the sole means of salvation of souls.

In union with Christ's sacrifice, Father Eymard accepted his election for life as Superior General of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, even though he was hoping to become a simple religious again.

On the night of July 21, 1868, Father Eymard, exhausted, very thin, incapable of taking in any food at all, arrived at La Mure to rest, on his doctor's orders. He celebrated the last Mass of his life in Grenoble, in the chapel devoted to perpetual adoration. Without a word, he got into bed with difficulty. His sister quickly came down to look for the doctor, who diagnosed a cerebral hemorrhage coupled with general exhaustion. Father made his confession through signs. On Saturday, August 1, he received Extreme Unction at one o'clock in the morning. At daybreak, a Father from his Congregation celebrated Mass in his room and gave him Holy Communion. He was presented with the image of Our Lady of La Salette, which he pressed to his heart. At the beginning of the afternoon, his last breath could scarcely be heard. His soul had entered Heaven, into the infinite Goodness of God, forever. He died at age 57 in the house in which he had been born.

Peter Julian Eymard's canonization benefited from a solemnity unusual in the history of the Church. The day after the closing of the first session of the Second Vatican Council, December 9, 1962, John XXIII, in the presence of 1,500 council Fathers, entered him into the catalogue of Saints. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Boys In Hospital

The two young boys were discussing their ailments together in the children's ward.

"Are you medical or surgical?" asked the first, who had been in the ward for a week.

"I don't know what you mean," replied the second.

"It's simple," replied the first.

"Were you sick when you came in here? Or did they make you sick when you got here?"

Work Virus

There is a new virus going around, called "work". If you receive any sort of "work" at all, whether via email, internet or simply handed to you by a colleague...DO NOT OPEN IT.

Work has been circulating around our building for months and those who have been tempted to open "work" or even look at "work" have found that their social life is deleted and their brain ceases to function properly.

If you do encounter "work" via email or are faced with any "work" at all, to purge the virus, send an email to your boss with the words "Sorry...I'm off to Home Depot." The "work" should then be automatically deleted from your brain.

If you receive "work" in paper-document form, simply lift the document and drag the "work" to your garbage can. Put on your coat and skip to the nearest cafe with two friends and order three double chocolate espressos. After repeating this action 10 times, you will find that "work" will no longer be of any relevance to you.

Send this message to everyone in your address book. If you do not have anyone in your address book,

then I'm afraid the "work" virus has already corrupted your life.

Putting the Cat Out

A couple is going out for an evening on the town.

When they are almost ready to go, the wife tells her husband not to forget to put out the cat. However, after a Taxi arrives and as they go out the door the cat darts back in the house.

Not wanting the cat shut in the house while they are out the husband goes back in to get the cat as the wife goes and gets in the cab.

The wife not wanting it known that the house will be empty while they are out explains to the cab driver, "He is just going upstairs to say good-bye to mother."

A short time later the husband comes down and gets in the cab. He says, "Sorry it took so long but the stupid old thing was under the bed and I had to poke her with a coat hanger!"

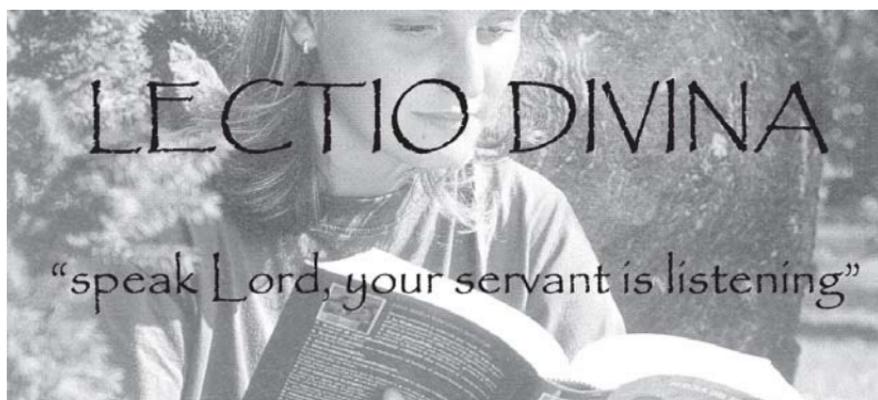
Beware of Dog

Upon entering a little country store, the stranger noticed a sign saying "DANGER! BEWARE OF DOG!" posted on the door glass. Inside, he noticed a harmless old hound dog asleep on the floor near the cash register. He asked the store's owner "Is that the dog folks are supposed to beware of?"

"Yep," the proprietor answered, "That's him."

The stranger couldn't help being amused. "That certainly doesn't look like a dangerous dog to me," he chuckled. "Why in the world did you decide to post that sign?"

"Because," the owner replied, "before I posted that sign, people kept tripping over him." □



REMEMBER WHAT JESUS SAID

(Lk 24, 1-12)

by Marco Rossetti

The large stone rolled away, a glance into the tomb of Jesus to record that the body was missing causing a sense of inner loss (vv. 2-3): paradoxically, the event at the centre of our faith is not verifiable or describable. This is because the resurrection is Christ's most beautiful gift of love. Just as love is indescribable because it is unfathomable, so is the resurrection because it is the supreme mystery of love. In our curiosity we want to 'remember' and meditate on the Word so that we may come to know something of the depth of the love that accompanies this mystery.

It Was A Unique Day

The empty tomb was discovered "on the first day of the week" (v. 1). That was according to the Jewish calendar which, for the Christians, is Sunday. The chronological indication reads "the first day," tending to suggest for each of us that the world began once more on the day of the resurrection. It was the fulfillment of the promises that God

had made. Our Christian life ought to focus on this day "the first and the last day made radiant and beautiful because of Christ's triumph" (Liturgy of the Hours). Such a coincidence should help us to keep alive the desire to seek and encounter the Lord in his Word and in the Eucharist so as to be able to proclaim him to the world. Why does this desire sometimes fade? Why are our lives so often focused only on things of this world and so dull to things to come? Why are we not able to bring the Risen Christ into our daily lives? Maybe we have lost the memory of that vital "first day" which alone can give us the ability to reread everything henceforth in the light of the Risen Lord.

A Day to Remember the Word

It is surprising, but the discovery of the empty tomb does not move either Mary Magdalene or the other women to accept the mystery of the resurrection (v. 10). For the purpose of faith it is not what is seen that



*Why do you look among
the dead for one who is alive?
He is not here, he has risen"
(Lk 24,5)*

matters. The following words allude to this: "Why look for the living among the dead? He is not here he is risen" (v. 5). Luke modifies the statements of Mark and Matthew where the women were to inform the disciples of the resurrection and has substituted it with "two men who stood by them in dazzling apparel" who invited the women to "remember" what Jesus had said (v. 6). They were meant to give the highest priority to listening and recalling the Word that was proclaimed. That is why the women understand "the two men" who help them to fathom what they are beholding in order to link it to the preaching of Jesus and especially the proclamation of his death and resurrection. Was it not what the Risen Christ said to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, helping them to understand what the Holy Scriptures had said about him (24:25 to 27)? Was it not what the Lord had told Martha one day, urging her not to worry and fret about so many things, but to focus the Word which is essential and second to nothing else (10:38-42)? Was it not what Mary of Nazareth did as soon as she pondered

everything that happened to her after she said "yes" to the birth of Jesus (2:19)? Here we are presented with a beautiful and clear invitation not to be overcome by simple curiosity or hurriedly dwell on things pertaining to the mystery of Christ, but to let the Word overwhelm us so that we may be able to internalize and live it. Only if we let the Word dwell in us can we be truly believers in the Risen Lord.

Day of Witness

Only if we allow ourselves to be possessed by the Word will we be able to proclaim the Lord of life. The Evangelist gives us a proof of the goodness of this dynamic when he says that only after the women remembered the words of Jesus (v. 8) "they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest" (v. 9). They did not become witnesses with a special assignment but by that spontaneous initiative that sprung up in them as they remembered the Word and then felt the need to proclaim it. Their testimony, however, was not accepted, not because it was not good. Of course, the ancient Jewish cultural mores prohibited one to believe the word of a woman, but the central reason was that the Eleven and the others were still missing at that crucial time of "remembrance" when the Word that had taken root in their hearts and would help them understand the significance of the empty tomb before which Peter himself gazed in astonishment (v. 12). Soon the time would come when Jesus would make them understand as he did to the two disciples at Emmaus, and confirmed them in the faith which would make them admit most manifestly: "Lord you know everything, you know that I love you" (Jn 21.15-23). □

THE ASSUMPTION: A WOMAN

by His Holiness - Pope Benedict

On 15th August 2007 - the Solemnity of the Assumption, Pope Benedict XVI made this reflection on the first reading of the liturgy of the Assumption taken from the book of Revelation. It was about John's vision of the woman clothed with the sun and about to give birth while the dragon was waiting to devour the child at birth.

♦ First of all, the Pope proposed a key to reading that passage of scripture: "In his great work *De Civitate Dei*, St. Augustine says that the whole of human history is a struggle between two loves: love of God to the point of losing oneself, of total self-giving, and love of oneself (egoism) to the point of despising God, of hating others."

The Pope went on: "This same interpretation of history as a struggle between two loves, between love and selfishness, also appears in the reading from the Book of Revelation that we have just heard. Here, these two loves appear in two great figures. First of all, there is the immensely strong, red dragon with a striking and disturbing manifestation of power without grace, without love, of absolute selfishness, terror and violence.

♦ So we ask: Who is this dragon? The pope says: "At the time when St. John wrote the Book of Revelation, this dragon represented the power of the anti-Christian Roman Emperors, from Nero to Domitian. This power seemed boundless; the military, political and propagandist power of the Roman Empire was such that before it, faith, the Church, appeared as a defenceless woman with no chance of survival and even less of victory. Who could stand up to this omnipresent force that seemed capable of achieving everything? Yet, we know that in the end it was the defenceless woman who won and not egoism or hatred. The love of God triumphed when the Roman Empire accepted the Christian faith."

♦ The symbol of the dragon is also found in the subsequent centuries. "This dragon," the Pope says, "is depicted not only in anti-Christian power of the persecutors of the Church of that time, but the anti-Christian dictatorships of all periods." And he referred to more recent times: "We see this power, the force of the red dragon, brought into existence once again in the great dictatorships of the last century: the Nazi dictatorship and the dictatorship of Stalin... It seemed impossible in the long term that faith could survive in the face of this dragon that was so powerful, that could not wait to devour God-become-a-Child, as well as the woman, the Church. But also in this case, in the end love was stronger than hate."

♦ And today? "Even today" the Pope went on, "the dragon exists in new and different ways. It exists in the form of



AN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

XVI with reflections by Enzo Bianco

materialistic ideologies that tell us it is absurd to think of God; it is absurd to observe God's commandments... Life is only worth living for its own sake. Take everything we can get in this brief moment of life. Consumerism, selfishness and entertainment alone are worthwhile." In substance, "it seems absurd, impossible, to oppose this dominant mindset with all its media and propagandist power." But the Pope concludes: "Even now, this dragon appears invincible, but it is still true today that God is stronger than the dragon, that it is love which conquers rather than selfishness."

♦ The Pope went on: "the other image: the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, surrounded by 12 stars. This is also a multidimensional image. Without any doubt, a first meaning is that it is Our Lady, Mary, clothed with the sun, that is, totally with God; Mary who lives totally in God, surrounded and penetrated by God's light. Surrounded by the 12 stars, that is, by the 12 tribes of Israel, by the whole People of God, by the whole Communion of Saints; and at her feet, the moon, the image of death and mortality. Mary has left death behind her; she is totally clothed in life, she is taken up body and soul into God's glory and thus, placed in glory after overcoming death, she says to us: Take heart, it is love that wins in the end!" "This is the first meaning of the woman whom Mary succeeded in being. The "woman clothed with the sun" is the great sign of the victory of love, of the victory of goodness, of the victory of God."

♦ Finally, the Pope mentions a second and more powerful significance: "Yet, this woman who suffered, who had to flee, who gave birth with cries of anguish, is also the Church, the pilgrim Church of all times. In all generations she has to give birth to Christ anew, to bring him very painfully into the world, with great suffering.... However, in all ages, the Church, the People of God, also lives by the light of God and as the Gospel says is nourished by God, nourishing herself with the Bread of the Holy Eucharist. Thus, in all the trials in the various situations of the Church through the ages in different parts of the world, she wins through suffering. And she is the presence, the guarantee of God's love against all the ideologies of hatred and selfishness."

Pope concludes: "We see of course that today too the dragon wants to devour God who made himself a Child. Do not fear for this seemingly frail God; the fight has already been won. Today too, this weak God is strong: he is true strength. Thus, the Feast of the Assumption is an invitation to trust in God and also to imitate Mary. □



THE SAINT OF DEVIL'S ISLAND

from Fr. Ian Doulton's collection

For Pierre Durand the story began the day he became a priest, for us the story begins ten years later in a courtroom in Paris.

The prosecuting attorney was conducting his final interrogation of the prisoner: "You, Father Pierre have been pastor of the village of San Remy for ten years, is that true?" "Yes, that is true," came the meek reply. "During all these ten years you have enjoyed the respect and confidence of everyone in the village of San Remy, have you not?" "Yes I have." "You enjoyed the confidence of even the widow Duvalle, a fearful and suspicious woman?" "Yes." "Is it true that you were the only person in the entire village of San Remy to whom she would open the door of her house after sundown?" "Yes it is true." "The widow Duvalle kept large sums of money in her house, you knew that, did you not?" "Yes I knew it." "The morning after the widow Duvalle was discovered strangled in her house, across from your church a pair of rubber shoes and a cassock stained with blood were discovered in the garden of the rectory. Were the rubber shoes in question your rubber shoes?" "Yes." "Was the cassock, stained with blood, your cassock?" "It was." "Did you know that by her will the widow Duvalle left you her entire fortune?" "I did." "Do you still say that you did not

murder the widow Duvalle?" "I am innocent."

The prosecutor then interrupted and said that the prosecution remained. Fr. Pierre was asked to stand and face the court and his sentence was read out: "Are you prepared to receive the sentence of this court?" "I am," came the firm reply. His Honour the judge spoke: "You have heard the evidence against you. I am prepared to exercise leniency if you confess to the murder of the widow Duvalle. Have you anything to say to this court before sentence is passed?" Fr. Pierre looked out over the crowded courtroom and said in a calm and steady voice: "As I stand before God, I am innocent."

"Fr. Pierre Durand," the judge went on, "this court finds you guilty of the murder of the widow Duvalle and sentences you to Devil's Island for the remainder of your natural life and may God have mercy on you."

The next convict ship that headed for Devil's Island carried seven hundred prisoners in their barred cages deep in the hold of the ship where the doomed men gathered according to sympathy or experience in crime: only one man stood alone and that was Fr. Pierre. But he still knelt in prayer while the others cursed and grumbled. Twenty days of misery at sea came to an end for the

convicts in the green hell of Devil's Island.

Fr. Pierre is then assigned to a lumber camp which is in the heart of the jungle. All day long in the steaming heat he and the other convicts must chop down trees half-naked, half-starving, eaten alive by swarms of mosquitoes. The men hack away till they are drenched with sweat and sobbing with exhaustion. Fr. Pierre suffers with the rest but he never complains.

Jacques and Marcel are two convicts working together and they are tired and sick and irritable. They watch as Fr. Pierre passes them. He has finished his task and offers to help Jacques who is struggling when a guard comes by and kicks Jacques in the back breaking his spine. In his last moments Jacques mutters: "Out of the green hell into the red one." Fr. Pierre consoles him and tells him that God will pardon him if only he asks for it. "Will you hear my confession?" Jacques mutters and with the last few whispers and a quick absolution Jacques dies in peace.

Day by day Fr. Pierre grows as thin as the others with hunger and fever but he never rests if there is a weaker man to be helped. The dying began to ask him to give them the last sacraments. The most savage curse with regret when after a year in the jungle Fr. Pierre is transferred to take charge of the infirmary of a new place.

It is the inner circle of hell. Here the rebellious convicts are sentenced as incorrigibles. They

work all day in the swamps up to their waists in mud and water. Mosquitoes feed on their bare bodies until all the men come down with malaria. The guards have their own system of making the convicts' existence more unbearable and Fr. Pierre even though in-charge of the infirmary is still a convict. "No incorrigible is allowed quinine when he has had punishment for a month." "They will all die with malaria," pleads Fr. Pierre. "So will all the rest of these animals. What else are they? The next boat will bring a new load to replace these." Fr. Pierre makes the mistake of telling the guard that he is in charge of the sick for which he receives a kick in the stomach for insolence. He is reported for exchanging quinine for cigarettes or bananas in return. But Fr. Pierre gives what he receives to those who are dying.

Fr. Pierre endures this existence for fifteen years in the very heart of that green hell. Then the list of dead at Au Repour grows too long for even Devil's Island. The jungle camp is closed. By this time Fr. Pierre has won a place in the hearts of all the convicts. Even the guards have learned to respect him. When the incorrigibles are scattered to other camps, Fr. Pierre makes a request that stuns the whole prison colony. He asks to be sent to "Isle Saint Louis!"

In its miserable shacks lie the dregs of Devil's Island convicts who have contracted leprosy. With little food and almost no medicine they crawl about in all stages of the disease. To this inferno, among the outcasts of the outcasts, Fr. Pierre asks to be sent.

He passes five years among the living dead when one day they bring into an already over-crowded hut a leper convict on a stretcher. The disease in him is far advanced. His face has nothing human left in it. Fr. Pierre kneels beside the stretcher. He attempts to put a bandage on his face and the man refuses to be touched by Fr. Pierre. "Don't touch me, I can't stand it," comes the reply from that mass of putrefying flesh.

He asks Fr. Pierre, who he is. On finding out that it is Fr. Pierre he is shocked. "No, you can't be. Fr. Pierre Durand? You don't know me? You don't recognize me? Somebody you knew in San Remy?" There is a pause and a sob and then come the words: "Fr. Pierre, I am Jean Duquesne." He shouts out loud and calls to all those around into the hut. "All you people here, listen, come closer. I want to tell you something." Fr. Pierre wants Jean to lie down but Jean raises himself on his elbows. "Listen, all of you. I was Fr. Pierre's gardener in the village of San Remy. One night I dressed myself in Fr. Pierre's cassock and rubber shoes. I went to the widow Duvall's house. I knew she would open the door if she saw the cassock. When she saw it was me she screamed. I caught her by the throat to silence her. She died."

Fr. Pierre consoles him: "You did not mean to kill her." Jean continues: "But I did, and then, to hide it all, I started to bury the rubbers and the cassock in your garden. Fr. Pierre saw me digging. I was afraid he would suspect something. I knew a way to seal

his lips forever. I told him I wanted to make my confession to him. I told him everything. I knew I was safe then. He could never tell what I had done." Fr. Pierre sadly shakes his head.

Jean let Fr. Pierre be arrested even though he did not have the slightest idea that they would suspect him. When he heard that Fr. Pierre was convicted, he was afraid to confess. He felt he was too young and did not want to die.

Jean went on: "Even when you were condemned to Devil's Island I was afraid to speak." Fr. Pierre now speaks and breaks the silence: "Jean, God has already punished you. Now pray to him, my poor friend. Ask his pardon." Jean pleads and asks if he could make a written confession. Fr. Pierre refuses to sign any declaration about the murder at San Remy.

The papers ordering his release finally arrive. It is too late he is dying. In the infirmary of the jungle camp he meets Marcel, now a veteran convict taking care of sick prisoners. He comes by Fr. Pierre's bed and mutters: "Twenty years in hell, all for that scum of a Jean Duquesne. You could have saved yourself any day with a few words." But Fr. Pierre replies: "I could not. What he told me was more sacred than my very life. Marcel, it was the will of God that brought me here. He chose me to care for the souls of his poor lost children. See? For someone on Devil's Island, the vocation of a priest is always the same." Marcel cannot hold his tears. He turns his face and says: "You're a man, Fr. Pierre, a real man!" □

walking with the Church



THE VENERATION OF RELICS

Office of the Salesian Missions

Q. Why do we venerate the relics of saints?

A. Precisely due to the conviction that the saints were very close to the Father, *it was understood that they were powerful intercessors.* It is God who is prayed to through the intercession of the saints. He would not deny anything to those who had loved Jesus all during their lives.

The saints then are not simply deceased persons. In many inscriptions found written in the catacombs we find: "It is holy and salutary to pray for the dead so that they may be absolved of their sins," precisely because praying for them one hoped in a certain way to accelerate his own encounter with the Father. On the contrary *the prayer directed to the saints is a prayer of intercession.* This is not the same as the prayer of adoration which can and should be directed only to the Most Holy Trinity. For this motive the saints began to be venerated like martyrs in the first centuries. And their mortal remains and relics were venerated with the same devotion.

In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, we find a more precise synthesis of all that we have said so far. "*The Church has always believed that the apostles*

and Christ's martyrs, who gave the supreme witness of faith and charity by the shedding of their blood, are closely united with us in Christ...and soon there were added to these others who had chosen to imitate more closely the virginity and poverty of Christ, and still others whom the outstanding practice of the Christian virtues and the wonderful graces of God recommended to the pious devotion and imitation of the faithful."

To look on the life of those who have faithfully followed Christ is to be inspired with a new reason for seeking the city which is to come (cf. Heb. 13:14 and 11:10), while at the same time we are taught a most safe path by which, despite the vicissitudes of the world. *It is most fitting, therefore, that we love those friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ* who are also our brothers and outstanding benefactors, and "humbly invoking them, and having recourse to their prayers, their aid and help in obtaining from God through his Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, our only Redeemer and Saviour, the benefits we need." Every authentic witness of love we can offer to those who are in heaven tends to and terminates in Christ, "the crown of all the saints," and through him in God who is wonderful in his saints and is glorified in them" (LG 50). □

DON BOSCO'S SUFFERINGS

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

Don Bosco always maintained his sense of humour even through his trials, both physical and moral.

His first biographies mention his rare physical strength. Yet he suffered many serious physical ailments. It would be rather difficult to list the several ailments that tormented Don Bosco throughout his life. It is sufficient to mention that he suffered from palpitations, varicose veins, swelling in his feet, travel sickness, persistent insomnia, nephritis, dysentery, constant sore eyes that almost led him to blindness not to mention his bad teeth and severe headaches.

His Moral Sufferings

Among his severe moral sufferings perhaps the most painful but certainly not the only one was the ten years of an inadvertent conflict with Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi, the archbishop of Turin.

Through all this Don Bosco always maintained his sense of humour throughout his trials and sorrows. According to the deposition of Fr. Michael Rua, who was close to him for about forty years, he mentioned that when Don Bosco seemed more cheerful than usual, it was an indication that he was undergoing some serious problem. If he smiled and



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

even told you a joke it meant that things were really bad. "Outwardly he looked always serene, but when to his outward calm Don Bosco added facetiousness, it was a clear sign to Rua (who knew him well) that his troubles were acute. (cf EBM 6, 368).

His Sicknesses

During his illness Don Bosco never lost his peace of mind. During his life, the Lord permitted him to be continuously marked with silent physical suffering. So quiet that many do not realize how much he suffered.

While he was recovering from an illness in December 1871 and seeking his skin falling in flakes he jokingly told Enria, one day: "See how bad I am, so bad that I have to shed my old skin! Let's hope the new one will be tough enough to withstand the gales and thunderstorms now lashing the

world. Be convinced that all our physical and mental powers should have but this goal - God's glory" (cf. 10.265 MB).

His Last Years

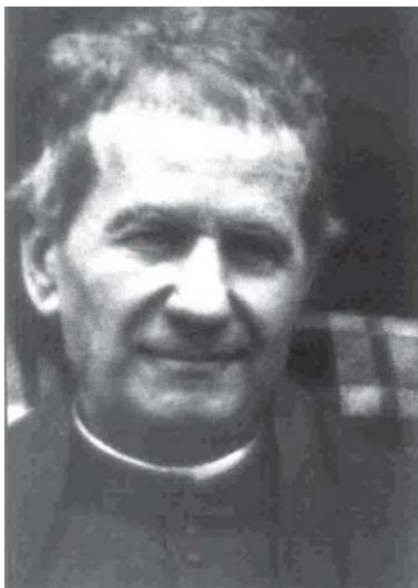
On the feast of Mary Help of Christians, May 24, 1886 he was overwhelmed by the crowd. He could barely stand on his feet and he turned to his secretary and whispered into his ear, "Would it be all right to give them a couple of punches, out of devotion?" (cf EBM 18,114)

When those who were less experienced just pulled him along they hurt him instead of helping. When someone noticed that they had hurt him, they anxiously would ask for his pardon, and he would answer, "Oh! Do not worry. The biggest hunk of all always sits tight! (cf EBM 17, 422)

During his last illness, as his secretary Fr. Viglietti was serving him some soup, he pretended to hold the bowl for him, so that he could more easily raise the spoon to his lips, "Ah you would like to eat it yourself, right?" At another time he said to his secretary, "Viglietti, give me some iced coffee...but make sure it's hot." Whenever the Salesians went to meet him he was always joking!

One day while they were talking to the doctor on how to ease his discomfort he said to Fr. Belmonte: "What you have to do is this: Tie a rope around my neck and drag me from one bed to the other." To those who asked: "Don Bosco, what can I do to help? He said, "Help me to breathe..."

On the evening of January 17th,

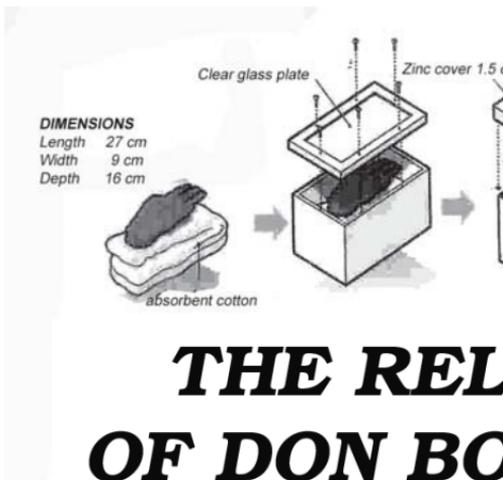


*Don Bosco
at Barcelona (1886)*

Fr. John Baptist Francesia gave a hand in the compassionate task of lifting him bodily from the bed. "Oh there was no need to disturb such a celebrity for so little," Don Bosco said. "Father Sala you alone would have been able to do it."

And he tried to encourage Dr. Fissore: "So you want to raise the dead to life? Tomorrow I'll be setting out on a long journey." (cf. EBM 18.447-454, passim).

Don Bosco died peacefully on January 31, 1888 as the bells of the church pealed the Angelus. He was called the saint of cheerfulness. Always humorous and witty, he obviously wanted to demonstrate to young people Christian joy. His serenity and joy revealed a deep inner peace, but along with it, the goodness and the wit of simple people. □



The Transportation

There is a light truck custom built to transport the relic for each host country - to be shipped beforehand from Italy. The Italian chauffeurs have made a vow never to give up the wheel during the transport of the relic and never to separate themselves from it.



DON BOSCO VISITS WESTERN INDIA

4 - 5 August: Baroda
 6 August: Nashik
 7 August: Ahmednagar
 8 - 9 August: Pune
 10 August: Lonavla
 11 August: Vasai/Virar
 12 August: Borivli
 13 - 16 August: Matunga,
 Shrine of Don Bosco's
 Madonna,

South Americas: June 2000

Interamerica: March - October

East Asia: Oceania: November

South Asia: May - November

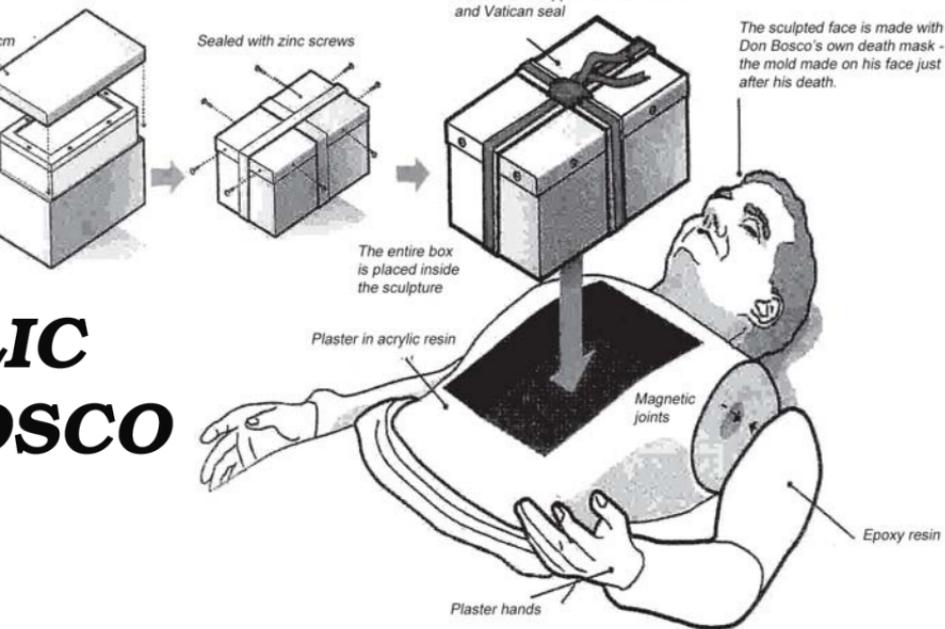
Africa-Madagascar: December
 July - August

West Europe: May - June
 September

North Europe: December 2000

Italy - Middle East: December

IC OSCO



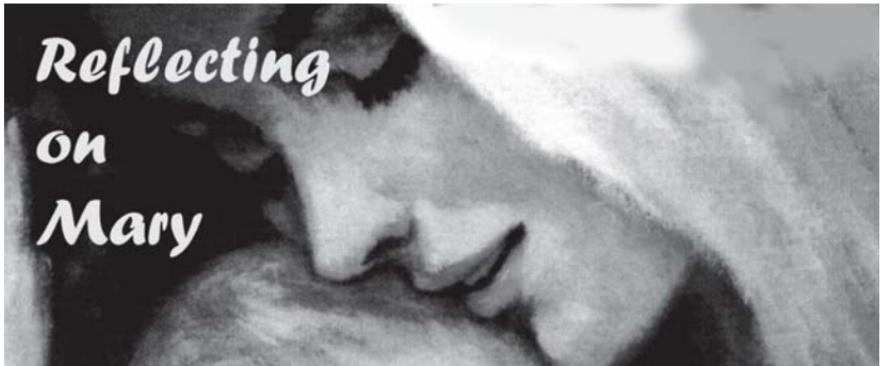
September 2009 - February 2010
 March 2010
 April 2010 - April 2011
 May 2011
 June 2011 - April 2012
 May 2012
 June 2012
 July 2012 - November 2012
 December 2012 - August 2013
 September 2013 - 2014



The urn is accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity from the Archbishop of Turin and the Vatican Secretary of State.



Those who take part in these activities obtain a plenary indulgence (remission of temporal punishment due to sin).



MARY: LADDER, BRIDGE AND DOOR

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

De Maria nunquam satis - "you can never say enough about Mary," is a well-known quote that has been popular down the centuries. There is so much that has been written, narrated, sung, painted, drawn and danced about the Mother of Jesus! Among the innumerable praises rendered to Mary down the centuries, there is this ancient and very beautiful hymn called the *Akathistos* from the Byzantine liturgy. In this carefully crafted poetic expression of love and praise we find marvelous images and expressions that celebrate in poetic form Mary's beauty. We present here just three images that are very evocative and simple.

Rejoice, heavenly ladder by which God came down:

Rejoice, bridge that conveyest us from earth to Heaven!

Rejoice, door of solemn mystery!

Man has always perceived that the distance between earth and heaven as insurmountable, between this world and the

mysterious and unattainable place where the Godhead dwells. He has always yearned to shrink this distance in order that the divine sphere should embrace humanity. 'Only rend the heavens and come down' (Isaiah 63.19) that expresses mankind's deep yearning.

Humanity has tried to bridge this gap on its own initiative and through its own effort. Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of trying to "become like God" (Gen 3:5). Their descendants tried to "build a city and a tower whose top would reach up to heaven" (Genesis 11:3). Of course their enterprise suffered painful consequences. As history progressed, humanity realized that for man to "ascend" to heaven was not possible unless it was preceded by God's "descent" to earth. Therefore they turned to God in prayer and so he 'bent down' to them (Ps. 14.2, 53.3, 102.20, 113.6) and so every divine intervention was a "descent" of God to his people (Exodus 3:8; 19.11, 11.17 Nm; Ps 144.5).

The Earth is a reflection of heaven's beauty

In time the idea that God loves humankind manifested itself in certain places, places chosen by him as points of contact between heaven and earth. Jacob exclaimed after he had dreamt about the stairway that rose up to heaven: "*How awesome is this place! It is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*" (Gen 28:17). At the time of David and Solomon, the holy place par excellence becomes the city of Jerusalem and especially the temple. Since then, it was the greatest wish if every pious Jew to visit that hallowed spot.

With the incarnation the situation changed. Now the point of encounter between the divine and the human spheres is no longer a place but a person, the Son of God made man, whom we profess in the Creed: "for us men and for our salvation *he came down from heaven.*" He brings heaven to earth and raises earth to heaven. In becoming an inhabitant of this earth he announces to his fellowmen the good news that the earth is a reflection of the beauty of heaven. The entire universe is a sacrament of divine love.

This transformation was achieved through Mary's humble cooperation. She is the mother who, in a unique way, makes tangible, corporeal and human, the presence of God through the overshadowing of the Spirit (Lk 1:35). Luke sees Mary as the new tabernacle and the new temple; the New Ark of the Covenant; God's new dwelling place, the new venue for salvation. In the iconographic tradition she is often portrayed as *Platitera*, "wider than the heavens." The One whom the heavens cannot

contain dwells in her womb. He, through whom "all things were made" (Jn 1:3), in whom "all things in heaven and on earth are united" (Eph 1:10), now lives in Mary in order to transform the world into his dwelling and all human beings as his companions, fellow citizens, no longer foreigners, but "saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19).

The "Hodigitria" that Points the Way

In Mary, not only her physical but also her inner space becomes the locus where heaven embraces earth. In the Our Father, that Jesus taught his disciples they say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). Jesus demonstrates how this long-awaited embrace is realized even by God when we do the will of the Father. He could point out his mother as a model, in pronouncing her "*fiat.*" She becomes the "stairway" and the "bridge" between heaven and earth.

The ladder, the bridge and the gate: all of them are images denoting a dynamic linkage, it denotes communication and movement. In the Gospels, Mary is often seen on the move. She frequently moves: from Nazareth to Ain Karim, to Bethlehem, to Jerusalem, to Egypt, she is constantly in motion and her interior movement is intense too. Her "pilgrimage of faith" (Lumen Gentium 58) is a model for our journey towards our heavenly goal. Just as Jesus reveals himself as "the way" (Jn 14:6), "the door" (Jn 10:1), Mary is venerated by the Church as "Hodigitria," as the one who points the Way, and "*ianua coeli*" the gate of heaven. □

NEWSBITS

PHILIPPINES

Edita Aguinaldo-Dacuycuy, 66, only wants the best for her daughter who has cerebral palsy. And in her search for things to ease her daughter's pain and suffering she discovered a little known fruit from the cactus family called a *pitaya* or Dragon fruit.

Around six-years ago, a friend from Macau recommended Dacuycuy try dragon fruit to help relieve her daughter Kate's frequent constipation, which is common among cerebral palsy patients. After witnessing positive results, the close-knit family decided to grow the fruit in their backyard.

That decision has been turned into a modern-day success story. "It was beyond our expectations that we would achieve this much, but thanks to God, He made all things possible," said Dacuycuy, brimming with confidence as she walked the red carpet at Malacanang Palace on Monday to receive a presidential trophy, a citation and check worth 100,000 pesos (US\$2,325) for being this year's most outstanding commercial crop farmer. The former insurance company manager and psychology graduate from the University of the Philippines never thought what started out as a hobby would see her become known as the "Dragon Lady" of the northern Philippines.

SPAIN

A Spanish judge has charged 20 Salvadoran soldiers with the killing of six Jesuit priests and two women during El Salvador's civil

war. The priests, five of whom were Spanish, their housekeeper and her daughter were shot dead by soldiers in 1989, BBC News reports. The case was filed using Spain's universal jurisdiction law, which holds that some crimes are so grave that they can be tried anywhere.

Among those indicted are two former defence ministers. Col Rene Emilio Ponce was the head of the Salvadoran Armed Forces' joint chiefs of staff at the time of the killings. He was later promoted to general and became the country's defence minister.

According to a report by a United Nations Truth Commission, Gen Ponce, who died earlier this month, ordered the killing of the priests. Gen. Rafael Humberto Larios was the minister of defence at the time of the shooting and was present at the meeting where Col. Ponce ordered the killing, the commission says.

ANDAMANS

When Shanti Teresa Lakra, a Catholic nurse, was posted to a dwindling tribe living in a forest on a small island in the Andaman and Nicobar chain, little did she know it would bring her one of India's top honours.

Lakra, 38, received the Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian award, from President Pratibha Patil on March 24 for her dedicated service to the Ongees, who are on the verge of extinction.

Ten years ago, when she first visited the Ongees, Lakra was the

only female government employee in that cut-off forest. She had difficulty in communicating with the tribal people as she did not know their language.

"I used to communicate through facial expressions or sign language. It built trust in me and they started to respond," Lakra said recently in a telephone interview. The central government has provided a settlement in the forest for these tribal people, who prefer to live naked and eat boiled or roast food. During the hot months they prefer not to live in the settlement. Some like to live near the seashore while others like the forest. "But I had to tend to them wherever they were," Lakra said. The 38-year-old Oraon tribal woman had to traverse difficult forest paths to reach people. "They were very unhygienic. I tried to change their habits and encouraged them to maintain a healthy and clean environment," she said. The nurse had to visit every family as the shy tribal people never opened up about their problems, especially maternity-related cases.

Lakra's determination was such that she stayed on the island after the 2004 tsunami that killed thousands of people in southern parts of India. She had a one-year-old son with her at that time but that too didn't deter her from serving the tribe. "I was alone there but I realized that if I left them, there would be nobody to care for them," she said. Lakra says her biggest support has been her family.

Lakra had to leave her infant son with her in-laws when she went to remote villages. "It wouldn't have been good for the child to live in a



tent, with insects and snakes common during rainy seasons."

Lakra claims her efforts have brought some positive changes in the tribe.

"The tribal women have started wearing clothes. They have become more open in discussing their health problems with our medical staff," she added.

The Ongees numbered just 78 when Lakra first went to the island but now their population has risen to 102. In 2006, she was posted to G.B. Pant Hospital in Port Blair, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a federally-administered hospital. Here she takes care of the medical needs of all the tribes in the Andaman Islands.

The island chain also has four other tribes – Jarawas, Andamanese, Sentinalese and Shompens.

Lakra says she never thought she would get the Padma Shri for her services. "My faith has helped me a lot. I could do all this because God was with me," she said.

She hopes the tribe will someday become part of the wider society. "They have given me so much. They will always be there in my heart," Lakra said. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Thank you Mother Mary for gifting me with a baby boy after the unexpected demise of my dad.

Joshi Paul, Tamil Nadu

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for a safe trip to Mumbai and back and for supplying all my needs.

M. Dodd, Pune

Thank you dearest Mother Mary for the many favours and blessings my family and I have received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. I am deeply grateful especially for blessing my daughter with good health and for helping her to answer her Std XII exams well and for the successful surgery of my brother-in-law. Dearest Mother please continue to help, guide and protect us.

S. Monteiro and Family, Goa

My sincere thanks to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for their constant blessings showered on me and my children.

Mrs. Lorna Pereira, Vasai

I am grateful to Our Blessed Mother for healing my mother Nancy Waring who was suddenly healed when her left leg would not respond due to diabetes.

Mrs. Hollarene Parrie

Many thanks to our Mother Mary for the many blessings, graces and favours showered on us especially during our stay in India.

Jessica and Lance Andrade, Canada

Grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians for my grand daughter's first class in her B. Sc examinations and admission into veterinary college.

Late Mrs. Matilda de Souza, Thane

Our grateful thanks to Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for the many favours received, especially for helping our daughter throughout her pregnancy and for blessing her with a healthy baby girl.

Girgol P. Braganza, Nalla Sopara

My son had passed his entrance written test and sent his online application form for the interview by mistake he interchanged the letter on his email address so he could not get an immediate response. He wrote to the institute about the mistake but did not get any response for many days. I started praying the three Hail Marys which I always do and he got an intimation to appear for the interview and he attended the second one and is awaiting the result. Thank you mother Mary for this and all the other favours.

Irene, Wadala

Thank you very much Mother Mary for giving my son a campus placement in the MOL Shipping Company through his Maritime University in Chennai. In spite of the tsunami in Japan the results were declared within fifteen days and he has also cleared his medicals. We continue to recite the three Hail Marys during the family Rosary and as a casual prayer during the day.

E. Mascarehnas, Mumbai

Grateful thanks to Mother Mary through whose intercession our nephew Yeltsin, 7 years old was diagnosed with high diabetes but has returned to normal life.

Norika & Simon D'Souza, Goa

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

Belated thanks to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys our grandson Dwight was born. We are grateful for the safe delivery and for all the other favours received.

Christopher David, Secunderabad, AP

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the many blessings and favours received through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to intercede for my family.

Maria Antonieta Godinho, Macao, South China

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio, through the faithful recitation of the Three Hail Marys my mother's eyes have been cured.

Savio D'Sa, Mumbai

I thank you Mother Mary for healing my daughter Olga D'Souza who was very sick and was hospitalised. I thank you also for healing her friend and neighbour Rekha as she too was hospitalised and on the point of death but both my daughter and Rekha are completely healed through your intercession.

Orfy Fernandes, Mumbai

All thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for my success and graduation.

Savio, Vashi

I have received numerous favours through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. So many times my family and I were in trouble but the 3 Hail Marys have helped us at all times to get out of trouble. I apologise for delaying my acknowledgement of these favours.

Antonieta Simoes, Macao (South China)

Through the pious recitation of the three Hail Marys my son was given his passport in the nick of time after much difficulty.

Ursula D'Costa

Belated thanks to Our Blessed Mother for all the graces and favours received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Romana Dias, Goa

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to our dear Jesus and Mary for numerous favours received and blessings bestowed on our family through the recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Maria D'Souza, Goa

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for all the graces received and for guiding us in difficult days. Through my daily praying of the three Hail Marys.

Mrs. D. D'Souza, Mumbai

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

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for blessing my sister with a baby boy.

Philo Navis, Tirunelveli

Thank you dear Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the cure of my daughter-in-law and for many other favours received.

Mrs. E. Magalhaes

Our sincere thanks to the Blessed Virgin Mother and Don Bosco for answering my prayers and settling a court case.

F. Rebello, Mumbai

Our grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, and Don Bosco for the innumerable favours bestowed on my family through the recitation of the three hail Marys. Our building redevelopment is in progress and we have also secured alternate accommodation till the completion of the project.

Mrs. Grace Colaco, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for granting us good health and for all the favours we have received.

Always keep us in your care.

L. Miranda, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my son a partner in life and for many other favours received.

I. G. Luis, Mumbai

My sincere gratitude to the Holy Trinity and Mary Help of Christians for granting my daughter the graces she requested and for the many favours I received.

Mrs Silverine Lobo, Mumbai

Sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing my son of his stomach and urinary problems.

A Devotee, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for granting us good health and for all the graces we have received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys and the holy Rosary. Always keep us in your care.

M. Dias, Goa

Our grateful thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the blessings received.

Enid

Sincere thanks to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the well-being of my family and keeping us together.

Mr. Francis Fernandes, Goa

My sincere thanks to Almighty God, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the several favours granted to me and my sons who secured good jobs, for curing all my health problems and depression.

Philomena D'Souza, Goa

Sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary, Joseph and St. John Bosco for granting my son a good job and for all the favours my family received.

Joyce Patel, Mumbai

Thank you dear Jesus for the many graces and favours granted through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio.

Daisy Asda, Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby to my daughter. *Rhonilda Rodrigues, Qatar*

Our sincere gratitude to Mother Mary, Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for the gift of our little Kiesha Gabriella Pauline Fernandes. *M. Fernandes*

My sincere gratitude to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the many favours I have received. *A. McPherson, New Delhi*

My sincere thanks and gratitude to St. Dominic Savio for the speedy recovery of my son. The doctors were suspecting TB but I prayed to Dominic Savio. Thank you Dominic Savio!

Mrs V. Marshall, Mumbai

Thank you dear Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours granted through your intercession. *Philomena Machado, Mumbai*

Many thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby boy. *Mr. & Mrs. Muriel D'Costa, Mumbai*

We wish to express our sincere gratitude and thanks to our dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of my daughter who has been blessed with a healthy baby girl whom we have named Jerusha. *Paul Fernandes & Fly, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a successful operation of my grand daughter and for clear test results as well as blessings bestowed on me and my family. *Mrs. Ursula D'Mello, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus, Mary help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for a successful operation and for many other favours received. *Ms. Marilyn & Bertrand D'Mello, Mumbai*

For the gift of a baby boy, Nathan Noronha delivered after 30 weeks and safely looked after at Breach Candy Hospital. Thank you dear Dominic Savio for keeping Nathan so healthy. *Mr. & Mrs. Jason Ruzel Noronha, Oman*

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

AUGUST 2011

General Intention: World Youth Day:

That World Youth Day in Madrid may encourage young people throughout the world to have their lives rooted and built up in Christ.

Missionary Intention: Western Christians:

That Western Christians may be open to the action of the Holy Spirit and rediscover the freshness and enthusiasm of their faith.