

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

JULY 2011

VOL.13 NO. 3

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*To be more credible
"Easter" Christians
we should look to
Mary who is the
model of the new life
of Easter.*

(Sr. Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA)

Cover: **The Incredulity
of Thomas**
by Caravaggio 1571 -1610,



From The Editor's Desk

A Whispering Wind

There's no doubt about it, we live in the age that has evolved from just sound, to sound with visual accompaniment. We're way past the age of the old radio that was once the centre piece and permanent fixture in our home. True it was cumbersome, with wires sticking out of the back and big valves inside that glowed mysteriously, yet we got all the news we needed and much of the entertainment too. And yet it's not much more than twenty or thirty odd years ago that even the transistor, having succeeded in ousting its big brother, has also faded out into oblivion.

With the advent of digital technology, our 'gizmos' for listening to sounds and watching moving images has become smaller, lighter, more powerful, more flexible and above all portable. They come now in all shapes and sizes and in a bewildering array. They are not forbiddingly expensive so they're within reach of practically everyone. Even young children now frequently have their own 'mobiles' with their particular 'apps' attached for their entertainment. The bulky valve radio and the unassuming transistor were certainly great inventions but they are of a bygone era.

Yet, as with so much else, we can get too much of a good thing. I was struck by that one day last summer as I walked around the foothills on the outskirts of Lonavla. It was one of those glorious days when you feel it's good to be alive. As I topped a small mound near a popular 'hangout' called 'Lion's Point' my ears were suddenly assaulted by a car-stereo thumping out noise (not music) at full blast. A group of yuppies had come for a picnic and there they were, sitting as if mesmerized in a wash of - what I called noise but what they called music, which drowned out all the delicate sounds of those hallowed hills.

Apart from my own irritation at having my peace disturbed, I began to wonder if those youngsters had any idea what they were missing on that glorious day. Did they not know that the bulbuls warbling madly in the thickets nearby? Would they not be enthralled by the elusive koyal with its deep call amidst the thick fauna of those surroundings? or the shy tweet of the sparrows twittering around in the shrubs nearby? Had they never been soothed by the rhythmic tick-tick of grasshoppers? Had they ever tasted the peculiar comfort and wholeness that comes with stillness and silence?

We do need some quiet if we are to live life to the full. It is important for us to have times alone. Jesus knew that: he regularly sought out quiet places where he could be by himself, and at times he wanted to be alone for longer spells. How else was he to be attentive to the voice of his Father?

Perhaps you remember Elijah in the Old Testament? He was to meet God on the holy mountain, Horeb, but wondered how he would recognize him? A great storm came but he didn't find God there. Then came an earthquake, but God didn't reveal himself in the earthquake. Then came a fire, but again God didn't show himself in the fire either. Finally there came the sound of a gentle breeze, and Elijah 'covered his face with his cloak.' He found God in the whisper of the wind.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

7. HELPING OTHERS MAKES YOU PROFICIENT

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Recently I came across a story of a true life experience with plenty of lessons for everyone: "Last winter I was going through a rough and arid patch in my life. I had heaps of unpleasant things dogging my steps each day! I felt very distant from everyone and found I had become quite selfish in the bargain. I was aware that deep down, I hated the way I was feeling and the feeling kept growing in intensity by the hour! Then, one bright morning I suddenly felt as if 'enough is enough!' I woke up and told myself, "You are above all this. Stop feeling sorry for yourself!" I next tried out an experiment with myself, and it has decidedly changed me for the better! I determined that every day I would do at least one act of kindness to anyone who came across the path of my life - It could be anything... and just about anyone who cared to receive some kindness!

Recipients in Plenty

I soon discovered that there were plenty of people needing help strewn all around me: Bringing the trash down to the trash compactor for my eighty year old neighbour, going into the store to buy something for myself and coming out with something for someone else, sitting down with my sister or a friend and just simply listening. Each day brought a whole new range of needy people and experiences reaching out to

them, and pretty soon I was enjoying life which certainly seemed worth living. The part I enjoyed most was doing all these kind actions without even being asked and often anonymously! I watched myself graduate from self discipline, something that I actively made sure I did everyday, to something I looked forward to and even enjoyed on occasions - and finally on to something much greater than that - I find that now I am sincerely all gaga about this novel idea! I try to do something for everybody I can think of in a day! It really does feel great.

"The most recent experience was of my close friend who has been going through a very tough time and has been quite miserable. I have really exhausted my repertoire trying every possible way to be creatively present for him, intensely listening to everything he said, waiting for the tiniest hints to see where I could assist with something small or big, helping him out with a place to stay or just stocking up with plenty of movies, candy, sunflower seeds, a new calculator, a hat, or a book waiting for him. As I sit back and review the effort, I now find that it all comes so automatically and it feels great to make someone smile. Even if, at first, it was not natural in me, it pays to just go out and do it, and I promise it will soon become a part of you and it will feel *fantastic and funtastic too!*"



Jackie Waldman

Reaching Out – A Universal Remedy

What is described here is really a truth that many individuals have discovered for themselves, over the years, often by trial and error. Down in the dumps themselves they found that the best way to get out of it is to forget oneself and genuinely reach out to another in greater distress. The person in need gets help and in the bargain the helper is blessed with a deep sense of fulfillment! In fact, a group of gifted teenagers have worked out ingenious ways of doing just this when caught in deep distress. Accounts of their stories are published in *Teens With the Courage to Give* – by Jackie Waldman; a previous series in *Madonna* actually featured several of these. But the truth works for anyone who dares to try it out; all s/he needs to do is to stop feeling sorry for him/herself and launch into helping another, whoever that person may be, and pronto, the depression and

sadness disappear.

In fact, Jesus himself has told us this when he said, 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets' (Mt 7:12). But, the one condition for this to work effectively is that we genuinely forget ourselves as we make the others' need our own. If we somehow decide to reach out to others only in order that in return we might be blessed ourselves, we would possibly find that we are left high and dry. And the reason is not difficult to ascertain: the focus is still very much on ourselves! When this is our approach what we basically seek is our own good and we actually use the other person's distress only as a stepping stone to achieve our own ends. And whether we are aware of this orientation or not, the scheme just will not work!

Here again we have Jesus' own warning, "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it... For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done'" (Mt 16:24-27). The question of losing one's life simply means that we have to place others before ourselves, their good before our own, their welfare above our own needs... only then will the principle work.

Applies in All Situations

The advice of Jesus applies in all areas of life. The more we focus on ourselves, the more restricted

does our life become: it can span only the area covered by 'I - Me - Myself' which is very narrow indeed! It is only when we have the courage and generosity to break out of the circle circumscribed by Self that we begin to discover new horizons - and what a wealth we then possess! In fact, once we launch into this way of living we find that 'the more we give, the more we receive,' for as St. Francis of Assisi put it so powerfully: "It is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned and in dying that we are born to eternal life!"

In fact, in most cases we could say that our ability to forget Self precisely when we are most in need and reach out to others is the test of the genuineness of our Christian commitment. When a tooth hurts, it is difficult to think of anyone else except the dentist! Unfortunately so many people are Christians today without a thorough understanding of the demands of their Christian vocation. They seem to have accepted Christianity more as a spiritual 'Life Insurance policy' - an automatic guarantee that obtains heaven by the mere fact of going through the Baptismal ceremony. They fail to realize that getting to heaven is not really the point at all. For in his great love for us, the Father has chosen to shower all his blessings on us even now while here in this world. But, all he asks of us is "... strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6:33).

Example of Jesus Himself

We extend God's kingdom

precisely to the extent that we lose ourselves and think of others. In this effort, we have the supreme example of Jesus himself. As the letter to the Philippians has it, 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human

*"Those among you
who will
be truly happy
are the ones
who have
sought and found
how to serve.*

Albert Schweitzer

likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:5-11).

If he, the Son of God, could divest himself so completely for the sake of us, sinners, and he did this out of his tremendous love for each one of us, how much more should we not feel ourselves privileged to follow his example. After all, did he not choose us (from among so

many other possible candidates) to follow in his steps, to be associated with him in the extension and fulfillment of the Kingdom the Father sent him to establish? And even when we do follow him one hundred percent, what we would be called to lose is but an iota, a paltry fraction, compared to what he sacrificed for our sake – his very divinity and intimacy with the Father!

In Practice

Given our endemic self-centredness, if we are to venture on to this path of self-forgetfulness, we would need real discipline, at least at the beginning. Each morning as we wake up, we would need to spend a few moments blessing God for keeping us still in his service, and then visualize the different persons we could reach out to during the coming day. When we begin to see this as our daily ‘assignment’ with regard to the kingdom, we would soon find ourselves rejoicing at every opportunity we get as our allotted quota for the day, and act on it with a sense of pride and gratitude. It takes no more than a fortnight to discover that our daily conscious application has produced a new habitual selfless way of thinking and responding. What seemed so difficult and demanding has become a joyful welcome blessing!

When we can link all this effort to the Eucharist we celebrate we would find that it acquires an even greater value and attractiveness. We then see our little efforts as joined to the mighty salvific work of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. We would find ourselves standing at the foot of the Cross together

with Mary the mother of Jesus and St. John his beloved disciple, uniting our little bit for the benefit of all mankind. We would also notice that our Eucharist is no longer routine, but that each day has a certain freshness about it, because each time we would have something different and special to present at the time of the Presentation of the Gifts.

Then as we begin to live out our commitment, the sense of adventure and purposeful living will fill our day and no matter how many adversities cross our path that day, they will not succeed in depriving us of a sense of fulfillment and triumph of God’s grace. Our life will have a purpose and a mission; our journey through life will be meaningful and we would no longer feel ourselves deprived, depressed or wanting in any way. Come what may, we would have something to contribute towards the well-being of our world; we live not like parasites, off someone else’s labours and sufferings, but as positive contributors. And when our time comes to stand before the Father’s throne, we can be sure we will hear his consoling words, ‘Come, ye blessed ... I was hungry ...’ And in typical fashion we too will say in wonder, ‘But Lord, when did I see you hungry and thirsty...’ because there will have been so many who benefited from our little efforts that we would hardly remember who they all are! And in the bargain, we will have had no time to worry about our own little pin-pricks – these will have been drowned in the ocean of joy and contentment the Lord provides for his faithful ones! □

OF THORNS AND DREAMS

by *Giovanna Colonna*
(T/A - ID)

Some seed fell on a rocky path and as they grew they withered for lack of moisture. Other seed fell among thorns and they grew up together and the thorns choked them.

What's my life?

What will happen to the rest of my life?

How will I live out my life?

We skip the regrets that we have experienced and sometimes only refer to them as 'lost opportunities,' things that 'could have changed my life;' and we ponder only on what today has to offer.

This morning some of us returned from work, others woke up, yet others went to bed. Some may have washed, dressed up and taken off for work while some could not even get up or do anything...others hoped to do more. That is probably how another day begins and it is similar to what happened the previous day and it will be the same tomorrow.

In the past week some of us prayed, briefly examined our consciences, sought forgiveness, thanked God for the day, resolved to do better the next day...we sowed some seed.

We've not arrived at the next day. Now promises are to be kept, commitments are to be honoured, resolutions kept. That is when the seed germinates.

But the weather is dry, arid, there is drought; the drought of monotony, habit, fatigue and discouragement dulls us into a

catatonic stupor reducing our awareness and consciousness as if we were in a mist where everything is muted, rarefied and we are catapulted into this gloomy mood and we are numbed, slightly intoxicated by this strange light which obscures reality and our surroundings.

Then there are the thorns of hardships, misunderstandings, mishaps, resentments, absences and the lack of interest that at times turns hostile and all this seasoned with a bit of cynicism. What are we to do? Struggle? Fight? Mediate? Or surrender?

There are so many thorns and they prick more and more. The superficial scratches of the past that surprised us now draw our attention to the scars they leave. There are deeper wounds some of which are healed while others are still sore. We cannot find any salves to soothe them and so we make the round of doctors, healers, magicians, charlatans who appear to us, well-dressed, polite and even helpful.

They promise complete and immediate recovery and they have an irresistible charm, offering peace, tranquility and serenity for ourselves and our loved ones. We are willing to pay anything, to make whatever sacrifices are necessary just to make everything right immediately.

With the passage of time we have developed a kind of antidote to our inner pain. The pain of some of our wounds and bruises are not felt immediately. We notice them

only towards evening or late at night when everything is quiet, in the darkness.

A crown of thorns was placed on the head of the Son of Man as a sign of defiance, a crown of thorns was a sign of omission, for all the times that the seed did not germinate since it was suffocated by aridity and excuses.



My daughter is working, my son is studying. They are satisfied living in the present. They plan for a future - without God.

I have my family, my home, my work, my past: Are there some future plans? Is it reckless to discuss the present and the future, to plan for tomorrow while you have a prosperous present and a rich past? The thorns are irrigated with fresh water and they are likely to become sterile because they tend to choke and wither the crops along their path.

We plough and dig and fertilize: We don't deny what has been. Perhaps we need forgiveness and grace! But it is important that we do not deaden our consciences, sending your brain into hibernation and locking up your hearts.

It is possible to return to the Father's house, indeed, you must! Too often we confuse our propensity towards sins of omission for privacy, impropriety, exaggerated humility but that is false and hypocritical and with the passage of time we convince ourselves to live in this cocoon by force of habit.

Nothing destroys and suffocates one's armour than the denial of the wounds and the

scars we possess.

The risen Jesus laid down the crown of thorns but did not hide his wounds, the mark of the nails, the lance and the lashes were quite evident and Thomas recognized all of them.

The past, the agony, injustices are not denied but transfigured. He began a new life beyond all imagining with far greater plans. The past was a necessary preparation for this apotheosis but now many changes will take place, many discussions, questions will be answered and all consistent with his thought and his mission.

The call is unique, but their realization is always original and must be renewed according to the experience we have gained along the way.

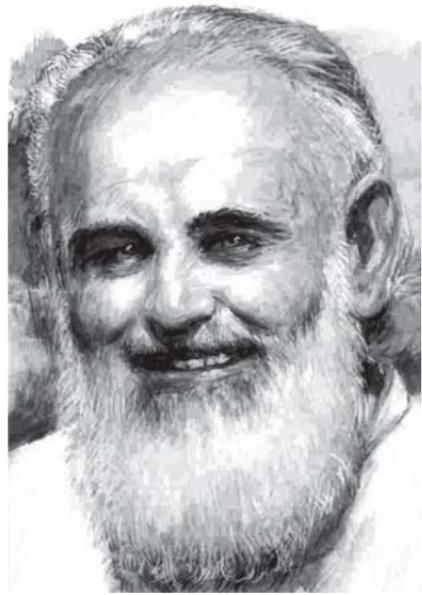
Jesus did not limit himself only to giving the guests at a banquet something to drink, but over the years he fed multitudes.

We think and plan in the company of our past but with our eyes raised to heaven and beyond the horizon of certainty and comfort. We can almost see the place prepared for us, as always, by the One who gives us the example of originality and novelty. □

SALESIAN SAINT OF THE MONTH

ORESTES MARENGO 1906 - 1998

Orestes Marengo was born at Diano d'Alba, a Piedmontese town in the province of Cuneo on August 29, 1906. For three years he attended the elementary school of the Salesian Sisters. His parents wished him to continue his studies at Valdocco where he could certainly come to know the first generation of Salesians like Fr. Albera, Fr. Francesia. During his second year of high school Providence designed that he be sent to substitute Fr. Stephen Ferrando who, a few months later would leave as a missionary to India. Orestes too wanted to go to the missions so Fr. Ricaldone sent him to begin his novitiate in Shillong under the guidance of Fr. Ferrando his first teacher and the rector of the studentate of philosophy. Orestes made a tour of the villages in Assam, learning the local languages and opening holiday Oratories. During his theological studies he had the good fortune to work with Fr. Constantine Vendrame who was truly a Salesian Pastor. His main missionary motivation were the words of Don Bosco *Da Mihi Animas*. Orestes was ordained on April 2, 1932, at the church of the Holy Redeemer in Shillong. From that moment he gave himself wholeheartedly to visiting the villages of North-East India. He travelled far and wide in those parts carrying the Gospel message to thousands of families, helping them in every possible way. He immediately won the affection of



the people because he was able to speak the more than twenty languages of that region. A man of prayer, affable and friendly, he put everyone at ease with affection and kindness. In 1951 he was appointed bishop of the nascent Diocese of Dibrugarh. As Bishop he continued to visit the villages, preaching and hearing the confessions of the faithful. In 1964 he was appointed first bishop of the diocese of Tezpur and five years later he was entrusted with the care of the future Diocese of Tura. He resigned early to make room for a local bishop. He spent the last years of his life in the apostolate. For a long time he helped the new Bishop of Tura seeking funds to support the new diocese. He continued to be available at the various mission stations until his death on July 30, 1998 at Tura. Obedience to his superiors, a yearning for the salvation of souls and a typical Salesian optimism were the most evident of this fourth servant of God of North East India. □



I WANTED TO BE LIKE THEM...

Br. Gabriel Garniga, sdb

Metiyagane Technical School, Sri Lanka

I feel happy when I think that God thought of me from all eternity and he had a plan for my life. I am Bro. Gabriel Garniga, a Salesian brother for the last 49 years and I am very happy in my Salesian vocation.

I am the youngest of six brothers and 4 sisters. My elder brother is a priest and my elder sister, a nun. I studied at the Salesian technical school in Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy.

I was an altar boy. The parish priest wanted to send me to the seminary, but I was undecided. At the age of 13, I met a Salesian priest who suggested that I follow a technical course in a Salesian school. I welcomed the proposal and opted to learn carpentry, but I was asked to join the mechanical section since there were no vacancies available in the carpentry department. During my training I was impressed by the way of life of my Salesian instructors and I wanted to be like them. I became a Salesian brother.

In the novitiate I felt the desire to be a missionary and ten years later my dream came true when I left Italy for Bhutan. After spending ten happy years with the youth of that Himalayan kingdom I landed in Sri Lanka to help the young people of that country.

With my mechanical qualification I was able to help thousands of young people to find their honourable place in life, to



support their families and serve their country.

God has a special plan for the life of each man and woman in this world. The happiness and joy in our life comes from the 'YES' we say to His plan for us.

Mary, our heavenly mother and Don Bosco are shining examples of those who accepted the plan of God in their life.

It is important that we discover the meaning and purpose in our lives; that we discover the great plans our mighty God has for each of us.

Some of you may be called to be Salesian Brothers. This is a meaningful and beautiful calling. Don't hesitate - take the first step in faith - speak to someone who can help and guide you; God will do the rest. □

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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



IN HIS HEART

(The Feast of the Sacred Heart 1 July 2011)

by Francesco Pignatelli

The Heart of Christ is a symbol of God's merciful love for humankind. It is the story of divine love which finds its climax in the manifestation of the Heart of Christ. It is precisely this story of divine love that is the subject of the devotion to and the spirituality of the Sacred Heart.

The Biblical Language of Love

The verb 'to love' in Greek is *αγαπᾶν* (agapan) but it underwent a semantic leap from the original classical Greek where its meaning was vague and meant "respect with affection, to care for." In the Septuagint translation of the New Testament it is translated as "to love freely and unconditionally." But what is love? *Αγάπε* (agape) love is different from erotic (*εἶδος*) love which is driven by lust and it is different from friendship which is (*πηνιλία*) that is not motivated by anything other than the beloved. Neither can agape love be defined only as the highest virtue (Col 3:14). Agape indicates more than simply a characteristic of human relationships. The term agape refers to the establishment of a new term



that cannot be limited by human vocabulary. St. Paul was well aware of this when, in his hymn to agape love he compares it to the babbling of a child (cf. 1 Cor 13:11). He could not help but list fifteen human qualities that cannot confine agape love (cf. 1 Cor 13:4-7). In fact, agape love is a reality which by its nature participates in the magnanimity of God, indeed, it is his very being, which we, on the human plane cannot even vaguely grasp.

Only Jesus Reveals the Father

The 'agape of God' or the very being of God as love is also the reference point for all theological understanding. He is love and only through love can he be freely understood. In fact, in revealing his face, God even establishes how we might communicate with him. This will dynamically characterize the way we think and speak of God.

Now, since God has revealed who he is, once and for all in Jesus Christ, we have a unique way to reach God. The rationale of agape love is that it is a love which is self-emptying thus becoming a form of revelation which will influence the Christian understanding of the Faith and theology as found in the story of Christ's life and his death on the cross.

In Jesus we pierce the inaccessibility of God because "no one has ever seen God; the only Son, who lives in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). He has given us the full revelation and final statement of who God is. "He so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). This is the supreme expression of the Father's love (1 John 4:9-10) because of which we can say that the definition of God is love (1 Jn 4:8,16). From Christ's presence in history the reality of divine love can be traced back to the depth of the Father's love which is not superficial or peripheral but infinitely profound.

The Image of the Heart

The heart has always possessed a dual symbolism, one natural and the other cultural. The palpitations of the heart are a symptom of a

heightened physiological or emotional state. This common experience makes one conclude that the heart is the seat of the will, of courage and above all of love, but more especially it refers to an active love-life that could be both active and passive. All this indicates a linkage between one's emotions and one's corresponding physical reactions. So the word heart - especially in a pre-scientific culture did not refer to an anatomical organ or some inner affection but a relationship that was established between two persons who experienced each other's presence in their innermost beings. From the time of the Renaissance, with the development of the anatomical and physiological sciences, one notices a change in the use of the metaphor of the heart and the earlier meaning of the word now takes on an anatomical significance while the latter continues to evoke the idea of a centre that unifies the two aspects, the physical and the moral (or affective) of the human experience. This is forcefully confirmed by biblical research which shows that the Eastern cultures understood the term "heart" very differently from Western civilizations. In the Bible the heart was not a part of man but the entire person. It was a union of body and spirit, the seat of all decision-making. It was the centre of man, the source of relationships, moral and physical which unites him to God and to his fellow human beings, giving him the ability to love them and to commune with God and with others too.

Hidden in the heart are its secrets which when revealed one sees the entire person in the open. The symbol of the heart situated in the breast of the person reveals the love

and affection of the person as one notices the beloved disciple John leaning on the breast of Jesus. We need also to keep in mind the partial synonymy between the terms *καρδια* (heart), *κοιλια*, (stomach, breast) and *σπλῶνκνα* (the bowels or the human viscera) alluded to in scripture.

In referring to the “heart” today our culture alludes to affection, human love which is rather emotional and sentimental. This description seems rather restrictive as compared to the heart as alluded to in the biblical world.

The Heart in the Bible

In the Bible the heart is also referred to as the seat of the intellect and locus of planning and willing. This is why the translation of the Septuagint interprets and translates *leb* as heart and *nous* as mind or intellect when actually both words are similar. Christian writers of the early centuries preserved in general, the biblical language even when referring to the heart. But since the third century Fathers tried to explain everything intellectually in ways that were unusual in Scripture.

How Jesus loves

Even the Second Vatican Council, referring to the Council of Chalcedon, Constantinople II and Constantinople III twice deepened the understanding of the full humanity of Jesus, the “new man” using, among other things, the symbolism of the heart. “...with the incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in a way to every man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, made human choices and loved with a human heart.”

To have “loved with a human heart” underlines the fact that Jesus as man loved the Father. Like a “son,” he obeyed and he wanted to save us. What the Gospels bring before us is the human love of Jesus. So, this tenderness and kindness is witnessed by Zacchaeus (cf. Lk 19:1-10), the repentant sinner (cf. Lk 7:36-50), or friendship that he manifested at death of Lazarus (Jn 11:1 - 44), of sympathy he felt before the single mother who was accompanying her son to the grave (cf. Lk 7:13), “compassion for the weary and helpless crowds” (Mt 9:36), the affection with which he embraced children (cf. Lk 18.15-17), and the different gestures of kindness to those he meet. In these short excerpts we are shown a love that is delicate and tender (Mark 10:21). Even the love for his Father was expressed in a familiar term “Abba” had human overtones. It is true that human love reveals divine love. That is what we see in Jesus when he looks on his Father (cf. Jn 14:9). But what is real human love? So it is not wrong to speak of the human heart of Christ.

In fact, this human heart (of Jesus) has the unique ability to love absolutely revealing a new character of humanity in which the heart is free from the dominance of a selfish ego so it can love totally. This absolute love summons us to a new life, to our highest vocation, to be other Christs who is the new Adam revealing the Father's love to us. In Christ who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1,15; 2 Cor 4,4), “the perfect man has restored to the sons of Adam the likeness of God.” He soothes the restless human heart in a way no one else can. So, the mystery of Christ's heart is the transcendent answer to the mystery of God. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Random Ponderings

A bus station is where a bus stops.
A train station is where a train stops.

On my desk, I have a work station... GO FIGURE!

If Fed Ex and UPS were to merge, would they call it Fed UP?

I believe five out of four people have trouble with fractions.

If quitters never win, and winners never quit, what goofer came up with, "Quit while you're ahead"?

Do Lipton employees take coffee breaks?

What hair colour do they put on the driver's licenses of bald men?

I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older, then it dawned on me...they were cramming for their finals.

Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do...write to these men? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mailmen could look for them while they deliver the mail?

Inspiring Music

A minister was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with more money than they were expecting for repairs to the church building.

Therefore, he was annoyed to find that the regular organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play. "Here's a copy of the service," he said impatiently. "But

you'll have to think of something to play after I make the announcement about the finances."

During the service, the minister paused and said, "Brothers and Sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost twice as much as we expected, and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up."

At that moment, the substitute organist played the national anthem.

Lost Balloon

A man is flying in a hot air balloon and realizes he is lost. He reduces height and spots a man down below. He lowers the balloon further and shouts:

"Excuse me, can you tell me where I am?"

The man below says: "Yes you're in a hot air balloon, hovering 30 feet above this field."

"You must work in Information Technology," says the balloonist.

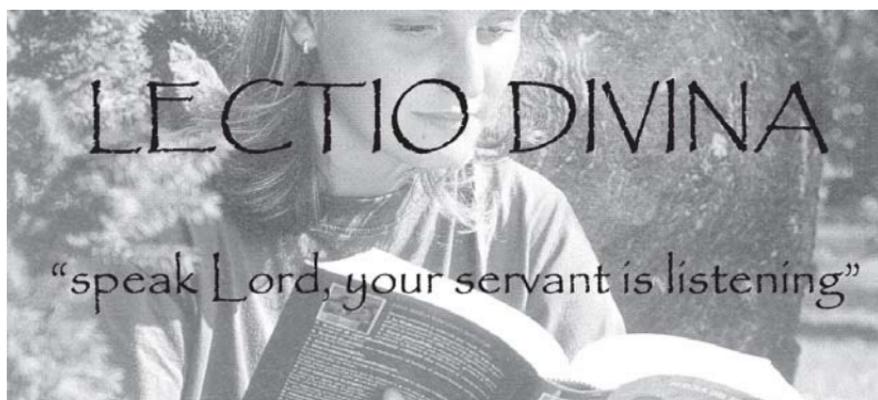
"I do," replies the man. "How did you know?"

"Well" says the balloonist, "everything you have told me is technically correct, but it's no use to anyone."

The man below says, "You must work in Management".

"I do" replies the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well", says the man, "you don't know where you are, or where you're going, but you expect me to be able to help. You're in the same position you were before we met, but now it's my fault." □



NOT BEING AFRAID TO MAKE COMPARISONS (Lk 10, 38-42)

by Marco Rossetti

To the lawyer who asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 10, 25-37), the Master replied that he needed to love God and his neighbour. Jesus, however offers a deeper insight in responding to his question. The incident took place at Bethany (Jn 11:1) and it was an opportunity from which flowed a further reflection that was wrapped up in the short statement: “Only one thing is necessary,” to listen to the Word. Nothing is more important than this. In fact, the one who does not listen cannot know the Lord who is calling him to do what he asks.

Martha and Mary

Unlike the Samaritans who did not welcome Jesus because he was heading for Jerusalem (9, 52-53), Martha and Mary did not hesitate to welcome him into their home. But was it just enough to open their doors to him? Obviously not! They must offer him water to refresh himself while they went inside to

prepare some refreshments and a proper reception to honour him. All this urged Martha to do her utmost, but Mary “sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to his words.” (v.39)

John the Evangelist perfectly understood the natures of these two women when, at the raising of Lazarus from the dead he wrote that Martha was all intent on talking to Jesus and receiving him while he goes on to say that Mary was “sitting at home” (Jn. 11:20). Later when the Lord reached their home she sat at his feet (Jn. 11:32). Even John 12.2-3 states that Martha was busy serving Jesus while Mary preferred to express her purest love for him. Luke notes that Martha was hurt by this disposition of Mary, she was displeased. She turned to Jesus hoping he would reprimand her sister for not helping her (v. 40b). This was certainly a dramatic moment but Jesus’ next words are very important and they are a teaching we would do well to emulate.



*Only one thing is necessary, Mary
has chosen the better part
and it shall not be taken away from her."*

*Jan Vermeer, (1632-1675)
Christ in the house of Martha and Mary*

Just a question of disposition?

The "master" is relaxed as he answers her question. There are no reproachful words, but just a desire that springs from wanting only the good of the one he immensely cares for (Jn 11:5). Given the hasty nature of the comment, Jesus contrasts her keen temper and frenetic activity to a propensity for quiet contemplation. But in fact that was not the case! The entire teaching is instead focused on the importance of listening to the Word which is "the better part." It is such an essential priority that nothing can take its place; nothing in human nature can replace it. We

must listen to the Lord. From this comes a precious piece of advice that the Lord offers Martha whose action he did not disqualify but he clarified the "distractions" that she should avoid (v. 40a). They were distractions that were mixed with agitation and could be compared to a stormy sea. It was Martha's exaggerated behaviour that had wrenched her away from her greatest treasure: her inability to listen to the Lord!

The Only Necessary Thing

"To inherit eternal life," (10:25) one needs to ensure that listening is a priority. God told Israel to "Listen" (Deuteronomy 6:4); at the Transfiguration the Father said to the apostles "This is my beloved Son, listen to

him" (9:34). Now the Lord Jesus turns to every disciple of his and makes them understand that "only one thing is needed" (v. 42a): Listening to him is essential and second to nothing else.

The Word of God endures forever. "Heaven and Earth will pass away but my words will not pass away" (21:33). His words are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:63) and the one who discovers what the Lord really offers us are "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). They are "the better part," the wealth that will never be taken away from us (v. 42b). □

VOCATION IS OBEDIENCE

by His Holiness

On Sunday, 27 June, 2010 the Holy Father introduced the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter's Square with comments on the priestly and religious vocation and on God, "a reality so great and strong that it fills human hearts to overflowing." The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection which was given in Italian

Dear Brothers and Sisters

The biblical Readings of Holy Mass this Sunday give me the opportunity to take up the theme of Christ's call and its requirements, a topic on which I also reflected a week ago, on the occasion of the ordinations of the new priests for the Diocese of Rome.

In fact, those who have the good fortune to know a young man or woman who leaves the family and studies and works in order to consecrate him or herself to God, know well what is involved, for they have before them a living example of a radical response to the divine call.

This is one of the most beautiful experiences one can have in the Church: seeing and actually touching the Lord's action in people's lives; experiencing that God is not an abstract entity but a reality so great and strong that it fills human hearts to overflowing, he is a Person, alive and close, who loves us and asks to be loved.

The Evangelist Luke presents to us Jesus, walking to Jerusalem, who meets some men on the road - probably young men - who promise they will follow him wherever he goes.

Jesus proves very demanding with them and warns them that "the Son of Man", namely, the Messiah, "has nowhere to lay his head" - that is to say, he has no permanent dwelling place of his own - and that those who choose to work with him in



CE TO THE LOVE OF GOD

- Pope Benedict XVI

God's field cannot turn back (cf. Lk 9:57-58; 61-62).

On the other hand Christ says to someone else: "Follow me", asking him to sever completely his ties with his family (cf. Lk 9:59-60).

These requirements may seem too harsh but in fact they express the newness and absolute priority of the Kingdom of God that is made present in the very Person of Jesus Christ. All things considered, it is a question of that radicalism that is due to the Love of God, whom Jesus himself was the first to obey.



Those who give up everything, even themselves, to follow Jesus, enter into a new dimension of freedom that St. Paul defines as "walk[ing] by the Spirit" (cf. Gal 5:16). "For freedom Christ has set us free", the Apostle writes, and he explains that this new form of freedom acquired from Christ consists in being "servants of one another" (Gal 5: 1, 13). Freedom and love coincide! On the contrary, complying with one's own egoism leads to rivalry and conflict.

Dear friends, the month of June, characterized by the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ, is now coming to an end. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart we renewed our commitment to sanctification together with the priests of the whole world. Today, I would like to invite everyone to contemplate the mystery of the divine and human Heart of the Lord Jesus, to draw from the very source of God's Love.

Those who fix their gaze on that pierced Heart that is ever open for our love sense the truth of this invocation: "You are my inheritance O Lord" (Responsorial Psalm), and are prepared to leave everything to follow the Lord. O Mary, who answered the divine call without reserve, pray for us! □

BRIGHTEN EVERY CORNER

from Fr. Ian Douulton's collection

At approximately 10.17 on the morning of May 3, Sr. Mary Martha aged 72, of the Order of Our Lady of Peace went home to God. The journey took four years, three months and eleven days from the time she left the convent of the College of Our Lady of Peace and went to the Mother House to wait, to die. It was as quiet and as simple an event as that. She packed what few belongings were hers personally, borrowed Sr. Mary Elizabeth's umbrella, because it was a morning of dripping grey mist and her own umbrella had been lent to a lay faculty member two years previous and not returned. She went down the five steps of Charity Hall into a student-driven car and rode the half-mile in silence. There were no tears except for the splashing drizzle on the windshield, no farewells, no sadness. The students who would be interested, and there were a few remaining, found out only after her departure and to the other nuns who understood this journey, it was merely the beginning, of the beginning.

Those who knew her:

Jacob Eugene Bankcock

- Her Father:

Her father, Jacob Eugene Bankcock, 89 was a farmer in Forest

City who hadn't spoken to her - since that day when she entered the convent - had survived Sr. Mary Martha, who was born, Martha Louise Bankcock, of Forest City. Sitting in his porch on a rocking chair with his white hair blowing in the evening breeze; this was how he received the news: "I sow my one hundred and ninety acres with my five sons and silently bitterly curse the living memory of the God who stole my firstborn. Who reached into the sanctity of my family and took for himself, the gentlest, the most affectionate, the dearest of my six children. Therefore for me, Jacob Bankcock, Martha died a young girl, with deep brown eyes and sandy hair, to me, faith, hope and my daughter lie in one tomb.

Jean Rose

Sr. Mary Martha, of the order of Our Lady of Peace, went to her eternal home that morning. A low Mass was offered for the repose of her soul on Thursday at 8.15 in the morning at the request of her girlhood friend Jean Rose. Jean Rose had become Mrs. Robert Savage. This is how she summed up her days with Sr. Mary Martha: "I am, a sweet heart, nurse, housewife, a mother, the source of valuable information, such as why cats can't have puppies, why

little children mustn't eat with their hands, who invented pockets? Where did I come from? And what's more important: Where am I going? I, Mrs. Robert Savage, who was Jean Rose, once walked in the garden of the novitiate of Our Lady of Peace with Martha Louise Bankcock, not yet Sr. Mary Martha. I still remember the evening when we had a conversation that went something like this: "Martha, the convent is a peaceful place. In a sense, it solves a great many problems" I said. "Yes Jean," said Mary Martha and she continued: "You follow a set schedule. You always dress alike and eat alike and always have company. You really don't have to think but you do, Jean!" Jean turned around through one of the flower-beds and said: "Being so busy! Is it possible to avoid remembering?" Mary Martha looked serious as she said: "But you *must* remember, if only *I* felt special. For many, the call to God's service is like a mystic change." Jean tried to joke: "Does it immediately provide the postulant with a halo or pink wings? I remember, a special...a certain boy. If only I could forget him I'd feel much better. Didn't you have any boyfriends, Martha?" Jean came close and asked. Mary Martha didn't seem offended at this very direct question. She serenely said: "Of course I did." Immediately Jean asked: "How *do* you forget an old boyfriend?" It was Mary Martha's turn to joke now: "Well, I should imagine it's easier than forgetting a young boyfriend." Jean retorted: "You can't be serious! How do

you forget a first love?" Mary Martha looked down the garden path and said simply: "Perhaps it's not the memory, it's...I don't know what, that separates us, you and me." Jean looked at Martha as they walked to the bench near the marble statue of St. Joseph: "You seem richer in your vow of poverty. You're chaste, but somehow, knowing. You obey, without command." As they sat down Mary Martha just said: "If you live because of love, because you were 'given to' not because you must - for the love of giving, then, this is home!" Jean held Mary Martha's hand tight as she said: "I can't forget, and I don't want to. I want to cling to the moment of the kiss. The warming memory of the strong arm, the tenderness of the unfamiliar lips, I don't want to forget." Martha stood up, as if to make a point, "and you must not. To forget would be to deny the moment. You must not forget the boy or the kiss. You must not forget the present memories." Jean looked away over the hills and said, as if to herself, but loud enough for Mary Martha to hear: "Then I am not for this place." Mary Martha was encouraging and rose too. As she laid a gentle hand on Jean's shoulder she said: "Then, take up your search again, it's as simple as that. It takes courage to admit a mistake. It takes a special type of courage to admit God has not called you." It was getting dark and the two walked into the convent.

So neither failed. Sr. Mary Martha, 72, of the order of Our

Lady of Peace, died that May 3, happily and Mrs. Robert Savage, born Jean Rose, goes on living the role of sweetheart, nurse, housewife and mother "*very happily, thank you!*" she likes to say, with a contented smile.

Paul Bannings

A Mass will be said for the soul of Sr. Mary Martha, every week, at the request of the Honorable Paul Bannings, state senator, proponent of the Bannings Bill, champion of the small farmer, president of the chamber of commerce and one time lost soul. When we went to the senator's office and broke the news to him it was the senator who broke the silence: "I remember a nun with a quiet deadly smile. Why did she question me in the first place?"

The senator seemed to look beyond us in his oak paneled office and said: "Going back those many years I asked the sister: "Sr. Martha, what business is this of yours?" She stood straight in her starched habit, not afraid of even political office and said: "I teach, not students, but people, and people have problems that they bring to class. Being people, they can be hurt, like your daughter." Marianne, Paul Bannings' daughter, came to Sr. Martha's office one afternoon before the close of the day and said: "Sister, my father is a good man. He's kind and affectionate. He's successful in business and a pleasant companion. He's well liked, but there are times I wonder if he died tonight, what would happen?" Then imitating her father, she repeated her father's

words when he was inebriated one evening: "50,000 to your mother, a trust fund to you and your sister, 75,000, from a beneficial insurance company." Then Marianne looked like a frightened little bird as she said: "And for my father? Sister should he die tonight, what inheritance?"

Paul Bannings had been summoned to the office of Sr. Martha and in his haughty manner said: "Sr. Martha, I'm an important man." Sr. Martha, not ruffled in the least, said coldly: "You are a proud man!" Paul simply retorted: "A man has a right to be proud when he's state senator, proponent of the Bannings Bill and champion of the small farmer." Sr. Martha stood up behind her neat desk and continued: "and master of all he can survey from the tiny windows of his soul so packed with self conceit that it must be hard for you to breathe." The senator was offended at this candid appraisal of someone who had too much of the world in his sights: "No one has the right to call me to task for my behaviour." Sr. Martha had heard from Marianne and so she continued: "But a quiet parish priest did, once." Paul looked down and in a conciliatory tone said: "Yes and I pointed out to him that business is business and the Church is the Church. These are separate. That's the American way! Imagine, telling me that..." "That sometime...Paul Bannings?" Sr. Martha seemed to ask the senator to complete the statement. With bowed head he said: "That I was to return an investment or not receive

absolution." Sr. Martha with a winning smile simply continued: "and you haven't been to Mass for the last fifteen years!" The senator didn't know where to look. He got up and walked up and down the small office as he tried to defend his stance in vain. "Well, it isn't that I stole the money." Sr. Martha was a little sarcastic when she said: "Of course not! Fraud, perhaps?" Paul tried to be slightly aggressive: "Fraud! But business is business."

Today as Paul Bannings heard this he shook his head in disbelief and he said: "That nun with a quiet deadly smile, *why* did she question me? I'm a man of business. But sometimes only to myself and usually in the dark, lonely, sleepless hours before dawn I hear words, words," He even recalled Marianne's words: "*and for my father, should he die tonight? What inheritance?*" Paul was serious now as he continued: "I wonder too, sometimes I must admit that I lay awake in thought. I'm a man of business. When I find something wrong, I correct it. Sometimes, it goes against my grain, but I'll do it." He took out his cheque book and wrote out a check for \$300 and handing it over said: "*for my sake, sister, please rest in peace.*"

Tommy Collins

Sr. Mary Martha, of the Order of Our Lady of Peace will not die today or tomorrow or forever in the memory of Tommy Collins. Almost 27 now, and he thought I'd never make it. He wondered whether Sr. Martha, would remember a skinny kid with too

much hair and an equal amount of gall. Tommy's eyes were on fire with hatred and always in sister's office for some reprimand or other. Someone screamed through the door and said: "Sister, I saw Tommy cheating in his test" and another: "sister he stole some money from my locker." Yet another: "sister he slapped me because I wouldn't go with him." Tommy's mind went back to that day when he had finally met his match. This is how it was. Sr. Martha shut the door behind Tommy and said, "Tommy!" Tommy muttered under his breath: "I'll show them, I'm going to show them, I'm as good as they are. I'm better than they are. I'm somebody, me, Tommy Collins" Before he could finish his adolescent boasting, Sr. Martha stood before him and said: "You're what you make yourself." Tommy looked away with his hands in his hip pockets: "No sermons, Lee, please" Sr. Martha already began to set him right: "You call me sister, understand?" "OK, Sis, that's what I call my sister." Sister then took a gentler tone: "I'm sure if you apologize." Tommy looked up and said sarcastically: "Nuts?" Sr. Martha then asked if he wanted to be expelled. Tommy thought he couldn't care less. Sr. Martha came closer as she said softly, "I do. I see by your record, that you live in one room with your mother, your father and nine other children." He was offended that Sr. Martha knew the state of his home, "So what? That's none of your..." He was interrupted and

(Continued on pg. 26)

DON BOSCO AND HIS BENEFACTORS

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

During his lifetime Don Bosco handled large sums of money that he collected at the cost of many humiliating sacrifices, time consuming lotteries and incessant travels. It was with this money that he was able to feed, clothe, house and find jobs for his poor urchins. He opened shelters and built schools and churches. He also started major initiatives like printing and publishing houses and he was even able to support his missions in America.

But Don Bosco would not have been able to do what he did had he not befriended that section of the aristocracy who were positively inclined to assist him in his works of charity. Of course we must not make the mistake of limiting the benefactors of Don Bosco solely to the nobility. He received help and selfless collaboration from the bourgeoisie and the people, beginning with his most valuable benefactor – his mother, Margaret Occhiena. But I'll stop here only to emphasize some curious insights regarding our topic.

Don Bosco, a Knight?

Count Cibrario, a Senator of the Kingdom, aware of the great good that Don Bosco was doing for the poor and abandoned youth of Turin, prepared a surprise for him. In appreciation of his work he wanted to award him the Knight's Cross of the order of Ss. Maurice and Lazarus.

One morning a man appeared at the Oratory of Valdocco, bringing a packet containing the cross of the



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

order and a scroll signed by the king. Don Bosco did not open it in the presence of his boys. From the seals and the feel of it he surmised its contents. Later he called on Count Cibrario at the order's headquarters to thank him for the honour he had received, but then he gently and tactfully tried to make him understand that he had no desire for such recognition. He requested that the Knighthood and the cross be substituted with a donation to the Oratory.

The Count insisted that Don Bosco accept the award to which Don Bosco jokingly replied: *My dear Count, if I had the cross and the tile of chevalier, people would think that Don Bosco no longer needs help; besides I already have enough crosses – too many...I'd sooner you gave me some money to feed my orphans.*

The count was finally persuaded. The Order of Ss. Maurice and Lazarus then granted him an annual subsidy of 500 lire. It was paid to him regularly until 1885. (EBM 4, 339s.)

The Old Countess

An old, rich and very religious countess had an understandable feminine weakness: she bristled at the mere mention of her age. Since her daughter was over thirty, she could not bear to hear herself alluded to as the "old countess."

One day Don Bosco met her and said: "Oh, I'm delighted to meet you. And how is your mother?"

"My mother? It's been some time since Our Lord called her to Himself."

"Impossible! Just a few weeks ago I heard that she was perfectly well."

"Perhaps, you are mistaken. I am the mother countess!"

"I would never have believed it!" Don Bosco exclaimed. "You look so young and healthy that I may well be excused for my error"

"Well," the countess said, visibly gratified, "I take care of myself..."

"I will pray that the Lord will keep you so for many more years," Don Bosco rejoined (cf EBM 7,184).

Napoleons with or without a hat

From May 1, 1866, in addition to the gold coinage, with the image of Napoleon with a hat came to be enforced in the recently established the Kingdom of Italy, a paper currency of the same denomination but at a considerably lower value was brought into circulation. The people immediately called it – "bareheaded Napoleon" because it bore the image of Victor Emmanuel without a hat.

Don Bosco was well aware of this when he had to return to Count Frederick Callori a loan of a thousand francs that he had borrowed in to gold napoleons. He did not miss the opportunity to kill two birds with a stone taking advantage of the confidence he had

been granted. The Countess Carlotta had, on her part in fact, already promised him an offering for his new church. He wrote to the Countess on June 29, 1866: "I'll tell you tomorrow after paying my debt to Sig. Conte which I must do in order to purchase some more credit. When you were at the Casa Collegno you told me that you would make an offering towards the church and towards the altar of St. Joseph but you did not specify the amount. Therefore, please be so kind as to let me know: 1) if you intend to make us a donation and of how much, 2) where should I send the money I owe to Sig. Conte, 3) whether Sig. Conte would make the payments with cash or, if it is acceptable in napoleons" (E 477).

As you have probably guessed, Don Bosco relied on offerings of the Countess and suggested sending the balance of his debt to the Count so that the napoleon currency would put no one at a disadvantage.

The answer that came was consoling. The money that would be sent would reach Cesare, the son of Count Callori and would be in paper currency. In fact, Don Bosco wrote to Cesare on July 23: "As I write, before the end of this month will I take a thousand francs to his house and I shall try to bring all bareheaded napoleons, because if I brought fifty napoleons with his hat on maybe would cause Jupiter, Saturn and Mars to explode." (E 489). Shortly afterwards he paid the balance very conveniently, while the Countess duly donated 1000 francs towards the construction of the pulpit for the new church (cf. E 495).

If there was a debt to pay, it was to Providence that did it! □

(Continued from pg. 23)

told not to swear. Sister threatened to slap him: "Tommy if you don't stop that swearing, I'll..." Tommy whipped out a knife and whispered through his clenched teeth, "don't slap me lady that'd be a mistake." Sr. Martha told him to put the knife back but Tommy, with a tremor in his voice simply said: "Make me" She walked behind her desk and said very clearly for Tommy to hear, "A slap would solve nothing not with a yellow coward like you. Not with a crawling, self-pitying bluff like you." Tommy couldn't bear that. There was a commotion outside the door but this did not worry Sr. Martha, 'stop it, won't you? Sr. Martha walked slowly towards Tommy from behind her desk as she said, "You're so brave aren't you, Tommy? So brave and tough? Go ahead and use that knife then go ahead my brave young man." Tommy was still holding the knife but his head was bent: "I'll say this for you, lady you've got guts." She simply turned her back and walked to the window overlooking the playfields. "It takes no courage to recognize a coward for what he is. Oh, you've got courage to waste racing a car, or pushing a girl or a smaller boy around, or starting a fight with a gang at your back." She smiled and sat down. Tommy said falteringly, "I ought to kill you, lady I ought to, you lady!" Sr. Martha did not get up. She simply said, "Go ahead, Tommy, go ahead," there was a brief pause and sister continued, "you see? I'm stronger than you are. I'm not afraid to die. Give me the knife

Tommy." She put out a gentle white hand and said, "Give me the knife..." Shamefacedly he threw the knife on the table and muttered: "Oh, God blast you! Here take it, sister, take it!" And then the sobbing began as he crumpled into a heap onto a chair.

Tommy, now a promising young man looked through his little window as he said, as if to himself: "I don't know where you are now, Sr. Mary Martha, but dead or alive, rest in the knowledge that somewhere there is a man who measures his manhood in what he knows, in what he can give, in what he is, me, Tommy Collins.

Somewhere, Sr. Martha, there is a young mother who knows now that love goes beyond parked cars and dark hall ways, that sex is not a dirty word, but a dirty faced little boy in blue overalls who just finished planting mummy's roses upside down in the driveway. Somewhere there is a teacher who watched you and came to realize that we don't teach young minds alone, but strengthen young hearts and broaden horizons so they educate themselves and somewhere there is a convent that will always remember the little sister who at 70 broke her leg dancing the Irish jig for them, who every Christmas made too much brandy fruit cake so that it reached through to Easter. Who laughed and lived, thank God!

Sr. Mary Martha, 72 of the order of Our Lady of Peace, born Martha Louise Bankock, of Forest City, lives today, tomorrow, forever. You may hear her whisper and it would go something like this *'very happily thank you!'* □

walking with the Church



Persistent Praying

by St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *I pray a lot but my prayers never seem to get answered. I have been praying for one particular intention for at least a year with no answer. What am I doing wrong?*

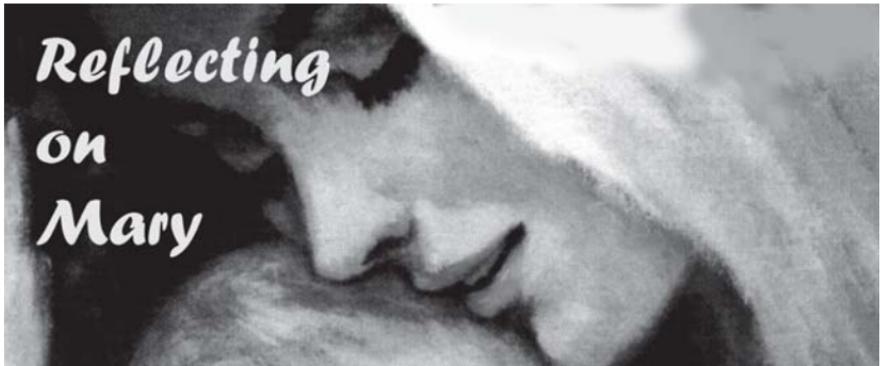
A. Thank you for your question. You are doing nothing wrong. You are praying as Christ wants us to pray.

Christ spoke on prayer a number of times and gave us an example of prayer in his own life. He prayed in public in the Synagogue and he prayed in private. Speaking on prayer he told us to pray always, and to persevere in praying to the Lord for what we need. To illustrate the need of persevering prayer he told the story of the widow seeking justice from the magistrate who would not listen to her, but eventually did so because she was wearing him out. Another example given by Jesus was that of the man who went to a friend for bread in the middle of the night. The friend initially told him he was in bed and would not get up, but the man kept knocking and his persistence made the friend get up to give him what he wanted. The message Jesus conveys to his disciples is that when they pray

they must persevere and be patient – not to give up when they do not get instant results. They must keep on praying even when there seems to be little hope.

We have one famous example of persevering prayer. St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, prayed for her son who had renounced the faith and who led a sinful life. She prayed for her son for 17 years. Her prayer was answered not only by her son returning to the faith but also becoming the saint we know as the great St. Augustine.

It happens that even though people persevere in praying for a particular intention for many years, their prayers never seem to be answered or certainly not in the way they want. One reason why this is so as Jesus explains, is that we do not know what we ask. Just as a father will not 'give his child a stone when he asks for bread' or 'a snake when he asks for fish,' so Our Father in Heaven will not give us something that will be harmful to us – harmful to our relationship with Him. He will give us what He sees we need rather than what we want or think we need. □



MARY, THE WOMAN OF EASTER

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

Friedrich Nietzsche, speaking of Christians in his book *Zarathustra* says: "They should sing their best songs so that I may learn to believe in their Redeemer, their best arias to win disciples." This is one of the strongest challenges for today's Christians. They are apt to forget that they have acknowledged and accepted to announce the 'good news' which they struggle to live with conviction. They are aware that their lives should be characterized by Easter joy. To be more credible "Easter" Christians we should look to Mary who is the model of the new life of Easter. Her proclamation of the "Magnificat" is comparable to the "Exultet" which the Church sings on the night of Holy Saturday. Easter which is God's Passover through human history was brought about by Christ and effected man's Passover from death to life, darkness to light and despair to joy. The Magnificat celebrates precisely this Passover.

Mary experienced the Passover of God

"Night truly blessed, that unites

earth to heaven and man to his creator..." so the Church sings in the Exultet at Easter. It is a time when we celebrate this Passover-encounter in which God always takes the first step. The Passover calls for a step-by-step response: God passes over to man so that man may pass-over to God. Man responds to God's Divine call by his Exodus. Mary felt within herself the realization of this mysterious encounter. She experienced the Passover as she sang the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord." She falls in step with the pace of God and witnesses with astonishment the explosion of His saving power and she rejoices in the greatness of His love. "The Almighty has done great things for me." In her, God renews the wonders that he performed at the first Passover. In her, God celebrates a new Passover. She witnesses the new Passover Lamb of God in history and this Passover Lamb has a name and a face: Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. All the saving work of Jesus takes place in the context

of the Passover: the Incarnation, the Son of God "descends from heaven" (Jn 6.38), passes from the realm of God to the realm of this world culminating in the cross and resurrection and "passing from this world to the Father" (Jn 13:1). Mary is the witness and collaborator of this dual Passover which gives her life an Easter hue.

Mary fulfils mankind's Passover

"God brought us from slavery to freedom, from sadness to joy, from mourning to celebration and from darkness to light and so we proclaim: Alleluia!" These are the words of the Jewish Passover liturgy that explains that concept: the Passover of God effects the Passover of man. Easter is the Passover that goes on! In singing her Magnificat Mary becomes the voice of all humanity. And mankind is astonished at the love with which this celebration of this union with God. Poor humanity sings and proclaims its Passover of salvation: "He has shown the power of his arm..." (Luke 1.51-55). With a series of seven verbs: shown, dispersed, brought down, raised up, filled, rejected and assisted, Mary describes God's action for humankind. The number seven indicates fullness and perfection. The verbs indicate the rationale, the criterion and the method of God's action which basically is this: He reveals himself as the God of the Passover. In fact, all the seven verbs describe a reversal of the situation, a Passover. The Passover of God disrupts human designs causing changes and Mary is its witness and prophet. As she accompanies humankind on this Paschal journey she still assists us today

with the encouraging words of Moses to all Israel as they face the Red Sea: "Fear not! Be strong and see the salvation that the Lord works for you" (Ex. 14,13). □

TO MARY THE LADY OF EASTER

O *Mary, Virgin of the Magnificat and Lady of Easter, watch over our world on its journey as we do not know where we're going. You know the passover well. At Nazareth, your "yes" marked the passover between the Old and New Testaments. At Ain Karim when you proclaimed your Magnificat and announced a new world order. At Bethlehem you participated in God's passover from heaven to earth. At Jerusalem, the prophecy of Simeon and the loss of your Son in the temple fulfilled an inner passover when you felt a sword pierce your heart. At Cana you caused the changing of water into wine. At Calvary you witnessed the passover of humanity from death to life. In the cenacle together with the whole Church you welcomed passover of the Spirit. Even after your "passover" into heaven, you have not ceased to assist us in our passover, dear **Cause of our Joy**. Throughout the history of the Church we find you everywhere and at all times when the dawn brings forth new life. O Mary, assist us as we walk this earth, till we reach our final passover in heaven where, we shall be united with you and Your Son Jesus Christ, our Passover.*

NEWSBITS

LOS ANGELES

Looking ahead to his retirement in February, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony wrote in his blog that he intends to spend the coming months and years “walking in solidarity with the 11 million immigrants who have come to the United States to improve their own lives and the life of our country.”

He also plans to spend time advocating on behalf of the “silent millions.”

In a column posted on the archdiocesan Web site Jan. 16, Cardinal Mahony encouraged people to get to know immigrants as individuals, not as stereotypes, and urged all levels of society – business and professional leaders, schools and Catholic organizations – to put a human face on immigrants and help them “find their rightful place in our society.”

“We will discover that their core values are the same as ours, and that they are here to help enrich, not diminish, our fine country,” he wrote. “Once we put a human face on an immigrant, the stereotypes and across-the-board characterizations begin to dissolve.”

Cardinal Mahony turns 75 on Feb. 27. While canon law requires bishops to submit their resignations when they turn 75, they’re not necessarily accepted immediately. However, Cardinal Mahony has signaled that he expects his birthday to be the date he retires and when Coadjutor Archbishop Jose H. Gomez will succeed him. (CNS)

CHINA

Four downtown parishes in Xi’an city, capital of central Shaanxi

province, baptized more than 150 new Catholics over the Easter period, thanks to the evangelistic efforts of lay catechists.

In Xi’an and in neighbouring Baoji, Xianyang and Xingping cities, there are some 50 full-time catechists, who go out to visit the poor and sick.

Most of these catechists come from rural areas. Their devout and vigorous Christian life has attracted many non-believers to the Church.

Father John Su Shengyi of Sanyuan diocese often invites lay catechist teams from other dioceses to evangelize in the area he serves. These active catechists evangelize through their writings, sermons and charity work in one village after another.

“I admire their dedication, spirit and charitable actions, which have fostered the Church’s evangelization enormously,” the priest noted. However, the catechists mostly work for the Church at their own expense. They save money on food and other expenses to give financial assistance to the needy. Since they also have to support their own families, their financial plight has gradually become a concern of the Church and Catholics. Zhang Ruohan, a retired civil servant who serves in the mountainous area near Baoji, uses his pension to back his evangelistic work. “Catechists who have no income may face difficulties serving in remote areas over a long period of time, particularly with the rate of inflation these days,” he noted.

Wang Enshi, a poor man from

Zhouzhi diocese, helps people in his parish to carry water and deliver newspapers. Wang is eager to go out to spread the Gospel and visit the sick, but is deeply concerned that he can hardly afford travelling expenses or to give money to the poor.

"These catechists leave their homes and spare no effort on evangelization. Some of them even travel across the country throughout the year, thus the Church should take care of them," Father Wang of Xi'an diocese said.

Maria Wang, a new Catholic in Xi'an, knows just how much catechists have contributed in spreading the Gospel. She hopes local Church-run charitable organizations can pay more attention to catechists and give some support to their families so that they can go about their evangelistic work more wholeheartedly.

There are around 10 Catholic charitable organizations in China that focus on social charity and humanistic work, as well as on disaster and emergency relief. Some laypeople hope they can also help support volunteer catechists' family and evangelization expenses.

MUMBAI

Church leaders in Maharashtra have joined the opposition to several proposed nuclear projects in the state, especially against what would be the largest nuclear power generating plant in the world.

"We don't want a Chernobyl nuclear disaster or a Fukushima crisis, to happen in India," Bishop Alwyn Barreto of Sindhudurg said yesterday.

He said the Diocesan Centre for Social Action has organized meetings to educate people on the disastrous consequences a nuclear accident

could have on the coastal region.

The federal government is to introduce a bill in the next session of parliament to create an independent and autonomous nuclear regulatory authority before commencing with the construction of the huge 9,900 MW Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project in Madban village in Ratnagiri district.

It is just one of several nuclear projects earmarked for the western state's Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts.

Bishop Barreto said a people's movement against the nuclear power plants, has gathered momentum.

The main focus of opposition however, is on the Jaitapur project.

A large protest rally was staged earlier this week at India's first nuclear plant in Tarapur.

The rally organized by the Anti-Nuclear National Committee saw several Christian leaders take part including Mathany Saldhana, a Catholic legislator from Goa state.

Vaishali Patil, convener of the coordinating body opposing the Jaitapur plant, said representatives of the body had met federal environment minister Jairam Ramesh three times to demand the scrapping of the Jaitapur plant.

"The government can build a nuclear plant at Jaitapur but over our dead bodies," said B. G. Kolse-Patil, former justice of the Bombay High Court and president of Lok Shashan Andolan (Movement for People Power), an NGO.

The protest came on the heels of a demonstration on April 18 in which a fisherman was killed and a curfew imposed in Ratnagiri. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

I met with a motorbike accident while I was in Goa. I was knocked down and dragged by the bike and lost consciousness for over an hour and a half. The CT Scan showed no injury and I was discharged the next day and returned to Mumbai. My family and I are grateful to our loving heavenly Father, beloved Lord Jesus and blessed Mother Mary for protecting me.

Bernard Braganza, Mumbai

We are grateful to Our Lady for blessing us in our sweet and simple wedding.

Vivian Britto, Mumbai

Many thanks to our Mother for the safe return of my neighbour who was robbed in a train while travelling from Goa to Mumbai, he was given dates with drugs to eat, he is a faithful devotee of our Mother and surely it was our Mother who took care of him and brought him home safely.

Mrs S .D'souza, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady for favours received.

Rollin Fernandez, Trivandrum

My sincere thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady for providing for all my needs.

Mark W. Dodd, Pune

I am grateful to Our Lady for protecting my grandson when he hid himself in a drawer of the chest-of-drawers. The entire unit collapsed and he was unhurt. My daughter always prays for the protection of her family before she leaves the house.

Mrs. P. Fernandes, Canada

I am grateful to Our Lady for having protected me from a raging bull when I was a child. Later again at the age of 12 she did the same while I was on my way to school one day. At the age of 30 when I was doing my post-grad studies at Vellore I believe she consoled me when memories of the two previous incidents disturbed me one night. I am sincerely grateful for her love and her protection.

Dr. Teresa Shany, Changanacherry, Kerala

I am grateful to Our Lady for saving my life and surviving a heart attack and for protecting my wife from an accident when the pressure-cooker burst in the kitchen.

Borges and Basita Fernandes, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for granting my sister Celine Jayaseelan a safe delivery of twins through your intercession.

Auxilia, Bangalore

My son Victor was going to work. He was near his office. The driver who was driving fell asleep and the car hit the divider. The driver was killed on the spot, a friend of his was taken to hospital but Victor was saved without a scratch. I believe Mary was there. I am most grateful.

Carmin

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Infant Jesus and Mother Mary for helping my husband and my son with good jobs and for all the blessings received.

Mrs. Shirley D'Cruze, Australia

My husband fractured his wrist and the doctors suggested a surgery. I continued to pray to Our Lady and Dominic Savio and at the next appointment the doctors found no need for a surgery.

Devotee, UK

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for all the favours.

Sweebert Dantes, Bahrain

Thank you Mother Mary for peace in our country.

Anna, Bahrain

Thank you dear Mother for a complete cure of an abscess and cyst through your intercession.

D'Silva, Goa

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for all the graces received and for guiding us during the difficult times. I constantly prayed the "Three Hail Marys."

Mrs. D. D'Souza, Mumbai

My son, while riding his motorcycle fell and bruised himself. It could have been serious but I am certain that Our Lady protected him. I always pray the three Hail Marys.

Mrs Maria Alina Dias, Goa

My son is an electrician and an agent promised him a job in Goa. But he was duped. When he reached Goa he was employed as a servant. I prayed the three Hail Marys to Our Lady and she brought my son back to me after a few days. I am most grateful.

Agnes Fernandes, Goa

I have received numerous favours through the faithful recitation of the '3 Hail Marys.' But for one special favour I am eternally grateful. I was unwell and had to undergo an emergency surgery. I do not recall how many hundreds of times I recited the 3 Hail Marys but I believe that through Our Lady the surgery was successful.

Mrs. Melanie Gabriel, Secunderabad

My sincere gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and Don Bosco for everything I received.

Suzanne, Chandigarh

Heartfelt gratitude to Our Lord and Mother Mary for assisting me in my father's recovery from his recent illness. May your light always shine on Hemant, Mira and Maya.

Mrs. P. Samagond, USA

Sincere thanks to Our Lady for answering my prayer.

Joyce Patel, Mumbai

Our belated but sincere thanks to Almighty God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby boy despite the doctor's predictions that neither would have survived. Everything was normal. I was wearing the scapular of Dominic Savio. I have named him Slenden, he is now 6 years old.

Edwin and Shonet Martins, Goa

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

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

F. Rebello, Mumbai

Dear Holy Trinity, the Holy Family, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio I thank you for healing Marina and for bringing her home from the hospital. We thank you for all the graces that you will continue to shower on us too.

R. Sagayaraj

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for saving me from a dangerous accident.

Connie D'Mello, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians and all the saints for the favours granted to me.

D. Lobo, Mumbai

Thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Vijay Aranha Moodubelle

Thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours received.

Jacinta Aranha, Mangalore

Thank you Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the wonderful job you gave me and continue to bless my family and give them good health.

C.S. Zuzarte, USA

My heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of a baby to my sister-in-law. Please continue to protect the baby and keep her under your care.

Mrs. Jessy F. Mumbai

Belated thanks to Don Bosco for giving my daughter a safe and normal delivery of a healthy baby girl. Continue to guard and guide us.

Violet A. Dass, Mumbai

Thanks to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the blessings showered on our family and for the gift of a bonny baby boy on 17th December, 2010.

Mrs. Josephine Raju Coutinho & Fly, Mumbai

In 2008 my daughter had a stroke and lost her speech. After praying to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio she is a little better.

Nazario Luis D'Souza, Canada

My brother went through the same surgery twice and it was unsuccessful. Then, through the intervention of Mary Help of Christians and Bl. John Paul II the third attempt was a success.

O.T. New York

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and the Saints for helping my daughter find a job.

Emily Pinto, Mumbai

Belated but grateful thanks to Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for giving my daughter a baby girl. Thanks for all the other blessings received too.

D. Mascarenhas, Mumbai

I was returning from a nursing home with my husband in an open jeep and when the driver suddenly braked I was thrown out and landed on a busy road. I was protected by Our Lady. I had no broken bones and I was safe. I am most grateful to Our Lady for her protection.

Sara Peter, Goa

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings poured on our families.

Doreen Ivy, Abu Dhabi

A big thanks to Our Lady, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and the 3 Hail Marys for all the favours I have received. For blessing my family and for my special mom and brother and especially to Don Bosco's School that has made me a good person. I shall never forget all this.

Kenneth Viegas, UK

My sincere and grateful thanks to Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for curing my uterus problems and other favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Mrs. Bernadette Fernandes, Goa

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lord, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for healing me of my sickness and many other favours received. Mother Mary, continue to protect me always.

Hillary Mathias, Goa

I am most grateful for all the favours granted me through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio.

Philomena Machado, Mumbai

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Dominic Savio for the speedy recovery of my son. Doctors were suspecting TB but I prayed to Dominic Savio and made my son wear the scapular of Dominic Savio. His X-ray report showed early Pneumonia. Thank you dear St. Dominic Savio.

Mrs. V. Marshall, Mumbai

I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby to my daughter.

Rhonilda Rodrigues, Qatar

Thank you most sincerely dear Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby boy and I pray you to keep him under your protection.

Melody and Malcolm D'Cruz, WA

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY 2011

General Intention: Those Suffering With AIDS:

That Christ may ease the physical and spiritual sufferings of those who are sick with AIDS, especially in the poorest countries.

Missionary Intention: Religious Missionary Women:

That religious women in mission territories may be witnesses of the joy of the Gospel and living signs of the love of Christ.

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Don Bosco's Madonna (Monthly)
Date of Publication: 1st of Every Month

Subs: (One copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland:** Rs. 200 p.a; **Airmail:** Rs.400 p.a

MARY WAS THERE

It was in the evening of 6th November, 2010 that we were returning from a family picnic. We had all been to Our Lady of Valinkini Church Bhatia, Uttan. We were driving on the National Highway and were just a few kilometres from home. The vehicle we were following suddenly moved aside when it came into the path of an oncoming vehicle. It was a vehicle that had been parked on the wrong side of the road without any warning. My husband tried to stop the car by applying the brakes but there we were too close to the parked vehicle. Our car collided with the stationary truck. The front of our car was badly damaged with windscreen smashed and the doors jammed. My children aged 10 and 6 were in the back seat. My husband had a hairline fracture on his ribs and his wrist. I had a few minor injuries. Our children were unhurt. We believe it was Mother Mary who protected us. My husband begins his day by reciting the Three Hail Marys.

Audrey Marcus Rodrigues, Vasai

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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