

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

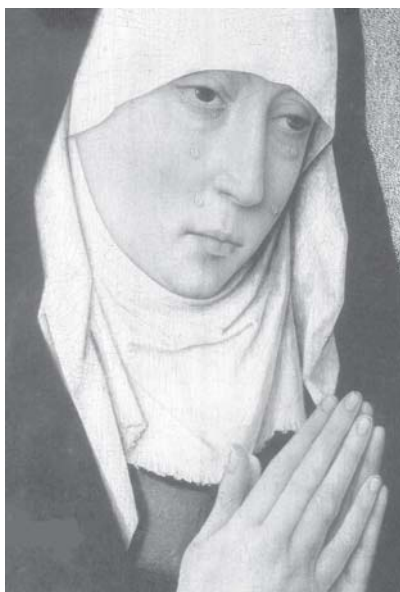
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CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>If Only</i>	3
11 - Self - Respect the Greatest Gift - <i>Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS</i>	4
Life after Death - <i>Vivian Boland, O.P.</i>	8
Artemides Zatti (1880 -1951).....	10
I was attracted by the habit - <i>Sr. Margaret Namagemba</i>	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>St. Charles Borromeo (Nov. 4)</i> - <i>Mario Scudu</i>	12
Lectio Divina: Gifts of Salvation (Lk:19:1-10) - <i>Marco Rossetti</i>	17
Quietspaces: Sanctity Is the Point of the Christian Life - <i>Pope Benedict XVI</i>	18
The Coming of the Kingdom - <i>Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection</i> ...	20
Don Bosco's Characteristics: A Mission from Above - <i>Gianni Asti</i>	24
Walking With the Church: The Origins of All Souls Day.....	27
Reflecting on Mary: "And Mary said..." <i>Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA</i>	28
NewsBits.....	30
<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



*"Blessed are
those who
mourn;
they shall
be comforted."*

Matthew 5:4

Cover: **"If I may only touch
the hem of his garment"
(Mt. 9:21)** (Luberoff)



From The Editor's Desk

If Only...

Martha of Bethany is one of the most endearing characters in the Gospel story. Like Peter the Apostle, she has a mind of her own and is not at all afraid to say what she thinks. When her more contemplative sister, Mary, prefers the company of Jesus to the drudgery of the kitchen, she is furious and calls on her distinguished guest to take action. And then, on another occasion, when Jesus delays in coming to the aid of her sick brother, she confronts him openly: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Martha's concern for Lazarus is, of course, commendable, but there is a querulous tone in her voice which suggests that even this most practical of women has fallen foul of the 'if only' syndrome: 'If only you had said this or not said that; if only I had done this or not done that, everything would have been different now.'

It is, I suppose, a mild form of delusion which affects us all at one stage or another, tempting us to look back in wistful regret, wishing that we could somehow undo the decisions of the past. 'If only I had stayed on at school and finished my education, I would be qualified now and have a more rewarding job.' 'If only I had stayed single, I would have some sort of a decent life now and not have to put up with my husband's drunken violence.' 'If only I had got married when I had the chance, my life would be more fulfilled now and I would not be as lonely as I am.'

Fortunately, those retrospective dreams are usually transient: the urgent demands of the present soon catch up with us and summon us back to reality. There are, however, times when a more virulent strain of this syndrome afflicts us and our wishful thinking becomes destructive. Its symptoms can easily be recognized in those despairing cries of the heart which are filled with bitter self-recrimination: 'If only I had spent more time at home with my son, he would never have got hooked on heroin. I will never be able to live with myself again.' 'If only I had listened to my wife and called the doctor earlier, she would still be alive today. I will never forgive myself.'

In situations like these, what we have to remember is that God has no difficulty *forgiving us*, no matter what mistakes we may have made in the past. But he has great difficulty making us feel forgiven if we are not ready to *forgive ourselves*. It pleases him more if we stop punishing ourselves endlessly and just trust in his mercy. That way we can really experience the joy and freedom which are the fruits of his forgiveness.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

11. SELF-RESPECT THE GREATEST GIFT

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

It seems pretty presumptuous and un-ambitious, to say the least, when a young MBA from Oxford quits his promising career and starts a courier service with just one delivery boy and an investment capital in the form of savings of Rs 10,000 only. But Dhruv Lakra's "*Mirakle Couriers*" claims to be the only courier company in the world today that employs only the hearing impaired. Today, with a staff of 55 employees, the company offers both domestic and international services on a competitive basis and a honest and self-respecting source of income to the marginalized.

The tsunami in 2004 was the cause of this sweeping change in Lakra's life. He turned his back on his cushy job as an investment banker to help a tsunami-affected fisherman community in Nagapatinam, South India, for five months. "I realized with a deep inner conviction that this is what I wanted to do with my life," says the 28-year-old, who had previously worked with several NGOs.

In 2008, Lakra launched "*Mirakle Couriers*" as his ambition was to offer the hearing impaired community something better than candle making as a vocation. He says, 'My dream was to give them a regular employment which somehow uses their disability to their advantage.' With special training sessions, Lakra ensures his boys deliver efficiently while his office work is handled



mainly by hearing impaired women. They receive the minimum wage and have their own bank accounts. With plenty of bulk orders coming their way, Lakra hopes to break even by the end of the year.

"I treat it like any other business," he observes. "What I want to achieve is that the idea of charity in India should undergo a change; a paradigm shift needs to be effected in the minds of most people. Disabled people may do things differently, but they should be treated as equals." Evidently, whether the enterprise is a success financially or not, what Lakra has set out to achieve is a grand ideal and would take quite some time to effect. People's mind-sets do not change easily, especially when it concerns those

who are disadvantaged. Most people tend to look on them as poor, helpless, inefficient' and so on. To treat them as equals when one has never experienced any set-backs in life, is itself a mighty challenge!

Besides changing the paradigm of society with regard to all challenged persons, Lakra would also have given the hearing impaired group themselves a marvelous opportunity to live their lives with dignity and pride – making a big difference in their own lives, enabling some to even shine and stand out among those with no impediments or lesser ones. One does not usually understand the plight of handicapped people until one actually lives with them in one's own family. Then the situation begins to be viewed from a totally different angle. The problem then is not 'out there' but at one's very doorstep! And that forces a different approach on one – whether one likes it or not.

Lessons Learnt from Adversity

A passage in Luke's Gospel forces upon us the reflection about why there are inequalities among people in this world. The story goes that a man comes up to Jesus imploring him to intervene with his brother who has deprived him of his share of the family inheritance. Jesus' answer to the man is puzzling. He says, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions' (Lk 12:14-15). It seems as if Jesus rebukes the unfortunate

man for making that request. Actually what he indicates is that while undergoing this injustice is understandably painful, yet it is not altogether a useless exercise.

Jesus reminds us all that God does not distribute his gifts equally to everyone. Even in the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) we see that one servant gets five, another two and third person gets only one. Does this unequal distribution imply that God loves the third person less? By no means! God's love for all is the same – he loves all equally, but yet distributes his gifts and talents in different measure to different people. And the reason seems to be that this unequal situation provides both parties with the challenge they need to enter into the Kingdom of God. The one having less, whether it is by God's decree or by unjust behaviour on the part of some other people around him, the deprived person is challenged to trust totally in God's personal love for him. Having made what efforts he could to correct the situation, either by himself or even through third-party interventions, and seeing that he has failed, he then places the problem before God leaving it to God to work out as He feels best. Trusting in God's love for him he continues to do his best, being content with what is, and also sharing his meager resources with those in greater need! God's assurance, "I will be with you" is his strength!

Challenge to Those Blessed

The challenge for one who has more is to share his blessings with others. This is incumbent on all, but much more on the one who has more because he has

wrongfully deprived others of their proper share! In such cases, there is first of all the injustice to be dealt with. "And the Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!'" (Gen 4:10-11). Even though the injustice goes unnoticed or no one does anything about righting the wrong, yet God's justice will not allow such flagrant violations to go unattended. Then the law of sharing one's blessings with the needy comes into play as well. Oppressing one's own kindred was a sign among the Israelites of total disfavour with God (Is. 49:26); it is the kind of punishment the Lord would impose on the foreign nations for their harassment of his people.

Thus it is that the same adverse situation poses challenges to both sides and provides both with the opportunity to truly listen to the Lord's voice calling from deep within them. When they act on his suggestions, the outcome will be a greater blessing than the earlier problem. And that is because besides the more equitable distribution of goods, there now exists also a deep bond of fellowship between the two parties. This approach therefore makes allowance for the fact that people often err in their behaviour. But it requires them to listen to their consciences and follow the Lord's rulings so that all can live amicably and happily in the land.

Death to Self – Pre-requisite!

All this is easily said but we know that things just do not work out all that easily in practice. Very few would be ready to truly listen

to the Lord's gentle suggestions especially when it means losing one's grip of a large amount of wealth. With our myopic view of life, we fail to see beyond our noses, even though every single person would vociferously proclaim that no one can take all his wealth with him into the grave; some day or other he will have to leave it for others to enjoy. Why

*"The more material
wealth we possess
the more fear we have
to carry along with
us wherever we go:
fear that we might
one day lose
all that wealth..."*

not heed the Lord's suggestion then when he says, "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes!" (Lk 16:9). The only way to make friends through dishonest wealth is to give it away lavishly – as long as we keep it for ourselves it is a liability, but when given away, it becomes a real asset, productive of eternal life.

Again Jesus warns us, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astounded and said to one

another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life" (Mk 10:24-30). In spite of all this advice and these warnings, we still are loathe to give up our material possessions!

Lure of Wealth

Especially in our modern consumerist world we are bombarded from all sides with advertisements regarding various commercial goods which are projected as not only making life a lot easier, but also as guaranteed to obtain for us a high rating in Society. While all this is true up to a point, we know from experience that it does not really go very far. For one thing, the more material wealth we possess the more fear we have to carry along with us wherever we go: fear that we might one day lose all that wealth, fear that someone may rob us of it, fear of being pestered by the poor who constantly ask for help!

There is besides the strange inner craving within us which somehow never leaves us satisfied and contented with what we have. There is a charming little story told of a King who was blessed with

plenty but yet remained very unhappy. As he traveled through his kingdom he came across a poor farmer who possessed next to nothing; yet his greatest treasure was his happy contented life. Seeing this, the King was puzzled and sought the reason for this from his wise men. One volunteered this explanation. He suggested to the King that he be given ninety-nine gold coins which he took and hid strategically in the field of the poor farmer.

Within a few days the farmer managed to unearth every single one of the ninety-nine coins and was grateful to God for this great blessing. Yet, a nagging inner voice kept repeatedly reminding him that no one would give him ninety-nine coins leaving him one short of the coveted number, hundred. There must be that last coin somewhere on the premises. So he began to search frantically day and night and with each day's unsuccessful hunt, he grew more and more desperate - he was no longer happy and contented but extremely miserable. He was convinced that he could not be happy until he had found that one last gold coin - which of course he never did.

Are we also in search of that 'one missing blessing' which, if we had our lives would be complete? Turned around, this same missing one could be just what could lead us back into the arms of our loving Father, who has prepared for us everything that can really satisfy us. Yet, to believe in him and trust him is in practice very difficult. And this is what provides the Devil with a foothold!☐

LIFE AFTER DEATH

by Vivian Boland, OP

One of the most important Catholic theologians of the last century, Karl Rahner, wrote that Christianity may be referred to as 'a hope' just as easily as it is referred to as 'a faith'. We can therefore speak about passing on the hope, keeping the hope, practicing our hope and teaching the hope to younger generations.

The hope in question is, of course, the hope we have in God on whom we rely to save us from disintegration and despair as he draws us ever more deeply into his life of love. We have the hope of being raised to live with Christ, and with our brothers and sisters, in the kingdom of the Eternal Father. Some historians identify this hope as one of the most important reasons for the rapid spread of Christianity across the Roman world in the first century.

Some Jewish groups were already convinced that the Lord, the God of Israel, would raise the just to everlasting life. Injustice was the last thing experienced by many people in this world, especially those who tried to live good and holy lives. The Lord, the God of Israel, is just above all else



and so, they reasoned, he must act to vindicate those who had placed their trust in him. At the time of the Maccabean revolt, about 150 years before the time of Jesus, many faithful Jews died courageous deaths rather than submit to tyranny. They died filled with hope that God would raise them up in the resurrection of the just.

Jesus taught that this strand of Judaism is correct. God is God of the living and not of the dead. God will vindicate and bring to himself those who have lived and died in righteousness.

Socrates, the most famous philosopher of ancient Greece, taught that the human soul is immortal. As he died he asked his friends to make an offering to the god of healing, implying that death as a kind of cure for the difficulties and trials of life, a blessed release and a journey to a better place.

God's power seen in Christian Martyrs

We may not be philosophical as Socrates in the face of death. We





may not be as unconcerned as the heroes of the Maccabean revolt threatened with torture and execution. But many Christian martyrs have been able to give their lives, sustained by their hope in God. The Mass for martyrs speaks of their deaths revealing God's power shining through our human weakness, God choosing the weak and making them strong in bearing witness to him.

The great difference for the Christian believer is, of course, the example of Christ. It is not an example that remains outside us, something we simply look at and admire and try to imitate. It is something that becomes part of our spiritual being when we are baptized into his death and resurrection. It is nourished in the

Eucharist where we proclaim his death until he comes. It is experienced in the sacrament of reconciliation when we actually pass again from the death of sin to the new life of grace.

Saint Paul ties our resurrection with that of Jesus. If Christ has not been raised, he says, then there is no resurrection of the dead. If Christ has not been raised, we are the most foolish of people. If Christ has not been raised, we are still in our sins. So if we are living in the grace of Christ, living 'by his Spirit', then we are already living the 'life after death', we know what it is like and we know what it is about.

Sometimes people say 'if somebody would come back to tell us'. But we have, more than likely, visited the realm of death ourselves. If we have ever wandered from God and turned aside to selfishness, pleasure or despair, then we have tasted death. If we have ever experienced forgiveness and the prompting of God's Spirit drawing us back, if we have ever experienced the drawing of goodness and heard the voice of justice, then we have glimpsed the eternal kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

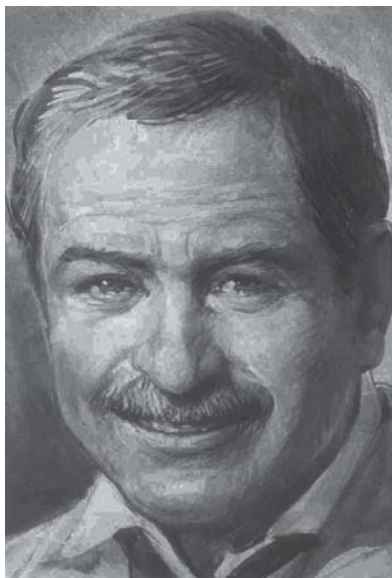
Anxious as he is to strengthen the faith of the Thessalonians, Saint Paul reminds them of their sure hope and prays that the Lord may 'turn their hearts to the love of God and fortitude of Christ'. We pray with him, that we may not turn aside to any sin but may live in the love of God. When we do, we taste already on earth, the gifts of the world to come. □

ARTEMIDES ZATTI 1880 - 1951

Artemides Zatti was born in Boretto (Reggio Emilia, Italy) on 12 October, 1880. He very soon experienced a hard life of sacrifice, so that at nine years of age he was earning his living as a farm labourer. Under the constraints of poverty at the beginning of 1897 his family emigrated to Argentina and settled in Bahia Blanca. Here Artemides began to attend the parish in the care of the Salesians.

Advised to become a Salesian, he was accepted as an aspirant by Bishop John Cagliero and, now a twenty year old, he entered the house of Bernal where among other things he was given the task of looking after a young priest suffering from tuberculosis. Artemides himself contracted the disease. He was therefore sent to the hospital of San José in Viedma. Here he was looked after in a special way by the priest and qualified doctor Fr. Evaristo Garrone. With him, he asked and obtained from Mary Help of Christians the grace of a cure, as on his part he promised to dedicate his whole life to caring for the sick.

He was cured and he kept his



promise. In 1908 he made his perpetual profession. At first he began to be responsible for the pharmacy attached to the hospital. Later he had full responsibility for the hospital, which became the training ground for his holiness. This was in absolute dedication to his sick.

In 1913 he was the driving force behind the building of the new hospital which was then demolished in 1941 to make room for the residence of the bishop of the newly created diocese of Viedma. Without being discouraged he set up another. Like Don Bosco, he made Providence the first and safest source of income for his works. Suffering from cancer, he died on 15 March 1951. John Paul II beatified him on 14 April 2002. His mortal remains are in the chapel of the Salesians in Viedma. □



I WAS ATTRACTED BY THE HABIT

Sr. Margaret Namagembe as told to Mathias Mazinga

I am Sr. Margaret Namagembe, a member of the Religious Institute of the Catholic Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix, Gogonya. I was born on October 9, 1962, the day after our country's independence.

My parents, the late Mary Kizza Nantumbwe and Pascal Muleera, lived in Nswanjere, in Mpigi district.

I grew up at Nsabwe with my grandmother, Ssefolooza Nantabaalo. She was a committed Catholic. With her I went to church every Sunday and we had family prayers every day.

My desire to become a religious already began which I was only a pupil at Kkande Primary School. The late Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga had a relative who lived in our village and he was accompanied by nuns on his visits. Their habits immensely fascinated me. Their yellow habits made them look like angels. When I joined them in prayer I felt as if I were praying with the angels of heaven.

I started religious formation at the Congregation's Mother house in Gogonya and after four years in 1986 I pronounced my vows of poverty, obedience and chastity and became a nun.

It would be a lie to say that religious life is a bed of roses. It has its own challenges, personal as well as communal. The community life we lead as



religious women lead can very trying because we come from various backgrounds. We are especially taught how to relate with one another. Community life has provided me with many good things. Living and praying together as a family is such a wonderful aspect of religious life. As secularism and individualism corrupt society, religious community life remains the embodiment of human solidarity and sharing. Together we share the good and the bad.

But what is of utmost importance is to trust in the protection and providence of God.

Honestly, I don't think I would have managed to be a nun for all these 25 years if it were not for the mercy and providence of my God. In joy and in sorrow, I have always remained firm and steadfast, knowing that God is on my side. I will keep in constant prayer and communion with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary as I continue to live my religious life. □

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Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. CHARLES BORROMEEO (1538-1584) (NOVEMBER 4) A GREATER LOVE

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

In both the civil and the ecclesiastical spheres there were various people whom posterity decreed should be given the title 'the Great.' We do not mention them here because they are so easy to recall and they are not very many in number. The saint we present here, St. Charles Borromeo was not given such a title though in my opinion he deserves the title nonetheless at least in the ecclesiastical sphere. He was one of the pivotal figures of the Church in the 1500's especially in the city of Milan and his influence reached immeasurable heights.

Charles was born in 1538 at Arona on Lago Maggiore, into a rich noble family. His father Gilbert was famous for his great generosity towards the poor and his mother Margaret was a very pious lady. She unfortunately died when Charles was only nine years old. The influence of his parents was fundamental in his upbringing.

At the age of 12 he was awarded a scholarship to the Benedictine abbey at Arona for which he was awarded 2000 crowns, a



considerable sum. But despite his age the boy already had his own clear ideas.

Upon receiving the habit, he ran away and told his father that he had decided to spend that money to help the poor. Not bad for a twelve year old boy. His peers today are light-years away from

such noble decisions.

At the age of 14 he went to study in Milan and then to Pavia. He took with him only a small amount of money. To him, such economic concerns (considering his status) seemed to matter very little. As a student many of his talents gradually surfaced: his prolific intelligence, his sense of character, his persistence and reflective nature. He concentrated on the essentials and did not lose himself in the many distractions that were not uncommon to youngsters his age. In 1559, he received his doctorate and he was just 21 years old.

In Rome, at that time, there was a change of the guard at the Vatican. Pius IV was the newly elected Pope. He was Gianangelo de' Medici a maternal uncle of Charles. This appointment caused a change in his life. He was summoned to Rome with his brother Frederick.

An Ecclesiastical Career in Rome

In the summons of Pius IV we are presented with a rare case of nepotism that had a positive influence on the Church. The Pope immediately gave appointments to his two nephews: Frederick (1561) was appointed 'Captain General' of the Church and Charles, not yet twenty-two was appointed to what we would today call the Secretary of State. Shortly after this appointment he was also given the administration of the diocese of Milan... however he was forced to stay in Rome. These were not the only two responsibilities that he was given. He had to administer the inevitable accumulation of the economic assets of the Church. Historians say there was perfect understanding between the Pope

and his nephew. Despite his many responsibilities Charles remained a man who loved culture.

A decisive event

The sudden death of his brother Frederick (1562) radically changed his life. He interpreted it as a sign from God to reform his life and in a sense, to live more closely according to the spirit of the Gospels. He radically changed. He bade farewell to receptions, to entertainments even though they were morally licit, to the Knights of the Vatican which now became a commission of religious culture. He scaled back his personal way of life too, increasing his penances, fasting and sacrifice. He took on more commitments of a theological and pastoral nature. He was still the bishop of a diocese though he did not directly administer it.

But the greatest merit of Charles Borromeo was that he convinced the Pope to reconvene the Council of Trent that had been suspended in 1555. If it ended in 1563 so successfully and gloriously, bringing much benefit to the Church it was due to the hard work of Charles Borromeo. He was its inspirer and organizer.

In July 1563 he was ordained a priest and a bishop soon after. He wanted to be a pastor to the souls of his diocese of Milan and was he waiting for this opportunity. The Council had come to an end but there was need to ascertain that the successor, Pius V would continue the reform that had begun. Charles believed in the inspiration and the direction of the Holy Spirit but at the same time he did what he knew would be humanly possible. In fact, the old

and sick uncle of Charles suggested the names of the new cardinals who would carry forward the reforms that were intended by the Council of Trent. Having done this he was asked to preside as papal legate over the provincial council that was held in Milan (his diocese) to implement the provisions of the Council, and Charles went. A short time later he hurried back to Rome (in the company of Philip Neri) because the Pope was dying. In fact, Pius IV died in his arms on 9th December 1565.

It was on January 7, 1566 that Charles could have been elected with ease. His "lobby" was very strong indeed and he was indeed very worthy. But both he and the Holy Spirit thought otherwise. Cardinal Michele Ghisleri was elected. He was a Dominican and he supported the implementation of the Council of Trent and Charles was one of his 'sponsors.'

A pastor "a man of steel" who gave his life

When he reached Milan in April 1566 he immediately got down to implementing the great reforms of the Council of Trent. He was such an able organizer and a tireless worker that Philip Neri exclaimed: "But he is a man of steel."

He organized the 12 constituencies of his diocese and oversaw the revision of life of his parish priests obliging them to keep their registers and the archives of the various parish activities and associations. He worked hard to train the clergy of the major and the minor seminaries. He especially made it a point to visit the people entrusted to his care beginning his first visit already in 1566 shortly after he arrived in Milan.

His greatest asset as a pastor was the love he demonstrated in the love with which "he gave his life for his friends." This was seen in the plague of 1576. He was absent from the city on a pastoral visit but he returned immediately while the Spanish governor and the grand chancellor were fleeing the city.

He went to work immediately knowing full well that that the plague was no respecter of persons. He organized the work of assistance and bravely visited those who were affected by the terrible disease. He went out of his way to help all to the extent that he was personally rebuked by the Pope himself.

In spite of all his pastoral activity, Charles Borromeo made four visits to Rome and to Turin. He had a great devotion to the Holy Shroud. From 1578 it was in the custody of the Duchy of Savoy which was overseen by the Bishop of Milan. He requested that he be allowed to venerate this sacred relic personally so that he would be spared the dangerous crossing of the Alps (the official reason) but also to protect it from the French (the political motive). The exposition that was held in 1978 was to commemorate the arrival of the relic to that city.

Because of his tireless pastoral work, his frequent travels and his constant penances his health rapidly deteriorated. He died on November 3, 1584 and devotion to him spread rapidly. He was canonized in 1610 by Pope Paul V.

Charles Borromeo physically died but his legacy of personal holiness and untiring action for the Church is very much alive and continues down the centuries. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Brightness in Action

The Baltimore Police Department, famous for its superior K-9 unit, was somewhat taken aback by a recent incident. Returning home from work, a woman had been shocked to find her house ransacked and burgled. She telephoned the police at once and reported the crime. The police dispatcher broadcast the call on the channels, and a K-9 officer patrolling nearby was first on the scene. As he approached the house with his dog on a leash, the woman ran out on the porch, clapped a hand to her head and moaned, "I come home from work to find all my possessions stolen. I call the police for help, and what do they do? They send a blind policeman!"

Parenthood

If it was going to be easy, it never would have started with something called labour!

Shouting to make your children obey is like using the horn to steer your car, and you get about the same results.

The smartest advice on raising children is to enjoy them while they are still on your side.

Avenge yourself ~ live long enough to be a problem to your children.

The best way to keep kids at home is to give it a loving atmosphere ~ and hide the keys to the car.

Parents: People who bear infants, bore teenagers, and board

newlyweds.

The joy of motherhood: What a woman experiences when all the children are finally in bed.

Life's golden age is when the kids are too old to need babysitters and too young to borrow the family car.

Any child can tell you that the sole purpose of a middle name is so he can tell when he's really in trouble.

Grandparents are similar to a piece of string ~ handy to have around and easily wrapped around the fingers of grandchildren.

There are three ways to get something done: Do it yourself, hire someone to do it, or forbid your children to do it.

Adolescence is the age when children try to bring up their parents.

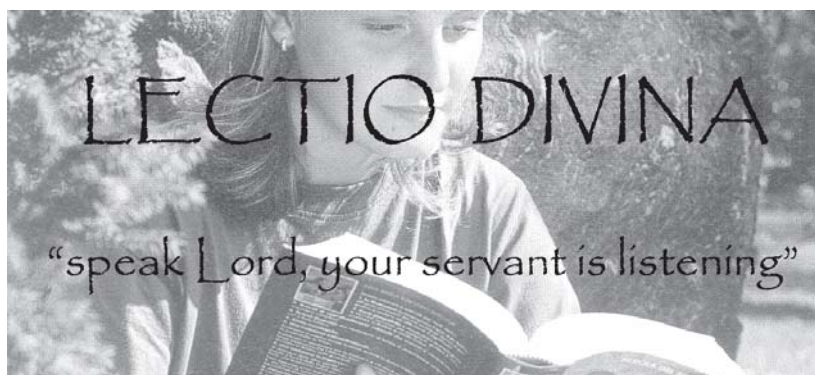
Cleaning your house while your kids are at home is like trying to shovel the driveway during a snowstorm.

Oh, to be only half as wonderful as my child thought I was when he was small, and half as stupid as my teenager now thinks I am.

There are only two things a child will share willingly: communicable diseases and his mother's age.

Adolescence is the age at which children stop asking questions because they know all the answers.

An alarm clock is a device for awakening people who don't have small children. □



GIFTS OF SALVATION

Luke 19: 1-10

by Marco Rossetti

Only a few kilometers separate Jesus from Jerusalem. At this point it was important for the Master to remind the Twelve of the fundamental reason for this journey. He was going up to that city to give his life – to die- and to rise again. It was the third time that he was telling them this and he had to make quite an effort to get them to understand and accept this (18, 31-34)! By this time the group was entering Jericho, a flourishing city with its own customs' house for the caravans that came from the Jordan valley and from distant Arabia on their way to Jerusalem and Zacchaeus was a resident of that city.

The Gaze and the Word

The oasis of Jericho offered Jesus an opportunity to take a break and the possibility to situate a miracle and an encounter: two different stories, but both presenting the offer of salvation.

The news of the healing of the blind man (18:35-43) quickly spreads around the city and Zacchaeus arrives on the scene. He

is “a sinner,” the chief of the publicans, those who collected taxes for the Romans. He was curious. Perhaps he wanted to see Jesus. That is how the episode begins and in a few verses we come to the core of Christ's work and one of the themes very dear to Luke: the salvation of sinners. The story is crisp and quick. Zacchaeus, being rather short climbs a tree in order to see Jesus, but suddenly the action is reversed: “when he arrived at that place, Jesus looked up...” and saw him first (v. 5)! After that look, the chief tax collector is drawn by the Word: “Come down immediately because I must stay at your house today.”

The Offer of Salvation

It is beautiful to note Jesus' considered approach. Zacchaeus is right on time, his curiosity and his desire combine to become an acceptable moment for salvation. Never keep quiet or ignore your desire for God, not even your curiosity about him. Zacchaeus must have said to himself instead: I could use this occasion for my own

good. Why live with a yearning for an unspoken word or an unexpressed desire? Jesus said to Zacchaeus: "come down quickly." "Quickly," but actually in the Greek text we read two verbs that make the statement even more intense: "come rushing down!" Why such haste? It is as if Jesus were saying: "Come on, get out into the open; stop hiding among the branches of the sycamore tree and tell me what you want and why you want to see me. Give up your old life and come and meet me." In the presence of Christ who brings salvation, there is no time to lose! He must be accepted at once and his plan must be put into action by removing from one's life all that is not decent or upright. He wants to gift you with salvation but why is it that you are sometimes so reluctant to accept it?

The Moment of Salvation

Then Jesus says: "...I must stay at your house today." Staying at the home of a public sinner is unbecoming for a teacher like Jesus but in his assessment of things, he is not afraid (v. 7). Instead he offers him salvation: that publican was really in need and so he needed to be helped immediately, "today." It is a word that is very dear to Luke. He uses it 19 times in his Gospel and twice on this page to emphasize explicitly that the moment of salvation for Zacchaeus is right now.

In stopping at his house and entering it at the same time, we are presented with something unique and beautiful. Here the Lord invites him to encounter salvation: "today," an unrepeatable and unforgettable occasion, and "at home" which is a symbol of an everyday life situation. Truly we should give a lot more



attention to the quality of our daily life situations in which God knows how many invitations to salvation and to the Lord come our way without us realizing it and which perhaps we have declined to accept. Zacchaeus is a master at not letting the Lord pass him by. He teaches us to throw open our doors by concrete actions that will signify the intention to change his life. The text then presents several levels of a man who "comes down in haste" - observe the two verbs Luke used after Jesus ordered him down (v. 5). "And he received him joyfully" (v. 6). Then we are told that this chief tax collector makes an extraordinary decision demonstrating his change of heart: "Lord, I will give half my wealth to the poor and if I have stolen from anyone I shall restore it fourfold" (v. 8). Courageous actions and impossible to execute by himself but they spring from a heart that has been overwhelmed by the love of Christ and so he feels the need to have his dignity restored, to be made right, and he is now grateful for the salvation he has received. □

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SANCTITY IS OF THE CH

by His Holiness

On Monday 1 November, 2010, the Feast of All Saints, the Pope addressed the faithful in St. Peter's Square before reciting the Angelus. The following is a translation of his reflection which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Solemnity of All Saints, which we celebrate today, invites us to raise our gaze to heaven and to meditate on the fullness of the divine life which awaits us. "We are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2): with these words the Apostle John assures us of the reality of our profound relation to God, as too, of the certainty of our destiny.

Like beloved children, therefore, we also receive the grace to support the trials of this earthly existence – the hunger and the thirst for justice, the misunderstandings, the persecutions (cf. Mt 5:3-11) – and, at the same time, we inherit what is promised in the Gospel Beatitudes: "promises resplendent with the new image of the world and of man inaugurated by Jesus" (Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth*, Milan 2007, p. 72). The holiness, imprinted in us by Christ himself, is the goal of Christian life. Blessed Antonio Rosmini wrote: "The Word impressed himself in the souls of his disciples with his physical presence... with his words... he had given to his own this grace... with which the soul immediately perceives the Word" (*supernatural anthropology*, Rome, 1983, pp 265-266). And we have a foretaste of the gift and the beauty of sanctity every time that we



THE POINT CHRISTIAN LIFE

Pope Benedict XVI

participate in the Eucharistic liturgy, the communion with the “great multitude” of holy souls, which in Heaven eternally acclaim the salvation of God and of the Lamb (cf. Rev 7:9-10). “The lives of the Saints are not limited to their earthly biographies but also include their being and working in God after death. In the Saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them” (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 42).



Consoled by this communion of the great family of Saints, tomorrow we shall commemorate all the faithful departed. The Liturgy of 2 November and the pious exercise of visiting cemeteries reminds us that Christian death is part of the journey toward becoming like God and it will vanish when God will be all in all to everyone. The separation from earthly affection is certainly painful, but we should not fear it, because it, accompanied by the prayer and suffrage of the Church, it cannot break the profound bond that unites us to Christ. As was previously said, St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms: “He who has created everything in wisdom, has given this painful disposition as an instrument of liberation from evil and the possibility to participate in separated goods” (*de Mortuis Oratio*, IX, Leiden, 1967, p. 68).

Dear Friends, Eternity is not an “unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality” (*Spe Salvi*, n. 12). To the Virgin Mary, the sure guide to sanctity, we entrust our pilgrimage to our heavenly home, while invoking her motherly intercession for the eternal repose of all our brothers and sisters who have been laid to rest in the hope of resurrection. □

Short Story

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

from Fr. Ian Doulton's collection

We have fought many wars, all of them to defend the ideals of justice and brotherhood and the right of each man to find his own way to happiness. We have won many battles overseas but here at home we have yet to win the decisive one.

This is what Johnnie Barker began to discover even while he was still with the army of occupation in Japan. At first, all he lived for, was the day he could go back home to Horton Creek in the in the valley. Then he fell in love with a Japanese girl. Her name was Set-Sumi and she had eyes like black velvet but Johnnie Barker took his time deciding whether or not to marry her. Set-Sumi loved farming, babies and a host of things that Johnnie loved. She was intelligent, pleasant and hardworking and she loved Johnnie. She was also a good Christian and the only way Johnnie could have her was to marry her. He listened to the objections of his commanding officer. He weighed carefully the warnings of his friends. Then he wrote a letter to his father explaining how he felt. And when he boarded the plane out bound for the States, Set-Sumi climbed the ramp with him as Mrs. Johnnie Barker.

Together they changed to the local train that chugged through Horton Creek. Johnnie was excited. The scenery seemed to look the same, the wooded valley and all the trees and streams. He was coming home and he made not secret of his excitement to 'Sets' (that's what Johnnie affectionately called her). She was happy for him too. Oh, his

dad would be looking forward to seeing his 'Soldier Son' return home from the war. As he lifted her delicate frame off the train onto the little platform he asked her: "You tired honey?" "No, I'm not tired" she replied very shyly. Then she asked quietly: "Where is our father, Johnnie?" (She would always say 'our father' when referring to her father-in-law, for, that was the Japanese custom) Johnny knew Matt Wilson, the stationmaster of Horton Creek as a good family friend for many years. His father would certainly be inside chatting with Matt. He told Set-Sumi to look after the luggage while he went to call his dad. He went into the stationmaster's office and found Matt busy at his books: "Matt, Matt, I'm home!" Johnnie shouted, like a schoolboy back home for holidays. Matt was thrilled to see him: "Well, Johnnie, how are you, how have you been? You look like you've grown two feet taller! Well, I'm glad to see you Johnnie." Matt told Johnnie that his dad had left the pick-up truck for them to come home and nothing more. Johnnie found it strange but his dad could have been caught up with something on the farm. He came back and told Sets: "Dad will be waiting for us at home, I guess." But it still seemed odd.

The old pick-up was still good and Johnnie drove off in a cloud of dust into the valley. The road wound through the green valley and then Johnnie said excitedly: "Sets, there's our fence, that's the beginning of our land." Nothing

had changed. Set-Sumi was impressed. Soon the pickup was climbing up to a clearing where the bungalow was. Johnnie then proudly said: "Here's our house." Set-Sumi observed: "I do not see a light in the house." Johnnie could almost think of his father eagerly preparing supper for them in the kitchen, with ham and cornbread and sweet potatoes from the farm. It was then she said: "Johnnie, *you* go to our father, I wait." Johnnie tried to insist but she said: "Perhaps he would like to welcome you, alone." Maybe he should, thought Johnnie. So, he walked up the porch steps and in through the wire mesh door and into the living room. He saw his father sitting in the armchair by the window. Will Barker could see the drive from where he sat. Johnnie shouted as soon as he saw his father: "Dad, dad, I'm back!" There was a cold reply from the gathering twilight: "I reckon you are." Some of Johnnie's excitement disappeared at this cold reception. His son had come back from the war and here was his father with no sign of welcome. There *was* something wrong, Johnnie sensed. Then he asked: "Dad, what's troubling you?" Now it all came out. His father stood up and in his deep voice said: "What's troubling me? You ask what's troubling me?" Johnnie tried to quieten him saying: "Dad, Sets is outside." Will could not be bothered. She could remain there. Johnnie was shocked. He could not believe he was hearing his father's voice: "There are plenty of your own kind you could have married, girls right here in the valley." Then Johnnie raised his voice: "Well, I loved Sets". Old man Barker wasn't listening. He sat on

his armchair once again: "You've loved her? You should have known she wasn't our kind. She won't fit in here. What will people say? How are we going to face this town?" Johnnie replied as loudly as his father had spoken. Now he could not be bothered if Set-Sumi was listening: "I haven't done anything to be ashamed of." William Barker was prepared to speak to the Japs maybe in the streets or at most employ them on his farm, but have his son marry one of them and have them eat at the same table? He would not hear of that. He bellowed: "How you could lower yourself with getting mixed up with a heathen?" Johnnie knew full well that Sets was a good Catholic, from the Catholic Mission in Osaka, in fact, a better practicing Catholic than either he or his father. Will Barker then said in disgust as he turned his back: "I'm not having any bunch of little 'skinnies' running around my house." But the war had taught Johnnie a few things and one of them was not to hate the enemy. He hated the wrong ideas somebody had pumped into their heads. Set-Sumi's father was killed in one of the American bombing raids. Will did not even want to see her and so he said: "She's not going to set foot in my house," disgusted, he continued: "Just thinking about you and her, turns my stomach." Johnnie was really angry and walked out in a rage: "I'm taking my wife to a hotel and I'm not setting foot in this house until you are ready to treat her like my wife." Set-Sumi had heard all this and she had tears running down her cheeks as she fell into Johnnie's arms: "Johnnie, Johnnie," He tried to calm her but she cried on: "I am sorry. I made you hear

our father say those things.”

This was the way Johnnie Barker came home and found that the war had followed him. He and his wife moved into a little old house not much better than a shack on the next hill over from his father's. From their south window, they could see Will Barker's chimney. But news raced through the valley. 'Johnnie Barker's married a Jap!' Nobody said: 'Welcome home, Johnnie' and nobody came to call. Johnnie farmed the place by himself. He tried to make the house livable with only Sets to help him. Every once in a while, she walked across the fields and left a cake or a pie on Will Barker's doorstep. But the old man never spoke to her or Johnnie. If he passed his son on the street, he turned his head. Johnnie set his jaw and hung on. Sets packed away the tea things that were meant for company and lost much of her gaiety. They fought it out alone for a year and a half when Johnnie got another call from the Army. There was trouble in Korea. This time it was doubly hard to go because he had to leave Sets alone and their baby was on its way. Johnny saw to it that word reached his father but when he boarded the train out bound from the valley only Sets waved him goodbye.

Months passed. Sets used to stand every day and look sadly at the chimney of her father-in-law's house. One day there was no smoke coming from the chimney. The next day there was none. When, the third morning passed without the sign of life, Sets, thought she had better call the doctor. She had no phone in the house so she trudged the three miles to the doctor's and together Dr. Weston and she went over to Will Barker's.

Dr. Weston knocked hard and called loudly: "Will! Will Barker! Will, its doc." There was no sound. He looked concerned: "Sets, I'm going in." Set-Sumi went in with Doc Weston. The place was all dusty. There was mud on the floor. Then both of them heard a sound in the kitchen. They walked quickly there. The moment Will Barker saw Set-Sumi he shouted, weak as he was: "Get out, and get that Jap girl out of my house." He had a stick in his hand and was coming toward them swaying from side to side. He did not seem normal at all. He was delirious. Dr. Weston managed to overpower him and took him to bed. He immediately went into a swoon. Set-Sumi said quietly: "Doctor, our father is very sick?" "Too sick to move, I have to get a nurse," replied Doc Weston. Set-Sumi was ready to sit by his bed: "I will care for him," she said. The doctor would not have it. "No Set you can't, you're too near your time. It'd be a night and day job. Besides, he doesn't want you." Set-Sumi assured him: "I cared for the sick in the war. You said with this fever, he would not know anything. He would not know I am here."

It was about a week later as Set-Sumi was dozing by Will Barker's bedside when Doc Weston tip toed in and asked if she had eaten and rested. Set-Sumi replied: "I have rested and the neighborhood women have brought food." Doctor Weston seemed relieved that the neighborhood was finally coming to accept Set-Sumi. There seemed to be some movement from the bed. Set-Sumi said quickly: "Doctor, our father is waking up." Doc Weston patted the slim shoulder of Set-Sumi: "You did it Sets. You pulled him through." Will Barker was trying

to get up and the doctor tried to tell him to take it easy. He had been delirious all this time. The moment he set eyes on Set-Sumi he said, rasping: "What! What's she doing here? You get that Jap girl out of here." Weston tried to convince him: "Well you wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her. She's been nursing you night and day." Barker went on, as if he had not heard the doctor: "You? What are you doing here? I told you to stay away." Set-Sumi spoke boldly now: "You are the father of my husband, so you are my father. My people are taught to have great respect for the elders of our family. I am the daughter of this house. When you are sick I care for you." Will Barker fell back on the pillows, but not before he whispered: "Go away." In his eyes was still the fire of hate. Set-Sumi turned her face away so Doc would not see her tears. Doctor Weston stood up over Will Barker and said very distinctly: "Will Barker. Is that all you've got to say?" He led Set-Sumi by the shoulders out of the room. She was sobbing. Then he said loud enough for Will Barker to hear: "Now, Sets I'm taking you out right now." She agreed: "Yes, please doctor. I want to go home." In the mean time Will Barker wanted to get up because he thought he was feeling a little better. "Now when can I get out of this bed?" He shouted after Doc Weston. The doctor told him to take it easy and said he would come to see him in the morning. He had only been conscious for three days now.

Some days later, Doc Weston was visiting Will Barker again. He heard the buggy of Matt Wilson, the old Station Master pull up. Matt hopped off and came to the door and shouted: "Hey doc, doc," while

making his way to the door, "Johnnie's wife's in a bad way come as soon as you can." Doc Weston called back: "I'll be right there, I'm coming." Matt continued nervously: "Get Johnnie Barker as soon as you can too. My wife and I just stopped in to see her." But the baby wasn't due mused Doc Weston. Matt was agitated: "My missus told me to tell you the baby is coming. She is looking awfully bad." Doc Weston told Matt to run along and send a wire to Johnnie Barker. He came back to the bed of Will Barker, who seemed unconcerned and he said very sternly: "Now Will, Barker, listen to me before I go. I've got something to say to you. Johnnie's wife wore herself out taking care of you. She sat up with you five days and nights. She saved your life and all you said was: 'Go away'. You call yourself a man of peace? You call yourself a Christian? Now chew this over Will. If Johnnie's wife dies, if Johnnie's baby dies, it will be on account of you!"

The Station Master finally sent Johnnie Barker a telegram. He never received the wire. It crossed one from Johnnie saying he was on his way home. - He was the only one getting off the train and there was nobody on the platform. He knew Sets wouldn't be there with the baby coming. There would be no pick up for him this time. There was only one car near the tracks, a brand new car. He started to walk away from the station with his duffle bag on his shoulder, head down and his boots kicking the dust. As he neared the car the door opened and two people stepped out. "Sets! Dad!" Sets was so excited in Johnnie's arms: "Johnnie, Johnnie!" Will

(Continued on pg. 27)

A MISSION FROM ABOVE

by Gianni Asti

Our reflections on Don Bosco as a catechist were inspired with some urgency as we consider the times in which we live. Think of the fact that today, we have to bear witness to our Faith in a world that is moving away from God at such a speed that it is losing its Christian and human values.

Religious education that in the past sustained the Faith of our elders does not seem to be effective for today's youngsters. A systematic catechesis only takes place for those preparing for their First Communion and Confirmation.

Once upon a time, parents and grandparents were the first catechism teachers of their children and because of this we would like to reflect on the influence that Mamma Margaret had on her son, Don Bosco

A Call From Above

We will now consider how the vocation of John and the education he received was influenced by the Call he received from heaven in the form of the dream that he had at the age of nine.

There was a certain originality in the suggestions that the youngster received as to how he was to teach Catechism and witness to his Faith during those early years and later on as a young priest.

The experience that John had during the dream of Jesus the



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

Good Shepherd and Mary became the foundation of his ministry among youngsters and it explains the passion with which he spoke to the youngsters about God. In fact, for Don Bosco, teaching Catechism was not just about memorizing some formulae but it meant encountering God and bringing him to young people.

Only those who have had an intimate experience of God can feel that passion that would qualify them to be good catechists. In this regard we should keep in mind all those who are presently in this ministry - even parents who are the first catechists of their children.

We must remember that the essential content of all catechesis is concentrated in one person who needs to be known and accepted: Jesus Christ, the Perfect Man, Son of God, Saviour and Lord.

The first proclamation is of Him

who was dead and rose and which St. Paul handed down to the Christians of Corinth: "We declare to you, brethren that the Gospel we preach to you... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was buried and rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve!" (Corinthians 15:3-5)

That majestic and luminous personage who appeared to little Johnny - in the dream while he was trying to silence his blaspheming companions with blows - was Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Instruction on the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtue

In John's dream, Jesus called him by name (like the typical of the calls in the Bible) and ordered him to put himself at the head of the group of youngsters and take charge of them, adding the words:

- *You will have to win these friends of yours, not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness. So begin right now to show them that sin is ugly and virtue is beautiful*

- *Confused and afraid, I replied that I was only a boy and unable to talk to these youngsters about religion. At that moment the fighting and cursing stopped and the crowd of boys gathered about the Man who was now talking. Almost unconsciously I asked:*

- *But how can you order me to do something that looks so impossible?*

- *What seems so impossible you must achieve by being obedient and acquiring knowledge.*

- *But where, how?*

- *I will give you a Teacher, under whose guidance you will learn and without whose help all knowledge becomes foolishness.*

- *But who are you?*

- *I am the Son of Her whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day. (EBM I, 95)*

The first draft of the Catechism that Don Bosco received from on High contained a catechesis on *the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtue*. He masterfully penned down those thoughts in his famous prayer book: *The Companion of Youth. (Il Giovane Proveduto)*

As instructed in the dream he was told that it was not with blows but with gentleness and charity that he was to win over his charges. These should be the characteristics of every catechist. He or she should demonstrate the virtue of patience coupled with firmness. The kindness of Don Bosco that conquered the hearts of his youngsters was the most beautiful expression of this charity.

The means to be employed were also revealed: obedience and the acquisition of knowledge. John was upset and admitted that he was a poor ignorant youngster.

From this mission that he had received from above John derived that passion for the salvation of souls that he demonstrated throughout his life. It became his motto: *Give me souls and take away the rest."*

This is your Field of Work

When he gave him a Teacher, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, presented his mother to him. He also pointed out to him that his field of work was that privileged portion of humanity: poor and abandoned youth.

At that moment I saw beside him a Lady of majestic appearance, wearing a beautiful

mantle glowing as if bedecked with stars. She saw my confusion mount; so she beckoned me to her. Taking my hand with great kindness she said:

Look!

I did so. All the children vanished. In their place I saw many animals: goats, dogs, cats, bears and a variety of others.

This is your field, this is where you must work,' the Lady told me. 'Make yourself humble, steadfast and strong. And what you will see happen to these animals you will have to do for my children.

I looked again; the wild animals had turned into as many lambs, gentle gamboling lambs, bleating a welcome for that Man and Lady.

'At this point of my dream I started to cry and begged the Lady to explain what it all meant because I was so utterly confused. She then placed her hand on my head and said:

'In due time, everything will be clear to you.'

After she had spoken these words, some noise awoke me.' (EMB 1, 95-96)

This was the role of Mary in the mission of Don Bosco the catechist. She would help him understand God's plan for his life and for the good of youngsters. It was not for nothing that his work for poor and abandoned youngsters would have humble beginnings with the recitation of a Hail Mary with a poor 16 year-old bricklayer.

A catechist juggler

Supported by the example of his earthly mother John immediately swung into action. He was just ten years old.

We notice him at his first performances among his peers.

Here we find the young John Bosco honing the art of teaching Catechism. He coupled the proclamation of the Gospel and entertainment to prayer and he still succeeded in offering his audience an experience of God.

"There was a meadow in Becchi dotted with several trees. John used to stretch a rope between two of them and anchor it firm and tight. He would then set up a chair and a small table with a bag on it. A large mat was then rolled out on the ground. As soon as everything was ready and everyone was eagerly waiting for the performance to begin, John would invite them to recite the five decades of the rosary and sing a religious song. That done, he would stand on his chair and announce: "Now I want to tell you about the sermon that the chaplain gave today at Morialdo." At the end of his sermon a brief prayer was recited and then the show would start. The young preacher had now become a skilled entertainer. (EDB 1, 106)

This was what "teaching Catechism" meant for Don Bosco: to be enamoured by the youngsters the Lord had sent to him so that they could sense that in him they had a loving friend.

For him simply teaching Catechism was unimaginable. There had to be a little 'game' which would make that meeting something that they looked forward to.

So, that was how Don Bosco taught Catechism already as a youngster, through his performances in the courtyard in front of his home. Today outside his home there is a monument to the ten-year-old passionate juggler - catechist, man of God. □

(Continued from pg. 23)

Barker smiled his old familiar smile: "Welcome home, son!" Johnnie embraced his dad: "Dad, you came with Sets! What happened?" Will said: "Well you haven't seen anything yet. Look in the backseat". Johnnie opened the door and his eyes opened wide and he shouted: "Ah, ha, ha, the baby! Sets why didn't you let me know?" Will motioned him: "Here, climb in the car." Johnnie was all questions. All Sets said was: "Our father bought it for us and he taught me how to drive." Then Will Barker was his cheerful self once more and he put

his arm around his son's broad shoulders and said: "Well it's a darn good story. And if you'll climb in here beside my grandson we'll tell you all about it on our way home."

This is one battle for brotherhood that ended in victory. But the war is still being fought in communities throughout every country all over the world. It will end only when all of us have learned the lesson of the Lord's Prayer that he whom we call 'Our Father' is equally the Father of all. And that only when we have learned this shall we see the coming of his Kingdom of Peace. □



walking with the Church

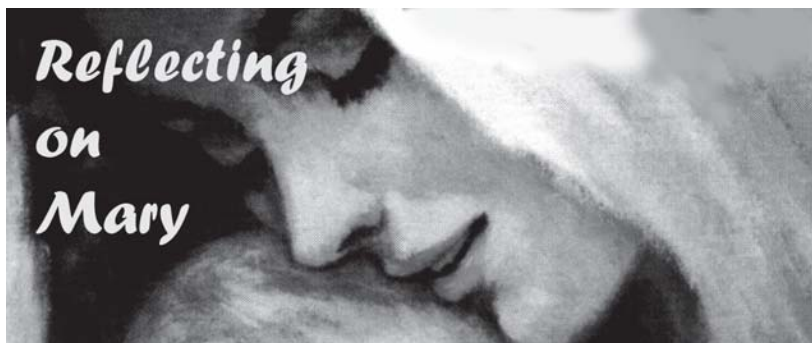
The Origins of All Souls Day

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

I go to a special Mass once a month for All the Faithful Departed... I feel that we do not pray sufficiently for them... My question is that I would like to know when the Church first started celebrating 'All Souls Day'?

Thanks for your question. I believe that most Catholics consider it a sacred duty to pray for the dead. They may not do so by attending a special monthly Mass, but any Christian who prays will almost certainly pray for their deceased relatives and friends because they believe that they can help them with their prayers. When was 'All Souls' Day' first celebrated? It was first begun in the year 998 by St. Odilo, a Benedictine Abbot. Other

Benedictines and Carthusians followed his example and in 1003 Pope Sylvester II approved the practice. Another point which you might like to know was that the date (2nd November) was selected so that the memory of all the faithful departed, those already enjoying their eternal reward and those still in purgatory could be celebrated on two successive days, the first two days in November. The successive celebrations remind us all of our belief in the Communion of Saints - we can help those who are gone before us by our prayers and those who have already departed this life can help us by interceding for us with the Lord. □



"THEN MARY SAID"

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

For me, the biblical presentation of Mary has overtones of Chinese art. She seems to have some of the characteristics of famous Chinese silk paintings: very few strokes, plenty of white spaces, some colours, contours not clearly defined, simple subjects and an unpretentious atmosphere of a kind of sacred silence. A few strokes falling harmoniously in just the right places and bursting with energy thanks to the white spaces, they become very evocative. These qualities invite the onlooker to take a leap towards the infinite, peep into the realm of mystery and experience the utter beauty beyond. In fact, there is very little that the evangelists report about Mary but the few strokes of colour and the many blank spaces that surround her offer us a portrait of her that is a harmonious whole both dynamic and fascinating.

For 20 centuries, the Church has contemplated Mary's sober beauty and she always manages to find some new insights some new energy to assist us on our journey through life. "*De Maria nunquam satis*" says St. Bernard (*you cannot*

say enough about Mary). We can never stop contemplating on Mary as we reflect on the few words that she speaks in the Gospels.

Only six verses in the Gospels

Just like the Gospel accounts of Mary have been counted, so too have Mary's words. Mary spoke only six times in the Gospels. Twice to the angel at the Annunciation (Lk. 1, 34.38), once to the 12 year-old Jesus when she found him in the Temple (Lk. 2, 48), twice to Jesus at the wedding of Cana (John 2.3) and then once to the servants (2.5). All the six statements of Mary are introduced with "and Mary said, or "his Mother said."

The "sayings" of Mary look brief and yet they are clear, intense, the fruit of silent reflection. They burst forth from the depths of her life as the result of her deep contemplation. That was why they were as incisive as the sword-like Word of God.

At the Annunciation Mary does not immediately respond to the angel's surprising message. Her first reaction is one of shock

which is typical of someone who is faced with something so infinitely incredible. It is something novel and unexpected and she can hardly grasp its meaning. Hers is an attitude of humility and reflection of someone who is conscious of her smallness. She approaches the mystery with timidity and discretion as she tries to plumb the depths of its meaning. Mary begs for enlightenment: "How is this possible? I do not know man." She also expresses her dilemma at having to accept without knowing what she is consenting to. She asks God what she should do to be able to obey and after the angel revealed how she was to become the protagonist and witness those "great things," Mary fully accepts and gives her consent: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me as you have said."

At Ain Karim, when Mary encountered Elizabeth, she "proclaimed" a poetic explosion of joy, emotion and gratitude. A poem is the fullest, most intense and the most beautiful form of human communication. It is language that unifies and harmonizes all that is in the depths of a person and directs it towards the Infinite. Hers was a language of innocence, wonder, love, a free "explosion" of life. With God concealed within her, Mary explodes in a form that is new and surprising because she is overwhelmed by the mystery that has filled her with overflowing joy. "My heart is moved by an exalted theme, my tongue as nimble as a writer's pen." (Psalms 44)

Words of Acceptance

There is a long silence after the incident at Ain Karim and then the 12 year-old Jesus visits Jerusalem. The journey to the holy city marks a

milestone in Jesus' growth and is an anticipation of another trip that he will have to make to Jerusalem and that journey will culminate in his Passover but it also marks a milestone in the growth of his mother.

She found Jesus in the Temple after three days and Mary asked him: "Son, why have you done this to us? Behold your father and I have been worried, looking for you."

The "why" of Mary gathers up the "whys" of all humanity as they gather around the mystery of the cross and in their anxiety and anguish they earnestly strive to find God. Mary too grows in her ability to accept the identity of Jesus - this child who is not just her son - she is growing in her knowledge that God is always mysterious and man is continuously "seeks" him.

At Cana, Mary plays the role of mediator. Her two 'words': "They have no wine" and "Do whatever he tells you," bring out this dimension. Mary reads deeply into human history, seeing individual problems, as yet unnamed. She finds confusion and cries of pain not yet verbalized and she presents them to her Son who alone can resolve them. In the mean time she prepares the servants to accept this divine help. "Do whatever he tells you." Among the statements that Mary made this one is addressed to everyone. It is also the last recorded word spoken by her in the Gospel, a kind of "spiritual testament." After this, Mary will not speak anymore. She has said what was essential. □

NEWSBITS

AUSTRALIA

"Jesus must disappear from history. Actually, he must really stop popping up as a pivot point of history itself: Before and After Christ, we say and write. But no longer. At least in Australia. At least in students' textbooks."

The perplexing proposal that all traditional references to the terms "BC" (before Christ) and "AD" (after Christ) will be replaced by the more "neutral" EV (before the Vulgar Era), BP (Before Present, to be used according to specific instructions for ancient history and archeology) and CE (Common Era). An innovation that was supposed to become effective immediately, but that due to the outcry it caused could be delayed.

Interviewed by the Australian Daily Telegraph, the Anglican Archbishop **Peter Jensen** spoke of an "intellectually absurd attempt to erase Jesus from history". Reverend Fred Nile said, "It is absolutely shameful. What they are trying to do is to remove from our history the role that Christianity played in creating the consciousness of the Country."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Education, **Adrian Piccoli**, stated that the Ministry was not concerned about the changes and added that by now terms such as BP or CE are already commonly used. **Christopher Pyne**, opposition spokesman for educational matters, noted: "What Australia is today is the result of the Judeo-Christian heritage of western civilization. The embarrassing removal of "Before Christ" and "After Christ" is an attempt at denying our being a people."

UNITED KINGDOM

Catholics must get back the tradition of the "**Friday fast**", the day of the week when the faithful abstain from eating meat to commemorate the Passion and the death of Christ.

English and Welsh bishops requested this in a communiqué **dated 5 September** and signed by **Markus Stock**, General Secretary of the English and Welsh Episcopal Conference. In this note, they urged the faithful to "return" to this "practice of penitence," for the entire year. **And this is precisely what is new about the proposal: a return to this "healthy habit," not just during Lent, but every Friday each year.** The bishops wrote: "Friday is the designated day of penitence as it commemorates the pain and death of the Lord." The prelates also gave an indication of the date by which this "decision" **came into effect: 16 September 2011, which was a Friday.**

In the document, the bishops of England and Wales also recognised that "simple acts of witnessing, coupled with sincere prayer, can be a **strong boost to faith.**" Finally, the bishops noted that traditional acts of Catholic devotion, such as making the sign of the cross in a careful and respectful way, saying the Angelus prayer as well as a prayer before and after meals, are "simple actions during which we dedicate a few moments of our daily lives to God the Almighty and show our love and trust in His goodness and providence." If these acts of devotion have been lost or even

forgotten, in particular in our homes and at school, then we can only but gain from **learning to bring them to life once more.**"

GOA

Richard Lees, a 26 year old chemistry graduate, lay leader and founder of the Goa Anglican Centre (<http://goaanglicancentre.webs.com/>) from Bath in the UK, has just completed a 500 km **walk across the UK to raise money for his charity**, which he set up to improve the lives of vulnerable people in India.

Lees walked from **Walshingham in Norfolk to Lindisfarne, popularly known as Holy Island, in Northumberland - the two most important centres of Christian pilgrimage in England.** "It was something that I felt I had a personal need to do as part of my own spiritual growth but it has also served as an opportunity to raise funds and awareness of the charity" Lees explained. "I was humbled by the generosity of people along the way, many of whom offered hospitality and friendship. I was also amazed by the generosity of those who gave money to the appeal"

The walk **raised an encouraging £1200 out of the £2000 target**, and is part of an **ongoing fundraising campaign** to finance a number of projects, the most important of which is the **establishment of a volunteering programme** and the opening of a **new charity centre in Goa**, which will include a café, a travel agency, Wi-Fi internet and a charity audio-visual display and shop. Tens of thousands of tourists visit Goa each year and Lees hopes to tap into their generosity, not just in terms of money, but also, their time and unwanted belongings. He also hopes his work "will generate long term funding for

projects that bring benefits to the most vulnerable, be they socially excluded, suffering from extreme poverty or ill health or simply lacking opportunities".

Lees qualified as a science teacher in 2008, but it seems God had other plans for him. After he was baptised and confirmed in the Anglican Church, he decided to spend 18 months exploring what these plans were, through a Pastoral placement with a church near Birmingham in the UK.

But if you are not prepared to take a risk, you are not really living. Though Church life in England was comfortable, "I **knew I would not really be following God's plan unless I took the jump**" the young charity worker said. He explained how his ever growing faith had revealed to him that the right way forward for him, was to give himself full-time to his charity work in India, which he had already been involved in during his time at school.

Fired by his faith and with the **strength and support offered to him by church communities of all denominations** where he had lived and worshipped (Bath, York and Birmingham, in the UK), Lees founded the Goa Anglican Centre in the summer of 2010 and spent the winter of 2010/2011 establishing a base for the charity in Goa. He established and strengthened links with local charities that had the know-how and contact base to help him fulfil his goals. Amongst these are SEEDS India www.seedsindia.net in Kerala and Mother Teresa's Roses in Mumbai (Bombay) and Goa. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for helping our daughter to pass her SSC board examinations with a good percentage and for many other favours.

Maureen, Mumbai

My nephew, his wife and son were saved from a terrible crash when cement boulders came through the roof of their house but spared them. Our Lady was there to protect them. A similar incident took place last year and they were spared from a crashing ceiling fan that fell from the ceiling. We pray the three Hail Marys every day.

Miss Arputhaswamy, Tiruchi

On 4th May 2011 we were travelling by car from Goa with my wife and daughter-in-law and two small grand children to visit Our Lady of Velankanni. At Davangere we met with a serious accident. None of us were hurt though the car was totally smashed. We prayed the 3 Hail Marys and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Our Lady had protected us.

Devotee, Mumbai

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for the gift of a beautiful healthy baby girl.

Ms. Hazel Crasto, Dahirar

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for blessing me with a good job abroad. Please keep me always under your loving protection.

Savio F. DeSouza, Goa

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for their constant guidance and protection in our daily lives.

Lorna DeSouza, Goa

Thank you, Mother Mary for my successful cataract operations in January 2009 and July 2009 and for a left leg operation in March 2008.

Selwyn Lopes, Goa

In the month of August 2011, my husband had taken a loan from the bank and he lost the money somewhere. We were very upset and worried. I prayed the three hail mary continuously, and asked Mother mary to help us find the money. In the morning around 5.00 am, my husband found the money in the store room. It was a miracle to find the money in the store room. I would like to thank Mother Mary for helping us find the money. and for all the favours granted to me.

P.D UK

It was in July 2010 – a very close friend of ours was very sick in hospital, she was in a coma for nearly a month due to some infection. She was under medication but there seemed to have been no improvement. It was at this time that I received the *Don Bosco's Madonna* and I felt inspired to pray earnestly and entrust my friend to Mary Help of Christians. Soon after this she began to show signs of improvement and now she is fine. I am sure Mother Mary heard our prayers. Thank you dear Mother Mary.

P. Antao, Goa

Our grateful thanks to Mother Mary for all the blessings and favours that our family received.

V.E. Joseph & Mary Joseph, New Panvel

Thank you dearest Jesus and Mother Mary for curing my child Ishaan from Jaundice. Please continue to bless him and keep him in the best of health.

Clemie Coelho, Mumbai

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

Thank you, dear Mary Help of Christians for the many graces granted to me through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Euphrosia Rebello, Goa

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for my admission in the post graduate programme.

Ishwar Rathwa, Vadodara

Thank you dear Mother Mary Help of Christians. I prayed for employment from Our Lady's Book (Don Bosco's Madonna) and I am blessed with a temporary job. I pray that Mother Mary continues to intercede for me and that Almighty God blessed me always. I pray the three Hail Marys daily.

Valerie Fernandes, Toronto

Our humble thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for the many favours received throughout our daughter's pregnancy and for blessing her with a healthy baby girl Kaitlyn Elizabeth.

Mr. & Mrs. Arockiasamy Anthony, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Thank you Mother for the all the blessings on my family, and for keeping my parents and my family in good health, and for blessing me with a job, the 3 Hail Marys have always be my strength in my most difficult times.

A Devotee, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a successful by-pass operation of Mr. John Godwin. We continue to say the three hail Marys daily.

Mr. & Mrs. Godwin, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, through the recitation of the three Hail Marys my daughter and son-in-law have got their green cards and for all the other favours received.

T. Gomes, Mumbai

Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for granting a US visa to our son. We need your continuous favours and blessings on him and on our family.

Mr. & Mrs. D'Souza, Mumbai

We are grateful to Our Lady for favours received. Please mother, protect us and my Trinette and Enzo.

R. Mahadwan & E. D'Silva, Mumbai

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for having attained 70 years of age in spite of many obstacles, difficulties and misfortunes. I also pray that Jesus and Mother Mary protect me and my wife always.

Joe Cabral, Mumbai

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

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and to St. Dominic Savio, through whose intercession and the daily recital of the three Hail Marys, I have received countless blessings for the last 40 years from ever since I was a child. Sorry I am very late to send my thanksgiving, but I know the Lord understands. Mother Mary and all the Saints continue to intercede for me and my Family.

Theresa Vaz, Pune

I am grateful to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the successful bypass heart surgery of my sister and also for many other favours received.

Violet, Mumbai

My belated but sincere thanks to Almighty God, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Blessed Mother Mary for granting my son a good job in a big organization in the Gulf.

Maria, Mumbai

My brother was suffering from a skin ailment. He had visited many doctors and had taken several medicines. Mother Mary always protects her children. I prayed hard to Mother Mary to cure him of his skin problems and today he is healed. Thank you Mother Mary for all the favours granted to me and my family.

F. D'Souza, Mumbai

Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for all the graces granted me during a very difficult period in my life.

Lizzie Dias, Mumbai

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the other saints for all the favours received.

Leena Martis, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the graces received.

Helen Johnson & Marissa J. Manuel, Bhayandar

Thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for granting my son success in his Std XII as well as in his final year and thank you for many other favours.

Devotee, Mumbai

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady: On 13th May and 24th May our house work that had been held up for 10 years became possible and was completed because of Our Lady's blessing. The impossible was made possible. We are grateful for several other favours received.

Theresa Gonsalves, Mumbai

Belated thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours granted, especially the gift of a baby girl to my elder daughter who had a normal delivery after many complications. She is eight months old now.

Mrs. O. Pinto, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for giving me a good life partner.

Mrs. N. D'Silva, Mumbai

Thank you, Mother, for restoring my good health and do continue to shower your blessings on us.

Cheryl, Pune

My belated thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby girl.

Rodricks, Mumbai

Thank you, Mother Mary for granting my daughter-in-law a safe and normal delivery and a healthy child.

F. Pinto, Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Thanks dear St. Dominic Savio for the favour I received. I was saved from having to undergo an operation which the doctor had advised me to get done. I have been cured. *Mumbai*
We are grateful to St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby boy. I wore the scapular of Dominic Savio throughout my pregnancy.

Mr. & Mrs. S. D'Cunha, Goa

Dear St. Dominic Savio thank you for the gift of a baby girl and for a safe and normal delivery.

Preetham and Carol Fernandes, Dubai

My Sincere thanks to our Dear Lord, Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for favours received.

B. Cardozo, Mumbai

For the last seven years we were childless and several times I came to the shrine to ask for prayers. Today I am blessed with a healthy baby girl. I am grateful to Our Lady, don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a child.

Mrs. Sonia Almeida, Goa

I am sincerely grateful to St. Dominic Savio for granting my son success in his examinations.

D. Fernandes, Mumbai

My elder son was born in March 2004 through a C-section and I was due to have my second child in 2008 and I was very nervous as the doctor had told me that I would not be able to have a normal delivery. It was the feast of St. Anne and I attended Mass with my family and after lunch that afternoon I went into labour. I went to the hospital and delivered a normal baby boy that evening. I am most grateful to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for this gift and for having preserved me from a dangerous accident.

Alanna Braganza, Goa

Our sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for saving us from a major accident while we were asleep at home.

Mr & Mrs Lawrence Pereira, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 2011

Holy Father's General Intention: *For the Eastern Churches, that their venerable tradition may be known and appreciated as a spiritual treasure for the entire Church.*

Missionary Intention: *For Justice and Reconciliation in Africa: That the African continent may find in Christ the strength to fulfill the path of reconciliation and justice, indicated in the second Synod of Bishops for Africa.*