

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*Hail Holy Queen,
to you do we cry:
Show unto us
the Blessed Fruit
of your womb
Jesus,
O Clement,
O Loving,
O Sweet Virgin
Mary!*

Cover:
Mary, Immaculate - a detail
by Nino Musio



From The Editor's Desk

He Speaks in Silence

As I sit down to write about faith all I can write is words. I sit down to think of faith, all I can think of is words. As I stand up to speak about faith, all I speak is words. Did you know that God however speaks more through silences?

When I was learning to pray (and I'm still learning) I knelt down but my mind is filled with thoughts and wild imaginings. I used to form pictures of Christ, his face, his hands, his clothes, but all these were constructs of my mind. I made pictures of how he might seem in the carpenter's workshop or walking down the hill to Capernaum... but perhaps all this was of my own making. What did his voice sound like, how did he handle a hammer, how did he talk with neighbours when the day's work was done? I can see him throwing his head back in laughter at stumbling, impetuous Peter, smiling wistfully at Thomas, looking patiently at John and accepting the exuberance of youth. But maybe all I am doing is imagining how it was. Where, I ask myself is the real Christ?

When I was a youngster I wondered what the blessed Mother looked like, so I said it to my mother "I find it hard to picture Mary in my mind." After a short pause came the never-to-be forgotten reply: "Don't try to picture her, just think of her as standing behind you."

We sometimes struggle fruitlessly to form images of those to whom we pray. Artists make carvings, icons and paintings to help our prayer, but in the final reckoning they are but symbolic tokens, figments of the artists' imaginations. So nowadays when I pray, or read the Gospel, I no longer make pictures in my mind. I listen for feelings. Perhaps feelings are closer to the person. How much Jesus had felt when he said to Peter: "Why did you doubt?" Was Jesus disappointed or was he rebuking? When he turned to Peter on another occasion and asked, "Will you also go away?" was he downcast, utterly shattered, almost begging that they would not leave him there to start all over again? Was he thrilled when the good thief said his piece, elated that it now seemed all worthwhile and he was seeing the beginning of the harvest, the first into the Kingdom? Was this a 'heart-lift'?

So when I pray I can only wait in silence, attentively watching, reflecting on what is before me in Scripture or in the Sacraments. That is why I try to be still, I let go of *my* own visions and words and desires till I catch a glimpse of him. At this point the reply I seek comes, not just in words but as a real presence, not as ideas but like the visit of a friend. The search is for the heart and I can begin to feel his love, his loving heart, the heart we long to know and hold sacred and that's why I believe only "heart speaks to heart."

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

9. AN UNUSUAL BUS RIDE

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

As usual, after work Jacinda took the bus home. But what a ride it was that evening! There was nothing very unusual except that a blind lady who usually got on at the same stop as Jacinda was noticed to be missing by some of the regulars. A brief search revealed that she was still sitting over in the corner all by herself, waiting for the bus. One lady passenger smartly jumped off the bus and ran to help and guide this blind lady to her usual seat.

Not far down the road, a young girl in her twenties tentatively got on at one stop and asked the bus driver how much the ride would cost to her destination. When to her dismay she heard that it would cost her \$3, she mumbled something about having less than \$2 and then with a "Don't worry," as if to herself, got off the bus deciding to walk the entire distance. Had she really done that it would have taken her about 7 to 8 hours of brisk walking – and in the dark for a good part of the way! As she started striding decisively down the road, suddenly there were voices of concern from every passenger on board. Everyone was speaking at the same time to one another, "Oh no, didn't she have enough money?" All on the bus, without exception, volunteered to readily pay her fare.

Charity in Action

Without much ado, being the nearest, Jacinda jumped up and was about to hand over \$3 to the driver for the girl's fare. But before

anyone else could get up and do the same, the driver called out cheerfully, "It doesn't matter even if she didn't have any money, I wouldn't let her walk all that way home!" Hearing these words, the entire bus-load was dumbfounded! That certainly wasn't the usual approach on these buses, for normally anyone who didn't have the correct fare wouldn't be allowed to ride on the bus. But this lady driver was different – she just exuded kindness and confidence with her charming ways!

The bus driver drove to where the girl was walking in the distance and cheerfully told her she was welcome to get on, free of charge. The poor girl was more than a little embarrassed and for a moment didn't know what to do, but a smile slowly emerged across her face and she was profusely thankful to all on that bus, but particularly to the driver! The cheerful bus driver, real apostle of charity that she was, made sure that everyone got home safely including the blind lady. Jacinda couldn't but reflect as she got off: "That bus ride was really something different; it touched my heart because everyone was so kind to one another, even to complete strangers!" She decided that on her next bus ride home, she would give a Smile Card to that lady driver and tip her a little extra if she was driving that day!

A New Vision of Others

One of the signs that we have

risen with the Risen Lord at Easter is that we begin to look on people, all people no matter what they look like or behave like, as the Lord himself in disguise. This applies particularly to those in distress as happened on this bus. The regulars noticed the absence of the blind lady and decided to do something about it, at least to enquire and make sure that she was not left behind because of negligence. And right enough that is what would have happened had someone not enquired! The general attitude, especially in our big cities is to mind one's own business, and particularly not to interfere with strangers or get entangled with situations that would require a lot of effort.

Had that somewhat self-centred attitude prevailed on that fateful evening, not just the blind lady but also the unfortunate girl who ran short of her bus fare would have been left out in the cold. At that hour almost everyone is tired and weary and all they want is to get back home to a hot meal and a cosy bed as soon as possible. To think of the convenience of others at that part of the day is rather demanding. Yet, that is what this bus load of people was able to do – was that not a sign that the Risen Lord was very much active in their midst? They need not have been Christians committed to following Jesus, yet the Risen Lord works in the hearts and lives of every person of goodwill. All it needs is a realization of one's own desire in a similar situation. Jesus summed this up so beautifully 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).

Another way of expressing the same truth is that in the Old Testament the law was: "love your neighbour as yourself!" But Jesus changed that considerably when he said that the only commandment he would give us his followers is to "love one another as I have loved you!" So the argument underneath all this is that the neighbour is as precious to God as each one of us is, and so should be precious to us too. For when we show kindness and love towards others, we acknowledge God's own kindness and care for ourselves.

Obstacles to Christ-like Loving

In actual practice, though, many of us find it difficult to love others as Jesus loves them. And perhaps the most obvious reason for this is that somehow we have been programmed to see 'perfection' as the pre-requisite for our love for others. We find it easy to love those who are good, particularly if we are the recipients of that goodness. We tend to distance ourselves from those who have shortcomings by sticking out like porcupine quills. Our tendency then is to save ourselves from getting hurt, little realizing that that is not the way Jesus loves us. He came precisely into a sinful world where not one person was righteous, the way he could have expected them to be. Further, he went out of his way to show love and acceptance precisely to those whom Society ostracized, the tax-collectors, murderers, sinners and the like. So, we see that Jesus loves us not because we are good, but because he sees in us the image of the Father who is the only one who is good.



Now it is precisely the power of the Risen Lord that enables us to rise to the level where we can habitually see the face of the Father in every person we meet. This is what produced among us a Mother Teresa who cared for the scum of Society, for people whom no one else had any regard. The Church's history is filled with people like Mother Teresa in whom the Risen Lord was at work. But one need not be a great saint to be an effective instrument of the Lord. All it takes is a readiness to be open - open enough to see and feel the sufferings of others around us; to listen to the inner voice of love urging us to reach out with whatever we have; to recall the thrill and joy we experienced when we did overcome our self-centredness and finally did something for others! Like the prophet Isaiah we have to be able to say, "Here I am, send me!" And the Lord will provide us with several instances in which we can bring his light and peace to others.

Going Beyond the Law

We recall that Jesus told his

disciples that "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). Now this is a strange thing we notice in Christian living. We are to respect and keep the laws God gives us, for there again he tells us, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one

who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21). So we need to keep the Law. Yet, it is not merely keeping the law that is important in the sense that we make of ourselves slaves of the Law. Rather we need to so imbibe the spirit of the Law so that we almost habitually go well beyond it. To take a simple example, Christians have the law of Sunday obligation requiring them to celebrate Eucharist on a Sunday. What we mean to say then is that it is not enough merely to celebrate Eucharist on Sundays imagining that with that all is over!

Our Sunday celebrations should engender within us such a love for the Eucharist that we would be delighted to celebrate Eucharist even on weekdays, according to the measure of our generosity. If Eucharist is reserved only for Sunday, and we do that mainly to fulfill the requirements of the law, then there would not be much difference between ourselves and the Pharisees. This is the approach that should characterize Christians, that schooled in and by the law they are free to go beyond it (not against

it!). Now isn't this also true of all great art? A student learning to play the piano has to initially stick to the correct fingering and play the piece exactly as it is written. But as he gains fluency he is permitted to interpret the piece he plays putting a lot more of feeling into it - which could mean that he lengthens a particular note a fraction or two, adds a little bit here or subtracts something elsewhere, keeping always within what the composer wishes to convey. Those kinds of liberties can be taken only by advanced students and not by beginners and that because they have by then mastered the art of playing the piano. The same applies to driving a car or operating a machine or gadget.

The bus driver in the story would certainly have needed to abide by the laws of the company she worked for. Yet, at her discretion she could accommodate a needy person or two according to circumstances. What guides her in this is the love that fills her life,

the awareness of the blessings she herself has received from the Lord through so many others. It could be that she also was fully aware of her mission as a Christian to pass on God's blessings to others, especially to those in need. Or again, she could have been inspired by the spontaneous generosity and goodwill of so many other passengers who immediately volunteered to pay the person's fare. What is important is that she allowed God's Spirit to work through her, whatever might have been the initial impulse.

Conclusion

When every Christian is convinced that s/he has a place in God's plans for the smooth functioning of the entire planet and that each person's contribution is indispensable, and then sets out to make his/her contribution freely and generously, what a different place would our world not be? Who is to bring about this change? Jesus has already begun the process through his marvelous self-gift on the Cross. Today, what we lack chiefly is the living out of all these symbolic gestures we do in our Church ceremonies.

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." Could you start the ball rolling from your corner of the earth? ☐



THE COURAGE OF HER "YES"

by Mons. Angelo Comastri,
(T/A - ID)

We should continuously explore the extraordinary richness of the "yes" that Mary uttered at the Annunciation. Just to compare our "yes" to the great "yes" of Mary is salutary because we make such an effort to say "yes" to the Lord that we think we are heroes whenever we do. What we do is to just throw a few crumbs of our Faith towards the One who tirelessly knocks on the door of our restless freedom with his nail-pierced hand. Mary is so different!

She was completely *in her "yes."* She was courageous. She never stopped to consider the consequences or the personal gain involved. She just totally and courageously surrendered herself to God.



With the help of a delightful story, Carlo Carretto helps us to plumb the depths of the extraordinary courage of Mary's "yes" at the Annunciation.

Brother Carlo said: "I was living in Hoggar in the small community of the Little Brothers of Father De Foucauld. I earned my keep by working on the slopes of Tit ... I grew fond of the Tuaregs and during my travels I had the opportunity to stop by in the evenings after work. It was during one of these meetings with them that I came to know of an interesting fact. I had learned, almost by accident that a girl from the camp had been betrothed to a young man from another camp, but she had not yet gone to live with her future husband because she was still too young.

Instinctively the passage from the Gospel of Luke came to mind recalling precisely how the Virgin Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, but that she had not yet gone to live with him (Matthew 1.18).

Passing that camp, two years later, in the course of conversation I spontaneously asked if that marriage had taken place. I was given to understand through my translator there was some uneasiness which was followed by the embarrassed silence of the chieftain of the encampment.

I too kept quiet about it, but towards evening when I went to draw water from the spring I saw one of the servants of the chieftain. In my curiosity I could not resist asking the reason for the awkward silence by the chieftain.

The servant looked around warily but he confided to me through a sign I knew only too well. By passing his hand across his throat in a characteristic gesture he meant to say: "Her throat was cut."

The reason? Before the marriage it was discovered that she was pregnant. The honour of the family demanded that sacrifice.

I shuddered at the thought of the girl who was killed because she had not been faithful to her future husband.

That evening as I prayed Compline (night prayer) under the Saharan sky, I wanted to reread the text of Matthew about the conception of Jesus in Mary.

I lit a candle because the night was moonless and dark and I read: **"His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Now before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a just man, refused to divorce her publicly, had decided to put her away secretly"** (Mt 1.19).

... I recalled the present. I felt Mary sitting on a sand dune close to me, helpless and small and defenceless...

The night was dark and I could not see the stars. All I could see around me were so many eyes like the eyes of jackals waiting for the lambs. They were the eyes of the inhabitants of Nazareth who had spied on the teenage mother, and asked her with all the incredulity that humankind could muster and even more: "How could you conceive a son, you shameless wretch!"

...Poor, sweet Mary, you little teenage mother. What a hurtful way to begin life!

How can you face so many

enemies? Who would believe you?

For the first time, that night, I felt I was getting a little closer to understanding the mystery of Mary.

For the first time I did not see on the altar the immobile plaster statue dressed in regal robes. Near me, I saw a sister sitting on the sands of this world, with worn out sandals and so very tired.

Then I understood why her cousin Elizabeth, who Mary had gone to visit, after those events....could say at the end of the story that Mary had told her: **"Blessed are you who believed!"**¹

The Blessedness of Mary

Yes, this is the great blessedness of Mary. She is blessed because she believed; she is blessed because she meekly gave herself to God and allowed Him to lead her.

True faith, in fact, cannot expect to see everything in front of it and see it clearly. True faith does not need to examine the maps in advance of the journey that God proposes.

True faith says "yes" looking into the eyes of God and blindly trusting in the goodness that shines in those eyes.

That was what Mary did. That was why the blessedness that Elizabeth proclaimed was most appropriate. Let us sit quietly in prayer and draw as close as we can to the courage of Mary's "yes". May we humbly and insistently ask to be infected by this "yes."

All of us need this because "everyone that is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 Jn 5.4). □

¹ Carlo Carretto, *Blessed is she who believed*, San Paolo 1988, 8-11.

SALESIAN SAINT OF THE MONTH

TERESA VALSÉ PANTELLINI (1878 – 1907)

Teresa Valsé Pantellini was born in Milan on 10 October 1878 into a wealthy family. Her father, Giuseppe Valsé Pantellini was a fervent Catholic and very rich. He owned several hotels in Egypt where Teresa spent the first years of her life. Giuseppe taught his daughter to love the poor and to always help them. The family first moved to Milan and later to Florence. Teresa was 12 years old when her father died. The girl nurtured a deep love for prayer. She was given in literature and the fine arts and, under the guidance of her wise and demanding mother from whom she learned to cultivate Christian virtues. On the day of her First Holy Communion she felt called to the religious life and so she joyfully offered herself to the Lord. Her spiritual director was Bishop Radini Tedeschi and he encouraged her to approach the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Rome, "to give herself irrevocably to the Lord," as she said, "for the education of girls from poor families." She made her religious profession in 1903 and after her initial training was appointed as a teacher at the Oratory of Trastevere. Her companions at that time remember her well. In fact she was able to keep discipline while overlooking a thousand gestures of rudeness and incivility. A girl simply spat in her face when Teresa



refused her a permission. She bore this gesture calmly much to the edification of all present. Teresa was always kind and gentle with everyone. She did the most menial and demanding jobs gladly.

Just as Don Bosco wanted, she did the ordinary tasks in an extraordinary manner. Not even the ever growing symptoms of tuberculosis succeeded in stopping her from striding confidently towards sanctity. She felt that the time had come for her to love and to suffer. The joy and the simplicity of Mornese, the silent sacrifice, her continuous union with God and her childlike love of the Virgin Mary were the pivots on which her life rested. It was on September 3, 1907 that sister Teresa went to meet Jesus whom she had irrevocably chosen. She is buried at Nizza Monferrato. The beginning of the diocesan process: December 6, 1926.

Declared Venerable: July 12, 1982

**WHY DID I BECOME A SALESIAN: WHY AM I STILL ONE?**

Fr. M. George Mathew, sdb

Provincial Administrator, Province of Bangalore

Fr. M. George Mathew shares his reflections on what inspired him to become a Salesian Priest and why he continues to be one:

Q. *Why did I become a Salesian?*

A. Already as a child I was interested in becoming a priest. This desire was further strengthened as I read the life of Don Bosco. After having a live-in experience in a Don Bosco institution during a summer vacation, my interest to become a Salesian priest became clear to me. After completing my primary schooling (Grade VII), I moved to the Don Bosco School for my high school education.

After my initial schooling I expressed a desire to join the Salesians of Don Bosco and applied for the same. I did the required period of formation and became a member of the Salesian Congregation in May 1986.

Q. *Why do I still continue to be a Salesian, from where does the motivation come?*

A. 25 years of Salesian life has been an enriching experience for me. I am glad with what I have become and what I am able to do in the congregation. I have had the opportunity to work with young people in different parts of South India. It has been great fun and an immensely satisfying experience.

I must say that the experience of working in the field of social development from 1997 has been very rewarding. I have been



touched and was able to touch the lives of thousands of youngsters through our projects located all over Karnataka and Kerala. In my interactions, I have also come to know the extent of our works for youth in the country and in the world. And these years have been a great learning experience for me. I still continue to learn.

I believe the motivation to continue in this ministry comes from the passion I have within me for this mission. The impact I see, the real change and development that I see in the young, surely encourages me. Several instances of young people come to my mind and they evoke many joyful memories. I can say that there has never been a sad day in my life ever since I became a Salesian.

My dear young friends, if you feel the desire to be a Priest or Brother; to be a consecrated person; don't be afraid. If God calls you, no matter how difficult it gets, He will see you through. Take the first step in faith, the rest will providentially follow. □

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Witnesses in & for Our Times



HILDEGARD von BINGEN

(17 SEPTEMBER: 1098 - 1179)

by Mario Scudù

The Church gives thanks for all the manifestations of "feminine genius" that have appeared in the course of history, among all peoples and nations, thanks to the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women throughout the history of the people of God, for all the victories that she owes to their faith, hope and charity, for all the fruits of feminine holiness" (Bl. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*).

Among these singular women is, Hildegard von Bingen who lived in Germany in the twelfth century; a saintly woman with an extraordinary personality.

The 9th centenary of her birth was celebrated in the year 1998. It was a celebration that aroused much curiosity. It led to new studies regarding this saint also called the "prophet of the Rhine."

"Oh thou, frail creature... speak and write what you see"

Hildegard was born in Bemersheim (Böckelheim), West Franconia (now Germany). She was the tenth child of a well-to-do family. There were two peculiarities that were noticed immediately in Hildegard: she

possessed a quick and keen intelligence but she was also rather frail in health. Her life was marked by celestial visions, which began at the age of 5 as she recalled: "In my fifth year of life I saw a light so great that my soul was shaken, however, because I was so young, I could not talk about it ..." In 1106 her parents sent her to a 400-year-old Benedictine monastery which had only recently added a section for women. They put her under the care of a noblewoman and resident there, Jutta, calling Hildegard the family's "tithe" to God.

Jutta, whom Hildegard later referred to as an "unlearned woman," taught Hildegard to read and to write. Jutta became the abbess of the convent, which attracted other young women of noble background. During that time convents were often places of learning, a welcome home to women who had intellectual gifts. Hildegard, as was true of many other women in convents at the time, learned Latin, read the Scriptures, and had access to many other books of religious and philosophical nature. Those who

have traced the influence of ideas in her writings find that Hildegard must have read quite extensively. Part of the Benedictine rule required study, and Hildegard clearly availed herself of the opportunities.

Anthropological message and ... ecological

For thirty years nothing extraordinary happened but Jutta gradually discovered that her pupil Hildegard had now become her tutor! And so when Jutta died, the nuns elected Hildegard their abbess. There followed five years of ordinary administration. The turning point came when she was 42 years old. She heard God's voice telling her: **"Reveal the wonders that you have learned...O thou frail creature... speak and write what you see and hear..."** A detail: the more she resisted the Voice, the more she suffered. Finally, on the advice of Volmar, her next tutor, began to write. Her best-known writing is a trilogy (1141-52) including *Scivias*, *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, (Book of the Life of Merits), and *Liber Divinorum Operum* (Book of the Divine Works). These include records of her visions - many are apocalyptic - and her explanations of scripture and salvation history. She also wrote plays, poetry, and music, and many of her hymns and song cycles are recorded today. She even wrote on medicine and nature -- and it is important to note that for Hildegard of Bingen, as for many in medieval times, theology, medicine, music, and similar topics were unitary,



not separate spheres of knowledge.

Meanwhile, her fame increased and news of her reached the ears of Pope Eugene III, who in 1147 had called a general synod of the Church in Trier. The pope sent a delegation to meet and interview Hildegard. The test was successfully passed and the "examiner" returned happy. At the synod even St. Bernard, the famous abbot of Clairvaux asked the Pope to not allow *"a light so bright to be muffled in silence."* Eugene encouraged Hildegard to write. One of the fruits of her fame (and sanctity) was the great number of noble women who knocked at the door of her monastery. Even so, not without difficulty, she managed to found another monastery near Bingen.

Hildegard was certainly a very atypical nun. She lived at a time when, within the Benedictine movement, there was stress on the inner experience, personal meditation, an immediate relationship with God and visions. It was also a time in Germany of striving between papal authority and the authority of the German (Holy Roman)

emperor, and by a papal schism.

Through her many letters, she took to task both the German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the archbishop of Mainz. She wrote to such luminaries as King Henry II of England and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. She also corresponded with many individuals of low and high estate who wanted her advice or prayers.

Richardis or Ricardis von Stade, one of the convent's nuns who was a personal assistant to Hildegard of Bingen, was a special favourite of Hildegard. Richardis' brother was an archbishop, and he arranged for his sister to head another convent. Hildegard tried to persuade Richardis to stay, and wrote insulting letters to the brother and even to the Pope hoping to stop the move. But Richardis left, and died after she decided to return to Rupertsberg but before she could do so.

A final famous incident happened near the end of Hildegard's life, when she was in her eighties. She allowed a nobleman who had been excommunicated to be buried at the convent, seeing that he had received last rites. She claimed she had received word from God allowing the burial. But her ecclesiastical superiors intervened, and ordered the body exhumed. Hildegard defied the authorities by hiding the grave, and the authorities excommunicated the entire convent community. Most insultingly to Hildegard, the interdict prohibited the community from singing. She complied with the interdict,

avoiding singing and communion, but did not comply with the command to exhume the corpse. Hildegard appealed the decision to yet higher church authorities, and finally had the interdict lifted.

Hildegard admonishes us today not to make of ourselves idols and sacrifice ourselves to them. One's greatest battle is against idolizing human person. The blasphemy we proclaim is: "I will not obey God or anyone else." This also has ecological repercussions which is a burning reality today. We realise this when we complain about pollution in our cities and global warming. The quality of life is increasingly endangered because of wild and thoughtless development that is not sustainable. Man is contemptuous of his environment, and once he has ruined it he turns on himself (think the greenhouse effect). This is why Hildegard says that we have neither respect for God or for the environment and for which all creation cries out in agony: **And I heard, wrote the saint, the elements turned on man with a wild scream. They shouted: "We can no longer run and complete our course as required by the Master because men by their evil deeds are reversing the course of the millstone. There is already the stench like a plague as we hunger for justice."**

It is an urgent plea to respect nature. We are all recommended to respect and listen, because it is God himself who speaks to us through her. Even nature can in fact be one way to get to know Him and His love. This is the message of Hildegard. Will we accept it? ☐

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Forgetfulness

While on a car trip, an old couple stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. The old woman unfortunately left her glasses on the table, but didn't miss them until they were back on the highway.

By then, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around. The old man fussed and complained all the way back to the restaurant.

When they finally arrived, as the old woman got out of the car to retrieve her glasses, the old man said,

"While you're in there, you may as well get my hat, too."

Cat Sale

A famous art collector is walking through the city when he notices a mangy cat lapping milk from a saucer in the doorway of a store and he does a double take.

He knows that the saucer is extremely old and very valuable, so he walks casually into the store and offers to buy the cat for two dollars.

The store owner replies "I'm sorry, but the cat isn't for sale.

The collector says "Please, I need a hungry cat around the house to catch mice. I'll pay you twenty dollars for that cat."

And the owner says "Sold," and hands over the cat.

The collector continues, "Hey, for the twenty bucks I wonder if you could throw in that old saucer. The cat's used to it and it'll save me from having to get a dish."

And the owner says, "Sorry buddy, but that's my lucky saucer.

So far this week I've sold sixty-eight cats."

No. 5 Bus

A married couple trying to live up to a snobbish lifestyle went to a party. The conversation turned to Mozart. "Absolutely brilliant, magnificent, a genius!"

The woman, wanting to join in the conversation, remarked casually, "Ah, Mozart. You're so right. I love him. Only this morning I saw him getting on the No. 5 bus going to Coney Island."

There was a sudden hush, and everyone looked at her. Her husband was mortified. He pulled her away and whispered, "We're leaving right now. Get your coat and let's get out of here."

As they drove home, he kept muttering to himself. Finally his wife turned to him. "You're angry about something."

"Oh really? You noticed?" he sneered. "I've never been so embarrassed in my life! You saw Mozart take the No. 5 bus to Coney Island? You goober! Don't you know the No. 5 bus doesn't go out to Coney Island?"

Wacky Definitions

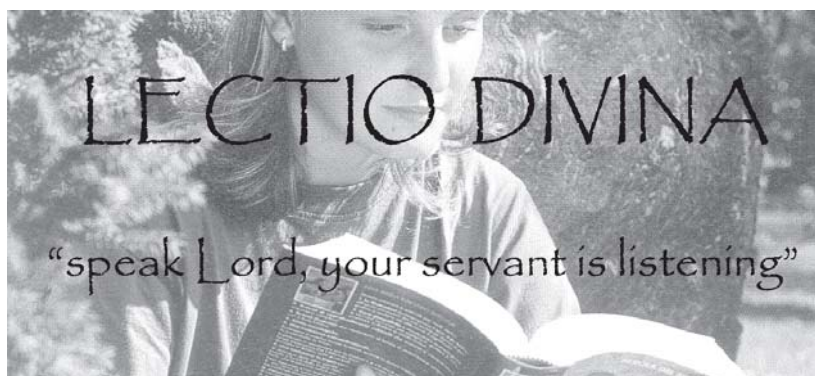
Gravity: Not just a good idea, it's the law!

Gross ignorance: 144 times worse than normal ignorance.

Clock: A small mechanical device to wake up people without children.

Karaoke: A Japanese word meaning "tone deaf".

Opera: Where a guy gets stabbed in the back and sings about it. □



EUCHARIST: ABIDING LOVE

by Marco Rossetti

Jesus' long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem is over. He enters the Holy City to begin the culminating moments of his life, his "exodus" his Passover (Luke 9:31). The institution of the Eucharist on the day of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22: 1-38) is one of the most moving and important stories that come at the end of the Gospel (Luke 19: 24-53)

It was the 14th day of Nissan, a day of great excitement for all families in Jerusalem. They would prepare for the feast by taking out of their homes and their kitchens every single piece of leavened bread. In the early afternoon the lamb was being sacrificed in the Temple so that by sunset the Jews could all gather together with their families to partake of the Passover meal, calling to mind through rituals the mighty works that God had done to free Israel from their slavery in Egypt.

Love's Prelude

Jesus had arranged everything for the occasion (22: 7-13) and was

now sitting at table with them. It was going to be his last supper before leaving this world, a very solemn moment. Luke offers us a description. It was the fruit of a wise re-reading within the early Christian Community. He portrays Jesus as the only protagonist on the scene but he is also perceived a deep communion with those who were listening to his words and participating in this greatest of love ever known to man. The enormity of this love is most evident when you note that this narrative is set between two gestures of disaffection: Judas deciding to betray him (vv. 1-6) and Jesus predicting Peter denying him (vv. 31-34). Christ's love is truly far greater than our hearts can fathom or we can imagine.

Jesus repeats the prescribed Jewish ritual (vv. 14-18), but he twice uses new terms concerning the Kingdom of God (vv. 16,18). They seem apparently mysterious, but in reality they are intended explain to his audience that what he is doing and saying is in

anticipation of a far greater feast that God will prepare for us at the end of all time as a sign of his infinite love (14.16-24).

New Words of Love

Perhaps, the apostles had perceived that Jesus was preparing a great and novel celebration. To begin with, he said that he had "greatly desired" to eat that Passover with them (v. 15).

Luke writes: "Then he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying, 'this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.' And, after dinner, he did the same with the cup (vv. 19-20). The bread, which during the Jewish Passover meal was a sign of communion among the members of the family was taken by Jesus and offered as his body. He commands us to repeat those words and those actions not as a mere memory, but as a "memorial" to ensure that his presence would be real and effective always, at all times.

It is no longer the symbol of the old covenant sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, but with the blood that Christ shed for us. Each

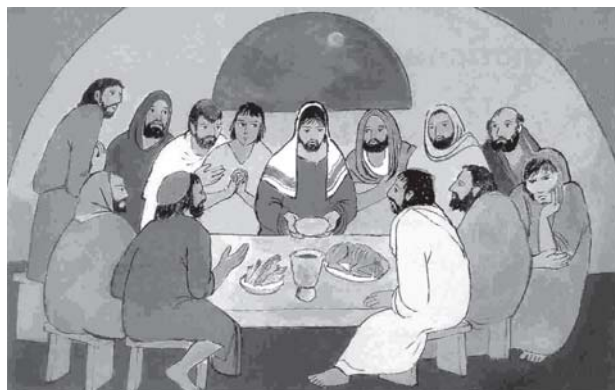
and every gesture and word that Jesus spoke that evening would be crowned by the events that would take place a little later: from Calvary to the empty tomb and the disciples would understand that the Eucharist anticipated the sacrifice of Christ – that he lived and laid down his life as a personal gesture of love - and of his Resurrection.

A Love for All Time

"Stay with us," pleaded the two disciples who were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). The traveller agreed, and "when he was at table with them, he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them" (v. 30). It is significant that the disciples recognized him precisely in the act of taking the bread, blessing it and breaking it. Soon Jesus would leave them, but the broken bread and the shared cup would remain.

Even in us, therefore, there is an increased awareness that the Eucharist flows from the love of Christ and that in this sacrament Christ is truly present. So the Lord continues to walk with us, and offers to stay with us as the true

bread that came down from heaven, the bread of life for all those who eat it in order to be in communion with Him that they may have eternal life and be raised by him in on the last day (cfr. Jn. 6:34, 48, 51, 54, 56, 58). □



GOD LOVES THE POOR AND

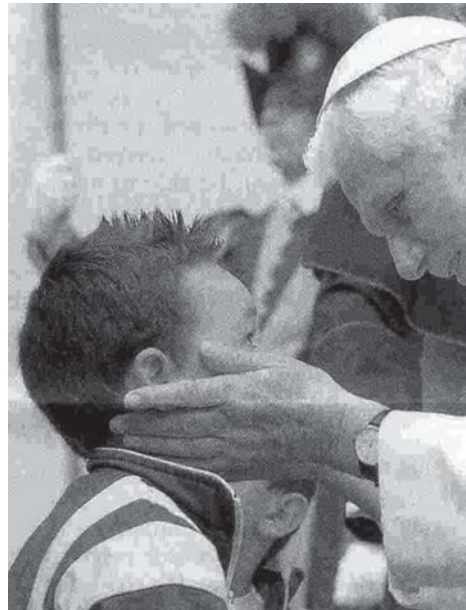
by His Holiness

At noon on Sunday, 26 September, before praying the Angelus with the faithful in the courtyard at the Papal Summer Residence in Castel Gandolfo, the Holy Father gave this reflection wherehe referred to the recent beatification of Chiara Badano. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Jesus tells the Parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), where the former lives in luxury and egoism and when he dies, he will go to hell. The poor man on the contrary eats the food left over from the table of the rich man, and at his death he will be brought by angels to his eternal dwelling place with God and the saints. "Blessed are you poor", the Lord proclaimed to his disciples, "for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20). But the message of the parable goes further. It reminds us that while we are in this world we should listen to the Lord who speaks through the Sacred Scriptures and to live according to his will, otherwise after death it will be too late to repent. This parable teaches us two lessons: the first is that God loves the poor and comforts their humiliation; the second is that our eternal destiny is conditioned by our attitude, it is up to us to follow the path that God has laid out for us in order to attain life and this path is love, not intended as a feeling but as service to others in the charity of Christ.

By a happy coincidence, tomorrow we shall be celebrating the Liturgical Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul, Patron of Catholic charities, on the 350th anniversary of his death. In 16th-century France, he himself keenly perceived the strong contrast between the richest and the poorest of people. In fact, as a priest, he had the opportunity to experience the aristocratic life and life in the



ASKS US TO SERVE OTHERS

- Pope Benedict XVI

country, as well as the dregs of society in Paris. Encouraged by the love of Christ, Vincent de Paul knew how to organize permanent forms of service for marginalized people, giving life to the so-called "Charitees" and "Charities", that is the groups of women who gave their time and belongings to the most marginalized people. Some of these volunteers chose to consecrate themselves completely to God and to the poor, with St. Louise de Marillac, and St. Vincent, Founder of the "Daughters of Charity" the first female congregation to live a consecrated life "in the world", with the common people, including the sick and the needy.

Dear friends, only Love with a capital "L" can bring true happiness! This is shown by another witness, a young girl who was proclaimed Blessed yesterday in Rome. I am speaking of Chiara Badano, an Italian girl born in 1971, who was afflicted by a disease that caused her death just before she turned 19. Despite her suffering, she was a ray of light (luce) as her nickname suggests "Chiara Luce". Her parish, the Diocese of Acqui Terzi and the Focolare Movement to which she belonged, are rejoicing today - and it is indeed a celebration for all young people who can discover in her an example of Christian devotion. Fully accepting the will of God, she spoke her last words: "Bye Mum. Be happy because I am". Let us praise God because his love is stronger than evil and death. Let us thank the Virgin Mary, who leads youth, through difficulty and suffering, to love Jesus and to discover the beauty of life.

In today's Gospel, the story of the rich man and Lazarus is held up to us as a warning to take special care of the poor in all circumstances. As followers of our blessed Lord, let us always look to others first, before we look to our own comfort. God's abundant blessings upon you all! □



MORTGAGE ON TOMORROW

from Fr. Ian Douulton's collection

The story you are about to read is based on an item that appeared in a newspaper some time ago.

Pauline Armstrong sits in a hospital room beside the bed where her husband Fred lies; his face is a grey mask against the pillow, a doctor bends over him to examine his progress. Ever since Fred was brought here, a day and a half ago he has lain still without opening his eyes or speaking.

"Doctor, how is he now?" asked Pauline, concerned. "Well, he is holding his own so far, Mrs. Armstrong. But, I'll be honest with you, his only chance is surgery, and we'll have to operate today." Dr. Evans seemed professionally rather casual. She went on, "How much will it cost?" Pauline was rather concerned. "How much?" repeated the doctor, "Well, I couldn't say. I hadn't thought about it." Pauline tried to insist, "How much *does* an operation of this kind usually cost?" By this time he had reached the door when he turned and replied: "Well, it might go as high as \$3500." Pauline seemed shocked: \$3500! The doctor tried to be more comforting: "Of course, Let me finish my rounds now, Mrs. Armstrong, I'll drop by within half an hour with the exact figures."

Pauline read the look the doctor gave her. He seemed to wonder

how she could talk about money at a time like this. She couldn't tell the doctor that \$3500 to her is more than a sum of money, more than a hospital bill. It stood for the way she looked at life. She was upset that eleven years of her marriage had come to a moment like that. Pauline thought back to her honeymoon. Did she remember that last night at 'Forest Lodge'?

Pauline's mind went back eleven years earlier to the last day of her honeymoon. The sun was setting over the lake as the couple sat on the bench overlooking the lake and Fred said: "Oh, I can't believe it's nearly over, honey. I'd give anything not to have to go back tomorrow." Pauline thought it would be fun getting settled, just the two of them. Fred looked at the sinking orb of the sun and mused. It was going to be good that his parents were taking them in till they got their apartment. At this point Pauline interrupted his reverie: "Fred," she said: "I've been thinking. Do we really want to go into an apartment? You know, we'd get jammed right up against other people. We would have to listen every time somebody coughed next door, kids screaming under your window, no place for your own children to play. I hate even the thought of it." She did seem rather upset even as she spoke about these

inconveniences. Fred tried to calm her: "Honey, we have to live some place. We can't roost in a tree." Then the typical Pauline tried to woo Fred as she said in a whine: "Do you really think it's so difficult to find a house?" Fred faced her squarely: "Now, Pauline, we've been through all that. I thought we had it settled." She stood up as she stretched out her hands in the evening breeze. She already had the flyer of a place she had in mind. All she had to do was to show it to Fred. Fred seemed to understand, but he promised he would think about it as soon as he got his first raise.

Pauline impulsively said: "But why pay rent, when we can put the same money into our house?" Fred seemed to get frustrated. It was like reasoning with a child. He tried to reason with her about all that buying a house would entail, but Pauline refused to listen. She gave her lame support that she could work for a while. That was something Fred didn't approve of and he often said: "If I'm not man enough to support a wife, I've got no business getting married." She tried to plead once more: "It'd just be for a little while, just till we get on our feet. Then we'd have our house." Fred was adamant about her not working. About the house he was willing to consider it. But then he thought: houses came empty. Pauline immediately, like a child, began to suggest that furniture wouldn't be any problem. She had thought of all the things his folks promised them. Besides, she had a lot of linen and dishes that the girls in the office had given her. So what could be missing? She seemed to have figured everything out. Fred

also wanted the house as much as Pauline did. He was just trying to be practical. He finally gave in: "Oh, well, okay we might as well take the plunge and get it over with." She was so excited; she hugged him like a child who was just given a new toy. Then Fred said they need to begin house hunting but again, Pauline had it figured out. She suggested eagerly: "Oh that won't be hard. Look, this is something I ran across the other day. It's a folder or something." She handed him a folder. He took it and looked at her rather quizzically. "A folder about what?" He said. She looked over his shoulder as they walked to the lodge. Fred became a bit cautious: "Hold it, wait a minute. Is this figure here the down payment on one house or the whole row?" Pauline defended her choice: "But Fred, this is a brand new house in an upscale residential neighbourhood. For a house in 'Echo Park' that's not much." Fred tried to tell her it was way above their budget. Pauline suggested that they could borrow the money and besides Fred would be getting his annual raise and promotions so that would take care of things. Of course, that was what Pauline thought. Pretending to be thoughtful, she finally said: "I'm just thinking, with your future Fred, this is the kind of house you'd buy for a lifetime. Consider, we have that money in the bank we could draw on."

Fred was finally made to see her point. Of course, she was right. It was wiser to *buy* a house than to rent one. But a house in 'Echo Park!' - the mortgage payments and the upkeep left you barely

enough to food on the table... Fred gave up smoking. Pauline experimented with working from home. Fred had two raises that first year but they still couldn't get ahead. Pauline remembered the time at the second raise. The two of them celebrated with dinner and a show of his choice. The next evening they both went window-shopping. It was Pauline's idea: "Isn't this fun, don't you just love to look at all the things in the window." Fred said with a wry smile: "Yeah, they can't charge you for that." Then something caught Pauline's attention: "Oh, look at this cute breakfast room set! Fred, I've been thinking; you know it's silly to have a breakfast room and not be able to use it because we don't have the right furniture." Fred tried to make her understand that they had not finished paying for the refrigerator and they had just started paying for the new stove. They hadn't even got their heads above water. Fred said in exasperation: "I wish we'd hung on to the stove we had." Pauline simply commented: "That old relic: that was a fire hazard. Oh come on let's look at the breakfast room set." So saying she dragged Fred into the furniture store. Fred gave her a final warning: "Now listen, Pauline, I thought we were going to save something out of this raise to start our family." Pauline whined again: "Family? Now a couple of pieces of furniture aren't going to interfere with that? Come on it doesn't hurt to look." That was true, but it always ended up costing Fred something. Pauline was excited like a child in a toyshop: "Oh did you ever see

so many lovely things. Fred, come over here. This living room set. That's just what I've been dreaming of ever since we got the house." Suddenly a voice from behind the racks called out: "Good evening, may I help you?" It was the manager. Fred simply said modestly that they were just looking around. Pauline had her eye on the living room set. The manager - a good salesman said: "Well I'm glad somebody appreciates it. You know, most people pass it right by." Pauline innocently murmured: "They do? Why's that?" The manager walked over to the set and placed a professional hand on the sofa: "No eye for quality or savings. I've been here ten years, and I've never seen a bargain like it." Pauline went over and impulsively sat down: "Try it out, sit down on the couch you too sir. It's like sitting on a cloud, isn't it? Feel the material, that's real foam. That's scratch proof, dust proof, perfect for a house with children." She was so excited but seeing Fred's face she traded it for tables and chairs and she was sick at heart.

As an afterthought she heard her conscience say: "Pauline, you are one of those people who will not offer up to God as a sacrifice the things they cannot have. They turn their desires into debts that others must pay even at the price of tragedy. Pauline, you had better pray now. Pray that your husband's tired heart will take up its beat again so that you will have another chance to make this up to him." □

(To be Continued)



Mother with a Heart

- Carlyle Laurie

She walked the streets to help the meek,
Picking up the leper and the weak
With a heart of gold she gave the poor
Food, kindness and an open door.

She had nothing to call her own
Yet her heart had place to cry or to mourn
The death of a cripple or an orphan she bore
Determined to fight to protect the poor.

The Missionaries of Charity was her dream
To help the downtrodden and restore their gleam
An angel of God she was for sure
Robed in blue and white she looked so pure.

'Mother' oh 'mother' they called her all day
And mother was there with them to stay
Cleaning their wounds with a soothing hand
She fought for them bravely and took a stand.

Her work won her the Nobel prize
The fruits she bore for heeding their cries
Millions came pouring into her door
Not a penny for herself - all for the poor.

Her life's work over, she returned home.
"Welcome good servant, your work is well done."
The Father's embrace was yours for sure,
because you always loved Christ in the poor. □

DON BOSCO AND THE CIVIC AUTHORITIES

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

With the Civic Authorities

Don Bosco was intensely aware that he lived in an era of tremendous problems. There were important social and cultural changes taking place in those days and these changes had severe political implications. Because of these changes he was compelled to make certain choices for the sake of his mission.

He took the conscious decision of "no party politics," and left that as a spiritual heritage to his congregation not because he was "apolitical" and indifferent to the great human problems of his time but because he wanted his followers to devote themselves to reform society through education and not through political movements.

In spite of this approach everyone was well aware of how much Don Bosco respected civil authority. Without ever being subservient he genuinely showed them respect and trust. He even made sure to ask for their consideration and understanding with regard to his charitable projects. Not for nothing was he generally liked by the civil authorities. He was much respected by them and they even helped him.

"Puf, puf, puf"

In 1865 Don Bosco had a meeting with the Home Secretary Giovanni Lanza.

Sig. Lanza asked him: "Don



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

Bosco, tell us, how can you meet so many expenses? Where do you get the money to feed all those boys? What's your secret?"

"Sir," replied Don Bosco, "I operate as a steam engine." "I keep going puff, puff!" (puff is the Piedmontese slang for debts)

"Yes, but these 'puffs' must eventually be paid. What's your secret for that?"

"I will tell you, Your Excellency. An engine needs fuel..."

"What kind of fuel do you really mean?"

"The fuel of trust in God!" Don Bosco replied.

The Minister did not forget Don Bosco's reply and often repeated it to his colleagues: "I asked Don Bosco how he managed to go on, without means with so many boys to look after and he replied that he was went forward like steam, making puff, puff, puff, meaning incurring debts. I added that we also go on like this. And he was glad that I had compared him to

the Kingdom of Italy” (cf EBM 8, 45).

“I’ll give you my income”

One area in which Don Bosco’s wit was explicitly seen was the way he sought to get money for his works

One day a tax collector showed up at the Oratory with an income tax form for Don Bosco to fill out and return with payment within the prescribed time. Undismayed, Don Bosco called the tax collector’s office for an explanation. “The reason is quite simple,” the agent replied. “You have an income from the board and tuition fees of all those boys in your school, and they are taxable. There can be no exceptions! If you don’t pay, you’ll be fined, and the amount will be all the greater since you neglected to declare your income.”

“Listen,” replied Don Bosco, “I have a better idea. I’ll hand over my income to the government and let it pay the tax.” The form was withdrawn (cf EBM 5, 493).

“What do you want me to say?”

A typical case of “reaching out” to the civic authorities was at the inauguration of the Turin-Lanzo



The Salesian House, Lanzo



Turin-Lanzo Rly Station

railway that stretched as far as Cirié in August 1876. On that occasion, Don Bosco mingled warmly with three of the most influential leftist anti-clerical members of the present opposition: Agostino Depretis, President of the Council, John Nicotera, Minister of the Interior, Giuseppe Zanardelli, Minister of Public Works.

The rector of the Salesian house of Lanzo, Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne was approached by the civic authorities requesting him to host the government officials and guests at a cocktail party which they wished to hold in the spacious porticoes of the school. Fr. Lemoyne wrote to Don Bosco and he gave him a free hand and told him that, were he then in the area, he would come to Lanzo.

The official opening of the railroad was held on Sunday, August 6, 1876. The school was festooned with crusader flags flying from every pillar, between which fluttered red and white streamers. In the centre of the portico a portrait of King Victor Emmanuel II stood on a stand between the national colours. At the entrance of the school the band took its place and struck up the royal march while the boys lined the route into the house.



The Old Railway Station - Lanzo

Vermouth was served and the ministers came through the porch and into the garden accompanied by Don Bosco who started a light and cordial conversation with them. Nicoterà, then jokingly opened fire on reports that Don Bosco was very close to the Pope but Don Bosco was not outwitted. He declared his loyalty to the Pope and his respect for the government authorities too. The conversation grew more animated

unable to give an opinion. But Zanardelli interrupted the conversation with these words: "Ask Don Bosco instead if you are not the biggest sinner of the lot."

"But I have no intention of being converted," he replied.

"Then you are a bigger sinner than I," Nicoterà replied "because you know what is wrong and do



*The Turin to Lanzo
Railway Station*



Nicotera



Zandarelli

but friendly too and lasted longer than expected. However, Senator, a Hercules Ricotti, clumsily interrupted saying:

"Tell us, Don Bosco, since you can read men's hearts, who is the worse sinner, Nicoterà or Zanardelli?"

Having been asked such an indiscreet question the Saint replied with a smile that he was

it anyway."

"What else can I say? You are all taking the words out of my mouth, broke in Don Bosco. "Just to get to know any one of you would take me not only one hour, but a whole spiritual retreat... and only after an honest confession could I venture an opinion on a person's inner self."

Everyone laughed and the conversation continued in a playful tone and, more animated and friendly. But with his good humour Don Bosco had succeeded in pleasantly entertaining those gentlemen.

Returning to be among his sons, visibly pleased he exclaimed: "I do not believe that those ministers and deputies ever heard as many sermons as they did today at Lanzo! (cf EBM 12,301-309) □

walking with the Church



Persistent Praying

by St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *What is the purpose of life? I live alone, I am unemployed. I have only one friend, a next door neighbour and very often I feel lonely and bored. I hope there is no such thing as reincarnation. The thought of going through life again scares me. Please help.*

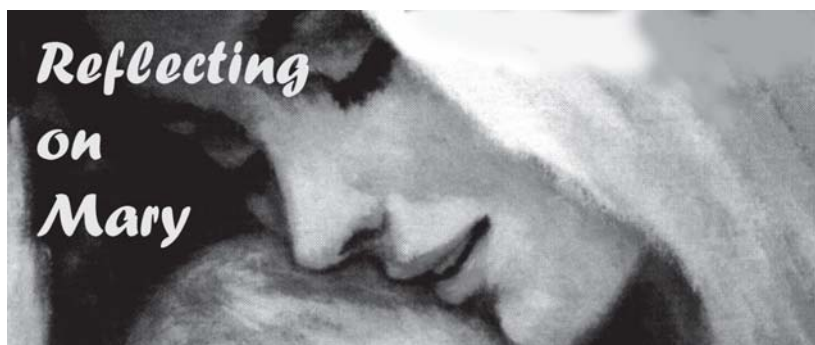
A. Our Christian belief is that as Christ rose from the dead, so also will all those who believe in Christ and with God's help do their best to live as Christians. In other words we Christians believe in our own future Resurrection from the dead to a life of eternal happiness with God. Reincarnation simply means to come again in the flesh. It is a philosophy or teaching particularly of some Eastern Religions. However, it runs completely contrary to our Catholic Faith which teaches us about the finality of death and our resurrection to a new life with God. Christ, the Son of God, spoke of his death and Resurrection and life hereafter with the the Father, and teaches us that all those who believe in Him and follow Him will also rise to that new and eternal life with the Father. There is no question of coming back to

this life again in another body.

'We were created by God, to know, love and serve him here on earth and after that to enjoy eternal happiness with Him in Heaven.' Those words come from the old catechism but still clearly express life's purpose. I am glad to hear you have a friend who lives near you. May God bless you and help you to become more and more aware of His presence in your life - that you have one Friend who is always there for you.

Q. *What does the Creed mean when it says that Christ descended into Hell?*

A. The Old Testament calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Jesus went down, 'hell' - Sheol in Hebrew or Hades in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God... It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their saviour whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell. Why did he go down into Hell (Sheol)? Christ went down into the depths of the earth so that 'the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear it will live. (CCC 633) □



MARY, REVEALED IN THE BEATTITUDES

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

Blessed are the poor in spirit." Jesus wanted to begin his first sermon (Matthew 5-7) in poetic style, welcoming those "who will enter the kingdom of heaven," to sing of the beauty and the joy of God's children. It is an opportune moment: the Master sketches the traits of the ideal disciple that he has in his heart and he would love to see in his followers, the Christians. But who could be an ideal Christian other than the one who is "conformed to the image of Christ" (Rom 8:29)? What other beauty is there for the one who follows Christ than to begin to take on his features? While describing these features to his disciples, Christ reveals to them his own face. The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" explicitly states that: "The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations;

they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints" (n. 1717).

The beatitudes therefore, reflect a series of faces, from the face of Christ and those of the multitude of saints from various ages and races to those from varied ways of life and holiness but all of them glow with the same radiance. Among this feast of faces there emerges the face of Mary with particular beauty. Her features are closer and most similar to those of her Son Jesus.

Mary does deserve the title of "blessed." The first one to proclaim her so was Elizabeth: "Blessed are you among women ... Blessed is she who believed in the words of the Lord." (Lk 1.42 to 45) The second time she is proclaimed blessed also comes from the mouth of a woman who, after hearing Jesus speak, "raised her voice in the crowd and said: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you" (Lk 11:27). This reference, albeit implicitly, is addressed to

Mary. On this occasion even Jesus joins in praising his mother and his reply: "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" focuses on the most authentic and profound happiness of Mary, whose attitude of listening and contemplation is constant and exemplary. How does Mary's face emerge in the beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount? Let us try and detect those features:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit

- In her song the "Magnificat" Mary, the humble servant in whom the Lord has done great things, stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him" (LG 55). Her emptiness, her total openness and availability made her "full of grace" and worthy of being called "blessed by all generations."

- Blessed are those who mourn

- Mary, the Mother of sorrows, experienced the sword that pierced her heart right up to the cross where she suffered profoundly with her Son. She knows the mystery of death and resurrection and she consoles and comforts the afflicted.

- Blessed are the meek - Next to Jesus, "meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29), Mary appears in the Gospel as a young mother who is tender and sweet. We have proclaimed her so down the centuries at the end of the "Hail Holy Queen," "O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary."

- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice - Mary lived in constant tension to the full realization of God's plan for her and for the whole world through her, though at times this plan seemed incomprehensible. She

lived in the "pilgrimage of faith" with only the desire to carry out the will of God as best as she could.

- Blessed are the merciful - Acknowledging Mary as the Mother of Mercy has been an ancient and an unbroken tradition in the Church. The poet Dante concludes his *Paradiso* by putting in the mouth of St. Bernard this prayer to Mary: "In you is mercy, in you is pity, in you is magnificence, in you is united whatever goodness there is in every creature."

- Blessed are the pure in heart

- Mary is the purest, the holiest, the Immaculate one. In her, humanity is brought back to its original beauty and innocence. Mary expresses the dignity of the human vocation that God intended for all creation. What Adam and Eve could have achieved is now resplendent in the fullness of her glory and purity.

- Blessed are the peacemakers

- Mary is the Mediatrix and Queen of Peace. The Vatican Council has made her "intercessor" until "all families of people... be happily gathered together in peace and harmony... into one people of God" (Lumen Gentium 69).

- Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of justice

- Mary lived the blessedness of the persecuted, suffering deeply with Jesus and offering it as a sacrifice to the Father. She is the Queen of Martyrs, the strength and support of those suffering with and for her Son.

Finally, Mary herself feels "blessed." She is filled with joy and flooded with love. In the Magnificat she sings: "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (Lk 1:48) □

NEWSBITS

GUWAHATI

A popular Italian magazine has recommended Archbishop Thomas Menampampil of Guwahati for the Nobel peace prize. *Il Bollettino Salesiano*, in its June edition, published a four-page story entitled "A Bishop for Nobel Prize".

The magazine, which was established in 1877, has a wide circulation all over Italy.

The 74-year old archbishop has successfully led seven major peace initiatives in the last 15 years.

The Joint Peace Team (JPT) of northeast India under his leadership intervened in the following conflicts: Bodo-Adivasi (1996), Kuli-Paite (1998), Dimasa-Hmar (2003), Dimasa-Karbi (2004), Bodo-Muslim at Udalguri (2010) and Rabha-Garo (2011).

"Church people negotiating in a conflict situation may not be

considered a politically correct act," the archbishop said. "But when the Church leaders and eminent citizens from warring factions join me in the conflict resolution process, it is making the Word of God come alive in the lives of people," he added.

Besides being a special invitee to the synod of Bishops for Asia on the Word of God, Menampampil is currently president of the northeast India Bishops' Conference, national chairman of Bishops Commission for Education and Culture and chairman of the federation of Asian Bishops Conference commission for evangelization.

A member of several Vatican commissions, the prelate is a recipient of the prestigious Mumbai based Maschio Humanitarian Award in 1998. (*Don Bosco*)

ROME

Hundreds of people went on board the Vatican railway to undertake a 62 mile journey from Rome to the town of Orvieto to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Caritas International. Vatican railway built over 80 years ago, is the world's shortest national railway system. With steam engines running, the train was blessed before the short trip got underway. The money raised will help communities dealing with everything from natural disasters and civil conflicts to health issues and education.

Upon arrival, guests were offered a tour of the town's impressive cathedral. It's a historic church that was





dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady in the 14th Century. Among the guests were several dignitaries and ambassadors all of whom paid their own fare.

This unique journey is rarely taken. In 1962 Pope John XXIII became the first pontiff to use the Vatican's railway. John Paul II used it twice, once in 1972 and in 2002. Through the years it has been used to transport emergency relief supplies in Italy. It will be used again in October when Benedict XVI and other religious leaders travel to Assisi for a day of prayer. Caritas' General assembly is being held in Rome from May 22 to 27. The organization is highlighting its mission while analysing the challenges it must overcome throughout the world.



Card. Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga has been re-elected as President of Caritas International.

He said: "Whenever there are people suffering we must be there to help. It is necessary to be united. Caritas links together 165 nations serving the poor in emergencies and suffering. (*Catnews*)

INDIA

Retired Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue says a recent pastoral visit to India has helped him discover "tangible signs" of a vibrant Church in a new and developing country. Writing in the website of the Church of England and Wales on June 2nd, the 77-year old prelate said he was astounded to see seminaries and formation houses filled with young people aspiring to serve God and society, and massive congregations for Masses even on weekdays. Bishop O'Donoghue who started his visit from the tomb of St. Thomas the apostle at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, found great interest among people in the priesthood and Religious life. He also found the Church deeply committed to the Catholic Church's social mission managing thousands of schools and colleges and caring for the sick, homeless and orphans.

The prelate was amazed to meet a young Jesuit who had volunteered to work in the strife-torn Afghanistan. According to him, Jesuit seminarian "epitomized" the Indian Church's confidence in her mission and its outreach to people everywhere. He found the Indian Church "aware of the growing materialism in its midst and challenge of mission today." □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

I would like to thank Mother Mary for the numerous blessings showered on me and my family and also for blessing us with a person to share a room in our flat.

Philomena Fernandes, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Thank you Mother Mary for the success in my new job.

Rinette Amanna, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for curing my husband from Malaria twice and also the lump under his chin.

Anita Pawar, Mira Road

One evening as my son and daughter-in-law were going to church on their motorbike, to avoid a cyclist, the motorbike was thrown off balance by the cyclist and my son and daughter-in-law were flung off the vehicle. But we always say the prayer of consecration to Mary Help of Christians during our family Rosary. That was why they escaped unhurt with only minor bruises.

Mr. Maurice D'Souza and Family, Mumbai

I am immensely grateful to the Infant Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother Mary for all the favours granted to my family.

F. Dias, Naigaon

Mary Help of Christians, thank you for helping and protecting my family. Do continue to bless us always.

G. Valladares, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for curing my brother-in-law Chandra Mohan.

Nair Prasanna Pushparajan, Mumbai

I am sincerely grateful to Our Most Blessed Mother, Mary Help of Christians for healing me and granting all my tests to be normal.

Cheryl, Australia

I thank our Blessed Mother for a successful operation and also for helping my daughter through her health problem.

E. Noronha, Mumbai

I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for taking care of my health during my entire pregnancy and for blessing me with a gift of a healthy baby girl.

Ruby Mumford, Visakhapatnam

My sincere thanks to Our Lady for all the personal favours granted and for those of my family too.

Huxley and Family, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the successful cataract surgery of both my eyes and also for helping my second son secure a good percentage in his SSC examination.

Aida Fernandes, Goa

My husband had a serious medical problem and we were very anxious. We prayed to our Blessed Mother. Next we went to the doctor and he set our minds at ease when it was not what we had suspected. He gave him some medication and told us that this would clear up in a few days. We are so relieved and sincerely grateful to Our Lady for her intercession.

Mrs. Rosalind Moreira, Canada

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.

Thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin Mary for helping my son get a job and for the successful operation of my husband. I prayed the 3 Hail Marys everyday.

Gladys DeSouza, Pune

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary for protecting us in all our troubles and for many blessings and favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to intercede for my family.

George Fanny, Mumbai

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing my grand daughter from a bout of food poisoning. She was admitted to hospital and I started praying the three Hail Marys and the Divine Mercy chaplet and she recovered very swiftly.

Mrs. J. Silveira, Mumbai

Through the daily recitation of the three Hail Marys for nine months, my sister had a normal delivery. Thank you dear Mother. A Devotee, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to Our Lady for granting that all my medical tests were normal.

Marie de Souza, Alberta, Canada

My sincere gratitude to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for obtaining a clear medical report.

Mrs. Kusum, Mumbai

Thank you Mother Mary for granting a safe delivery and for the delivery of a healthy baby to Michelle.

Venita and Nancy, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to the Holy Trinity and Our Lady for helping my grand daughter and her family.

B.P. A Devotee, UK

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints for a clear report and for many other blessings and favours granted to our family.

Maria Fernandes, Mumbai

Thank you Mother Mary for helping me pass my post graduation and securing a good job.

Miss Atila D'Souza, Mumbai

Sincere thanks for a happy trip and a safe return from the Holy Land.

Mr. & Mrs. Reggy and Maria D'Souza, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for granting me a safe delivery and the gift of a baby boy and also for a successful surgery.

Wilbur and Jennifer Vaz, Goa

Belated thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for the gift of a baby girl to my sister.

Brigid D'Souza, Mumbai

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

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for helping my daughter find a suitable life partner and all the other favours received.

Clara D'Souza, Mangalore

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary and St. John Bosco for helping me pass my Std.VII examinations.

Rita Cascia Ukachukwu, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Blessed Mother and Don Bosco for helping me in my moments of difficulty after reciting the 3 Hail Marys. Do continue to bless us always. *Mrs. Maxy L. Dias, Vasai*

Our grateful thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for blessing us with the gift of a beautiful baby.

Ramos Filu Ribello, Goa

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for the gift of a sweet baby girl. We have named the baby girl Jane Marychris. In spite of some minor complications during the pregnancy, St. Dominic Savio kept us safe.

Eusebio and Bernadinha, Goa

Thank you so much dear Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl to my daughter and a baby boy to my daughter-in-law. Keep them always under your care.

Remy Nazareth, Goa

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

Vijay Aranha, Mangalore

Thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and all our other heavenly intercessors for the favours granted.

Vanessa Rodrigues, Goa

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mary help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for saving me from burns.

Lovely Shaju, Mumbai

Thank you Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Help of Christians, Don Bosco and all the saints for all the favours received.

M.S.D.A., Kalyan

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a beautiful baby girl whom we have named Jerusha. I wore the scapular of St. Dominic Savio throughout the pregnancy for the protection of our baby.

James and Sweeda D'Costa, Goa

Thank you dearest Mother Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for helping my daughter through a difficult pregnancy and for the gift of a beautiful baby girl Francesca Maria.

Terrence and Lorraine Fernandes, Mumbai

I am grateful to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for helping me choose the right career.

Ingrid da Costa, Mumbai

Sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the marriage of my cousin, cure from an illness, my elder daughter's graduation with a good percentage and her marriage, for the success of my younger daughter's Std. X with good marks and for good health.

Mrs. Louis and family, Thane

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My belated and grateful thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my grand daughter and the gift of a normally healthy baby boy. Thank you Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for all the graces and blessings.

Mrs. M. Wilkins, Bangalore

Our son's initial tests showed that he had leukaemia. We immediately prayed devoutly to Our Lady, St. Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio, and after having further blood tests and a bone marrow test, the oncologist gave us the good news that his tests were clear. Our prayers were heard and our son has been given a second chance to live a healthy life. Thank you to our dear Lord, Our Lady, St. Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio

for performing a true miracle and curing him of this condition.

Ms. R. James, Australia

Thank you dear Father, Jesus, Mother Mary and dear St. Dominic Savio for all the strength and the blessings I received to get through a very difficult pregnancy. With great faith in the ever powerful most holy Rosary and by wearing the scapular of St. Dominic Savio every single day, I had a safe and normal delivery. Our precious son Yohann Isaac is truly a miracle baby boy. *Ransom & Mary Ann Fernandes, Mumbai* Thank you dear St. Dominic Savio for a safe and healthy baby boy.

Mr. & Mrs. Caeiro, Goa

My grandson master Eric Elvis Pereira was suffering from blood cancer. I had prayed to St. Dominic Savio to cure and protect him from this dreadful disease. He has been cured through the intercession of St. Dominic Savio. I am thankful to God and St. Dominic Savio for curing him from this sickness. May God protect him always through the intercession of St. Dominic Savio. *Joseph Basil Monteiro, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for granting me so many favours. *Mrs. E. Travasso, Goa*

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

SEPTEMBER 2011

General Intention: Teachers

That all teachers may know how to communicate love of truth and instill authentic moral and spiritual values.

Missionary Intention: The Church in Asia

That the Christian communities of Asia may proclaim the Gospel with fervour, witnessing to its beauty with the joy of faith.