

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

JANUARY 2012

VOL.12 NO. 9

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>All Good Things</i>	3
Listening to God's Still Voice - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS.....	4
The Shades of Evening - Monsignor John Moloney.....	8
Ignatius Stuchly (1859-1953).....	10
Seven Languages in the Key of 'G' - Bishop Luc Van Looy, SDB...11	
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>Bf. Angela of Foligno (Jan. 4)</i> - Mario Scudu.....	12
Lectio Divina: The Lamb - Brendan Clifford, OP.....	17
Quietspaces: A Happy New Year With Mary - Pope Benedict XVI.....	18
You Cannot Do Enough For God - Fr. Ian Douulton's Collection....	20
Don Bosco's Characteristics: Don Bosco's Ancestry and Birth - Fr. Elias Diaz, SDB.....	24
Walking With the Church: The Magi and St. Matthew.....	27
Reflecting on Mary: Mary, Mother Of God <i>Antonio Rudoni</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



*Mary most holy
becomes the model
for all of us
since the entire
human race has been
thought of by God
so that we might be
his children...
(cf 1 Jn 3,1)*

Cover:
"The Baptism of the Lord"
by Luberoff



From The Editor's Desk

All Good Things

One morning I was standing outside the parish church talking to a friend whom I hadn't seen for some time. Looking over his shoulder I saw Mr. Barlow, an elderly retired railway Ghat-driver entering the church. I continued talking to my friend but the picture of old Mr. Barlow did not leave me. I hadn't seen him in some time and normally people left church after Mass no one came in for a 'visit'. It wasn't common. A few days later I was going 'down' to Bombay and while waiting at the station I met Mr. Barlow - his wiry frame - his peppery hair plastered down with some cheap pomade. He too was waiting for the train.

'I haven't seen you for some time, uncle. I hope you are well,' I remarked when I saw him. 'I wasn't really too well,' he replied, a slight smile breaking the wrinkles on his face. 'I'm on my way to Bombay to see my doctor'. 'I thought I saw you go into church a couple of days ago.' I continued. 'Oh, that!' he said, 'that was a little thanksgiving visit. I was over in Poona to collect my medical reports. They seem to be all clear and that's quite a relief at my age. The lab did a great job'. Just then I heard the bell announcing the arrival of the 'Janata Express' and we parted ways to board our respective coaches.

Long after he had gone I got on to the train, musing quietly over his words. The sheer simplicity of the man had touched me deeply. That and the generosity of spirit which had prompted him to give thanks to God for the kind of service which any pathology lab would be happy to provide for a fee, of course. Many others, I thought, would have taken it as their due and walked away without any sense of indebtedness. But not Mr. Barlow - he was grateful for everything, as I discovered later when I went around to visit him a few weeks later.

He was blessed with this profound Christian faith which allows him to find God in all things: in the events of his day, in the circumstances of his work, in the experiences of his heart, and in his relationships with others. And not just that, He can find God as surely in the dark valleys of pain as on the bright peaks of success.

Needless to say, I had often wondered to myself about the source of Mr. Barlow's faith. Had there been some special influence in his life? Or some point of radical conversion? One day I took the initiative and asked him. 'It was a friend of mine, this old Carmelite nun,' he replied. 'She was talking to me once about the Mass and I remember her saying that all our faith can be summed up in those words at the end of the canon: *Everything that is good in life comes to us from the Father, through the hands of Christ Our Lord.*

Ever since then I have always loved the morning: I like looking forward to hear what God has to say to me. And I love the evening too: I like looking back on the day to see what God has given me.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

Yet Another Series

We have reached the threshold of yet another series of Eucharistic articles in the Madonna. With this series we will have completed twenty-five years of continued service to the readers of this esteemed spiritual magazine. We are always encouraged by the enthusiastic response to these Eucharistic articles not merely because they make good reading but mainly because indirectly they offer valuable insights into how the Eucharist can truly become the "source and summit of our Christian living." The Eucharist is indeed an unfathomable mine of spiritual energy and dynamism, yet one would need to know how to tap its wealth with a minimum of wastage. This is what we aimed at making clear so that even the simple reader of any age could benefit from the message.

Our hope is that this new series will be like the previous ones, a pleasure to read and an inspiration to follow while celebrating Eucharist. Coming as they do once each month, each insight gets enough time to be worked out carefully if the reader is genuinely interested in growing spiritually, so that the message becomes really a part and parcel of our daily Christian living. We pray that all who read these articles will slowly but surely become effective instruments in the Lord's hands to bring many more people into the sphere of his redemptive love! Happy reading,

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

LISTENING TO GOD'S STILL VOICE

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

A classmate from twenty years ago was one of my Facebook friends," writes a Facebook enthusiast. "A few random comments he made one day gave me the faint impression that something was wrong so I prodded him to call me. When he did call I found out that that the entire family of husband, wife and eight children had just moved into a cheap motel room. He had used the very last of their savings to pay for a week's stay there. With no job they had just lost their home - but not their hope!

"Hearing of his plight, I was stumped! What could I do in a

situation like that? Burdened with my own worries, I had not enough money to bail them out and not enough room in my own home to offer them shelter... but I decided that I would not let these deficiencies defeat my desire to help. After a few minutes of reflection, I confided in my sister and the two of us bought a few groceries and took them to the motel room. She even made them a spaghetti dinner and took it along on one of our visits. During those times I decided to do something a bit extreme... I messaged all of our mutual Facebook friends from our graduating class.

An Avalanche

“What happened next was just miraculous! I had listed all the major things this family needed; a job, a home, money, food, clothes - and happiness! Soon responses came pouring in. Classmates, who had previously been distant and barely cordial started calling me for details or sending donations for the family. One messaged me they knew someone else in a nearby town with an empty house. My protégé and family were soon to take up residence there. Homeless on Saturday, a new home on Tuesday! Incredible! The home owners donated the house rent free, only asking for them to pay utilities and mow the lawn when it needed to be done. Soon this family had volunteers from our class delivering furniture, groceries, toys, even job applications!

There are still many things we are hoping to provide for this family. They have yet to get a vehicle for work and he hasn't found a job as yet, but everyone is wearing smiles now... And, would you believe it, the hugs from his lovely children speak louder than any words ever could! I became the bridge over troubled waters, between this family's needs and people who could help them. It still amazes me how wonderfully it all worked out, just because of little old me and my Facebook friends! God works his wonders through us, even when we may not have any idea what we are doing!”

Lessons to be learnt

Perhaps the first important

lesson to be learnt from this sharing is that there is no telling what the Spirit will lead us to once we are totally open to his action in our lives! This openness is called for not only at the beginning, but at every step of the eventful journey. With this kind of openness, we find ourselves being exactly like the Good Samaritan who perhaps initially stopped only to enquire how the wounded man was, but soon found himself drawn into being God's generous ambassador to the hapless victim. Yet, what a manifestation of God's infinite care for every one of his beloved children! One cannot but marvel at what the Lord does in and through us, if only we can be selfless enough to trust in his presence and action.

How can we inculcate these background qualities, or better, how can we prepare ourselves to become pliable instruments in God's hands so as to reach out to the numerous people who need our ministrations? Possibly the easiest way is the daily celebration of the Eucharist. But possibly most people would say that they have been celebrating Eucharist almost every day and yet there doesn't seem to be such exciting miracles happening in their lives. One of the reasons for this could be that our way of participating is not yet the most effective one.

Survey Results

Our Blessed Sacrament students were sent out to collect data on why people celebrate the Eucharist both on a Sunday and also the daily Eucharist. The results could be tabulated as follows:

a) Teresa never misses her

Sunday Eucharist. When asked by a friend why she celebrates Eucharist, her answer was, "To ask for special graces during the week, peace, God's blessings on the family, a good job for her son Peter Paul ..."

b) Francis, a daily Church go-er, is generally distracted during the readings and other parts of the Eucharist, but makes sure he is absolutely attentive and reverent during the Consecration...

c) Mary who hasn't missed even one weekday Eucharist since her First Communion picks up a word or two from the Readings, but is all attention during the Communion rite and after ...

d) Reginald has a love for Scripture and pays full attention to the Word of God and finds deep strength from the day's readings. That makes him appreciate the rest of the Eucharist in a more than ordinary manner

e) Jennifer brings to the Eucharist her efforts to spread God's love. She listens to the Word of God to learn how further she could spread the message of love, focuses on Christ's gift of himself at the Institution Narrative and seeks to be deeply united with the Lord in Communion as the branch in the Vine so that her efforts at spreading the Kingdom become more fruitful... She is particularly attentive at the dismissal rite searching for where God wants to send her out each day to accomplish his mission.

Which of these responses corresponds to the way you generally celebrate Eucharist?

Reap What You Sow

There is a theological saying which says, "The Church makes

the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church!" In simple terms this means that the kind of Church (Christians) we are will decide what kind of Eucharist we celebrate; and the way we celebrate the Eucharist will further make us into exactly that brand of Christians! Or, if we come to the Eucharist with a self-centred attitude (Christians who come only for personal gain - see Teresa above), then we will go from such a Eucharist much more self-oriented than when we came in! And the same for the other attitudes we bring to our Eucharist.

Is it surprising then that although we celebrate Eucharist frequently, maybe even daily, our inner selfish and un-Christian attitudes hardly register any change, even marginal? The result naturally is that in our life transactions, it is only our own interests that we care for, or even if we do reach out to others, it will be only in a given pre-determined measure, or when it suits us, or when it doesn't really demand too much from us. Our excuses, of course, can be countless as the stars - but with such an attitude there is no way that we can experience the kind of miracles mentioned here. The point is not that we seek to become selfless so that we can witness miracles, but rather that we become more pliable instruments in the hands of God, for the benefit of suffering humanity.

Jennifer's Example

The "Facebook community" in the story narrated above might not even comprise of Catholics celebrating Eucharist regularly. Yet, somehow those people were

genuine human beings able to resonate with others desperately in need. The point is that whenever a person is ready to forego self-centred interests and place oneself in the shoes of those suffering, great things can happen. It is basically our self-interest that keeps us locked and imprisoned within our limited worlds – for our world is as big and broad as we care to make it! We could go further and say with equal truth that our world will be as exciting and full of miracles as we care to make of it!

All we need to do to put on the attitude similar to that of Jennifer in the above survey responses and to sincerely pray to God's Spirit to take hold of us and propel us into a situation where we are challenged to break out of our comfort zones. However, it is worth noting that such a prayer should not be made if we do not sincerely mean to honour it. For the Spirit will take us literally and pretty soon we will find ourselves facing some pretty tough situations! One would know that it is God's Spirit leading and guiding us by the inner peace and enthusiasm we experience; also by the flow of ideas and possibilities which will be like an ever-flowing stream, one leading to another. What is more, we discover an inner enthusiasm to follow the lead of the Spirit without worrying too much about where it will land us. Love takes over our actions, casting out all fear!

Spiritual Thermometer

A further offshoot of this cultivated attitude is that we go from strength to strength, tackling more and more difficult tasks, enterprises which demand

greater self-giving, even to the point of losing one's very life for the sake of the other. It is precisely through this growing selflessness that we can gauge the power and effect of our celebration of the Eucharist. One thing is sure, that where the giving is sincere and wholehearted, the Spirit will waste no time in using such a person for great things. The obvious reason for this is that there are so few such selfless and generous persons while the number of those in need is a million times more, and so every willing volunteer will find his/her hands full almost all the time.

Nevertheless, we need not worry that our selfless giving will leave us dry and empty. For the more generously we give, the more does the Spirit ensure that we are filled. As Paul recounts, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another." (5:22-26). □



THE SHADES OF EVENING

by Monsignor John Moloney

The soft mellow light of evening tells me that the hurried tempo of noonday is over; it invites me to a moment of calm repose.

How often, even in one day, and in quick succession, even within a few daylight hours, many painful hurts, many menacing clouds suddenly darken a cloudless sky?

You Teach Me

Dear Jesus, you have shown me how many painful sword-thrusts you endure a within a few hours of just one day. Scarcely had the Hosannas of welcome that greeted your entry to Jerusalem died down, when, so shortly afterwards, you had to endure the pain of finding your Temple defiled by those who had made it a den of robbers. And then, quickly, another pain -the sharp sting from the tongues of Scribes and Pharisees. 'They were indignant' (Mt.21:15).

Lord, when in some small way I live through successive, sharp pains within a few daylight hours, would I at least console you by offering them to you in reparation? And also, could I learn from you how to find balm in the peace of evening. You have taught me. You left those traders and those sharp tongues behind.

Leaving the City

'And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and he stayed there' (Mt21:17). There, in the quiet of evening, he found peace. Bethany, the place of memories of friends, and open

hearts and generous hospitality, drew you away from the city. Could I, too, follow your example? 'And leaving them he went out of the city.' Like you I should leave behind the memory of those troubled hours, of those stinging words that wounded me.

I leave the city with all its noise and fretful rhythm.

The saints interpret for me the inner meaning of your leaving the city. St Jerome reminds me that 'the Lord was so poor that he found no one in the big city who would offer him hospitality; no one gave him lodging. But in a little village, in the company of Lazarus and his sisters, he found welcome. That village was Bethany. And there he stayed.' And St John Chrysostom tells us: 'He remained there corporally so that he would find spiritual repose; because those who are holy do not want to come to a large banquet but to where holiness flourishes'.

The Heart of Bethany

Bethany was the place where you were sure of a welcome and the warmth of loving hearts, sheltered from the cold wind of disbelief, the pain of rejection. Small wonder that you appreciated the love you received from the family of Bethany - Mary, Martha and Lazarus - who opened their door and their hearts to you.

It is not surprising that they are recorded in the Gospel as receiving the intimacy of your special love. 'Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus' (Jn 11:5). You



Bethany, with its memories of friends and open hearts and generous hospitality

moments show you loving your own and wanting to be with them.

Bethany of the Heart

There is another Bethany where I would always wish to greet you. Give me a longing to make for you a Bethany in my heart; a longing to give you hospitality. Your Bethany friends have much to teach me, expressing their love for you in gestures simple yet touching; a simple meal prepared with love by Martha. Mary, at one moment seated at your feet to receive the wisdom of your words; at another, anointing your feet with precious ointment, and then wiping them with her hair. (Jn 12:3)

came close to them who came close to you, allowing them something of the intimacy: which you gave to John, your beloved disciple. 'One of the disciples whom Jesus loved was lying close to the breast of Jesus' (fn13:23). Both Gospel

To Bethany you came often, and you stayed long. I cannot match the love you received in that home, but, at least I can bid you welcome.

At Bethany you stayed - stay, Lord, also with me. ☐

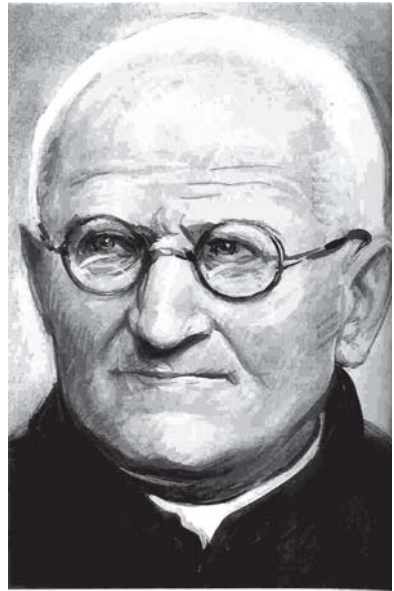
A time to be silent

Much of the time we live trapped inside a hectic, mechanical lifestyle, getting up to the sound of an alarm clock, battered by news from the radio, tested by traffic., forced to calculate time and distance to the minute, going through the day using phones, lifts and gadgets, then going home again at the end of the day, through more traffic, with more news being shouted at us.

It is only when we make time for silence and for prayer that we give ourselves a chance to remember who we really are and what life is really about. (Sr. Stan Kennedy)

IGNATIUS STUCHLY 1859 - 1953

Ignatius Stuchlý was born at Olomouc in Moravia on December 14, 1869. He was fortunate to have been nurtured in a family that was rich in Christian and scholarly values despite the persecution that prevailed all around him. He completed his secondary school in Austrian Silesia and since he felt the call of God he was advised to go to Turin to meet Don Bosco. Don Rua sent him to Valsalice where he was accepted as an adult vocation. After completing his novitiate and his philosophical studies he earned a diploma in agriculture. He was sent to Gorizia where he taught and studied theology. He committed himself to doing everything with love and precision and so when he was told that he would have to defer his priestly ordination, he obeyed and waited. He was ordained a priest at Gorizia in 1901. When he asked to be sent to the missions Don Rua told him: "Your mission is in the North." In 1921 Don Stuchlý was sent to Ljubljana to take care of the construction of the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians which was eventually completed in 1924. For some years, at Perosa Argentina, near Turin, there was a group of young Czechs preparing themselves to carry the Salesian work back to their homeland. Ignatius was appointed to be their



rector. At the age of 66, Ignatius could truly be called the father of Czech Salesians and so he was appointed the provincial of Czechoslovakia and as always, he obeyed. Thanks to his gift of governance, the region witnessed a great blossoming of vocations. During his tenure there were now 12 houses in Czechoslovakia with 270 Salesians, all Bohemian and Moravian confrere and besides them there were 20 other Salesians working in the missions. After WWII a vicious persecution broke out on Russian Czechoslovakia and Don Stuchly was pained to witness the end of the Salesian work he had started. He became very ill but faced his sickness with Christian courage. Through all his trials his faith never faltered. He died on January 17, 1953, at 83 years. His cause was introduced on March 5, 1993 and concluded on January 20, 2001. □



SEVEN LANGUAGES IN THE KEY OF 'G'
BISHOP LUC VAN LOOY

Fr. Pascual Chavez, the ninth successor of Don Bosco

From the time I was little I dreamt of becoming a missionary. We were a family of daily communicants. Sometimes an uncle, my mother's brother, a priest and a pastor dropped by. He had been in China and the Philippines as a missionary. The stories he told us fuelled my dream. He died fifteen days before I left for Korea after he had presented me with a chalice.

A small diversion: how many languages do you speak and how many musical instruments do you play?

Music and language go hand in hand, they say. I was fortunate to learn some languages and some Korean. Even now I am comfortable with seven languages, all of which I use regularly. As for music, here, beside me in my office I have a piano that the Rector Major gifted me on the occasion of my Episcopal ordination. I regularly play the organ, because whenever I go to bless the organs in the parishes of the diocese they always ask me to play. Then there's the accordion that I always carry in my car and I play it whenever people ask me, in hospitals and at meetings with young people.

What is it like being a Salesian who is a bishop?

Being near to people and the spontaneity of

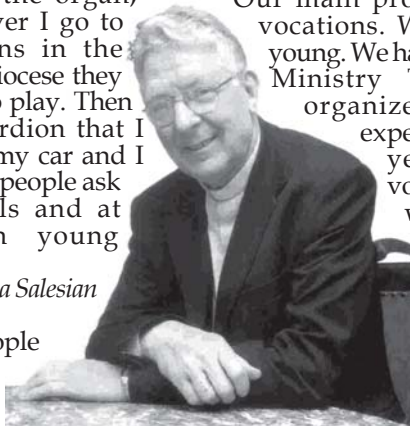
young people and keeping my home open to everyone. My house is a kind of oratory: people can come in and serenely talk to the bishop. The chapel door is always open and I invite the collaborators to drop in for a 'visit.'

What about your diocese?

The diocese of Ghent has 1,300,000 inhabitants. Most of them are Christians but there are a fairly large group of Muslims, Turks and Morrocans. The Catholic school is very important. We have more or less 800 dioceses with 427 parishes and 450 priests many of who are more than 75 years old and there are 84 permanent deacons. In recent years we have had to merge the parishes for lack of priests. The strength of the diocese lies in the central team and the formation of the laity is our priority.

What are some of your main difficulties?

Our main problem is that of vocations. We invest in the young. We have a strong Youth Ministry Team and we organize wholesome experiences for them yet we get no vocations. The Lord will supply, some day. Sometimes I ask the Lord: what have I done wrong that you don't give me the vocations I need? □



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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. ANGELA OF FOLIGNO **Mystic and Teacher of the Spiritual Life** **(1248-1309) (JANUARY 4)**

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

For some years now it has been common to come across articles in newspapers and magazines portraying a certain interest in 'news' of a return to the sacred, a resurgence of religion, a religious revival... possibly a "return to God" - as if He had departed this world "disgusted" by man's behaviour (just look at the wars and the various philosophies of the twentieth century). There is now a return to the sacred and there is also talk about being born (born-again). But is there really an interest in mysticism?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines Mysticism in # 2014 as: "Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments - "the holy mysteries" - and, in him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some offer the same of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all."



Angela in Ecstasy

The Mystic: Anything but alienated

Blessed Angela of Foligno was a contemporary of Dante and the mystic Jacopone who lived in

Umbria after the great Francis of Assisi.

Angela was born at Foligno in 1248, into a family rich in material goods. She herself lived in prosperity, enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life. We also know with certainty that she was married and had children. She lived with her mother who, as we say today, pandered to her whims.

During this time, in those years there was a remarkable flowering of the Third Order of St. Francis and the message of Saint Francis of Assisi was also popular in Foligno. In those days, in the city there was also a certain Pietro Crisi, a very rich land owner who gave up everything for a life of poverty and penance and so earned the mockery of Angela's family too.

My place in the world

As she herself admitted, during those years she came to "know sin." She even went to confession but "shame prevented her from making a complete Confession and she remained in that torment." Finally she prayed to St. Francis and begged him with tears after which he appeared to her in a dream reassuring her that she should make a complete confession should she want God's mercy and know His peace. We are now in the year 1285, and Angela is 37 years old, a mature woman and no longer a helpless little girl. Her life changed and she began to live a life of austere penance (following the example of St. Francis). She focused her efforts on poverty, particularly in three aspects: detachment from things, detachment from affections and detachment from herself.

A short time later, her mother, her husband and her children died. Being left alone, she continued on her path, more determined than ever. She was convinced that she had to follow the poor Christ so she sold almost all her goods and began to spend several hours on her knees before the Crucifix, daily feeding herself on Holy Scripture.

Upon returning from a pilgrimage to St. Peter's in Rome she also sold the farm that she owned. She was accepted into the Franciscan Third Order. Once more she decided to make a pilgrimage to Assisi in order to "consult" Francis. During the journey she stopped by to visit a friend, the abbess of the monastery of Vallegloria who asked her if she wanted to stay with them. But Angela, also thinking of the friends who accompanied her (a small group of "little children"), said: "My place is in the world." Adding that she intended to stay and do penance in the city where she had sinned.

I do not know why love left me?

It is now the year 1291, six years after her conversion. This was to be a pivotal and decisive year for Angela and her spiritual journey. This was to be a moment of a mystical experience at Assisi that would leave an indelible mark on her. What happened there?

As she recounted to Brother Arnold, her confessor (who later wrote the *Memoriale*) while she was on the way to Assisi, Angela had a long conversation with the Holy Spirit and then with Christ. In the afternoon she returned to the church of St. Francis where

she had an overwhelming mystical experience of the Triune God, and the immensity of His love. "And as I - the Brother Scribe asked her: "What did you see?" She said: "I saw a thing filled with immense majesty, I did not know how to speak of it, but I thought it was completely good. And it spoke many words of kindness and great gentleness to me and then it ascended and it left slowly. After its departure I began to scream out loudly: "I don't know why love left me?" But I was unable to say anything else. All I could do was to cry out shamelessly again and again: "Why did this Unknown Love leave me? Why? Why? Why?"

Then a certain Masazuola (whom Angela calls "my partner," she was "Pasqualina of Foligno) had drawn around her a little group of "children" who saw in Angela a spiritual guide and real teacher to help them to recognize the Way of the Cross. She was also an example and guide helping them to live a life of poverty and prayer.

Angela died on January 4, 1309, but her memory and her teachings have come down to us through the centuries. Among the many who "knew" her we can recall Teresa of Avila (great mystic of 1500) and Elizabeth of the Trinity (a mystic who died in 1906 and was beatified in 1984), who appreciated the message which is true for us even today.

What was her message? Sergio Andreoli, a scholar of Blessed Angela synthesizes that the spirituality of Angela rests on her central affirmation of "God who is complete love and so is totally in love" and that to correspond this love we need to do nothing other

than follow Christ "Who is still working in the world; the only true, direct and the shortest way." Angela clearly understood that deep communion with God is no 'utopia' but a possibility that is offered to help us to avoid sin. Hence there is need for constant and strict mortification to keep us connected to the love of God who gives joy to our souls. Angela also realized that this union came about especially in the Eucharist, the most sublime expression of Christ's love for us. Another constant in her life was her meditation on the mysteries of Christ, especially His Passion and Death, (with Mary of Nazareth at the foot of the Cross). According to her doing this was a very fruitful experience in order to remain in communion with God and to persevere in our love of God and of our neighbour.

We all know that there is no truly spiritual life without humility and without prayer. This can be physical (vocal) and mental ("when you think of nothing else but God") and supernatural (or contemplation). Andreoli goes on: "In these three schools one knows oneself and God and the fact that he knows, loves, and because he loves, he desires what he loves. And this is a sign of true love: that he who loves does not transform the one loved into himself but transforms himself into the Beloved. I always hold that these considerations are available to everyone: for those starting their spiritual journey and for those already guided by the Spirit and for those who want to pursue this adventure of knowing the love of God in this life this is "the shortest way." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Late for Work

For thirty years, Johnson had arrived at work at 9 A.M. on the dot. He had never missed a day and was never late.

Consequently, when on one particular day 9 A.M. passed without Johnson's arrival, it caused a sensation. All work ceased and the boss himself, looking at his watch and muttering, came out into the corridor.

Finally, precisely at ten, Johnson showed up, clothes dusty and torn, his face scratched and bruised, his glasses bent. He limped painfully to the time clock, punched in, and aware that all eyes were upon him said,

"I tripped and rolled down two flights of stairs in the subway. I nearly killed myself."

His boss replied skeptically, "And to roll down two flights of stairs took you a whole hour?"

House Call

Old Dr. Carver still made house calls. One afternoon he was called to the Tuttle house. Mrs. Tuttle was in terrible pain.

The doctor came out of the bedroom a minute after he'd gone in and asked Mr. Tuttle, "Do you have a hammer?"

A puzzled Mr. Tuttle went to the garage, and returned with a hammer. The doctor thanked him and went back into the bedroom.

A moment later, he came out and asked, "Do you have a chisel?"

Mr. Tuttle complied with the request.

In the next ten minutes, Dr. Carver asked for and received a pair of pliers, a screwdriver, and a hacksaw. The last request got to Mr.

Tuttle.

He asked, "What are you doing to my wife?"

"Not a thing," replied old doc Carver. "I can't get my instrument bag open."

In My Day

A young man who was also an avid golfer found himself with a few hours to spare one afternoon. He figured if he hurried and played very fast, he could get in 9 holes before he had to head home.

Just as he was about to tee off an old gentleman shuffled onto the tee and asked if he could accompany the young man as he was golfing alone.

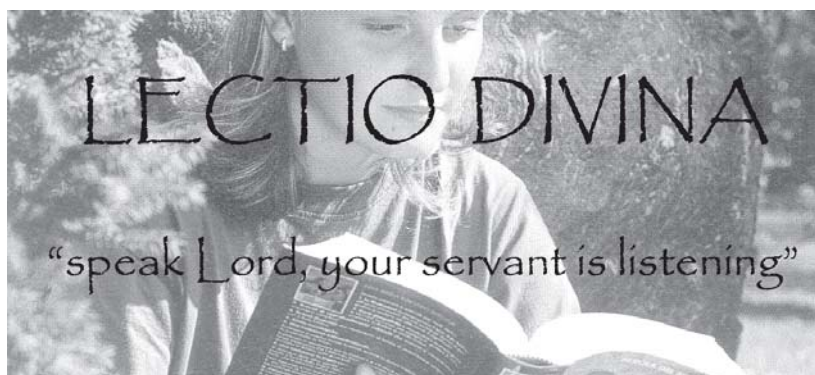
Not being able to say no, he allowed the old gent to join him.

To his surprise the old man played fairly quickly. He didn't hit the ball far, but plodded along consistently and didn't waste much time.

Finally, they reached the 9th fairway and the young man found himself with a tough shot. There was a large pine tree right in front of his ball, directly between his ball and the green.

After several minutes of debating how to hit the shot the old man finally said, "You know, when I was your age I'd hit the ball right over that tree."

With that challenge placed before him, the youngster swung hard, hit the ball up, right smack into the top of the tree trunk and it thudded back on the ground not a foot from where it had originally lay. The old man offered one more comment, "Of course, when I was your age that pine tree was only 3 feet tall." □



THE LAMB

by Brendan Clifford OP

Seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, “Look, there is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said ‘A man is coming after me who ranks before me, because he existed before me.’”

John 1:29-30

What are the sins of the world that you are most aware of? What are the ones that upset you the most? We hear about violent crimes and murder, drug pushing on the streets and bullying at school and in the work place; crimes against children and dishonesty in business dealings. On the international scene innocent people are massacred or driven from their homes; the poor of the world are cruelly exploited by the rich and deprived of the basic necessities of life. Closer to home are the sins, the faults and failings of the people we live with. And last but not least are our own sins!

So much sin and so much evil - what is the solution? The New Testament gives a strange answer: a lamb, a lamb that takes away the sin of the world. Are you familiar with lambs? When we look at lambs in a field in the spring, we are struck by their gentleness, their

playfulness, their innocence, and also by their vulnerability - they are not big enough to defend themselves. How could a lamb take on the evils of the world? If it was a lion it could attack the evil people and defend itself against them.

joyful in His presence

John the Baptist described Jesus as a lamb. Jesus was gentle and innocent. He was playful too; Fr Edward Schillebeeckx, who studied and meditated on the life of Jesus for many years, concluded that the people who followed Jesus as he travelled the roads of his native land, could not but have been joyful in his presence. Jesus wanted to bring about the rule of an incredibly loving Father in his own country first, and in due time, in the whole world. When people accepted this rule, they would be at peace with God, with their own selves, with one another, and with nature. This would be “the



kingdom of God." And while it would only reach its completion in the next world, it would nonetheless transform this world.

Jesus Was Always Non-Violent

He was courageous and honest in challenging those who opposed him, but he was always non-violent. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter, "Put your sword in its scabbard." His way was the way of the lamb, not the way of the lion. It became clear to Jesus that to bring about the rule of his Father, he must confront the authorities in Jerusalem even though this would put his life in danger. He had given everything he had, now he would give his life. "He was led like an innocent lamb to the slaughter."

When his Father raised Jesus from the dead on Easter morning, he guaranteed that it is the lamb and not the lion that will take away the sins of the world.

In The Footsteps of the Lamb

Down through the centuries, the followers of Jesus have not always remembered this; during the Jubilee Year, Blessed Pope John Paul II apologized on various occasions for acts of violence committed by Christians. But there have always been good people

who have followed in the footsteps of the Lamb of God. Our own Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata is a striking example. We think also of our missionaries and aid workers who serve with humility and respect and often stay at their posts at considerable danger to themselves. Fr Rufus Halley from the UK lived among the people in a troubled area in the Philippines, where he was frequently threatened by extremist Muslims. All the while he worked tirelessly to convince them that God is one and that all people are his children and can live peacefully together. He was so highly esteemed for the respect and love he showed, that he was invited on one occasion to mediate in a dispute between two factions in the Muslim community. When he was murdered in 2001, he was mourned by the Muslim and Catholic communities alike. We all know people who are gentle as lambs. Not that they never feel anger or impatience, but they make a deliberate choice not to be lions in the way they treat others. We know innocent people who have endured a lot of suffering with courage and faith. Organizations also act in this way; we think of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, L'Arche and other religious communities. Likewise there are small communities working for justice and the rights of the poor in many countries; sometimes they face opposition and violence, yet they continue to follow non-violently the way of the Lamb.

Only Jesus, the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, but he lives in all these people and through them continues to take away the sins of our world today. □

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

The Holy Father, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI's New Year Message given on January 1, 2008 at St. Peter's Square, Rome

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have begun a new year and I hope that it may be serene and profitable for all. I entrust it to the heavenly protection of Mary, whom we invoke in today's liturgy with her most ancient and important title, that of Mother of God. With her "yes" to the Angel on the day of the Annunciation, the Virgin conceived in her womb, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Word, and on Christmas Night gave birth to him. At Bethlehem, in the fullness of time, Jesus was born of Mary; the Son of God was made man for our salvation, and the Virgin became the true Mother of God. This immense gift that Mary has received is not reserved to her alone, but is for us all. In her fruitful virginity, in fact, God has given "to men the goods of eternal salvation..., because by means of her we have received the Author of Life" (cf. *Collect Prayer*). Mary, therefore, after having given flesh to the Only-Begotten Son of God, became the mother of believers and of all humanity.

And it is precisely in the name of Mary, Mother of God and of humanity, that we have been celebrating for 40 years on the first day of the year the World Day of Peace. The theme I selected for this year's celebration is: "*The human family, a community of peace*". The same love that



PEAR WITH MARY

her of God, World Day of Peace

builds and unites the family, the vital cell of society, supports the construction between the peoples of the earth of those relationships of solidarity and collaboration that are suitable to members of the one human family. Vatican Council II recalls this when it affirms that "all people comprise a single community, and have a single



origin.... One also is their final goal: God" (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, n. 1). A strict bond therefore exists between families, society and peace. "Consequently, whoever, even unknowingly, circumvents the institution of the family", I note in the Message for this year's World Day of Peace, "undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary "agency' of peace" (n. 5). And then, "We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters" (n. 6). It is thus truly important that each one assumes the appropriate responsibilities before God and recognizes in him the original source of his own existence and that of others. From this knowledge flows a duty to make humanity into a true community of peace, based on a "common law..., one which would foster true freedom... and protect the weak from oppression by the strong" (n. 11).

May Mary, Mother of the Prince of Peace, sustain the Church in her tireless work at the service of peace, and help the community of peoples, which celebrates in 2008 the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to travel a road of authentic solidarity and stable peace. □

YOU CANNOT DO ENOUGH FOR GOD

From Fr Ian Doulton's collection of stories

Is the world going consumerist? The conservatives will say 'yes'. Many a Christian today agrees with them. Advertising and consumerism have swept across half the world through the media that have hypnotized the western world and the east too. The devout Christian asks 'why?' 'Why in the face of all petition and all prayer does this campaign to praise the 'flesh' go on borne on by the men who carry it forward very ardently and convincingly? They are hungry men, desperate men, starved for money and more money and no love for the good of their souls. The Communists in the East tell them: 'Christianity has not fed you. Christianity has failed. You have no souls that need to be saved. You have only stomachs that need to be filled and flesh that only pleasure can satisfy!

Christianity has failed! There was day in 1833 when this accusation rang out in a classroom in the University of the Sorbonne in Paris. Here young Frederick Ozanam and a group of his friends are earnestly defending the cause of Christianity. They speak of its glorious past, of the civilizations it has saved. Their skeptical audience begins to mutter with impatience trying to silence him but the defending voice goes on. Frederick Ozanam is speaking: "Christianity built, Christianity saved, in the past, a hundred, a thousand years," and he was finally interrupted by the professors "Ozanam, Ozanam, you are right when you speak of

the past. In past centuries Christianity has done wonders, but what is it doing for mankind now. And you too, who pride yourself so much on being a Catholic, what are *you* doing for the poor? Show us what practical benefit the working man reaps from your religion and we too will believe in it" - No answer.

From that moment on Ozanam could do nothing except try to find the answer. The next time he spoke to his group of friends his words were charged with fire. "What are we doing for the working man and the poor? Nothing! We argue, we discuss and they continue to suffer. The sharpest weapon our enemies can find against us is our own neglect of the poor. We cannot bring Christianity back to the people by prayer alone and least of all, by arguments, they need service. They need love. From now on we shall concentrate all our energies on helping the poor."

First, Ozanam and his friends went out and met the poor. Then they chose a patron for their work, St. Vincent de Paul. Monsieur Vincent, that true Christian of the seventeenth century. Monsieur Vincent who lived for the poor. But this too happened in the past, nearly two hundred and fifty years ago. What of today? Once again the desperate and the unloved hear the old cry: "Christianity has failed. You were hungry and they did not feed you, yet in nearly every parish there is a group of men filled with the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul who carry on the

work of Ozanam. Let us look at the life and the work of one of these men, a certain John McGuinness of Dublin, Ireland.

It is the month of February 1924 and this honest hardworking young man is seated behind his desk in the office of the Customs House. He is trying his polite best to resist the pleadings of a friend who is inviting him to make a closed retreat together with the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. "Well, Matt, I've never made a closed retreat, besides I don't even belong to the St. Vincent de Paul Society." "Now that does not make any difference. We're free to invite our friends and I am inviting you." John tries in vain to excuse himself but Matt is insistent when he says: "It's something too grand for anybody to deserve. Now look John, we've got to fill this empty room at the retreat house. Once you've made a retreat, you'll realize there's nothing more important than checking up on the state of your soul. This is your chance John. Maybe God will never give you another one." John agrees to think it over, but Matt was convinced that John would accept his invitation and he says as he walks out the door: "I thank you a thousand times, John. You'll make it. I'll be meeting you at Doyle's corner at 8.30 tomorrow night. I'm depending on you being there".

John McGuinness kept his appointment with Matt. The retreat opened up for him a whole wonderful new world. Now he saw Christ as the shining ideal of the best that a man could be. He was captured by a vision

of the splendour of unselfishness and service. When the retreat was over John McGuinness joined the society of St. Vincent de Paul. Under the guidance of a senior St. Vincent de Paul friend, Bartholomew or 'Bart', for short, the new recruit met the poor.

They took the most run down area of Dublin where most of the calls for help came from. It was, as Bart put it: "one of the sore spots in the neighbourhood. Here were slums, cheap lodging houses and salons." John had never known a Dublin like this existed. On a bridge over a large sewer Bart stopped and pointed: "In that basement on the left are three families we've been helping for two years." John could not believe people lived there. There are families living in every basement in that area. They average six people to a room. Suddenly a little girl no more than four years of age ran across the bridge. John was shocked and said: "Look at that little girl coming across the street, Bart. She has no shoes on her feet." Bart told him of the stark poverty of that area and that most of them walked that way all through winter." In shame and in a whisper he said: "It's terrible, I never saw anything like this before. I didn't know." Bart, was an old hand at this type of tour and assured John that many new 'recruits' never came back after seeing that area of Dublin. He told John: "This isn't poverty, John, it's destitution. And you haven't seen the worst part of it: the awful thing that's happening to their souls. It isn't the hunger or cold or sickness that drives them to despair. It's the feeling that nobody cares."

John assured Bart that he had plenty of time to spare and he could get help from some of his colleagues at the office. Instead of spending his evenings fishing or playing golf he could work for these poor destitutes. As they walked back up the road Bart looked sideways at John and almost saw him like any other recruit who had made up his mind never to come back again.

At the next meeting of St. Vincent de Paul group John spoke up earnestly: "Gentlemen" he said: "this is what I had in mind to do, if the other members agree. We never have enough second hand clothes to go around. We could set up a wardrobe here. I'll volunteer to do most of the collecting." Everyone seemed surprised seeing this new comer full of zeal. They were to hear and see more of John. The group was motivated and it started moving.

At a meeting about a month later John spoke up again: "We've been visiting the lodging houses and we find man after man there who has stopped coming to church because he's ashamed to be seen in the old rags that he's wearing. Besides nobody has spoken a kind word to him in years or asked him to come back to church. With just a little encouragement and some decent clothes out of the wardrobe we could do the trick." The other members agreed. This went on for sometime; and a year went by and the group grew and the poor were seeing the difference.

Sometime later John was bold enough to suggest something ambitious: "Even after a year

gentlemen, we are in desperate need of a club for the unemployed. They have to have some place to rest between looking for work and to get cleaned up. Now, I know that building on High Street is filthy but I've a good hand at painting and cleaning. I've already found out how to light that devil of a gas stove without blowing my head off." They all laughed but he got volunteers, Matt and Bart felt encouraged and came forward with some others to help spruce up the High Street place.

One evening in early October Bart met Matt at Paddy's corner: "Matt, Matt, isn't John McGuinness supposed to be on his vacation? I swear I saw him pedaling down High Street with a sack half as big as himself slung over his back." Matt knew John by then that when he had an idea in his head he had to get it through. That was not all. John had now moved into a one-room apartment and started doing his own cooking. He was a bachelor, so what was so wrong about doing one's own cooking? Those who knew of this move thought that with a salary like his from the Customs he could not only have a flat. He could even afford a cook. Matt said to Bart one evening as he walked home: "Can't you see what he's doing? He's scrounging on himself so he'll have money enough to hand out to each and every man and woman who come to him with their hand open. Poor John's taken it to heart. He can't keep this up. He ought to be told. The first chance I get, I'm going to give him a good talking to." Matt, who had introduced him to this

whole idea thought he could convince John.

Autumn was getting over. It was now nearing winter and John had this nagging cough that Matt had noticed at the last meeting. So, after the meeting he asked John about it: "Now Matt, don't be worrying yourself about me. I'm going to be all right. I did feel terrible last night. The cold seemed to go right through me." Finally John admitted he was not well. Matt went on: "What did the doctor say?" John replied: "He told me I was going to be alright. I've just got to stuff myself up, take a little rest. He said I was a little run down." Matt insisted: "Did he say, a *little*? Did he John?" John looked weak and pale and looking at his rosary beads entwined in his fingers he said: "Well, no, he said I was badly run down." Matt continued: "Now listen to me John. You're on the verge of a breakdown." He told him that if he tried to be the saviour of the poor he would end up in a coffin on his way to the cemetery. Matt concluded by telling him: "You've been trying to do too much for God." John sat up with a start and with a grave face looked at Matt and said very slowly: "You mustn't speak like that. You must never say that. I couldn't do enough for God. No matter what I did, I never could. No one ever could."

A few weeks passed and the cold November mist from the north was blowing down around Doyle's corner. It was after morning Mass and Fr. Paddy, from the Clergy Home was coming around for his cup-a-tea at Doyle's when he saw Matt and

hailed him: "Matt, Matt, have you seen John McGuinness lately?" Matt looked puzzled: "Not for the past three weeks." He replied and added: "I suppose he's gone out into the country for a rest." Fr. Paddy walked on, his hands in his pockets: Fr. Paddy went on: "He was in Dublin less than a week ago. Yesterday I met somebody he was talking to. I though I'd inquire. I just overheard Mary Gallagher tell Frank O'Neil that she'd heard from the chief clerk's office a Mr. McGuinness was dead." Matt stopped in his tracks and looked at Father Paddy. He felt a cold chill run down his spine: "Mr. McGuinness? It couldn't be John. He wasn't sick, just a little run down. Said Matt: "Besides we have several McGuinnesses in the department. I don't think it is John either. The last time I saw him he was looking so cheerful I thought he was feeling better." They entered Doyle's and Fr. Paddy came and sat by the counter as he continued his conversation: "But you know, I did hear something strange about him. Only yesterday a poor ribbon woman stopped me outside the door and asked about John. She saw him a week ago. He was leaning against a bus stop looking so bad that she was frightened. He'd given her clothes a couple of times so she asked him if he could help. He just said that it was a long time since he had given her anything and that she should come along to the wardrobe." Matt looked down at his cap and told Fr. Paddy that John was stubborn: "Ah, what can you do with a man

(continued on pg. 29)

DON BOSCO'S ANCESTRY AND BIRTH

1

In preparation for the birth-bicentenary of Don Bosco in 2015 Fr. Elias Diaz SDB has kindly consented to write us a series of articles on the historical background of Don Bosco and his times

A stranger came to a lonely village and asked a villager: "Has any great man been born here?" The simpleton replied, "I don't think so. They're all born babies, though some of them achieve great things later on." Don Bosco was no exception to that observation. He was a poor village boy whose fame came from the fact that he worked tirelessly for the glory of God's kingdom. In this first of twelve articles I'd like to dwell on Don Bosco's ancestry.

Philip Anthony Bosco - I married Cecilia Dassano in 1733 and was blessed with a child, Philip Anthony Bosco II. Sadly, he was born after his father's death in 1735. In 1739, Cecilia Dassano remarried Mathew Berruto. They lived at St. Sylvester and had four children. Mathew and his family left St. Sylvester and went to live at Pino Torinese. Philip Anthony Bosco II remained at St. Sylvester and was adopted informally by his uncle John Peter Bosco. In 1751, John Peter Bosco left St. Sylvester and moved to Castelnuovo to become a small independent farmer. He took Philip Anthony Bosco II along with his family to Castelnuovo.

Don Bosco's paternal grandfather, Philip Anthony Bosco



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

II married his first wife Domenica Barosso in 1758 and had six children by her. She died in 1777 and in the same year he married his second wife Margherita Zucca and also had six children by her. The fourth born son was Francis Luis Bosco, who would be Don Bosco's father.

Hard pressed by circumstances Philip Anthony Bosco II was forced to leave Castelnuovo with his family to become a tenant farmer at The Biglione farmstead near Becchi. He died at there in 1802. His eldest surviving son Paul Bosco became the head of the extended family and manager of the farm but a short time later he left The Biglione farmstead to become an independent small farmer at Castelnuovo. It was in 1804 that Francis Luis Bosco took over the management of the farm. He was 20 years old.

In 1805, at the age of 21 Francis

Luis Bosco married his first wife Margherita Cagliero. Their first child Anthony Joseph was born on February 2, 1808. Teresa Mary, their second child was born on February 28, 1810. She unfortunately died two days later. A year later, on February 28, 1811 Margherita Cagliero died. Francis Luis Bosco became a widower at the age of 27.

In a little municipality of Capriglio, located about two miles from the hamlet of Becchi, lived Melchior Mark Occhiena. He was born in 1752 and married Dominica Bassone, a small independent farmer at the parish church of Piea. They had ten children and Margherita was born on April 1, 1788. She was baptized at Capriglio on the same day. Margherita was a modest, God-fearing and a hard working girl. Some time later Francis Luis Bosco became acquainted with Margherita Occhiena. They were married on June 6, 1812 at the parish church of Capriglio after a civil ceremony in the town hall of Castelnuovo in the presence of a French government official.

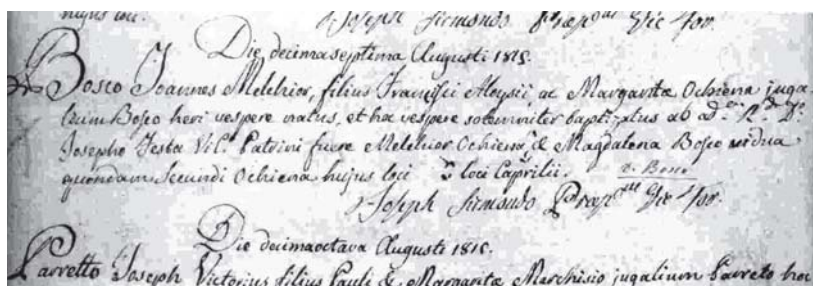
Their first son Joseph Luis Bosco was born on April 17, 1813; their second son John Melchior Bosco was born on August 16, 1815. Both were born at The Biglione

farmstead and John was baptized at St. Andrew's parish church at Castelnuovo on August 17, 1815.

Francis and his family lived at The Biglione farmstead. He worked as a farmer but the land that he worked on was not his own. He had to share half the produce with Bigliones. At this time, Francis acquired nine small pieces of land, some animals and the 'little house' at Becchi on February 8, 1817 from Francis Graglia. It was formerly owned by Mr. Gavallo and situated on a property in the canton of Cavallo.

Seven days after he contracted pneumonia, working in the Biglione cellar, Francis died on May 11, 1817 at the age of 33. Before dying, he called a notary; made an official inventory of his possession and debts which was estimated at 1.331 lire and his debts: 446 lire. There was also a case pending against Francis. An ex-servant woman of the Biglione farm claimed 220 lire as her share in the sale of the harvest. The case came up for hearing after Francis' death and his heir settled the debt.

Margherita Occhiena the widow, after fulfilling, to the best of her ability the terms and conditions of the contract for the rest of the season, left the Biglione household and moved to the 'little house' in



Don Bosco's birth date entered in the parish register

November 1817. The family, besides Margherita, now consisted of her step-son Anthony, her two sons Joseph and John and her invalid mother-in-law Margherita Zucca.

For several years it was believed that Don Bosco was born on August 15 at the 'little house' of Becchi in the canton of Cavallo. Don

Bosco himself also believed this detail and even mentioned it in his - the Memoirs of the Oratory. Till 1889 the Salesians too were of the same opinion. This is the date given in the Storia dell'Oratorio by Fr. John Bonetti and published in the Salesian Bulletin. This date was also given on a document placed on Don Bosco's coffin. The Salesian Alumini also mentioned this date on a memorial plaque dedicated to Don Bosco on August 11, 1889.

In 1889, Fathers Rua and Lemoyne sent Fathers Secondo Marchisio and John Baptist Francesia to Castelnuovo to make inquiries about Don Bosco's early years. Only then was it discovered that the parish register had recorded the date of Don Bosco's birth as August 16. For sometime the Salesians doubted the accuracy of the parish register but it was clear that John was born on the evening of August 16 and was solemnly baptized by Rev. Fr. Joseph Festa on August 17, 1815.

It was also believed that John was born at the 'little house' of Becchi in the canton of Cavallo



The little house where Don Bosco spent his early life

because Don Bosco often referred to 'the little house' as 'my' house. In point of fact, that was not where he was born!

The local archives state that Don Bosco's ancestors lived where they worked as tenants. Don Bosco's father worked as a tenant farmer at the Biglione farm and his family moved to that 'little house' of Becchi only after the death of his father. Fr. Francis Desramaut has maintained that Francis Bosco lived and worked until his death not at the Biglione farmstead but at an 'annex' to the farmstead located a little further away at Monastero in the hamlet of Meinito. Some other studies showed that Don Bosco was born at one of the farms that belonged to Biglione. The Biglione farmhouse was very close to the house of Becchi and was demolished in 1958 to make place for the splendid minor basilica of Don Bosco (*Tempio di Don Bosco*). Today those visiting this "Temple of Don Bosco" will find an inscription which reads: "This is where Don Bosco was born." □

(To be continued)



walking with the Church

The Magi and St. Matthew

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *With regard to the story of the Magi – the three wise men in the Bible. Last year I heard a priest, who was a scripture scholar, talking on the radio. He was saying something to the effect that it is possible that there were no magi. Could you please explain what he meant?*

A. The only one who tells this story about the Magi is the gospel of Matthew. The Bible contains many different kinds of 'literary forms' or simply, different styles of writing. Matthew had a particular style of writing, a particular 'literary form' which uses stories to spin out and clarify the meaning of a particular event or teaching. These stories were intended to help get the essential truth across as clearly as possible. The author, Matthew in this case, did not intend us to take them literally – the way we might take something literally. This was a common method of teaching by the Jews. We may or may not believe the story of the Magi but it helps to focus our minds on the central mystery of our faith, the mystery of God becoming man, of the birth of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Apart from helping to focus our minds on the central mystery of

God becoming man, reflecting on the story of the Magi can help us in another way. The Magi travelled a long distance to find the Lord. Even though people sometimes today travel long distances in search of spiritual experiences our faith tells us that we can find Christ in our homes, in our own workplace, in our own neighbourhood. We don't have to travel. He is with us and indications of His presence are everywhere. He can be found in the poor, in those who suffer, in our next door neighbour, in the Church. There are stars everywhere pointing the way to us. We pray that the Lord will reveal Himself more and more to us during the coming year. We know and believe that Jesus accompanies us on the way even if sometimes in this world there is no star for us and we seem to be travelling in darkness. □



Reflecting on Mary

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

by Antonio Rudoni

On the first day of the New Year, just after having celebrated the feast of Christmas, the Church feels the need to celebrate the mother of the child as well and she is not to be referred to as "mother of Jesus" but as "Mother of God."

What is the significance of such a sublime title?

We have a human nature. It is not that we have assumed the nature of dogs, even though we might love the house dog very much. We are human beings not dogs!

But God is different. He desperately loves us, his children and while he maintains his nature as God, because he wanted to come to us he assumed our human nature so that we, uniting ourselves to him, could assume his nature.

So, God has two ways of existing remaining just as he is:

1) His natural state of being is divine (God continues to be God);

2) and the nature he assumes is human (so as God he also becomes man).

God, in being God, is eternal. He is the source of everything and therefore he does not need to come into existence through

a mother. However, the same God, being human, has a beginning in time and comes into existence through an earthly mother, Mary.

Therefore, she is clearly the mother of God, of God not in the way that he is God but as God in the way that he (God) assumes a human nature.

So when we celebrate the feast of the Mother of God we are not recalling a simple "way-of-saying," a kind of catch-phrase or a symbolic image. We



are reaffirming a precise truth!

This truth was proclaimed in the year 431 at the Council of Ephesus, a city of Asia Minor. At this Council, we hold that Jesus, from the first moment of his existence in the womb was God and man.

So Mary did not generate a simple man, who later became God, but she gave birth to God himself made man!

We should never forget the Virgin Mother of God before she became Mother of God was a creature, a child of God who became His spouse, because the Annunciation was the declaration of a marriage proposal by the Father inviting her to be His

bride, so that together they should give birth and nurture the Messiah and to this request, Mary said 'yes!'

That was why Dante could sing of her: "Virgin mother, daughter of your Son!"

Therefore, because of all this, Mary most holy becomes the model for all of us: since the entire human race, every human person has been thought of by God, with love from all eternity so that we might be his children (cf 1 Jn 3,1), his spouses (cf Is 62,5), his mothers (cf Mt 12,49s)! □

(continued from pg. 23)

like that? After the doctor and everybody telling him to take a rest." Fr. Paddy went on: "Now this woman told me, that going up the stairs she walked behind John all the way and she was afraid he was going to fall. She waited outside the door and he was so long that she got frightened and so she looked in the room and there he was lying on a bench. She asked him what was the matter and he only said. 'I'm alright now' and then he gave her the clothes." Matt seemed a little concerned now. Looking at his watch he thought he might call his brother's room at the boarding house: "Well, it won't do any harm to check up and see how he's getting along. I'll telephone his brother." He dialed the number: "Hello, give me extension 334 please. I'd like to speak to Mr. John McGuinness. Well, when do you expect him?" There was a sudden shock on Matt's face: "Oh no" Fr. Paddy asked: "What's the matter?" Matt was still on the phone: "Well, thank you," he said putting down the phone. "It was John, two days

ago. God rest his soul, I never thought he was so sick. I've lost the best friend a man ever had." Matt was upset: "Well, why didn't he take his rest, the way the doctor told him to?" Fr. Paddy continued: "Eh, he had too much to do." Matt took out a cigarette and lit it. Through the smoke he mused aloud: "Many's the time he asked me to help and I've turned him down. Where are we ever going to find anybody to take his place?"

"I still say he tried to do too much and that wasn't right." Matt insisted: "Yes, it was right." Said Fr. Paddy. Then Matt said solemnly: "That's what made him the fine man he was. John McGuinness was a hero more than many a man who won a chest full of medals in the war. They risked their lives a couple of times. John gave up his life everyday for twenty years. It's true what he once said to me. I know it now. You couldn't do enough for God." □

NEWSBITS

SOUTH SUDAN:

Italian-born Bishop Cesare Mazzolari, known for rebuilding church structures and communities in the Diocese of Rumbek, died July 16 while concelebrating Mass. Catholics from the diocese recalled Bishop Mazzolari as a zealous worker who reopened missions and negotiated humanitarian assistance for the diocese, which, in 2004, was home to tens of thousands of refugees from the Sudanese region of Darfur. He also promoted education and health care and "passionately responded to human need at every level", they said.

They recalled how the bishop presided over the opening prayer of

the Independence Day Celebration in Rumbek July 9. He later stated that he was "moved with tears of joy to see the jubilation of the people of Southern Sudan at the (January) referendum."

Born in Brescia, Italy, Feb. 9, 1937, Cesare Mazzolari was ordained a Comboni priest in San Diego, California, March 17, 1962. He spent 19 years working among African-American and Mexican mineworkers.

In 1981, he moved to the Sudanese Diocese of Tombura-Yambio, in what is now South Sudan. For three years, he worked as a parish priest and spiritual director at a minor seminary. In 1984, he moved to Juba to serve as Comboni provincial of southern Sudan.

Pope John Paul II appointed him apostolic administrator of Rumbek in 1990, and he was consecrated bishop in January 1999. *CNS*



*Bishop Cesare Mazzolari
Celebrating Mass*

VIETNAM

Vinh City - At a recent ceremony at Quy Chinh Church near the northern city of Vinh, 17 Missionaries of Charity nuns made their final vows while 30 others made their temporal vows. Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop of Vinh presided at the ceremony attended by 70 priests, 300 Religious and 2,000 Catholics.

Father Joseph Nguyen Dang Dien founded the congregation on May 31, 1980 with only five nuns. Now the Missionaries of Charity congregation has 317 nuns and 300 postulants. "We receive all

girls who want to lead a consecrated life and serve poor people," Father Dien said. Members come from poor families and are illiterate and in poor health. Some were turned away from other local congregations. The congregation creates opportunities for nuns who are illiterate to study from elementary through high school level and study catechism, theology, Church history, morality, music and English. There are currently 20 nuns studying at college and three others studying in Italy and the U.S. The nuns have established over 54 communities throughout Vietnam. Missionaries of Charity nuns serve orphans, elderly people without relatives, lepers, psychiatric patients, and unwed pregnant women in 11 dioceses. *An edited version, taken from ucanews.com*

INDONESIA

"Dialogue and Proclamation" are the main points in the call to Mission for 25 new priests ordained at the beginning of June in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, located in central Indonesia. While Indonesia is 90% Muslim, the province of East

Nusa Tenggara is known as "the Christian heart of Indonesia" because of its large Christian majority. Of the approximately 4 million inhabitants of the province, 91% are Christian (mostly Catholic), 8% Muslim and the remaining 2% is divided between Hindus, Buddhists and animists. The province became in past years a refuge for Christians escaping from the Indonesian conflict areas such as Papua or the Indonesian Moluccas islands.

The Catholic community of the province celebrated with great joy the ordination of the 25 priests who represent three dioceses in the province. The ceremony, featuring

traditional music and dance, was attended by thousands of Catholic faithful. Vocations to the priesthood are increasing in East Nusa Tenggara and many of their priests and religious now are sent to other dioceses of the Indonesian archipelago. The province has a long Christian tradition, as it was the initial focus of the earliest Christian missionaries in Indonesia beginning in the seventeenth century. *Agenzia Fides*

MALI

9 deacons ordained from the major Seminary of Samaya Bamako, Mali -Don Edmond Dembele, the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Mali reports to Fides that nine seminarians were ordained to the diaconate at the Cathedral of Bamako on Sunday, June 19. The celebration was presided by Archbishop Jean Baptiste Tiama, Bishop of Sikasso, and President of the Episcopal Conference of Mali. The nine deacons represent various dioceses in the Republic of Guinea as well as Mali. In his homily, Mgr. Tiama stressed the importance of the diaconate, and urged the new deacons to be at the full service of their communities. The major Seminary of Saint Augustine, which serves both the Church in Guinea and in Mali, has a new Rector, appointed by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples: Fr. Ahmadou Kizito Togo, a priest of the diocese of Mopti who was ordained in 1993, returns to serve in his native country after obtaining his Ph.D. in Church History in Rome. *Agenzia Fides* □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

I thank you most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Blessed Mother for the countless blessings received and for the favours granted.

Alvin Braganza, Canada

My most sincere thanks to the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother Mary for the clear medical test results of my friend Amber.

Mrs. A. de Souza, Australia

After many complications and much stress I had a serene and safe normal delivery of my son Ralin Ignatius Braganza in March 2004. I am grateful to Our Lady for this and several other graces.

Alanna Braganza, Goa

My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for helping my daughter get her Work Permit.

N. Paul, Mumbai

Heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for their constant guidance and protection in our lives.

Lorna De Souza, Goa

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

Savoi F. De Souza, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary and all the saints for the blessings showered on us as well as the birth of a healthy grand child.

Joe and Quennie Rodrigues, Vashi, Navi Mumbai

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

Maureen, Mumbai

It was in July 2010, our very close friend was very sick in hospital for nearly a month. She was in a coma due to a brain infection. I prayed to Mary Help of Christians fervently and there seemed to be some improvement. Thanks dear Mary Help of Christians.

P. Antao, Goa

My brother was suffering from a skin disease. He visited many doctors and took a lot of medicines. Mother Mary always protects her children. I prayed hard to Mother Mary and today he is cured of it. Thank you Mother Mary for all the favours granted to me and my family.

F. D'Souza, Mumbai

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

Maria, Mumbai

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

Clemie Coelho, Mumbai

Our grateful thanks to Mother Mary for the blessings and favours granted to our family.

V.E. Joseph and Mary Joseph, New Panvel

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady: from 13th May to 24th May the house work which was stalled for 10 years was completed. I am grateful for this grace.

Teresa Gonsalves, Mumbai

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

F. Pinto, Mumbai

Thank you, Mother Mary for restoring me to good health.

Chery, Pune

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.*

For the last eight months, I noticed a growth, the size of a golf ball on the right side of my thyroid gland. I went through an ultra-sound X-Ray and a puncture examination. The reports came back inconclusive. There was only a surgery left. I prayed for God's mercy and recited the "Hail Mary" for her help. Today (2nd November 2011) I received the report and the growth was non-cancerous. Thank God!
HAIL MARY!

Louis Pinto, Wellington, New Zealand

My sincere thanks to Our Lady for the many graces I received through the faithful recitation of the 'three Hail Marys.'
Maureen Gaughan, UK
 My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary and Don Bosco for curing my eyes through the recitation of the three Hail Marys daily in the morning and the night.

Godfrey Vaz, Australia

Thank you, Mother Mary Help of Christians and all the saints for granting me the favours by reciting the three Hail Marys. I am sorry for the delay.

Euphrasia Rebello, Goa

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 many other favours granted.

T. Gomes, Mumbai

Thanks to our Blessed Mother for helping my nephew, a motherless boy to complete his studies and to get a good job as per his qualification. I prayed the three Hail Marys everyday.

Sr. Mabel, Mangalore

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for giving me an excellent season 2010-2011 through the recitation of the three Hail Marys and thank you for the many other graces and blessings granted to me and my family.

S. de Souza, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary for a safe air journey from Mumbai to Guwahati and back inspite of heavy rain and for many blessings and favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary, continue to intercede for my family.

Dr. Sushma Rose, Tirkey, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus Christ and his Mother, Mary Help of Christians for getting me a job. I prayed the three Hail Marys every day. I pray that Mother Mary, our heavenly Mother continues to shower her blessings on me and my family always.

Eunice Valerie Fernandes, Canada

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

In August 2010 I had a fall on the basketball court at Don Bosco Lonavla due to which my lower jaw was dislocated and the doctors had given me a choice between wearing a mask or medication. I opted for medication as it would be painful and inconvenient to wear a mask for life. But then one whole month of medication did not really heal my dislocated jaw bone. My jaw remained out of shape and it caused me severe pain especially at the time of eating my food or singing. Even a single action of opening and closing my mouth caused my jaw to slide out of joint. On 17th August 2011 I "met" the relics of Don Bosco and the pain miraculously stopped and to date my jaw has stopped sliding out of joint. I am grateful to almighty God and to Don Bosco too. *Swithin Moraes, Kudal*

My grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for all the favours received. *Mrs. L. D'Souza, Mumbai*

Thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the graces received.

Helen Johnson, Marissa J. Manuel Bhayandar

Our sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for saving our lives from a major accident while we were asleep at home. *Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Pereira, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints for favours received. *Leena Martis, Mumbai*

I sincerely thank Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints to whom I prayed when I was desperately in need and I was going through a bad time. I am grateful for the graces received. *Lizzie Dias, Mumbai*

Thanks dear Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for granting my son success in his examinations. *D. Fernandes, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio. I was childless for seven years and finally I've been blessed with a child. I am most grateful. *Mrs. Sonia Almeida, Goa*

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

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*

Grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the successful by-pass operation of Mr. John Godwin. We continue to pray the three Hail Marys daily. *Mr. & Mrs. Godwin, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for giving me a good life partner. *Mrs. N. D'Silva, Mumbai*

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

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My belated and sincere thanks to the Holy Trinity, Mother Mary, St. Joseph, St. Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter and the gift of a healthy baby boy whom we have named "Jerome". *Mrs. Margaret Joseph, Vasai*
Belated thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for my son's success in his XII Std as well as his final year and many other favours granted. *A Devotee*

My daughter (Sonia) was childless for the last 7^{1/2} years. I was praying to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio and I received the grace. I am most grateful for this grace granted to my daughter. *Mrs. Maria Lira Martins, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift successful delivery and the gift of a baby boy.

Isabel Francis Mascarenhas, Jalgaon

My belated but sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a grandson, whom the doctor had predicted would be mentally challenged, but to the contrary he is an intelligent child for his age.

Mrs. Celine Coutinho, Mumbai

My sincere and grateful thanks to St. Dominic Savio and all the saints for blessing me with a normal delivery and the gift of a son.

Valerie Fernandes, Mumbai

My grateful thanks to St. Dominic Savio for granting me so many favours.

Cecilia Fernandes, Mumbai

Thanks dear Dominic Savio for the favour I received. After an MRI that the doctor advised I was healed without surgery. *Devotee, Mumbai*

Dearest St. Dominic Savio thank you for the gift of a healthy baby girl and for a safe and normal delivery. *Preetham and Carol Fernandes, Dubai*

We are sincerely thankful to St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby boy. I always wore a scapular during my pregnancy.

Savio and Jennifer D'Cunha, Goa

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JANUARY 2012

Holy Father's General Intention: *That the victims of natural disasters may receive the spiritual and material comfort they need to rebuild their lives.*

Missionary Intention: *That the dedication of Christians to peace may bear witness to the name of Christ before all men and women of good will.*