

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*Jesus was born  
when Mary  
listened. The Word  
of God  
took flesh in her.  
May He be born  
in us  
as we listen  
to his Word.*

Cover: **Jesus with little children**  
**Luberoff**



## From The Editor's Desk

### A SECOND OPINION

The new walkway was underway on the campus where I live and I was eager to get my feet onto it but after the first 'round' I was feeling a slight but unmistakable stab each time my weight came down on the right knee but, being optimistic by nature, I kept going. Some days later I ground to a halt in agony.

The moral was that flat-footed people like me should not walk long distances on flat surfaces. That's why we are not allowed into the army. Soft tissue damage, as the doctor called it, makes life very complicated indeed.

The doctor's advice was crisp: stop walking until there was no pain. Then people began asking a rather tedious question - 'Why not get a second opinion?' I agreed, in a bad tempered sort of way but I went to see another specialist. He asked me to walk around the room and after telling me to sit down he said, 'There's nothing I can do for you.' He paused, waiting for my jaw to drop, and continued: 'My advice is to cut off all contact with the medical profession. Doctors often do more harm than good. Start living normally again. You may feel real pain, but ignore it. I've seen this happen to the sanest of people. It's a bit like a child alone in a dark house being advised to keep an eye out for ghosts. The ghosts will always appear.'

Did I feel like a real fool? Quite possibly, but that paled into insignificance before an overwhelming sense of relief and gratitude. If you had asked me that morning was I the happiest half-wit in the world, I would have responded with a blissful and vigorous nod of the head.

The best kind of doctor is able to see the world through the eyes of the patient. He will know that the patient is never a passive observer of the healing process and that, wherever the will to recover is lost, medicine is worthless. He will know how to challenge those who lapse into self-pity and how to encourage without being patronizing.

It is not at all easy to keep abreast of all the latest medical research and at the same time to be aware of one's own human fallibility. Specialized knowledge and skill have a tendency to make people think that they have all the answers. That is a temptation, and where there is temptation - prayer is needed. Because they are human and because we all depend on them for so much, doctors need our prayers.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## PRECIOUS LESSONS FOR LIFE

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

A young academically brilliant person applied for a managerial position in a big company. He passed the first interview and the Director reserved the last interview for himself. In a few seconds he discovered that everything about the youth's academic achievements were excellent all the way, never had he gone through a year when he did not score. However, on learning that the candidate had not received any scholarships, the Director was intrigued to know who had paid his fees all through - it was his mother, by working as a laundry woman! So he asked the young man to go home and clean his mother's hands and return to meet him the next day.

The young man did as he was told, cleaned his mother's hands slowly as tears fell all through the task. For the first time he noticed his mother's hands wrinkled, with so many bruises, some so painful that she shivered as he cleaned them. This was the pair of hands that washed the clothes everyday to enable him to pay the school fees! After completing the task, he silently washed all the remaining clothes for his mother. That night, mother and son talked for a very long time.

Next morning, when he entered the Director's office, there were tears in his eyes as he answered the question: "Can you tell me what have you done and learned yesterday at home?" With lowered head he confessed, "I cleaned my mother's hands

and also finished cleaning all the remaining clothes. I know now what appreciation is. Without my mother, there would not have been the successful me today. By working together and helping my mother, only now I realize how difficult and tough it is to get something done. I have come to appreciate the importance and value of family relationships!

"This is what I am looking for in my managers," exclaimed the Director. "I want to recruit a person who can appreciate the help of others, one who knows the sufferings of others to get things done, and one who will not put money above people in life. You are hired."

### Important Insights

A child, who has been protected habitually and given whatever he wants, as is often the case nowadays, will develop an 'entitlement mentality' and will always put himself first before all others, even the most deserving ones. He will be ignorant of his parent's efforts and struggles to provide him at times with even the bare necessities. When he starts work, he will assume that every person must listen to him, and when he reaches the level of a manager, he will find it hard to resonate with the sufferings of his employees and will always blame others. While such a person may be good academically and successful for a while, it is almost impossible for him to feel a sense of

achievement! He will constantly grumble and be full of hatred, always fighting for more. If we are this kind of protective parents, are we really showing love or are we destroying our children instead? The most important thing children should learn is how to appreciate the effort and experience the difficulty parents undergo and discover how to work with others to get things done.

### **Today's Problem With Children**

The problem that parents face with children nowadays is that it is so easy to pamper them mainly because they seem to be so much a 'rare commodity' in our times. What with nuclear families, planned parenthood, Government and other incentives and the rest?! Add to this the fact that generally most parents are over-worked in their effort to make both ends meet - spiraling prices, the generally high cost of living in almost any part of the world, the enticements of consumerism, peer pressure and the like that make children so demanding and difficult to cope with!

There is also the other side of the coin. Busy with all that they need to do to keep the always-needed cash flowing in, parents hardly get enough quality time to spend with their children. And so the endless hunger in the hearts of children for parental love and acceptance drives them further and further into substituting 'having' for 'being.' It is not surprising that only a few children today deeply realize what parents have to go through to educate their children the right

way, until they themselves reach the age of parenthood. And if the scene is so pathetic in our day, we can be sure that it will be even more so as one generation follows another. Our problems would grow in arithmetic proportion while our resources keep diminishing in equal measure!

### **Stemming the Rot**

Allowing such a situation to escalate only increases the scope and areas of damage done! No wonder then that the prospective employer in the true story above sought for leaders who would really care for their subordinates as people and work to bring out their full potential as they go along!

But how and where could we bring in a paradigm shift? Once again, it is perhaps only the Eucharist that can make people realize the infinite value of each single individual. For if Jesus was prepared to die for each and every person, if he portrayed himself as the Good Shepherd going in search of even the one lost sheep while risking the well-being of the other ninety-nine, wouldn't we begin to realize the value of the persons around us as we recall his Self-gift to us? Further, since the Eucharist strikes at the very root of our egotistic self-absorption, we should realize that "I/Me/ Myself" am not the only person in the world. The Eucharist teaches us to 'sacrifice' ourselves for others, to break of ourselves and share our resources and gifts with others who are less fortunate and so if and when we enter into this dynamic more

personally and meaningfully, something must happen to turn the tide.

But why does this not happen in spite of most Christians being regular Church-goers, celebrating Eucharist ever so often even on weekdays? Could the deeper reason be that even when celebrating Eucharist, we think primarily of ourselves and our own well-being? As a matter of fact, if as they enter Church we were to ask people what is their reason for celebrating Eucharist, we would be pleasantly surprised to see that almost 90% have no more than a self-centred reason for being there: peace in my family, a good job for someone and so on. Another way to gauge where the problem lies is to ask people which part of the Eucharist they consider as the climactic one, the one towards which all the others are directed and flow? Here again, the answers come as a surprise: most would place their preference in the Consecration, or the Communion – but hardly would we hear anyone say that it is the dismissal rite on which Jesus has his eyes fixed. He calls us to Eucharist primarily to remind us of his choice and undying love for each of us; he chose us not only because he loves us, but also because he wants to make us his ambassadors (Mk. 3:13-17). Having come to us through his powerful Word and the sacramental elements of bread and wine, he then penetrates our very lives as we lovingly receive him in Holy Communion – but here again, this deep interpersonal union is not just for our own sakes. He wants us to

experience what such a union means and feels like, so that we can go out and share it with others, and bring them too into his loving, saving embrace.

### **Eucharist Makes the Church**

We have often heard it said that it is the Eucharist that builds the Church, meaning thereby that the attitudes that we bring with us to the Eucharist are what will determine the way we celebrate, control the level and quality of our participation all through, and finally end up reinforcing those same self-centred attitudes as we go back to our work-a-day lives. While this way of celebrating is a kind of *spiritual 'ego-mania'* it is egoism nevertheless and does nothing to spread God's kingdom of light and love in the midst of our world that is plunged in the darkness of consumerism and globalization which thrive on our selfish attitudes!

But if we did come to Eucharist to do what Jesus commanded us to do, namely to *take* the bread of our lives, to *give thanks* for all our blessings and then courageously to *break* of our lives and *give* to one another saying, 'Take and eat this is my very self given for you!' – what a different world would we not have? Would we have such a heavy outlay of scams, murders, rapes and the like as our daily diet in the news bulletins while we have to minutely scan the least frequented pages to pick up tidbits of the few heroic deeds of selfless service of the needy which are quickly forgotten? How happy would the Risen Lord not be to see that there are

so many of his followers who are ready to live out their baptismal commitment courageously: in baptism we had committed ourselves to die to our old sinful, self-seeking Self – but that seems to have remained only on paper, or as a quaint theory meant for the old-fashioned and backward populace!

What we need today desperately is a Copernican revolution in the direction of selfless and limitless love of others – an attitude and way of life we can learn only from Jesus our Saviour and from those

who energetically follow him as the Way, the Truth and the Life! Each Eucharist we celebrate meaningfully should result in us becoming more appreciative of others around us, more ready to place ourselves at their service saying in action more than in words, ‘You must increase, I must decrease!’ And this is best begun in the family circle itself moving out from there in ever widening circles till the Psalm which says, “All the ends of the earth, have seen the saving power of God!” (98:3) comes true. □

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## walking with the Church

### *Thanksgiving After Mass*

*From The Sacred Heart Messenger, Canada*

*Q. I attend a church where as soon as the closing hymn finishes, everyone begins socializing, making thanksgiving prayer quite difficult. Only a few hardy folks attempt it here anymore. Should I even be trying to pray after Mass ends?*

A. The Mass might end with “*Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord*”, but this does not imply that everyone must immediately dash off into the marketplace. On the contrary, spending time in gratitude for the gift of Christ in the Eucharist is entirely appropriate liturgically and officially encouraged by the Church: “They may do this during the celebration with a period of silence, with a hymn, psalm or other song of praise, or also after

the celebration, if possible by staying behind to pray for a suitable time” (*Inestimable Donum*, 17).

St. John Chrysostom wrote that “When we have received the precious Body of Jesus Christ, we should take care not to lose its heavenly flavour by turning too soon to the care and business of the world.” St. Teresa of Avila counseled her sisters not to rush out after Mass but to value the opportunity for thanksgiving: “Let us detain ourselves lovingly with Jesus and not waste the hour that follows Communion.”

The time of thanksgiving will vary from person to person, but Cardinal Arinze once pointed out in one of his talks: “It is a beautiful

*Continued on pg. 23*



# WHAT ABOUT SUNDAY WORK?

by Finbarr Clancy

No! You are not old-fashioned in giving us this timely reminder of the third Commandment: 'Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.' The first two commandments remind us of our relationship to God. Commandments four to ten guide our relationship to our neighbour. The third reminds us of the sacredness of time and the invitation which it gives us to be mindful of God and neighbour, especially on the Sabbath day.

## The Secular Sunday

Today we run the risk of letting Sunday become an all too secular day. The shopping mall or Sunday market have become the new cathedrals. The liturgy of Sunday shopping replaces the Eucharist for many. It attracts throngs of worshippers to its new shrines. Subtle advertising with the catchy refrains, 'open seven days a week' or 'shopping two to five on Sundays,' becomes today's response to the consumerist psalm, The contemplative silence of Sunday is regularly disturbed by the hum of lawn mower, the noise of industry and other instruments of trade which join the sad symphony.

**Am I old-fashioned in thinking that it is wrong to engage in unnecessary work on Sundays? Are we not supposed to keep holy the Lord's Day?**

## Spiritual Amnesia

The materialist and consumer society are often the symptoms of a disease which we might call 'spiritual amnesia.' This is one of the major problems of our time. In a world where success, competition and productivity are the guiding values we often witness a

corresponding decline in attentiveness to, and familiarity with, spiritual realities.

The Christian community is asked above all to be a 'remembering community.' A society or culture from which the remembrance of God disappears soon becomes a sick society. Forgetfulness of God often leads to forgetfulness of neighbour. Combine both and you have the recipe for an impoverished existence, a hollow society and the proliferation of the DIY syndrome -we can 'do it ourselves.' The attitude is 'Let us do our own thing and do away with God, Sunday Mass and Church regulations.'

The Jewish mind had, and still has, a profound reverence for and sensitivity to the sacredness of time. To this day the Jewish family observes the Sabbath from Friday evening until after nightfall on Saturday. It is a

sacred time in which there is solemn commemoration of God in prayer together, devotion to the family and an abstention from all unnecessary work which would hinder the other two activities. What rich lessons there are here for us!

### **Creation and Salvation**

The Old Testament gives us two accounts of the Ten Commandments. In one account (Ex 20:8-11) the Sabbath is linked with God's rest on the seventh day after having created the world and all- its manifold beauty, including humankind (Gen 1:1-3). The other account (Dt 5:12-15) links the Sabbath observance with remembrance of the great events of the Exodus, when God liberated Israel from the shackles of slavery in Egypt.

Thus the Sabbath encouraged reverence and gratitude to God the Creator and - also joyful remembrance of God as Israel's liberator. Where the Sabbath was reverently observed, God the Creator was blessed, creation itself was esteemed and God's past saving events were solemnly commemorated. These were recalled in such a way that their power became a present reality.

### **The Lord's Day**

From earliest times Christians have always observed Sunday as a special day. It is the Lord's day, the Dies Dominica. We are invited to recall solemnly the



great event of Christ's Resurrection from the dead 'on the first day of the week' (Mk 16:9; Mt 28:1; Lk 24:1). The risen Lord is the Head of the New Creation and the author of our liberation from sin and death. Christ brings to fulfilment what the Jewish Sabbath so eloquently prefigured.

### **Giving Prime Time to God**

Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy (n.10B) speaks of Sunday as the day on which Christians gather joyfully to celebrate the Eucharist in which the Paschal Mystery is actively recalled. Sunday is the 'foundation and kernel' of the Church's whole liturgical year. Sunday is a special day on which we are invited to give God our prime time. It is only appropriate that we abstain from all unnecessary labour on Sundays so that we can make God our number one with the devotion of an undivided heart. As one well-known hymn puts it: 'High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.'

A famous text in the Book of Ecclesiastes (3:1-9) states that 'There is a season for everything. A time for every occupation under heaven.' There is a time for working and a time for not working; a time for shopping and a time for not shopping; a time for worshipping God and a time for not being ensnared by the tentacles of the consumer society. A life seasoned with the remembrance of God becomes a sweet dish pleasing unto God. □

## MARIA ROMERO MENESES 1902 - 1977

**M**aria Romero Meneses was born in Granada, Nicaragua, on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1902 to a well-to-do family. Her father, a minister in the Government of the Republic, was generous with those who had nothing. Mary learned from her earliest years what it meant to offer practical charity even when it was difficult. The family had great dreams for her: she studied music, played the piano and the violin.

At twelve she went to the school run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Don Bosco's charism seemed to have been tailor-made for her. In the novitiate she taught music and worked at the Festive Oratory, where, for the first time, she came into contact with poor girls.

After her perpetual vows, she was sent to San José in Costa Rica. It would become her second homeland. She was asked to teach in a school for rich girls but she was always was on the lookout for "the poor and abandoned," like Don Bosco.

From among her best students she chose 'disciples' for the Oratories and called them "las misioneritas." They went into the houses of the poor, helped clean, and distribute food and clothes collected by Sr. Maria and taught catechism. She then began the festive oratories for poor



children.

Mary Help of Christians, whom she called her Queen, ensured that many offerings came to support her works. Thanks to voluntary medical specialists she succeeded in setting up a fully equipped clinic. There were also rooms in which catechism was taught and a chapel in which they prayed.

She carried many great works because of her great faith and with the help of generous people who all began to experience the effects of devotion to Mary.

She was a contemplative in action. Many of her "Escritos Espirituales" have been printed. She died of heart failure on the 7th July 1977.

The government of Costa Rica declared her an honourary citizen of the nation. Her remains lie San José de Costa Rica. John Paul II beatified her on the 14th April 2002. □



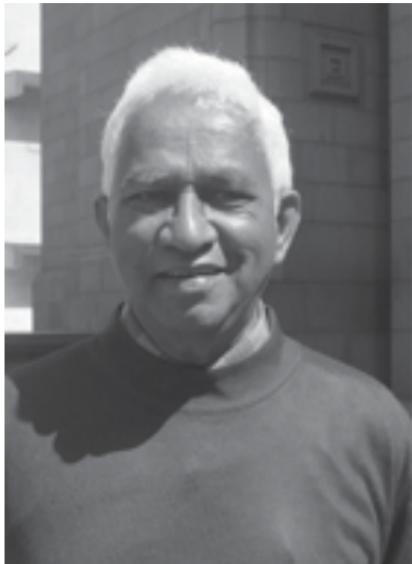
**THE WILL OF GOD IN MY SUPERIORS  
FR. JOHN SAMALA, SDB**

*Rector of the Provincial House, Ethiopia, Eritrea*

**M**y name is John (Jonas) Samala. I was born in Kattupadi in 1938, near Vellore in Tamil-Nadu, South of India. After my early school I went to Vellore Don Bosco. At a retreat I attended, the preacher always began his sermons with Jesus' words, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul." This made an impression on me. On 15<sup>th</sup> August - the Feast of the Assumption, I was chosen to play the lead role in the opera: Aloysius Gonzaga (the patron for youth in the church then). This made me eager to be a Priest when I grew up. Through my regular talks with my spiritual guide Fr. Tuena I was guided to this way of life. Fr. Hubert Rozario my rector and head master then reminded me of my promise to Fr. Tuena to become a priest.

I went to the Novitiate at Yercaud on 24 May, 1958. Fr. Pianazzi, then Provincial of Madras inducted us into the Novitiate. He introduced us to Frs. Egidius Sola the Novice Master and Mauro Casarotti the Rector. Msgr. Louis Mathias sdb, the Archbishop of Madras Mylapore gave us the cassock on 15 August 1958. My parents and family were so happy to see me in cassock.

The cold weather caused me to contract para-typhoid which left me deaf for more than two weeks along with bronchial asthma.



Thankfully and through the grace of our Blessed Mother, the doctors certified me fit enough to continue with my Salesian life. Together with Br. M.O. Mathew, I was sent to Lonavla at the end of May 1962.

I was ordained on 21 December 1968. After which I served the congregation in this part of the world in various capacities.

In May 1998 there was an emergency in Ethiopia, East Africa. There is much satisfaction in the Salesian way of life because I accepted the wish of my superiors as God's will after discernment with them.

My dear youngsters, have great faith in your spiritual guide/mentor who can help you to discern God's will for you. □

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

# **Witnesses in & for Our Times**



## **ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556) FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD (JULY 31)**

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

In 1415 there was an Ecumenical Council in Constance (Germany) during which an urgent need for the reformation of the Church was felt. The slogan was that the reformation should be "*in capite et in membris*" in the head and the members, i.e. among the clergy and the People of God. Unfortunately, for many years, nothing was done.

Once more in 1500 the issue recurred. The problem had become grave. "*Reformatio Ecclesia, Ecclesia semper reformanda.*" The Church needed reformation and it needed to be open to reformation.

And so a

devastating cyclone of so-called reformers began to batter the



*St. Ignatius presents the "Rule" of the Company of Jesus (Jesuits) to the Pope Paul III. (The painting preserved in the Church of Jesus in Rome)*

Church with people like: Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. In some ways theirs was a laudable attempt, but many others were disastrous.

Luther (1517) was the foremost of the three. A former Augustinian monk, steeped in culture and possessing a complex personality, he was a spiritually and existentially troubled individual. Although re-evaluated in recent decades one cannot overlook the extent of his errors.... The issue that led Luther out of the Church was his subjectivism. He would have a great impact on the history of culture of his time. His strong personality undergirded all that he said. Everything was seen from an individual perspective, asserting his "I" without any reference to objectivity. He was adept in bending the Word of God to suit his own needs. Yves Congar defined him as "a restless reformer."

The reformation (or counter-reformation) prompted by Luther (this was his merit) was implemented by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and backed by several saints like Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Philip Neri, Charles Borromeo, Pius V (of the Battle of Lepanto) and others who frequented Rome during those years.



*The Apparition of the Madonna to St. Ignatius, by Sébastien Bourdon (1616-1671)*

### **Ignatius: The Worldly Troubadour**

Ignatius was one of the great protagonists of real reform in the Church. This reformation was brought about through his charisma and his holiness, his culture and his apostolic courage, his personal action and the zeal of his sons, the Jesuits.

This champion of the Church was born at Loyola in the Basque country of Spain in 1491. He possessed a fiery temperament coupled with a very strong will. Eager for military adventure, a lover of fine clothes and beautiful women he fought bravely in the service of the viceroy at the siege of Pamplona, where he was also seriously wounded in the leg. Shortly after that, clenching his fists and teeth he decided to

change his life. His conversion began immediately after his convalescence during which he read the *Imitation of Christ*, the Jacopo da Varazze's *Golden Legend* and the *Life of Christ*. Besides reading, he reflected on his past life and wondered what lay in the future for him. He examined and analyzed himself more profoundly because he wanted to know how to improve himself. In short, he succeeded in subduing his lower inclinations and became a new man, ready to live for God and for his glory.

### **Ignatius: A Soldier for God's Glory**

At Manresa (1522) he had several mystical experiences that transformed him completely. He learned several things about the spiritual life which he incorporated into his famous *Spiritual Exercises*. Through his Holy Spirit, God himself was enlightening him. Ignatius now possessed a "new outlook" on God, man, the world and himself. His approach to life was totally transformed, driven by a new way of approaching God. The entire Church would benefit from his new outlook.

Spiritually renewed, he began to study once more. He was 34 years old! But when he "felt" if he wanted God he would have to remove all obstacles. The important cities that he visited were: Barcelona, Salamanca and Paris (the Sorbonne) where he laid the first foundations of the Society of Jesus (Montmartre 1534). Ignatius was ordained a

priest in Venice and he finally arrived in Rome, the seat of the Pope, which was being contested in those years. Ignatius and his companions (called "Friends of God") did not want to "protest" against the Pope (as was done in France). They simply placed themselves at his service out of total obedience and for the love for God and for the good of the Church.

He was immediately given two "Imprimaturs" to his projects, two major "approvals" that would give him a sense of assurance and an impetus for the future: a vision that he had of the Trinity at La Storta (Rome 1537) and the approval of the Society of Jesus by of Pope Paul III in 1540.

Ignatius would always remain in Rome to guide the young Society that wanted to culturally equip itself (in theology, philosophy and the sciences), and be ready for to great challenges that faced it.

He was a hard worker and an indomitable organizer, but he was also a Saint who prayed a lot with a particular devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, Christ in the Eucharist and His Crucifixion. His biographers called him "a contemplative in action" because of the extraordinary way in which he did nothing for himself but always, in his words, "for the greater glory of God. He died on July 31, 1556, whispering the words: "Ay, Dios!" □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## The Wedding Dress

Betty was soon to be married.

More than anything, she wanted to wear the wedding dress her mother was married in. Betty's mother was beaming with pride as she gave her consent.

Later in the evening, the family gathered in the living room to wait while Betty tried on the dress.

When Betty entered the room, there was a chorus of approval. The dress fit perfectly and looked wonderful on her.

Tears ran down the face of Betty's mother.

Seeing this, Betty said, "Don't worry Mom, you're not losing a daughter, your gaining a son."

"Forget about that!" she said with a sob.

"I used to fit into that dress!"

## Banking Woes

The girl came running in tears to her father. "Dad, you gave me some terrible financial advice!" she cried.

"I did? What did I tell you?" said the dad.

"You told me to put my money in that big bank, and now that big bank is in trouble."

"What are you talking about? That's one of the largest banks in the world," he said. "Surely there must be some mistake."

"I don't think so," she sniffed. "They just returned one of my checks with a note saying, 'Insufficient Funds'."

## Shy Visit To The Dentist

A shy little 4-year-old came in to the dentist for his first cleaning and check-up.

The hygienist tried to strike up a conversation but no response.

After the cleaning, the dentist was called in to do the final check.

The dentist tried to strike up a conversation as well.

"How old are you?" No response.

The dentist then asked, "Don't you know how old you are?"

Immediately four tiny fingers went up.

"Oh," replied the dentist, "and do you know how old that is?"

Four little fingers went up once again.

Continuing the effort to get a response, the dentist asked, "Can you talk?"

The solemn little patient looked at him and asked, "Can you count?"

## Grandpa's Manners

"Grandpa, I'm really proud of you," said the modish young lady.

"What's to be proud of?" asked the old man.

The young lady replied, "I noticed that when you sneeze, you've learned to put your hand in front of your mouth."

"Of course," explained Grandpa.

"How else can I catch my teeth???" □



## LECTIO DIVINA

"speak Lord, your servant is listening"

### THE APOSTLES ON A MISSION

(Mark 6,7-13...31-34)

by Carlo Broccardo

**E**verything and every action will happen at its own time." (Ecc. 3:17). And this maxim of biblical wisdom fits in very well with what we shall dwell on this month: In fact, we have followed the disciples from the time Jesus called them and day after day he formed them and helped them to mature in his 'school' and now that they have 'grown up,' Jesus sends them out on a mission. But this period will come to an end because the mission gets over and he calls them back to himself for a period of rest.

Jesus can't stop training his disciples. He just asks his disciples who follow him and remain with him. Being united around this unique Master they tried to fathom his way of thinking and living.

However, the mission we are reading about highlights at least three important features. First, the disciples are sent out two by two. I wonder if this observation has any particular significance, but unfortunately Mark does not tell us why Jesus has made this choice, so any explanation would be hypothetical. Was it perhaps to distinguish his disciples from many "lone wolves" who travelled the villages deceiving

people, pretending to be healers and philosophers? Or was it to give emphasis to what they were saying. In the Jewish world of that time wasn't it necessary that if a testimony were to be valid it needed at least two witnesses? Maybe Jesus did not simply want them to be alone. No one is a hero all by himself and no one is abandoned by the rest of the community. Two is the minimum number to avoid being alone, and then, as the evangelist Matthew writes, Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them" (Mt 18:20).

The second characteristic of the mission is extreme simplicity. The equipment Jesus permits is the bare minimum: a pair of sandals to walk in, a staff to defend oneself against marauders or dangerous animals, a garment that could be put on at the moment of departure. Having a spare tunic, a bag in which to carry a little food and some money just in case it was needed was not a luxury, but Jesus asks of his apostles an even greater sobriety: only the bare essentials, nothing else.

Third characteristic: the point of reference was to be homes. Jesus does not send them to the town-squares, the synagogues, before kings or governors. He sends them to where ordinary people live, in homes. To all homes, none are excluded except those who reject them. Against them the disciples are to make a significant gesture of shaking off the dust even from their sandals; as if to say: we do not have anything in common with you. But in homes where they were

received, Jesus told them to stay there.

A final observation about this mission, in a very quick synthesis is made by Mark in v. 13: "And they went out and preached that people should turn away from their sins. They drove out many demons and rubbed olive-oil on many sick people and healed them." It did not matter where they went, how long it took, what kind of reception they received; we just know that they behaved as Jesus had instructed them to behave, preaching and healing as they made the round of the towns and villages. It showed that they had been in his school.

But "...Everything and every action will happen at its own time." The days of the mission over, they return to Jesus. From one point of view one would say that the mission is not over yet: the crowds, in fact, were pressing in on them and relentlessly asking for more help: "There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have the time to eat" (v. 31). But Jesus does not give in. "Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest for a while (v. 30). The disciples have worked and now they needed some rest and as usual the people will not relent. They come to Jesus and he teaches them while the disciples rest. It may seem strange, but that's how Mark describes the scene. He invites us to imagine the twelve apostles resting in peace while Jesus is intensely teaching the crowd. With everything that there is to do (there would be no time to eat) and they are resting!



And so it was: Jesus is moved by the people's demands but he does not disturb his disciples while they are resting.

Perhaps, it is not just a rule of common sense, it is also a question of faith. In the Old Testament we find that God requires absolute rest on the Sabbath day: "...the Lord, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy" (Ex 20:11); the book of Deuteronomy states: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that I, the Lord your God, rescued you by my great power and strength. That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath" (Dt. 5:15). Experiencing a time of rest after one's work and mission, is a reminder that two of the most beautiful realities of life (creation and salvation) are a gift, not a sweaty conquest.

Paradoxically, then, the most significant time for the disciples is actually their time of rest; in fact, it is said that the profound significance of all rest and every activity makes sense only in the Lord Jesus. In the urgency and the momentum of the mission one must not forget his words: "I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me" (Jn. 15:5). □

# *Quiet Spaces*

## **DEAR GRANDPARENTS!**

*Enzo Bianco's reflection on the conference of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (5 April 2008)*

**W**ho does not remember their grandparents? Who can forget their presence and their witness by the domestic hearth? How many of us bear their names as a sign of continuity and gratitude! It is a custom in families, after their departure, to remember their birthdays with the celebration of Mass for the repose of their souls and if possible, a visit to the cemetery. These and other gestures of love and faith are a manifestation of our gratitude to them. They gave themselves; they sacrificed themselves for us, and in certain cases also gave their lives...

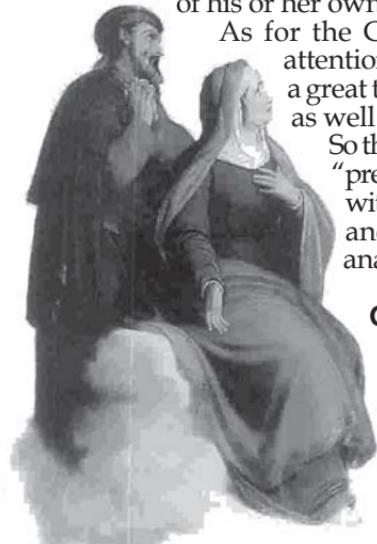
These warm and affectionate words of Benedict XVI were spoken at a conference he gave on the Christian family. It was rather unusual that he devoted his entire speech to this theme. He goes on: grandparents, he said, "are a treasure which the younger generation should not be denied, especially when they bear witness to their faith"

### **Grandparents in the Church**

Pope Benedict XVI recalled: "Thinking of grandparents, of their testimony of love and fidelity to life, reminds us of the Biblical figures of Abraham and Sarah, of Elizabeth and Zechariah, of Joachim and Anne, as well as of the elderly Simeon and Anna and even Nicodemus: they all remind us that at every age the Lord asks each one for the contribution of his or her own talents."

As for the Church, she "has always paid special attention to grandparents, recognizing them as a great treasure from both the human and social, as well as religious and spiritual viewpoints."

So the Pope set out the role of the grandparents "presence in the family, the Church and society with a look that can include the past, present and future." So he says: "Let us briefly analyze these three moments."



*A detail of Sts. Joachim and Anne  
the parents of Mary,  
the grandparents of Jesus*

### **Grandparents of the past**

Take this premise, going back to the distant past paleo-anthropologists surmise that in the Neanderthal age, grandparents, as a social category did not exist because human life was so brief, they died before they became grandparents. According to these scholars, grandparents appeared only about 40,000 years ago.

The Pope in his speech did not dwell on the distant past; he dwelt on the

recent past, when the grandparents began to live well. In the meantime families began to have even great-grandchildren...

He acknowledged: "In the past, grandparents had an important role in the life and growth of the family. Even with their advancing age they continued to be present with their children, their grandchildren and even their great-grandchildren, giving a living witness of caring, sacrifice and a daily gift of themselves without reserve. They were witnesses of a personal and community history that continued to live on in their memories and in their wisdom."

### **Grandparents today**

Until half a century ago, grandparents were few, counted for little and hardly lived long. They were marginal, on the periphery. Today the status of grandparents is becoming more pronounced and many become great-grandparents. They contribute to the stability of family life, even in economic terms.

They realise that: "being a grandfather," wrote Anselmo Bucci "means that this third edition of one's autobiography, revised and corrected has arrived." Grandchildren are more interested and more accepting. Lewis Mumford, the sociologist observes, "Every generation that rebels against its parents befriends its grandparents."

But the Pope recalls: "Today, the economic and social evolution has brought profound transformations to the life of families." He also pointed to two negative and dangerous transformations. - The elderly, including many grandparents, find themselves in a sort of "parking area." Some think that they are a burden to their family and prefer to live alone or in retirement homes with all the consequences that such decisions entail."

- Another sad transformation is that, "unfortunately the "culture of death" is also threatening the stage of old-age. With a growing insistence, people are even proposing euthanasia as a solution for resolving certain difficult situations..."

### **And grandparents tomorrow?**

We will have more and more and capable grandparents. More and more of them will have a wealth of experience and experts in humanity. They will live longer. Their influence on future generations will grow. The Pope asks: "In the face of the crisis of the family, might it not be possible to set out anew precisely from the presence and witness of these people - grandparents - whose values and projects are more resilient?"

He then pointed out the need to focus on them: "If grandparents, as is said often and on many sides, are a precious resource, it is necessary to put into practice coherent choices that allow them to be better valued." So he suggests: "Never, under any circumstances, grandparents are to be excluded from the family."

Finally, the Pope expressed a wish or a programme: "May grandparents return to being a living presence in the family, in the Church and in society... and continue to be witnesses of unity, of values founded on fidelity and of a unique love that gives rise to faith and the joy of living." □

# THE PASTOR'S DONKEY

*From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories*

*This story will, perhaps make you smile, but it will be perhaps one of the most valuable lessons a man can learn. Although a donkey, never will.*

In the bayou country of Louisiana, there lived a pastor who rode a donkey; the pastor's name was Fr. Beauprè and the donkey's name was Jacquò. This Fr. Beauprè was a good and amiable man of God who gave his blessing politely and with generosity to everybody from the mayor to the poorest catcher of shrimp, and Jacquò was the finest of donkeys: a handsome beast, white as milk with soft ears that pointed straight ahead and little hooves that clicked merrily as he carried Fr. Beauprè when he traveled from town to town. When the Archbishop came to bless the shrimp boats, Jacquò always led the procession, his head decked with pom-poms and ribbons, silver bells and streamers and when Fr. Beauprè gave a blessing Jacquò would bend his head in a graceful bow.

And in the evening when the business of the Parish was finished, Fr. Beauprè would come down to the stable with a special treat for Jacquò. He would speak to Jacquò as to his friend:

"Good evening, my little Jacquò, I hope you are not too weary tonight? Well, here it is, your bowl of wine, all fixed with sugar and spice. There, dip your nose into that. You know the cook made many remarks as I

prepared this bowl of wine, but I told her you deserved it. And you know something else? The baker offered me a fine horse. Never fear, my little Jacquò, I would not exchange so good and gentle a donkey as you for the finest horse in all the world."

But as any child of one year could have told the donkey, there is a bottom to every bowl of spiced wine, and there comes an end to every happy time. For Jacquò it came on the day that Fr. Beauprè stopped to answer the greeting of one Alphonse, a hulking fellow with a thatch of black hair and one eye that squinted. This one bowed low to Fr. Beauprè and he smiled at Jacquò and how could either of them know that he had been thrown out of the house by his own father who was wearied to death of this Alphonse's drinking and his bragging, and his looking for ways to eat meat everyday without lifting a finger.

Alphonse admired the donkey as he said: "Ah, what a fine donkey you are riding, good father! Just let me look at him. A treasure, a jewel, a pearl, not even the Bishop has his equal."

"So, you like my little Jacquò, eh?"

"I love all God's creatures. I wish I had a piece of sugar for this beautiful donkey, but alas I do not even have even so much

as a crust of bread for myself."

"My poor man, you have no job?"

"I have been ill and unable to work, and now my own father has thrown me out of the house. No one will give me a chance to work."

"Oh, oh, that is terrible, if you do not keep your hands busy with God's work, you will soon be doing the devil's. If...if I would give you a little work."

"Oh, good father, try me, only try me."

"I shall, and until I find a good place for you, I shall let you take care of my little Jacquò."

And so this Alphonse came into the service of Fr. Beauprè and of Jacquò. For a time he performed his duties faithfully and well, especially when the pastor was within sight. So highly did Fr. Beauprè come to regard this 'artful' one that he even delegated to him the task of bringing to Jacquò the evening bowl of spiced wine. Jacquò, even though he was only a donkey, missed the gentle voice and the wise conversation of the good father. But, donkey that he was, he liked his spiced wine too well to care whose hand it was that held out the bowl. Until, on a certain evening this Alphonse came into the stable and held the bowl a good six inches away from Jacquò's nose.

"Does the little donkey want his little bowl of wine? Ha, ha, well, this is the last time I will have to play servant to a jackass. Already the pastor has found me a fine new job. Tomorrow I go to New Orleans, to work for the Archbishop himself. I've put up



with you long enough. All those compliments to a jackass. And who has a good word to say for Alphonse? Nobody! Well, I'll take care of that tonight.

The donkey moaned, for, he understood something wasn't right...

"Ah, you want your wine, do you? Well, watch me drink it. And take this, I'll give you some fine slaps before this night is out."

Then this Alphonse pulled the pastor's donkey out of his warm stall. He dragged the poor beast across the churchyard. Then with kicks and with prods he forced Jacquò to go into the bell tower. Up the stairs they went, right round and round until they reached the belfry and there Alphonse left the poor beast standing on a tiny platform, high above the earth, in the pitch black of the night. The cry that Jacquò

gave woke up the whole bayou. Fr. Beauprè came running, all the men and women of the parish came running and that crafty Alphonse.

"Jacquò, my poor little donkey, what are you doing in the belfry?"

"He's trying to get down father."

"He must have gone mad, or drunk too much wine. Who would ever believe this of Jacquò?"

"Look, look at his ears, sticking out like two swallows. Come down Jacquò. Come down!"

"Ah, you poor beast, how did you ever get up there? Do come down, ha, ha."

But they had to wait until morning. And they had to take Jacquò down with a derrick, a rope and a sling. All the town stood and laughed to see Jacquò come down swinging through the air. His legs dangling and his ears flapping. When his feet touched the earth again, he headed straight into his stable. He hung his poor head down to his knees. But his heels beat a tattoo against the stable wall. Now, that should have been the end of it, with Jacquò safely on the ground again and Alphonse on the way to New Orleans. But humiliations are like thorns, they stick fast in one softest spot, which is pride. Everyman knows that unless they are promptly pulled out by being offered up to the God who sent them they will fester until the whole soul is poisoned and sick. But Jacquò was only a beast and not a man. So even six months later, Fr. Beauprè wore a sad face as he brought in the evening bowl of wine.

"Hey, Jacquò, what is troubling

you? Your ears droop, your hooves drag, you roll your eyes at everyone, except me of course and today you even bared your teeth to a poor man with an eye that squinted. And the way you look up at the belfry every time you pass the church. Sometimes I think you are thinking of climbing up there with me on your back. Oh, if people would only stop laughing at you and wagging their heads. Well, my poor Jacquò that is the way of the world. They take our one little mistake and use it as an eraser to rub out the memory of all the good that went before."

"That is another thing, the kicking in your stall. You never even lifted your heels before"

But Jacquò was only a beast, and so the good father's words of wisdom rolled off the tops of his ears. For seven long years those ears drooped and those eyes rolled until the people muttered when they saw him: "What a bad tempered old jackass!" And Fr. Beauprè began to look twice at the fine horses that friends offered him. He was in fact, riding out to look at a horse on the very day that he was stopped by a hulking fellow with a thatch of black hair and one squinting eye.

"Good day, good father! And how is your good little donkey?"

"Good day, my good man, but I am afraid, I cannot recall your name."

"What, father? Don't you remember Alphonse?"

"Oh yes, Alphonse, but what has happened to you? Why are you not in New Orleans?"

"I have done all the work that is there, good father and besides, I miss Jacquò."

"You did? You know he has not been the same since you left."

"Indeed, dear, sweet, Jacquò. Here, pray, the little jackass, let me stroke you."

Now with seven years of waiting Jacquò's kick landed Alphonse in the hospital. Now the road lay clear for the happy days to return to Jacquò but it is the way of a donkey to think that one moment can wipe out seven years. Fr. Beauprè said as much the next evening when he came to the stable with the bowl of spiced wine.

"Hey, Jacquò, here is your treat, though no one in the parish would think you would deserve so much as a drop on the end of a straw. I paid a visit to our friend Alphonse in the hospital today and he told me with tears that it was he who led you into the belfry seven years ago and now you think you have paid him back in full. Ah, my poor Jacquò, if you only knew what you've really done. You've made everyone afraid of you. No one will ever trust you again, and even I; how can I be sure that your heels will stay on the ground? Tell me, was it worth it?

*Continued from pg. 7*

testimony to hear parishioners say of their pastor: 'Father is doing his thanksgiving after Mass and will be available to us about ten minutes later'. And why should this not be applicable to the congregation too? Reverence is not automatic. It has to be nurtured, to be built up, to be kept up."

There are several causes, I suggest, that explain the slipping of this prayerful custom in places.

You poor beast. You only wag your ears and roll your eyes. You will never understand.

Poor Jacquò, that moment of revenge, that second of satisfaction was it worth the seven years spent in hating and making himself disliked? Was it worth a future of never being trusted? And poor human beings who hold grudges, do they realize that as long as they hate, they shut themselves off from God's love and his grace? Even after that fleeting moment of revenge the habit of hating will not leave them, everyone will mistrust them and because they have no sorrow for their sin of revenge the love of God will not return to them. How can they ever pray to God: "Forgive us as we forgive others"? And how can they come into the Church, into the presence of the Lord who has told us that he will accept none of our gifts or our prayers until we have made peace with all our brothers?

So, that is the story of the pastor's donkey, which we have told you, because you are sensible. You are wise human beings and you know that if you did hold a grudge you would be nothing but a donkey!" □

First, the epidemic of activism - the idea that if I'm not doing something, I'm not being productive. Second, the loss of the sense of the sacred: sacred time and sacred space. You can be a wonderful witness to the reality of the sacred presence and help reverse these trends by persevering in your thanksgivings after Mass, even in the midst of bustle and noise. That's love in action! . □ *John D. O'Brien, S.J.*

# THE SALESIAN SOCIETY AND ITS CONSTITUTIONS

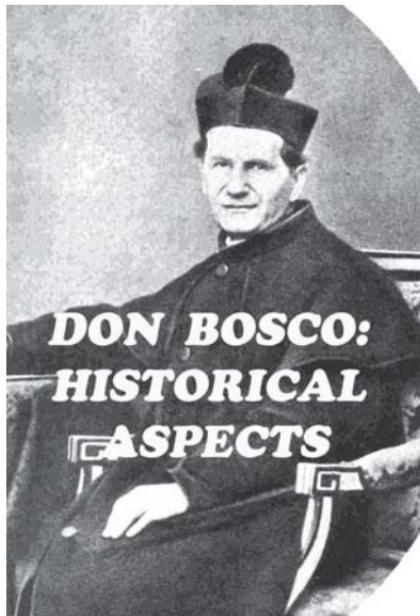
## 7

by Fr. Elias Dias

A small boy saw a spider laboriously working on its web. He asked his mother what it was doing. The mother told him that it was weaving its web. Where are the resources? It has its own resources and with the help of other things it will build its web. Don Bosco wanted to work for the poor; he wanted volunteers to help him. Together with his own resources and help of others he accomplished and realised his dream.

The 1850s saw Italy in a restless political and religious situation. It was during this time that Don Bosco tried to make his work permanent. A number of priests and lay people joined him in the work of oratories but the bond that united them was very loose. They had their own commitments and ideas. He wanted to bind them together with a firmer bond using a set of rules. In 1852-1853 he wrote the *Regulations of the Oratory* in order to give greater importance to this ministry.

On February 2, 1851 the first group of four Raviglia, Gastaldi, Buzzetti and Belia donned the clerical habit at the Oratory. This experiment came to nothing because they either left the Oratory or did not reach the priesthood. Don Bosco changed his approach. He began to give conferences to those who seemed to be more suitable with the



intention of gradually preparing them to join the religious society.

During the years 1848-1852 there was the revolution for independence. Don Bosco took a thoroughly conservative stance with the Church. There were many priests who took up a liberal patriotic position. A rift developed between his co-workers and the boys of the Oratory. Many efforts were made to bring together the two parties but they failed. Don Bosco maintained his position but almost completely lost the support of some of his associates. Archbishop Fransoni, in his decree of March 31, 1852, officially appointed Don Bosco Spiritual-Director-in-chief of the three oratories. This appointment gave Don Bosco and the oratories a place within the archdiocesan structure outside the parish. The Archbishop encouraged Don

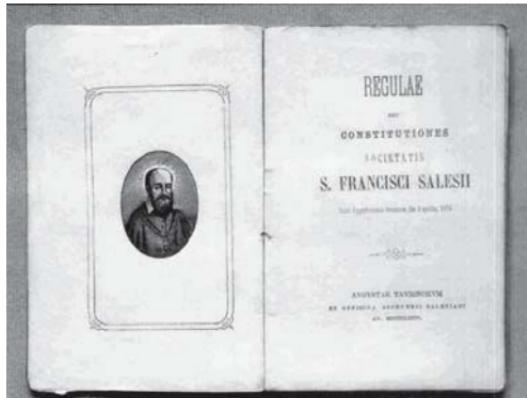
Bosco to carry on expanding the work of the oratories.

Disappointed by his earlier failure with his co-workers he toyed the idea of attaching the oratories to some existing religious institute like Rosmini's *Institute of Charity*. In 1852 he sought to bring together a group of young men who had been engaged in several charitable works.

On January 26, 1854 he chose four young men, Joseph Rocchietti, James Artiglia, Michael Rua and John Cagliero and invited them to practice charity towards their neighbours so that they would be able to make a promise and later, if possible, a vow to the Lord. From that evening the name *Salesians* was given to those who chose this exercise. He did not speak to them of any congregation not because he was afraid of them becoming monks but because of the situation at the time.

In 1848 Canon Lorenzo Gastaldi launched the idea of forming a federation of oratories dependent on a management committee. Don Bosco agreed to cooperate with them but did not like joining the federation. It was probably because Don Bosco was thinking of starting a society not comprising of adult collaborators but of boys from his own institute.

In March 1855 Don Bosco openly invited Michael Rua to make a vow before the crucifix. Few months later Victor Alassonati made the vow. In 1856 John Baptist Francesia, a



Immediately after the approval,  
the Rules were printed in their  
definitive form. (1874)

teacher in the Oratory, joined the two and little by little the group began to grow.

In 1857 Don Bosco met the Minister for Internal Affairs, Urbano Rattazzi who had suppressed all the religious orders who were not engaged in preaching, education or nursing the sick. He advised Don Bosco to select a number of laymen and ecclesiastics and infuse them with his spirit and his system in order to form an association of free citizens who would submit to the laws of the State in order to carry on his work.

On February 18, 1858, Don Bosco left for Rome to meet the Pope Pius IX. The Holy Father was pleased to receive Don Bosco. He read the letter of recommendation from Archbishop Fransoni and the draft of the constitutions of the *Society of St. Francis de Sales* and made several observations. The Pope told Don Bosco that the Society would have to have vows which would serve as a bond and a guarantee of unity in spirit and

work. The vows would have to be simple, which could easily be dissolved so that some members of ill-will may not disturb the peace and unity of the group while at the same time the society would remain a union of free citizens in the civil society. The Pope sent the draft to his Eminence Cardinal Gaudé for his comments. His Eminence asked Don Bosco to practice the rules for some time in their amended form and then forward the same to him. Unfortunately the Cardinal died on December 14, 1860. The society was divided into two categories those who lived together in common and the externs who lived with their families.

On December 8, 1859, at Don Bosco's oratory in Valdocco, the feast of Mary Immaculate was celebrated with great solemnity. In the evening Don Bosco announced that next day he would hold a special conference in his room after the boys had retired to bed. His close collaborators realized that it was to be a very important meeting. On the evening of December 9 after the usual busy day 19 young men crowded into Don Bosco's room. He told them that the time had come for him to start the congregation which he was planning. He disclosed to them that Pope Pius IX has praised his work and had encouraged him to go ahead with the idea of congregation that had already existed through the observance of the rules of the Oratory. Don Bosco gave them a week to reflect on it. On December 18, 1859 he called together those who decided to

form part of the *Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales*. In a few minutes there were 18 young men including Don Bosco. Two did not attend the meeting. They gathered as a group and decided to form a society with the aim of personal sanctification and of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls especially of those most in need of religious instruction and the education of the young. At that meeting a document was drawn up which was to become the first official act of the Salesian Society. It listed the names of the first 18 members of the Congregation including that of Don Bosco.

A council was formed. The group unanimously requested Don Bosco to accept the office of Major Superior. He accepted the office on condition that he should have the power to choose someone for the office of Prefect or Vicar. He chose Fr. Victor Allassonati for the post of Vicar. The group then considered the method to be followed in the election of other members. They decided to elect the other members by secret ballot. Michael Rua was elected spiritual director, Angelo Savio economer, John Cagliero, Bonetti and Charles Ghivarello consultants.

In the summer of 1860 Don Bosco sent to Archbishop Fransoni a copy of the constitution. Archbishop was in favour of it but he died on March 26, 1862. Less than three months on February 2, 1860 the council accepted Joseph Rossi as first Coadjutor brother. On May 1, 1860 new admissions were made for the society.

On May 14, 1862 the members

of the society gathered together in the room of Don Bosco and promised Almighty God that they would observe the rules by making the vow for three years. Don Rua read aloud the formula and others repeated after him. Up to 1864 the Salesians around Don Bosco simply formed a private association.

The earliest text of the Salesian Constitutions is a manuscript written by Father Rua and is dated from late 1858. It was based on the constitutions of other religious orders. In 1860 Don Bosco sent the constitutions to Archbishop Luigi Fransoni (in exile) for his comments and approval. The Archbishop gave his encouragement. He sent the text to Father Marcantonio Durando for his evaluation and comments. Archbishop Fransoni died in 1862 and Don Bosco took great pains to prepare the draft and send it to the Roman Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for their approval. He collected testimonial letters from several bishops but the all-important letter of the commendation from the vicar of the archdiocese of Turin was half-hearted. On July 23, 1864 the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars granted the decree of commendation, the *Decretum Laudis* to the Salesian society.

In 1867 Don Bosco went to Rome to seek approval of the Society with a redrafted text of the constitutions. He incorporated part of the observations made to him in 1864. On March 1, 1869 the Congregation of Bishop and Regulars approved the Society but he was admonished that he

should bring the constitutions into conformity with what Rome had demanded if he wanted them to be approved.

Lorenzo Gastaldi was a great friend and benefactor of Don Bosco. He came to the See of Turin on November 26, 1871 as the archbishop. He did not approve the Salesian Society. A dispute arose because of the differing conceptions of the Salesian Congregation. The Archbishop conceived the idea of Salesian Society as a traditional religious congregation and therefore objected to the apparent lack of discipline and formation especially to the lack of a proper novitiate. Don Bosco's idea on the other hand seemed to have been that of founding not a traditional congregation but one that would have been more pliable and adaptable to the youth apostolate of his time.

The approbation of the Salesian Society did not automatically mean approval of its rules. The constitutions in fact, continued to be the object of criticism and argument for ten years. Msgr Svegliati sent thirteen remarks to Don Bosco. A new consulter Father Bianchi was appointed to examine the constitutions. He sent his list of observations. Finally four cardinals met on March 24, 1874. After a long discussion the three cardinals were in favour of a definitive approbation of the Constitution. Three days later Pope Pius IX gave his own vote to conclude the debate. After much labour and many difficulties the constitution of Salesian society was finally approved on April 3, 1874. □

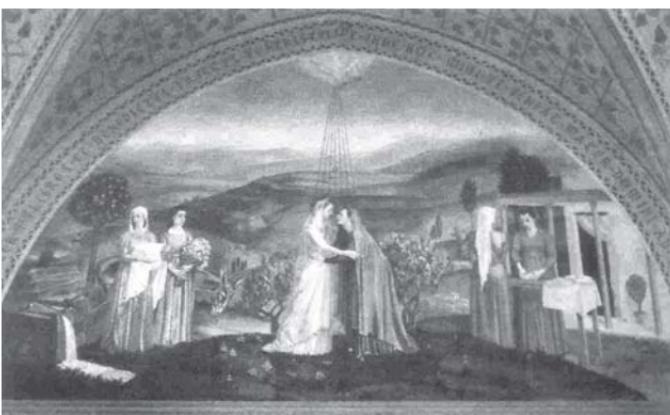
# *Reflecting on Mary*

## **THE TEMPLE OF STONE AND THE HEART OF FLESH**

*by Maria Ko Ha Fong*

Reading the first two chapters of St. Luke is like watching a movie; the story is very lively and engaging. The scenes flow from one to another in quick succession, moving from one character to another as the mysterious plan of God unfolds and develops in the midst of some contrasts. Like the typical movement of a camera, the story pans away from heaven and focuses on the temple of Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel is sent by God "Standing on the right of the altar of 'incense' (1,11) while the priest Zechariah is immersed in an offertory

ritual. Zechariah is the husband of Elizabeth and both of them are 'well on in years.' They were both God-fearing and they rigorously observed of the laws of Moses, even so, the Lord did not grant them the gift of a child. The angel now brings Zechariah the good news: "Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth



*Elizabeth meeting Mary in a fresco at the church of the Visitation at Ein Karem, the place, by tradition where the event took place.*

will bear you a son and you shall name him John" (1:13). Zechariah, confused and bewildered, found it hard to believe a story so amazing and incredible. In the end, Zechariah left the temple mute, unable to speak. Because he did not believe in God's plan, he was unable to speak about it and so he was left on the periphery of the wonderful events that were beginning to unfold.

The camera moves: leaving the temple, leaving the holy city, it comes to rest on a spot very unlike the majestic city of Jerusalem. It comes to rest on a "City in Galilee called Nazareth" (1:26). It is a profane setting bordering on pagan territory. Galilee is considered to be associated with "the nations" (Isaiah 8:23; Mt 4:14), the territory of foreigners and because of its position it was possibly infiltrated by non-Jews. In fact, Nicodemus the Pharisee makes a derogatory case when he says: "and see, no prophet comes from Galilee" (John 7:52). Nazareth, then, was a city that was completely unknown in the Old Testament. It was not without good reason that Nathanael ironically said: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46)

### Daily Chores

The focus comes to rest on a simple house and within it, a girl - Mary. "And the angel came to her" (1:28). It was the same angel who announced a similar message, the birth of a wonderful child. Comparing Zechariah and Mary, on the outside, it seems that the entire balance shifts



*Today all that remains of the temple "of stone" of Jerusalem is the western wall.*

away from the first character. Zechariah, a just and venerable priest met the messenger of God in the temple while he is at worship. He was a holy man, at a holy place and a holy time: Luke emphasizes the sacredness and solemnity of the event. Mary, however, an unknown girl in a profane land was involved in domestic chores. But God reversed the positions. He suggests that his home was no longer linked to the temple of Jerusalem. Every corner of this world, however neglected, may well be a sanctuary of his home. The centrality of the temple of stone now ceases and the heart of every believer who receives the Word of God is able to accommodate God and thus becomes a shrine of his divine presence.

The angel did not enter the sacred precincts but he comes "to her." Mary is actually, the temple of the Most High. She "found favour with God" (1:30), God's gift came to her gratuitously, not because she had kept the law nor because she prayed for a gift like Zachariah did.

**Nothing is impossible for God**  
Mary, too, like Zechariah,



*A discussion between Elizabeth and Mary from the film "I am with you." (Io sono con te) by the Turinese director Guido Chiesa.*

raised an objection to the incredible news but her motive was different. Zechariah's objection was: "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years" (1:18). He seemed to doubt the possibility of a miraculous divine intervention. Mary, on the other hand, asked: "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" (1:34). She does not question the power of God but she asks to be enlightened on how she was to fulfill the vocation that God had intended for her - how was she to obey God's will. She asked for inspiration to fathom this mystery. When the angel assured her that the Holy Spirit was at work, that was sufficient for her and she said - yes - "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;...for with God, nothing will be impossible (1:35 - 37). The word of the angel reminds us of the transportation of the ark into the temple that Solomon had just built. After the prayer a cloud covered the entire

building and the glory of God filled the temple, a sign that God was pleased to stay in that place, it became holy because of his presence (1 Kings 8,9-11).

### **A Teen on a Trip**

While Zechariah remained silent, obscured and shut up like the stone of the temple, Mary came out of her house, turning herself into a living temple, the ark of the new covenant, the visible presence of divinity among

humankind. Luke now follows Mary as she makes her way in haste through those mountainous roads. The sentiments of her heart gave wings to her feet. This young woman on the move is a sign of the realization of God's promise to Moses and to all the people of Israel: "I will walk with you" (Exodus 33:14).

Mary who was transformed into the new dwelling for God by the power of the Spirit is the image of all Christians who, in Jesus Christ have become the "household of God," "built into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2, 22). Mary not only welcomed God into her womb, but more importantly, says St. Augustine, received the Word of God in her mind and accepted the love of God in her heart. She has afforded all of us the opportunity to do whatever her Son Jesus will say: "Whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him (John 14:23). □

## NEWSBITS

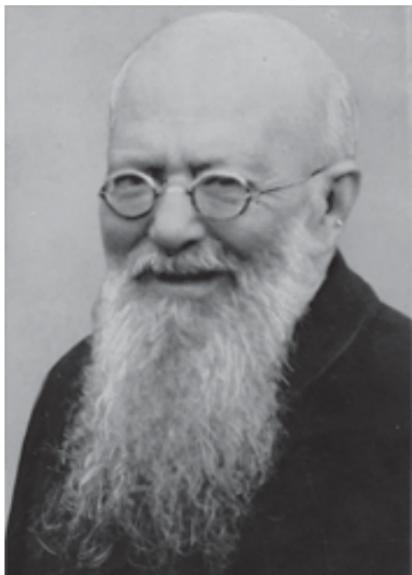
### BANGLADESH

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate (PIME) yesterday marked the anniversary of 75 years of service by announcing they would expand their reach in the country through new mission work, including a programme of assisting people living with HIV / AIDS.

About 2,000 local Catholics, including 6 priests and 12 nuns, attended a Mass celebrated by Bishop Gervas Rozario of Rajshahi to commemorate the occasion. In his homily, Bishop Rozario told those in attendance that he was himself a fruit of outstanding service by the missionary nuns.

"PIME nuns were my first catechism teachers and they prepared me for (the) sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. I was inspired to enter religious vocation life with inspiration from their service," he said. "I recall the days when there were no registered doctors in the area. The nuns were a great source of comfort...with their health services. I'm proud to have them in my diocese."

Inspired by Blessed Father Paolo Manna, two Italian nuns, Giuseppina Dones and Giuseppina Rodolfi, founded the congregation on December 8, 1936, in Milan. The order sent three nuns to the East as the first missionary group in 1953. They started their mission in northwestern Dinajpur district by setting up a leprosy hospital, one of the first of such health services in the country.



Bl. Paolo Manna

Since then 56 local women have entered the missionary order, and there are now 68 nuns from PIME working in the country. *An edited version, taken from ucanews.com.*

### CUBA

Pope Benedict XVI visited Cuba in spring 2012. The visit will give strength and vigour to the faith in Cuba. The visit should be one of peace and reconciliation.

Religious practice and the celebration of Christmas and Easter were discouraged after the revolution in Cuba in 1959. Catholic schools were closed in 1962 and people with religious beliefs were barred from joining the Communist party. Relations between the Church and government improved after the end of the Cold War.

Cuba removed references to atheism from the constitution in the 1990s and believers of all faiths are now allowed to join the party. When Pope John Paul II visited in 1998, Fidel Castro welcomed him personally at the airport. The pontiff celebrated a Mass at a packed Revolution Square, calling for "Cuba to open to the world, and the world to open to Cuba". Since then, Church leaders helped to negotiate the release of political prisoners in 2009 and 2010.

Mgr Perez said Pope Benedict made a pilgrimage in honour of the Virgin of Caridad del Cobre, the patron of Cuba. A *report by Claire Bergin*

## BELGIUM

Church leaders from 12 major European dioceses who hoped to re-evangelize their cities during Lent 2012 met in Rome [in mid-January] and finalized plans for a new initiative called "Metropolitan Missions".

Attending the meetings were the Metropolitan Archdioceses of Barcelona, Budapest, Cologne, Dublin, Lisbon, Liverpool, Mechelen-Brussels, Paris, Turin, Warsaw, and Vienna. The meeting was hosted by the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, which is headed by Archbishop Rino Fisichella.

The Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels called its Lenten series of events "Metropolis 2012 - Paths of Conversion". The organizers planned for the Feb. 22 - April 15 series created a stir in the Belgian capital by making "everyone more aware of what it means to be Christian". On



*The Annual Mass at Vie Montante, Metropolis 2012*

Palm Sunday, 15 churches across Brussels opened their doors for anyone to visit and, over a cup of coffee, to ask any questions about the Catholic faith.

On Good Friday, April 6, there was an all-day reading of the Gospel of St. Mark in the historic downtown church, Notre-Dame-du-Finistere. This was also broadcast on large screens in the streets surrounding the church. The chapters and verses of the Gospel were interspersed with musical interludes played by violin and harp.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization was established in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI. He said he wanted it to "promote a renewed evangelization" in traditionally Christian countries which are living in a "progressive secularization of society and a sort of 'eclipse of the sense of God'."

This year's "metropolitan missions" were the first of their kind. If deemed successful, they could be introduced elsewhere around the world, including the United States, in the coming years. *An edited version, taken from CNA/EWTN News. □*

## 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.*

I would like to thank our Mother Mary for always being very protective and caring of me and my family. Under

Her protection and through the recitation of the three Hail Marys, a lot of our prayers have been answered. Though problems exist, I am confident with my regular and constant prayer and devotion to Mother Mary and specially the Three Hail Mary's, She will continue interceding for me and my family always.

D. d'Melo, Mumbai

Mother Mary and Her three Hail Mary's works wonders in our lives. Every prayer seems looked after. Mother Mary has helped my son retain his sanity under trying circumstances at work and I know it is the protection of the Three Hail Mary's at work. Thank you Mama Mary.

Cherie Rao, Mumbai

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

L. Lobo, Mumbai

Sometime last year, while driving back home from evening Mass, along the highway, my husband did not notice a bulldozer driving very slowly and without a light. I noticed it and warned my husband. He braked immediately. Thank God, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for protecting us. I just cannot imagine what would have happened to us. We pray the 3 Hail Marys everyday. She protected us.

Wong Nyuk Moi, Malaysia

I have received numerous favours through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. So many times my family and I were in trouble but the 3 Hail Marys have helped us at all times to get out of trouble. I apologise for delaying my acknowledgement of these favours. My sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the many blessings and favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to intercede for my family.

Antonieta Simoes, Macau, (South China)

## **LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My humble and sincere thanks to the infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother for putting me on my feet after a fall a year back when I broke my hip bone. Although I shuffle about now without help, I fully trust that the Infant King will make me walk normally soon.

May DeCouto, Bangalore

We are sincerely grateful to Our Blessed Mother for all the graces received.

*Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Murzello, Australia*

With the help of Jesus and Mother Mary I stopped smoking from 16th October 2011. I am very grateful.

*Mr. Charles Parrie, Udaipur, Rajasthan*

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for blessing us with a daughter after 5 years of marriage. I had been operated but our daughter is safe. We are grateful for all the other blessings we have received.

*Mr. & Mrs. Dias, Pune*

Our heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mary for saving our son Russell from a serious accident in Melbourne last month. We thank you loving mother for coming to his rescue in a very difficult situation.

*Mrs. Alicia Stapleton, Jamnagar, Gujarat*

My sincere gratitude to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for sending me help to buy my medicines and also for getting my friend a good job.

*M. Dodd, Pune*

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians for helping my friend give up alcohol and for granting me a safe trip to Bombay and back.

*M.W. Dodd, Pune*

Many thanks to Mother Mary and all the saints for protecting us always. My brother was recently knocked down by a buffalo which was chased by a dog. The impact of the fall resulted in a dislocated shoulder; it could have been worse. A few days later, while reporting to work, I was knocked down by a bike on a busy road with heavy on coming traffic. I fell face-down on the road but escaped with only a bruised elbow. I had recited the Three Hail Marys when I was in the bus. Surely, Mother Mary was there to save both me and my brother. May She bless us always.

*Ruth da Costa, Margao*

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

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for all that you have been to my family and me.

*Ishwar Rathwa*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. John Bosco for getting a clear medical report and for many other favours.

*A Devotee, Mumbai*

I am grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for a successful cataract operation.

*Mrs. Rita Macwan, Ahmedabad*

## **THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



St. Dominic Savio, thank you for saving our son from falling from a height. During the fall, our son just held on to the scapular. With the divine intervention, of St. Dominic Savio our son got away with a fracture on his vertebrae and left leg. . Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to St. Dominic Savio for the numerous blessings showered on our family.

*Mr. & Mrs. Augustine D'Souza, Mumbai*  
Our sincere thanks to our beloved Mother , Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for completely curing our dear brother Britto from his illness. We are immensely grateful to God.

*Sr. Josephine, Kerala*

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio. In spite of complications in the pregnancy we had a safe delivery and have been blessed with a healthy baby boy, Jason.

*Stella and Robert Alexander, Mumbai*

My sincere gratitude to our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter-in-law who has been blessed with a healthy baby boy. We have named him Dominic Savio and I am extremely sorry for the delay.

*Julie Fernandes, Mumbai*

Heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for the safe delivery of a healthy baby boy for our daughter.

*Mr. & Mrs. W. Henricus, Australia*

My eldest daughter had a very complicated pregnancy but after much prayer both mother and child survived. My daughter had a baby boy and they are safe, alive and above all, the child is normal.

*Mrs. Prescilla D'Mello, Goa*

My sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to dearest Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for all the favours received.

*Paula Carr, Bangalore*

Our sincere thanks to our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the blessings received and especially for the gift of a child to my niece after five years.

*Annette Coelho, Bahrain*

### **APOSTLESHP OF PRAYER**

**JULY 2012**

**The Holy Father's General Intention:** *That everyone may have work in safe and secure conditions.*

**The Holy Father's Missionary Intention:** *That Christian volunteers in mission territories may witness to the love of Christ.*

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## MARY WAS THERE

Late one Sunday evening, our son had a near fatal accident. Fearing the worst, we put all out trust in Mother Mary who protected him and kept him under her mantle blue. With Mother Mary's divine intervention, our son got away with a fracture on his vertebrae and left leg. We pray that Mother Mary continues to bless him and help him on his road to recovery. Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother for the numerous blessings showered on our family. Thank you Mother Mary for saving our son.

*Mr. & Mrs. Augustine D'Souza,  
Mumbai*

**Don Bosco's Madonna**, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay.

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