

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*Mary is "the woman
clothed with the sun,
with the moon
under her feet
and on her head
a crown
of twelve stars."
(Apoc. 12:1)*

Cover: **St. Anthony of Padua**



From The Editor's Desk

DOING A DEAL WITH GOD

When I was a young boy growing up, I would sometimes slip quietly into the School chapel and pray silently before the tabernacle. Such modest ventures, I must confess, were neither lengthy nor frequent, nor indeed were they very regular. Often enough, they heralded the approach of examinations or the threat of a poor report from school. More often, perhaps, they resulted from some problem with my friends and the way they dealt with me or I with them. In either case, I always preferred to pray in the quiet of the afternoon - at the lunch break, when I could have the chapel all to myself and avoid the ridicule of street-wise pals.

I remember vividly setting off on one of these prayer-excursions when I was still a fledgling teenager. At the time, I was very unhappy with myself, I was disheartened by a constant failure to imitate the seemingly effortless goodness of my companions, and I was tired of seeing myself as not good enough for anything. Only a total and radical overhaul, I felt, could set things right. But, first, I needed assurance on one important point. I needed some convincing sign that God really existed.

So, with all the intense devotion of a thirteen-year-old, I turned towards the tabernacle and prayed, setting out clearly the terms of the bargain I was prepared to strike. I solemnly promised Jesus that I would reform my whole life if he would just open the door of the tabernacle and appear to me. Never again, I assured him, would I bunk school or raid the neighbour's garden or answer my elders back. From now on, I would come when I was called, I would run errands promptly, and I would always be on time to serve Mass on Sundays. The terms seemed fair enough to me: a generous offer in exchange for a simple favour, well within his power to grant.

I prayed and waited, and prayed again. But, sadly, the barren minutes passed by slowly, my confidence began to fade, and soon it was time for me to leave. The door of the tabernacle never opened; and Jesus never appeared. All offers were immediately withdrawn, my conversion was postponed indefinitely and my delinquent activities continued apace.

I was, of course, too young to appreciate the irony of attempting to bargain with God, especially when I had little else to trade except the misdemeanours of a boy. Many long years were to pass before I came to accept that, even in the person of Jesus, God is always sovereign. He is always beyond our control, but never beyond our reach, for he is bound only by the impulse of his love, which he shares freely with those who stand in reverence before they approach in friendship.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

EMPATHIC BONDING - LIVE IN LOVE!

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

"It was barely 5:30 in the early morning and I was in line at the local Starbucks watching the lady ahead putting together what seemed to be an enormously large order. Curiosity peaked to breaking point as I listened attentively to her exclaiming to the attendant loud enough to be heard a mile down the road, "Thank you, the order is for the nurses at Sloan-Kettering Cancer Society because they have been doing a marvelous job taking care of my Dad." Realizing in a flash that she was actually struggling to get some deep emotion off her chest, seeking to share a deep fear within the cave of her heart, I asked her how her father was doing, in a tone expressing genuine concern!

"He fell into a coma yesterday and my sister and I have been taking turns being there with him and liaising with the nurses and doctors," she blurted, trying hard to hold the bubbling emotions together, while balancing her precious cargo piled on a large tray. In a second my mind raced back to a month ago when my own Dad had been in the Emergency Room. Anyone who has had a loved one suddenly slip into unconsciousness would easily recall the feeling of helplessness and fear of loss that grips one in such a situation!

"I sat down with my coffee, trying to free my watch strap which got caught on my bag strap....and couldn't help realizing that it wasn't about fixing the strap at all, but rather not knowing myself what to say to someone who's shared something so dear. Bonded with human experience, compelled to make a connection, I realized how I, too, was 'holding it in.' Diverting my sense of helplessness I couldn't help thinking, what if one of my loved ones slipped into a coma...

"It's not about me," I realized as I caught myself walking up to the counter and telling the guy I wanted to pay for her order. She hastily intervened, "Oh you don't have to...it's okay." I looked into her eyes gently, and told her that, "I would be happy if this could be the last thing you have to worry about - just keep praying. Be in a space of deeply desiring his positive health. It's okay, let someone else get this."

Her eyes welled up in tears and she finally started pouring it out,



with 'thank you's' punctuating almost every sentence.

"We hug, both filled with emotion, then, walk over to the milk & sugar station and talk about his condition. I turned to her saying as empathically as I could, "He's going to be okay, he will come out of this, just keep reinforcing him with touch, his body memory will start jogging his mental memory. He's going to be okay." She then tells me her name is Christine, while I respond with - mine is 'Anon'.

She gets it, smiles, and releases the rest of her pent up strength. We hug, exchange thank you's and wish each other a good day.

"All this happened in less than twenty minutes, sparked off by an inner urge to reach out to a person in need, letting go of whatever considerations hinder connection. As I watched her leave with her heavy tray I couldn't help reflecting, 'Why, this is love, when there is no rhyme or reason nor any elaborate 'figuring it out' - but just spontaneous connection and a willingness to contribute and share in another's plight!

He Comes, He Comes, He Ever Comes

Doesn't the Lord come to us in very strange ways when we least expect it? But he has warned us that in answer to our surprised query 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ...' his answer will be, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Mt 25:37-40). The catch seems to

lie in being able to spot these 'members of my family' in the fleeting seconds we are sometimes allowed before we miss the golden opportunity! For it is very easy to trot out the lame excuse, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' (Mt 25:44) and expect to hear a lighter sentence as we plead our innocence.

Training Needed

How then can we train ourselves to be quick in picking up the all-important clues that will earn us the great reward of heaven? The entire matter becomes so simple when we stop to realize that what keeps us engrossed in our own little (or big) problems is our self-centredness and lack of faith. Some of us specialize in 'minding our own business' and 'not interfering' with the problems of others, thinking that we ourselves are burdened with more than we can handle! However, suppose we look at such situations in this way: it is the Lord himself who sends this needy person across the path of our lives, while he very gently requests of us, 'Can you be my instrument in reaching out to this my family member?' What we are direly in need of at such moments is "respect" for the other.

The word 're-spect' is derived from two Latin words amounting to 'look again' - review your instant assessment of the situation! *Spicere* (spectacles) means to look, to see - while '*re*' tells us to look again

or properly. What might we not 'see' if we did make it a habit to 'look again' from another perspective, that of what the Lord asks of us? For isn't each one of us created and sent here on earth with a mission? How often do we stop to think about a truth that is common knowledge - that out of all the human foetuses nurtured, only 30% are born alive - and that too without any outside intervention which purposefully terminates their lives. So, the very fact that one is alive says that one belongs to that thirty percent; so is it so very difficult to believe that one is here on earth for a definite purpose - else one would have been among the remaining 70%! Further, one does not usually discover one's life purpose right at the start, but it seems to unfold gradually and with each opportunity grabbed positively. This simply means that each opportunity lost makes it that much more difficult to discover what our life's mission really is - because our inner eyes can get so clouded by constantly focusing on ourselves that we no longer see what is right there before our very eyes ... we have become spiritually blind!

Limitless Opportunities

However, in his goodness, the Lord will not reject us because we have failed a few times. He provides us with plenty of opportunities. Besides he has a strange way of giving us a 'wake-up' call in these matters. One familiar approach he avails of is to use someone, often a total stranger to come to our rescue when we are in a desperate need.

Realizing what we felt when someone totally unconnected with us, went out of his/her way to assist us would then shame us into doing the same for others.

Eucharist – the Training Ground

But we don't have to wait for such things to happen. Each time we celebrate Eucharist we could listen more attentively to the Institution Narrative reminding us of what Jesus himself did: "...Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples saying, 'Take and eat...'. And then added: 'Do this as a memorial of me!'" It is this last phrase that we need to hear - that Jesus calls us to continue his mission each day by breaking of ourselves and sharing our blessings with others. It is at these sacred moments that we need to attend deeply to Jesus pointing out the strangers and others in need of our compassion and love. If we did, we would be surprised how much we actually hear. He never assigns us a task that is beyond our strength, and assures us, "Do not be afraid, I am with you - even till the end of time!" Why worry then? Why not trust Him and launch into the deep?

Winston Churchill has said it so powerfully, "There comes a special moment in everyone's life, a moment for which that person was born. That special opportunity, when he seizes it, will fulfill his mission - a mission for which he is uniquely qualified. In that moment, he finds greatness. It is his finest hour." But what if we were to miss that 'special opportunity' just because we have rendered

ourselves blind by a self-centred way of living? Wouldn't we be caught up in eternal regret that we could have made a difference if we were a little more generous and other-centred. Another way to put it could be: every single day each of us is gifted with 86,400 seconds of precious time. However, only what we utilize productively out of these will stand us in good stead when we appear before the Judgment seat

of God – the rest will have been frittered away, but with us having to give an account for those wasted moments! Would there be a better way of spending our time allotted here on earth than in serving others out of love?

The Eucharist certainly challenges us to think again and perhaps introduce a change while there is still time and opportunity! □

walking with the Church



Blessings, Anointing of the Sick

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *Who can give blessings? Can Lay people give blessings?*

A. Who can give blessings? The short answer is that anyone can give blessings on certain occasions, but the Church restricts some blessings to bishops, others to priests and deacons, and others can be given by lay people.

The general principle regarding blessings is that "the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry, (bishops, priests, or deacons)" (CCC 1669)

There are certain ordinary blessings that all the lay faithful, including children, can carry out. These include blessing oneself with holy water upon entering or leaving a church, blessing a meal and blessing oneself at the beginning of a trip.

Some other more formal

blessings can also be imparted by lay people, including the blessing of a family and of sons and daughters.

The blessings given by lay people do not confer a sacred character on the person or thing, but merely invoke God's protection and blessing.

Q. *May lay people anoint the sick?*

A. When people receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick the forgiveness of sins is included for those who cannot confess. Because of this absolution, lay people may not anoint the sick. Only priests and bishops may do so. Deacons, not having the power of absolution, may not anoint. Lay people should encourage the sick to receive the sacrament and also go to Confession; very often this will mean preparing the sick for both sacraments. □

BEARING THE BURDEN OF ILLNESS

by Tom Baggot S.J.

Illness of one kind or another is a common burden that all of us bear. We see it in the bowed shoulders and the listless limbs of others. We see it in ourselves when our hearts grow heavy and our minds are dulled by restless tension. Illness is a feature that accompanies the growth of our bodies, souls and spirits. 'The whole earth is our hospital' wrote the poet T.S. Eliot. The mystery of living is linked with the mystery of our wounds and the manner in which we deal with them.

Wounded World

We are all wounded as part of a wounded world. There is no growth without pain and struggle. St. Paul's words 'The entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth' convey the sense of effort in which we and the entire universe are caught up. The burden of life lies on each of us.

As Christians on our human journey we look to Jesus to see how he, on his human journey viewed suffering and how he lived through it. To clear our thoughts we remind ourselves that he did not cultivate or seek pain just for itself. He did not preach pain for its own sake or tell us to inflict it on ourselves or on others. Indeed, the gospels show that he alleviated suffering and sickness of body and mind in many of those he met, saying that this healing was a sign of God's power and presence.



He lived through his own human condition with the inevitable struggles and troubles and, on top of this he accepted without directly seeking them, the sufferings and bitter kind of death which followed from being true to himself and to his life's calling. His passion – those fearsome, tortured last days of his life – was the completion and conclusion of a whole life given over to carrying out the will of God whom he called Father.

Agony in the Garden

We can learn from what he said, did and felt in the agony in the garden at the start of his passion. The gospels sketch the intensity of the torment of soul and body which tore him apart so much that he felt he could not take it any more. He went

through the despairing isolation of being cut off from God and from his friends and followers who fell asleep. All this was the dark night of his soul. But at the lowest point of his weakness, in opening to a bottomless pit, his spiritual strength returned and he was able to rise, stand and go forward to what lay ahead.

United with Christ

To be united with Christ is to live by his Spirit, to open ourselves in body and soul to allow the flow of his power to course through us. This will happen more effectively if, as well as praying to be relieved and healed of our pain, we also learn appropriate human ways of meeting and dealing with it.

Compassion is our starting point, and this is not only for ourselves but for the whole world which *is groaning in coming to birth*. We are to have mercy and gentleness for ourselves rather than feelings of hatred, dislike and annoyance. These block the flow of healing energy and caring that we require.

That is why it may not be wise to fight our illness. This implies that one part of me is combating another, thus dividing and depleting my strength. Rather than recoiling in annoyance and self-criticism for being sick and suffering, we are to flow along with what we are going through in this stage of our human journey.

Deep Breathing

One way we can do this is by learning to breathe with our tension and pain. When physical and/or emotional pain hits we

breathe shallowly as we instinctively hold our breath to protect ourselves. In so doing we tighten our body because we are afraid. Fear, after all, is one of the most primitive feelings of human nature, indeed of every living creature.

So, instead of holding the breath and breathing only from the chest we let the breath come out and begin to breathe deeply. This means breathing from the abdomen, thus drawing power and energy to ease out our tension and distress. Then we may be able to acknowledge our pain and move along with it. Praying to accept God's will includes making use of the human means which God puts at our disposal.

Weakness and strength

Jesus of Nazareth in his final earthly hours experienced the inner struggle between the stronger and weaker parts of himself. 'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak' are the gospel words which describe the tug of war between fear and weakness which pulled him back and strength and courage which drew him forward. We, then, must not condemn and blame ourselves for the weakness which tempts us to give in and give up. Weakness, though part of us, is not the whole of us.

The human experiences of Jesus of Nazareth like everyone else's were coloured by joy and sorrow, success and failure, light and darkness. The power of the Spirit carried him through all of them. His power, released into the world by his death and resurrection, can be with us in our life and death. □

STEPHEN SANDOR 1914 - 1953

Stephen Sandor was born in Szolnok, in Hungary, on 26 November 1914, son of Stephen and Maria Fekete, the first of three brothers. His father worked with the State Railways, and his mother was a housewife. They gave their children a deep religious spirit. Stephen studied in the city earning a diploma in metallurgy. As a youngster he was admired by his friends, and was happy, serious and gentle.

It was by reading the Salesian Bulletin that he came to know about Don Bosco. He immediately felt attracted by the Salesian charism and spoke to his spiritual director, expressing his desire to enter the Salesian Congregation. He spoke to his parents about it. They tried to dissuade him and withheld their permission, but Stephen ended up convincing them, and in 1936 he was accepted at the Clarisseum for his aspirantate of two years. At the "Don Bosco" printing school he did a printer's course. He began his novitiate but it was interrupted by military service. In 1939 he began and completed his novitiate and made his first vows on 8 September 1940. Asked to go to the Clarisseum, he immediately began to teach. He was also an assistant at the Oratory, something he did competently and enthusiastically. In 1942 he was called back to the Front and earned a silver medal of military valour. In the trenches he founded a festive oratory,



entertaining and encouraging his young friends in a Salesian style.

At the end of WWII he involved himself in helping especially concerning himself with poor young people whom he gathered around him in order to teach them a trade. On 24 July 1946 he made his perpetual profession as a Salesian Brother. In 1948 he gained the title of Master Printer. When Stephen's students completed their studies they were employed by the best printing presses in the city and the State.

A period of persecution of Catholic schools began and they had to close. Stephen was working in the press but he had to escape and hide in Salesian Houses, working in public presses under a false name.

In July 1952 he was arrested while working and his confreres never saw him again. His Cause of martyrdom was opened at Budapest on 24 May 2006. □



VOCATION PROMOTION

FR. BRIAN MORAS, SDB

*Vocation Director and South Asian Coordinator
for Vocation Guidance*

I was born and grew up in Borivli, Mumbai and every summer my mum would take the family to Mangalore. I believe my vocation to the Priesthood was initiated there by my mother's sister Sr. Marie Evelyn AC many years ago. Later, as a young altar server at the Immaculate Conception Parish, Borivli, this desire was further strengthened.

I was fond of sports and football, hockey and cricket were my forte. Once I happened to see the Don Bosco priests and brothers at a football match and was thrilled. Fr. Elias Dias, then Rector of Don Bosco Borivli kept in touch with me. Later, Fr. Desmond Paes asked me to join the boarders on Thursdays - which was our holiday - to get used to the timetable. At the end of std. VII, I was selected to go to Don Bosco, Lonavla for a camp. The moment I entered the campus I knew I would be happy there. At the end of the camp, by God's grace I was selected to join the Apostolic School for std. VIII. Since then there was no looking back.

On 24 May, 1989, I entered the Salesian Novitiate at Nashik after completing my std. XII at Lonavla. The experience there would help me cope with the many challenges that would come my way in my journey to the Priesthood.

My dear parents were my pillar of strength, constantly encouraging and praying for me. Along my Salesian life I did have



some fears and I spoke to my spiritual director and confessor Fr. Mauro Casarotti who was very understanding and kind. I vowed to be a priest like him one day encouraging and guiding youngsters.

I was ordained on 16 December 2000 by his Lordship Bishop Ferdinand Fonseca at Don Bosco Matunga. Two years later I was asked to be the Vocation Promoter of the Mumbai Region which I accepted willingly. It is a joy helping youngsters discern God's plan for their lives and helping those called to the Priesthood and Religious way of life to go ahead. My dear young people, God has beautiful plans for your lives, hence live with Hope. Some of you are called to consecrated life-discern this and respond with generosity and trust in God; don't be afraid. If God calls you to it, he will see you through it! □

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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA (1568-1591) GOD SHOWS ME REAL HAPPINESS (JUNE 21)

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

In the fall of 1585, at Castiglione delle Stivere, its surroundings and up to Mantua, strange news was making its rounds: Aloysius, the eldest son of the Lord and scion of the city of Ferrante Gonzaga, a good and promising lad, was about to give up his right of succession in favour of Rudolph, his younger brother. Was it really true? Unfortunately yes, but many of the subjects were hoping it was not. It was a sad day at the castle of San Giorgio, Mantua, the solemn ceremony of the renunciation of the birthright was taking place. The simple folk loved him very much. They commented: **"They don't deserve to have him as lord, he is a saint and God has need of him."**

Actually, there were several voices raised in criticism of Aloysius' decision, but Aloysius replied: **"I seek salvation and I am going to find it too! You cannot serve two masters... It is too difficult to save the soul of a nobleman."** Several accepted that comment of his. When Aloysius took that decision he



was 17 years old.

Great respect, admiration and expectations would accompany him in the few years that he lived the life of a Jesuit too. After his death the Superior General testified: "I never thought he would die of that sickness. I thought, for sure, that our dear Lord, who had called him to the Society of Jesus, would give him time to do great good." The great

Ignatius of Loyola – the founder of the Jesuits – already saw him as a successor.

At the courts “to open his eyes”

Aloysius was born March 7, 1568, son of Ferrante Gonzaga, Marquis of Castiglione (near Mantua), a proud and hard man who loved hunting but was a man also deeply attached to his faith and his family, and Marta Sàntena, a Piedmontese countess. She was a very good and religious woman who would have a profound influence on her son. **Aloysius was intelligent, brilliant and candid, of a strong and spirited character. He could sometimes be stubborn and obstinate. Once he was heard saying: “I’m a twisted piece of metal that must be straightened.”**

At the age of ten, in the church of the Annunziata, Aloysius spontaneously offered himself to God: **“I will consecrate myself to Mary as she consecrated herself to God.”** Did he understand what he was doing? Certainly, judging from the life that followed, he understood very well and remained consistent with that consecration henceforth. From Florence he went to Mantua, and there he became ill. His doctors prescribed for him a strict diet of bread and water that Aloysius took advantage of to learn how to voluntarily do penance for the love of the Crucified Christ. It was there in Florence that he had the great consolation of making his First Holy Communion at the hands of Cardinal Charles Borromeo (Saint) who was on a pastoral visit.

He gradually began to nurture the idea of giving up his birthright. He first spoke to this to his mother and then he had to endure the mockery of his relatives and finally the inevitable and understandable violent opposition of his father who was very proud of Aloysius. He possessed intelligence, refinement and diplomatic skills (that were missing with his brother). Ferrante Gonzaga, who was away, was furious at the prospect of this renunciation. On his return from Madrid (1584) he ordered his two sons to take a tour of the various Italian noble courts. The official goal was “distract” Aloysius a little with the brilliant lives of the other Italian courts and the second and rather covert reason was the secret hope that he would arouse the affections of some beautiful blue-blooded princess. For this, the boy was sent to Mantua, Parma, Ferrara, Pavia and Turin, the new capital (since 1563) of Savoy.

But Aloysius returned and in the presence all his relations his resolve was firm: to surrender his title and become a Jesuit religious. At that point everyone realized that this smart and intelligent boy, so calm and pensive had made up his mind. His was no mere adolescent whim and so they all conceded.

His motto: “Like the others, without privileges”

After finishing his novitiate, Aloysius entered the Society of Jesus at Rome in the year 1587. During this period the Jesuits immediately noticed that they had on their hands a spiritual

gem. Not only did he not need long discourses on ascetics but they had a problem getting him to balance and moderate his penitential fervour that had become part of his spiritual upbringing. He even curtailed his sense of humour. Aloysius was so accustomed to penance and self-control that his ascetic formators began to be concerned. Due to his excessive penances he began to suffer from migraine to the extent that his spiritual director had to admonish him not to think too deeply about God, and out of obedience he obeyed. He confided to an old formator: "Truly, I don't know what to do. Fr. Rector forbids me to pray so I do no violence to my head. I have to use much more strength to distract me from thinking of God because thinking of God has become so natural to me. In it I find peace and rest and not pain." Because God was so present to him he had to pray: "Depart from me, Lord." Excluding St. Peter, I do not know how many saints have dared to pray thus; but he had said the same words with other well-known reasons. Aloysius was already engaged in studying theology in Rome when the city experienced a terrible tragedy: first there was a draught, then a famine and then an epidemic of typhus. In order to be of assistance, the Jesuits lent themselves to help the patients especially the most repulsive and the dying. Aloysius went around the palaces of the nobility to ask for alms for the poor. He did this, though he was of noble blood, because his motto was: "like the others," forgetting all his

privileges. He felt that this courage and physical strength came from God and from Christ whom he was serving in the suffering poor. One day he picked up a man dying of the plague and carrying him on his own shoulders he took him to hospital. It was probably because of this that he caught the infection. His end came quickly, but not unexpectedly. His encounter with God was so well-prepared for that he was not afraid and told all those around him: "I'm leaving very contentedly." In the last letter that he wrote to his own mother he urged her not to cry for him as not dead by living happily forever with God from the day of his birth into heaven which was June 21, 1591. He was assisted by St. Robert Bellarmine, one of the great Jesuits of the first generation. Aloysius Gonzaga was a martyr not for the Faith (even if it was so), but for charity. He gave his life for others.

This was what this young saint was made of. Holiness was easily recognizable in him and he proves that it is even feasible.

In the anticlerical climate of the 1800s (and during the first part of the 1900s) he was not only not recognized but even suppressed. In a certain sense one finds this in the words of Gioberti (1801-1852) where he said that the sanctity of Aloysius Gonzaga was not only "useless but also harmful to imitate." He can easily be proposed today to youngsters as a model in place of the ephemeral, superficial and small "heroes" that are presented by powerful media and commercial circles. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Country Puddle

A man travelling down a country road was forced to stop before a giant puddle covering the entire road. Looking to the side of the road, the man noticed a farmer leaning on a fence. "Think it's safe to cross?" the man asked.

"I reckon so," replied the farmer.

The car was immediately swallowed by the puddle as the man drove in. In fact, it was so deep that he had to roll his window down to swim out of his car back to the surface.

As his head broke the surface the man said to the farmer, "I thought you said I could safely drive through this puddle!"

"Well, golly!" said the farmer, scratching his head.

"It only comes up chest-high on my ducks!"

Bachelor's Cat

A bachelor kept a cat for companionship, and loved his cat more than life.

He was planning a trip to England and entrusted the cat to his brother's care. As soon as he arrived in England he called his brother.

"How is my cat?" he asked. "Your cat is dead," came the reply.

"Oh my," he exclaimed. "Did you have to tell me that way?"

"How else can I tell you your cat's dead?" inquired the brother.

"You should have led me up to it gradually," said the bachelor.

"For an example, when I called

tonight you could have told me my cat was on the roof, but the Fire Department is getting it down. When I called tomorrow night, you could have told me that they dropped him and broke his back, but a fine surgeon is doing all he can for him. Then, when I called the third night, you could have told me the surgeon did all he could but my cat passed away. That way it wouldn't have been such a shock.

"By the way," he continued, "how's Mother?"

"Mother?" came the reply. "Oh, she's up on the roof, but the Fire Department is getting her down."

Passed Note

A nearsighted minister glanced at the note that Mrs. Jones had sent to him by an usher.

The note read: "Bill Jones having gone to sea, his wife desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety."

Failing to observe the punctuation, he startled his audience by announcing:

"Bill Jones, having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety."

Sweat Her Choice

My mother once gave me two sweaters for Christmas. The next time we visited, I made sure to wear one.

As we entered her home, instead of the expected smile, she said,

"What's the matter? You didn't like the other one?" □



"WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?"

(Mark 4,35 - 41)

by Carlo Broccardo

Just like Jesus asks the father of the sick child if he trusts him or not, we are ready to say: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

Those who have been to the Holy Land will recall the great sense of peace that one experiences just viewing the Sea of Galilee; it is one of those places that has hardly changed in the last two thousand years. It remains just as it was at the time of Jesus. A small lake – on a clear day you can see from shore to shore – and spend some time in recollection. It is a wonderful place to just sit quietly and recall some of the most beautiful pages of the Gospels. However it is also a lake that is surrounded by mountains on three sides and it is not uncommon that on most afternoons there is a light breeze which towards nightfall turns into a veritable windstorm.

The passage that we are reflecting on tells not just of the storm on that lake, but also in the hearts of the disciples. Let us get the scene from their point of view: they were fishermen, so they were experts on the sea, but this time they were truly lost. "And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was almost filling," says

Mark. Now notice the adjective "great" and the detailed description that followed. There was nothing they could do, the boat was filling up and would soon sink. And Jesus, what does he do to help his disciples? Absolutely nothing! "He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion." How strange. True, it was a long and tiring day (he was teaching the crowds and his disciples in parables the whole day). How was it possible?

Today we would spontaneously ask such a question: How is it possible to sleep in the midst of such a storm? The disciples don't wonder. Their concern was somewhere else. They said: "Do you not care if we perish?" They don't care to fathom how Jesus could sleep. They were worried about the fact that Jesus wasn't doing anything to save them. In their words we note what deep emotions motivated them: they believed that Jesus could do something, instead of sleeping peacefully. Jesus could help them but he did not! Offended by this, they woke him up shouting: "Do you not care if we perish?"

At this point the passage of Mark opens up two points of reflection. The first is that Jesus woke up, and said just two words and settled everything. "He woke up, rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "Peace, be still." The wind ceased and there was a great calm." We note again the adjective "great." The storm was great and then there was an immediate and total calm. Jesus does not perform miracles in halves, he truly has enormous power. He is powerful against evil and also against the harshness of nature. This

impresses the disciples so they ask: "Who is this man?" Because the healings were things that others did (or at least tried to do) but controlling nature - that was something that only God can do. So it is that Mark affirms this right from the beginning of the Gospel saying: "Jesus is the Son of God." (cf. Mk. 1:1)

The second reflection is about the disciples: after they had witnessed the situation, Jesus speaks to them rather harshly: "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" That quip invites us to go back a few pages in this Gospel and see what happened before this episode. It is as if Jesus had already told them: "See everything I've said and done so far and you still don't believe me?" In the coming days, it might be a good exercise to read the first four chapters of St. Mark's Gospel slowly and without stopping. Just pay attention to what Jesus did. Maybe then return to a particular passage that touches you. They are marvellous chapters and we heard some of them in the months of January and February. Wherever Jesus goes, life flourishes. With his words and his actions he revives hope, health and peace; evil spirits are terrified; with him around they know that evil will never win. They are aware that with Jesus life has already triumphed!

That is why the disciples marvel at Jesus. He has literally touched lives. Spending a few weeks with him, they saw incredible miracles, they heard marvelous words and yet they didn't believe everything that was why Jesus wasn't really upset by their panic. Strange; maybe not; we seem to empathise well with them. Recall the times



when the Lord doesn't seem to be present and when things go so wrong that that we aren't in control and God does nothing (or at least, to us it seems so)! In her autobiography, St. Teresa of Lisieux tells of all the sadness that she experienced after an audience with Pope Leo XIII. She had hoped that the Pope would concede to allowing her to enter Carmel even though she had not reached the prescribed age, but that did not happen. She says: "In the depths of my heart I felt a great peace, because I had done absolutely all that was in my power to respond to what God had asked of me, but peace remained in the background, while bitterness filled my soul since Jesus was silent. He seemed to be absent. He did not reveal his presence."

If we had the experience of the disciples and the saints, the fear that the Lord doesn't care about us won't worry us. We should pray hard for all those who are experiencing difficult moments, for all those who, in the end will believe but right now are unable to find peace and hope. It is like Jesus asking the father of the sick child if he believes or not, we too say: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24).□

THE COURAGE C

by His Holiness P

Entrust yourselves without reserve to the hands of the Lord. This is Our Lady's Message to mankind in every age, echoed by Benedict XVI on Tuesday evening, 31 May 2011, at the Grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens, where the Marian month of May was solemnly concluded. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's Meditation, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am delighted to join you in prayer before the statue of the Holy Virgin, whom we are contemplating today on the Feast of the Visitation. I greet and thank Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the cardinals and bishops present, and all of you gathered here this evening. At the end of the month of May, let us unite our voice to Mary's, in her song of praise; with her let us magnify the Lord for the wonders which he continues to work in the life of the Church and of each one of us. In particular, it was and remains for all a cause of great joy and gratitude to have begun this Marian month with the memorable Beatification of John Paul II. What a great gift of grace for the entire Church this great Pope's life has been! His witness continues to illuminate our lives and spurs us to be true disciples of the Lord, to follow him with the courage of faith, to love him with the same enthusiasm with which Pope Wojtyla gave him his very life.

Meditating today on the Visitation of Mary, we are led to reflect on precisely the courage of faith. She, whom Elizabeth receives into her



OF MARY'S 'FIAT'

Pope Benedict XVI

home, is the Virgin who “believed” the Angel’s message and responded with faith, bravely accepting God’s plan for her life and so welcoming within her the Eternal Word of the Most High. As my Blessed Predecessor underlined in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, it was through faith that Mary proclaimed her fiat, “she entrusted herself to God without reserve and ‘devoted herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son’” (n. 13; cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56). This is why, in greeting her, Elizabeth exclaims: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Lk 1:45). Mary truly believed that “with God nothing will be impossible” (1:37) and, on the strength of this faith, she, in daily obedience, allowed herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit in his plans. How can we not wish for our own lives the same abandonment to trust? How could we cut ourselves off from a happiness that is born of such an intimate and profound relationship with Jesus? Therefore, turning today to the One, “full of grace”, let us ask her to obtain from Divine Providence for us, too, the ability to say “yes” to the plans of God with the same humble and pure faith with which she did. May she, who, by welcoming within her the Word of God, entrusted herself to him without reserve, guide us to an ever more generous and unconditional response to his plans, even when in them we are called to embrace the cross.

In this Easter Season, as we call upon the Risen one for the gift of his Spirit, let us entrust the Church and the whole world to the motherly intercession of Our Lady. May Mary Most Holy, who together with the Apostles in the Upper Room invoked the Consoler, obtain for every baptized person the grace of a life illumined by the mystery of God, Crucified and Risen, the gift of knowing how to accept ever more in our own lives the Lordship of the One who through his Resurrection has vanquished death. Dear Friends, upon each one of you, upon your hearts, especially upon those suffering, I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing. □

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

From Fr. Ian Douulton's collection of stories

It Is Saturday evening, 7.15, at old St. Peter's church, the three front doors stand open wide. Up and down the triple Path of Life, the people come and go. A few stop on the way in and read the schedule on the main door: Sunday Masses, daily Masses, Confessions: Saturday evenings, 4 - 6, 7 - 9. On the corner stands a man watching the people come and go. Everyone in the city knows him, but no one would recognize him tonight. Who would ever expect to find Mr. Richard Scott standing on the corner, in front of the shabby old church in the River District?

It's the same Mr. Richard Scott who at one time was the richest man in town. Who, looking into that empty face and those dead eyes would guess that his mind, his heart and his soul were seething with storm? For there was a voice within his soul like the wind upon the waters that troubled the sea of memory to the years of the past that seemed to come rolling back like black and bitter waves. They were lost years, dead years. Lost like Miriam his wife, dead like Lenorè his daughter, dead, like his own soul.

Richard's conscience whispered to him as he stood there looking in: *"Look at people, Richard Scott, they're still doing it, still going to confession 31 years since you stood at this corner and the Church is still here and the people going in and out. Going in a little slowly a little sadly, even the children strangely quiet, coming out again, quickly and happily, the children running down the steps. You*

know what they do inside. You do not need to remember, you have never forgotten. You too once knelt in a back pew examining your conscience, then your firm purpose of amendment."

Richard Scott remembered going to the confessional after some others. His heart was pounding in the stillness of the church. He heard the priest behind the grill softly say: *"The Lord be in your heart and help you confess your sins with true sorrow."* Richard started. 'Bless me father for I have sinned.' The priest then gave him a talking-to and his penance. The priest's words of absolution were like the strong swell of the sea under the froth of the waves and they ended with *'God bless you.'* Richard was outside again quieted and clean. He went back to his pew and said his penance and was at peace.

This night, outside St. Peter's, 31 years later, the times when he went to confession came back to him and then there was a break, a long break. Oh, the lost years! The dead years, since the last time he was there! His mind burned now with the memory of his last confession 31 years ago, and the priest: was he tired or sick, or naturally short-tempered?

Richard thought to himself: "I didn't think I'd done anything really serious. A lot of fellows took extra pieces of equipment out of the plant and sold them. Yet after ten minutes I was still kneeling there, hot with anger. Was I a small school boy?"

Then Richard remembered the priest's words: *'It doesn't matter*

what anybody else does I've been trying all this time to tell you that what you've been doing is plain stealing. You'll have to stop it and pay back the company for all the material you took.'

"Father,...after all, father, that's pretty hard... it's a lot to pay back, and besides, it's the way I said, I'm not the only one"

'You know what you did was wrong, you know it was a sin, or you wouldn't have mentioned it in confession would you?' The priest said.

"I know it wasn't right but...don't think it's worth a lot of fuss. Oh! Well, I suppose I'll have to cut it out and pay for the stuff."

"I've spent the last fifteen minutes trying to make you realize that the purpose of amendment and restitution mean just that. Your confession is no good without them." The priest seemed a little impatient and said: *'I don't see how I can make it any clearer. If you can't understand it by this time you haven't the proper disposition to receive absolution. Now I can't waste any more time with you. Come back when you're in a better frame of mind.'*

Richard felt the priest turn to the other side of the confessional to another waiting penitent.

If you saw Richard then, you would have seen him fling himself out of the church.

He put his hurt pride into a festering wound. The priest, whoever he was, didn't have any right to refuse him absolution. All he did was ask a simple question. The priest wasn't even civil. Richard thought to himself: "I didn't go to confession to be insulted. I went looking for a little help and advice and all I got was a dressing down. Who does he think

he is anyway? Just because he's a priest he thinks he can go around insulting people? Ah! That's the kind of people the Church gets to run a parish. They can tell other people what to do, and look at the way they act! I'm not taking that from anybody. I have my pride. I'll go away all right, and I won't come back!

Richard's conscience worried him once more: *"Remember, remember the lost faith, the lost love, the strange hollowness of the first Sunday without Mass, the flinching of the mind away from Saturday evening 4-6, 7-9, learning to say "Ah, I used to be a Catholic."* Marrying Miriam without the sacrament, she didn't ask you to do that, she, rather liked the Catholic Church. She was almost interested, but you said: "No, I'm through with all that." And you gave her your ring in a dusty little office and you pronounced your vows to a tired clerk with a swift mechanical smile. You had your pride!

And Miriam seven years later said one day in exasperation: "I wish there was something to hold me, but there isn't. I might not do it but to divorce is so easy. I can't help it Richard. I just don't want to settle down with you. You're dull and hard and all you think of is money. No, not even the child is enough to hold me."

"Not even the child" Leonorè! Leonorè! The lovely, and the dead! You gave her all the love that was left in your heart.

Everything was for Leonorè, the money, the great house, the fine schools to fill her ever hungry mind.

Faster, faster, walk faster Richard Scott, for the bitterest and the blackest wave has lifted from the sea and a memory is about to

break upon your heart.

One sunny morning out on the patio sipping lemonade, Leonorè, the splitting image of her mother gently told Richard: "Dad, I want to go away for a year. I want to work somewhere, just to see what it's like outside. I've been shut up with books so long. I'll come back when I've seen something of life." And soon she was off.

He was sad when she too was gone and the house was so empty. But she came back pale and tired and she sat by the fire and looked at Richard. He thought he was looking into the eyes of a stranger.

"You've worked too hard, Leonora, you're tired out."

"I am tired...so many things... I've seen so much, it's worse than I thought."

"What's the matter, Leonorè? What do you need? I'll get you anything you want."

"There's nothing you can do now... It's too late. There is something I wanted to know."

Suddenly Leonorè said: "Dad, were you really a Catholic once?"

"Well, yes, yes, a long time ago."

Richard was uncomfortable. Leonorè persisted.

"What's it like?" Leonorè sat up and asked. "Is there really anything to it? I've been in that church, it looks interesting." The girl continued.

"Oh, go on, there's nothing to it." Richard brushed it off. He remembered his last encounter a long time ago.

"Nothing?" Leonorè asked.

He looked into his paper rather nervously: "Maybe, maybe, there's something, some people have to have ceremony and mystery and

the Church satisfies them. The whole thing is out of date." He thought he had convinced his daughter with his ambiguous answer.

"Is that why you left the Church?" Leonorè was insistent.

"Yes, of course, it isn't progressive, it's too dogmatic. Too many people telling you what to do." Richard seemed edgy now.

"What's the matter, Leonorè?" He seemed curious. "What happened while you were away?"

"You can't help what's already done. You can't minister to a diseased mind. I think I'll go to my room." She seemed tired, irritable and restless as she got up in the bathrobe she was still wearing.

"All that you need is a good sleep." Richard said and thought he was being a good father.

"I'll have a good sleep." There was something in that tone, but he failed to sense it.

"Good bye dad!"

"Goodnight Leonorè." Richard went back to his paper. Her footsteps faded as she entered her room and he heard the door close.

His study was strangely silent. Suddenly he heard a shot. It pierced the silence like fire into ice. His first thought was his daughter and so he shouted and ran. "Leonorè!"

He pushed open the door only to find his daughter on the white marble floor in her bathrobe slightly open and a red tide of blood poured from the region of her temple and from her half parted lips. He dashed to call emergency.

She was white and still in the hospital room. The doctors whispering and the sisters coming

in and out. A young sister, young as Leonorè stopped and said: "We'll pray for her."

Head in his hands he sobbed in the lounge outside her room.

"Leonorè, Leonorè, why did you do it? Tell me. Tell me." But he only heard hospital sounds and smelt the pungent smells of antiseptic.

He saw a tall priest come. Yes, he came to see her. The sisters said she asked for him.

And only after that she spoke to her father. The storm over her life was gradually ebbing and a slow tide of peace returned.

Leonorè opened her eyes slightly and said: "I'm sorry, but it's all right now."

"Don't leave me, Leonorè." Richard held on to her hand and wept.

"It's too late. I thought there was nothing more. You said there was nothing more." Leonorè said faintly.

"I didn't mean it, Leonorè, I didn't know. I'll make up for it, I'll help." He didn't know what to say.

"I've already been helped, why didn't you tell me dad? The priest was very kind. Confession isn't hard." Leonorè sounded surreal as she whispered.

His old bitterness towards priests surfaced as he screamed.

"Why did you need him? I could have helped you."

"*Can you forgive sin?*" Leonorè simply said and turned her face away.

She had spoken to him and not to her father. The priest had helped her. But it was too late, Leonorè gently breathed her last having made her peace with her Creator.

The Afterthought

Was there anything in

confession? There was a question lingering in his mind and his conscience came back to harass him: "*But there is...Richard Scott, there is!*" He seemed to be walking in the direction of the church. He didn't know why and all along his mind was saying, "*Walk, walk, think, think, oh the lost years, the dead years. When you walked away from the Church and led them after you, Miriam your wife and Leonorè. What did it matter? It was a little thing. A tiny thing, nothing at all, and for nothing you became the lost one with the lost wife and a daughter, dead! And weren't there a thousand other priests for you to go to confession to? But you, you had your pride. You have it now Richard Scott, sleep with it, eat with it, live with it, love it now, for all the long and empty years to come.*"

You loved your pride more than you loved your God. Let it save you from the depths. The depths of your iniquity like the depths of the sea where the river tide is running now back and so strong that a man may fling his body down and let the river bear it off and into the depths of the sea."

Richard Scott was out of breath as he reached the foot of the steps leading up to St. Peter's old church. He dashed in and found no queue at the confessional. He went in with hot tears streaming down his face and out came those words he had uttered so long ago "Bless me Father, for I have sinned."

He heard a gentle voice from the other side: "*How long has it been since your last confession, son?*"

"My last confession was 31 years ago!" The prodigal had come home. □

THE ORATORY OF DON BOSCO

6

by Fr. Elias Dias

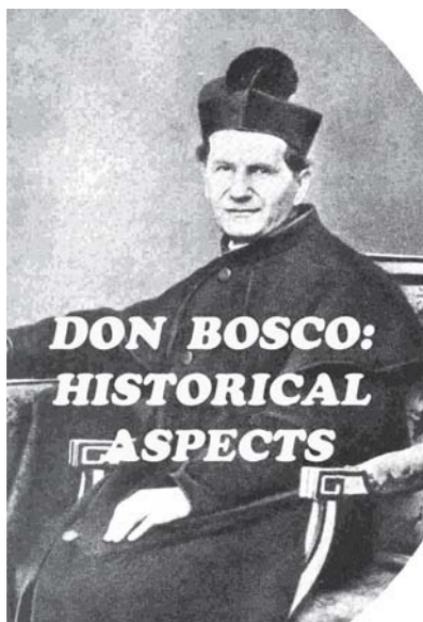
A young destitute youngster from Genoa wanted to see Don Bosco. The captain of the ship took him on board and directed him to Turin with a placard around his neck reading: "Don Bosco." When he reached in Turin people simply directed him to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, where he met Don Bosco. Don Bosco was synonymous with the Oratory.

The Oratory of St Francis de Sales was a name originally given to the gathering of boys that flocked to the Valdocco area on Sundays for Church services, recreation and religious instruction. The same name designated the house for boarders, apprentices and students attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.

Don Bosco's Oratory, after much wandering finally found its permanent home in 1846 in an isolated house and on a property located in the district of Valdocco in the city of Turin. Once settled in that little house, Don Bosco established there a home to shelter the most destitute lads who attended the Oratory in 1847. He called it: "A Home attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales".

The purpose of the Oratory was to entertain youngsters on Sundays and holidays, to offer them wholesome recreation, train them to earn a living and help them to fulfill their religious duties.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the period of the



Restoration, the population of Turin experienced a remarkable increase. It may have been because of industrial revolution but it was also because of the worsening condition of the peasant population in the villages. The youngsters from the villages migrated to the cities in search of work. They had no place to stay, no employment and no education and were morally at risk. Many well-to-do people considered it their duty to help the poor and to free them from misery and ignorance. The priests at the *Convitto* were remarkably sensitive to the problems of the youth. Fr. Cafasso visited the prisons and conducted catechetical classes at *Convitto*. When Don Bosco joined the Institute Fr. Cafasso introduced him to these ministries.

In the early documents - *the Regulations of the Oratory* (1854)

and *the Historical Outline of the Oratory* (1862), Don Bosco wrote that the Oratory was started by gathering young people who were either released from prison or liable to go there. He gathered them and taught them catechism at the church of St. Francis of Assisi. In 1874, Don Bosco mentioned in his *Memoirs*, that the Oratory started when he gave the young Bartholomew Garelli that catechism class held on December 8, 1841 (this was taken from the chronicle by Fr. Ruffino in 1860).

The number of boys increased so much that the chapel at the *Convitto* was no longer large enough so he had to move to the *Barolo Refuge* and later to other places. Realizing the need of the time, he later started evening classes at the Moretta house.

Once he and his boys were established at the Pinardi house in Valdocco, Don Bosco responded to the pressing needs of the youngsters. He opened a Hospice (a boarding house) where the poor boys were fed and clothed and instructed in the truths of the Faith and at the same time they learnt some skills to earn a living.

In his *Memoirs* Don Bosco recounted how the Home had its beginning. On a rainy evening in May 1847, he and Mamma Margaret took in a 15-year old homeless orphan from the Valsesia and Margaret talked to him before putting him to bed. The boy's name is not given. Don Bosco added: "Very soon we had a companion for him." According to Lemoyne, Don Bosco found this second boy, also a homeless orphan, crying with his head leaning against a tree on the Corso San Massimo. It is possible that the

two youngsters spoken of were the first boarders at the Home are the same as the two were mentioned in the *Memoirs*; their social conditions being identical but neither of the two fitted the identity to the young man from the Valsesia though Don Bosco surely worked for the youngsters like the lad from Valsesia.

Don Bosco admitted his first students in 1847. With the help of Fr. Pietro Merla he tutored them. In 1851-52 Don Bosco began to send them out to private schools in the city that were run by licensed teachers. Prof. Carlo Giuseppe Bonzanino and Fr. Matteo Picco generously admitted Don Bosco's poor boys free of charge. In 1855-56 Don Bosco established a secondary school programme at the Home with a 17 year-old seminarian John Francesia as teacher. By the year 1859-60 he succeeded in establishing a complete resident programme of secondary studies. He did it for several reasons, especially to cultivate priestly vocations. In 1847 Don Bosco drafted the regulations of the Oratory based on the regulations of oratories in other parts of Italy.

In 1847 two very important events took place the foundation of the municipality of Turin and the *Opera della Mendicita Istruita* involved in the scholastic field sent two separate delegations to the Oratory at Valdocco. Don Bosco asked them for financial help and for recognition of the role played by the Oratory in the field of education. At the same time some very prominent people of Turin visited the Oratory. Fr. Aperti a controversial educator, Count Charles Bomcompagni in charge

of educational laws, Fr. Joseph Rayneri a professor of pedagogy and anthropology of the Royal University at Turin were all amazed to see the work of the Oratory.

In 1849, Don Bosco's Oratory in Valdocco was regarded as most important in terms of numbers and activities. He was helped by many priests and lay people who formed an informal association with a desire to help the poor young people.

After acquiring the shed and the property of Sig. Pinardi in 1851, Don Bosco took up the major building project of church of St Francis de Sales. For this project he launched his first large-scale fund raising campaign through a benefit raffle or lottery. This first project, the church of St. Francis de Sales, was inaugurated on June 20, 1852.

A few days after the inauguration of the church, Don Bosco began to build a large building for the boarders. On November 20, 1852, part of the second floor collapsed, three workers were seriously injured. The work reassumed but on December 2, 1852 the whole edifice collapsed. In October 1853 the building was completed and occupied. In 1853 the strength of the boarding was 100 boys. 65 were working apprentices while 35 were students. In 1856 a further construction was completed and occupied in 1856.

In the year 1853 the first two shops were begun. The shoe-making shop and the tailor's shop Don Bosco himself taught the trades. Pleased with the modest success of the first two, a third bookbinding shop was opened.

Eight years later, in 1861, with the help of Rosmini, Don Bosco opened a print shop. In 1860 there was a sharp rise in construction and demand for industrial products so in 1862 Don Bosco opened a metal shop.

The number of boys at the Oratory steadily increased and Don Bosco, with help of Fr. Borel, decided to start another Oratory on the Viale Vittorio Emmanuele close to the river Po. It was owned by Mrs. Vaglianti. She was not ready to sell but "thunder and lightning" made her agree to sell it to Don Bosco. The washerwomen and Waldensians were against the Oratory. Don Bosco petitioned His Grace, the Archbishop for permission to bless the new Oratory. He called it the Oratory of St. Aloysius and Fr. Borel blessed it on December 8, 1847. Fr. Carpano was nominated the first director of that Oratory. The Oratory of St. Aloysius still exists today. It is now has a School and the church of St. John the Evangelist attached to it.

To the northeast of the city of Turin lies the district of Vanchiglia which was inhabited by the poorer classes. Fr. Giovanni Cocchi established an oratory there. Austria was at war with Italy and boys of Fr. Cocchi were enlisted but sadly Piedmont was defeated. The oratory was closed in 1849. Don Bosco with understanding Fr. Cocchi reopened the oratory calling it the Oratory of the Guardian Angels which existed until 1866. When parish of St. Julia was erected there was no need of Oratory so Don Bosco sent his personnel to St. Joseph's in the southern suburb of San Salvario.

Before 1850, the majority of

Italian workers were peasants, farmers and agricultural labourers. After the 1848 industrial revolution they began to work in the industries. There were guilds to protect the workers. In 1844 workers' guilds were abolished. In Piedmont Mutual Aid Societies were introduced and they were a great help for the workers. Don Bosco quickly recognized the need of Mutual Aid Society. On July 1, 1850, with the help of the older boys, he established it at the Oratory. Its aim was not only to offer social but also spiritual benefits. Don Bosco made contracts for his apprentices and visited his boys at the sites where they were working on.

By the mid-sixties the Oratory had a very large and successful educational establishment with some 600 students and artisan boarders, a few hundred day students and Oratory boys. Don Bosco had taken care to insist on basic points that everyone accepted as axioms to live by: "Work, study and piety" at the Oratory. Don Bosco uncompromisingly demanded seriousness from the students. He made it clear that he regarded the perfect fulfillment of one's duty as the mainstream of the ascetic life and one of the foundations of spiritual life too. The other foundation was a life of piety (that is religious faith and devotion, expressed in prayers, the sacramental life and religious practices).

Don Bosco believed that one of the areas in which the educator's presence is most effective is in the area of recreation. Don Bosco's concept of recreation as an

educational tool was innovative and ahead of his time. He recognized not merely the usefulness of the playground but also its purpose in bringing the young person to maturity. Besides the daily playground activities Don Bosco used further specific means to foster cheerfulness and to strengthen the educational environment: The Autumn outings, music and theatre were other help in his educational system.

The youth Associations were another important educational tool for the educators. Don Bosco used them at the Oratory for the personal growth of the students, the Company (*Sodality*) of the Immaculate Conception founded on June 8, 1856 by Dominic Savio, the Company of the Blessed Sacrament founded towards the end 1857 by Cleric Joseph Bongiovanni whose purpose was to promote the regular reception of the Sacraments and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Altar Boys' Company was founded on February 2, 1858 by Cleric Joseph Bongiovanni and its purpose was to serve at the altar and promote vocations to priesthood. The Company of St. Joseph was founded in 1859 by cleric John Bonetti to promote the practice of virtuous Christian among the artisans.

Traditionally the oratories were parish activities, they were held exclusively on Sundays and feast days. They were selective and their games limited to the playground. Don Bosco's Oratory transcended the parish oratory. Its purpose was to develop all the aspects of the life of the students. It was open to all. □

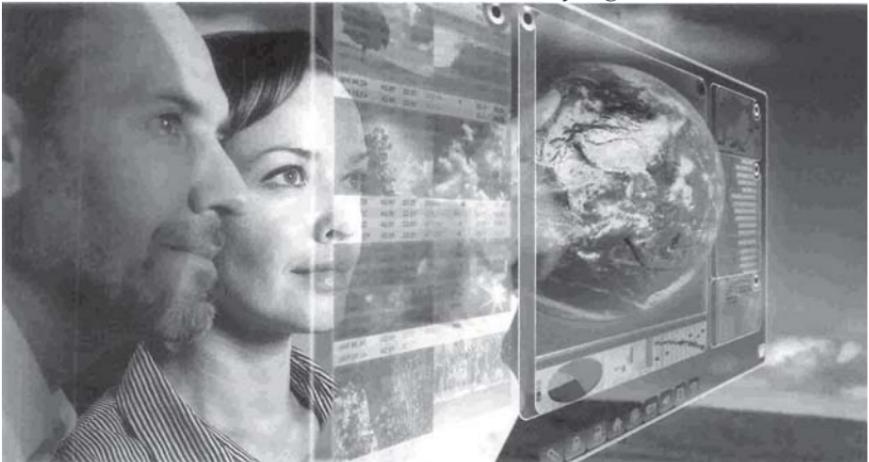


MARY: THE WOMAN WITH A PONDERING HEART

by Maria Ko Ha Fong

In the celebrated book 'The Little Prince,' Antoine de Saint Exupéry has a little story: "The little prince crossed the desert and met with only one flower. A flower with very few petals, a flower of no importance... "Good morning," said the little prince. "Good morning," said the flower." "Where are the men?"

the little prince enquired. The flower had once seen a caravan passing. "Men? I believe there are about six or seven of them. I caught a glimpse of them several years ago. But one never knows where to find them. The wind blows them around. They have no roots which makes their lives rather trying." In the Bible there



Modern technologies that have increasingly more powerful "memories" must not make man lose his "memory" of times gone by, of his history and of eternity.

is a similar comparison: the first Psalm describes just: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season," while the wicked are "like chaff which the wind drives away" (Sal 1:3-4).

Today, many thinkers point to the fact that these are the characteristics of our times since we have lost our roots and our memory too. Without roots and without memory our lives are superficial, inconsistent and empty. We experience only brief emotions. We are unable to cultivate intense feelings. We don't have the ability to pause and nurture hope, to conceive great ideals or plans just short bursts of energy that leave us breathless and shut us down immediately. Dante said: "There's no knowledge without being able to ponder" and we can add: "There's no wisdom without reflecting on one's life."

Large computer memory and small human memories

Today computers have a powerful *memory* while the human mind has a memory that is increasingly reduced to a momentary *mens*, a few fleeting thoughts.

Human life appears to be a series of transitory and disconnected episodes. We lose the sense of times past, of history, of the eternal. Bonds between generations weaken and we feel little responsibility for future generations. What the book of Ecclesiastes says seems bitterly true: "There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there



Mary is the "pondering" woman, par excellence, because she "kept all these things and pondered on them in her heart."

be any remembrance of later things yet to happen" (Eccl. 1:11).

The Christian, however, is a person with strong roots, a good memory and a faith based on a historical event and nourished by a "memorial" - the Eucharist -



In the Bible, the first Psalm emphasizes that the "just" person is "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in time."

and with Mary is a model of someone with such a heart that ponders. In the Gospel narratives, accounts of Mary are sparse but Luke is the only one who highlights Mary's capacity to ponder. Twice he repeats the phrase: "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (2:19,51).

It is interesting to see how Luke describes Mary with Jesus in the quiet everyday life of those hidden years. Jesus "increased in the wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (2, 52) while his mother grew in the wisdom of reflection, silence and acceptance. Mary co-operated in the development of Jesus and Jesus helped Mary to grow.

Be captivated in order to be comprehended

Mary kept all these things in her heart. The recollection of facts is not only an activity of the brain but also that of the heart. The word "record" comes from the Latin word re-cordare. It literally means going back to the heart. Then, to record means, to make present in the heart a past event as if it were happening today. To reflect with love, with the heart; and in biblical language the heart indicates one's deepest self from which flows our decisions and involves our very existence.

Mary, with the mindful heart embodies the wisdom that Sirach eulogizes: "Blessed is he who concerns himself with these things, and he who lays them to heart will become wise" (Sir 50:28). Mary's heart is like a living Bible containing all the words that God has revealed to humankind, like a mirror that clearly reveals God's plan. Mary "in a way, unites in her person and reechoes the most important doctrines of the faith" affirms *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II (n. 65).

In this age of weak memory we contemplate on Mary to learn from her the art of reverting into our past in order to grow in our Faith by allowing ourselves to be captivated by it so as to direct our exterior lives from that strong inner core where we have crystallized our experience of God from an understanding the past in order to guide our future. □

NEWSBITS

KAZAKHSTAN - Astana

In a country of over 15 million inhabitants with a large Muslim majority, the Orthodox Christian community which represents about 13% of the population as well as a Catholic community of about 200,000 faithful. "The Catholic community in recent months has underlined the hopes for two important issues that affect our lives: the first is the difficulty in the issue and renewal of visas to foreign missionaries. They are often restricted to three-month tourist visas, having to leave the country and return after another three months, with results of clear precariousness and instability for the pastoral care work. Then there are the limitations to freedom of religion, while understandable from a State that wants to prevent the spread of extremist groups, present in the Central Asian region. But in doing so, you also penalize religious minorities such as our Church, which does not constitute any danger," notes Father Guido Trezzani, OFM, a missionary Franciscan who has spent the past 15 years in Kazakhstan. The State maintains tight control over all religious activities. Religious communities must be registered or remain illegal. No missionary activity is allowed without State authorization.

Despite this situation, Fr. Trezzani remains optimistic. "The Catholic community is receiving growing shows of confidence from the civil

authorities, and this provides for a glimmer of hope. Father Guido is the founder and director of the community, "Village of the Ark" in Talgar near Almaty, a home that welcomes disabled children, orphans or those with family difficulties.

Our life at the community is proof of that: today there are the same State welfare structures that bring us and entrust us with disabled children or those for whom they cannot care." *AF*

VATICAN

"The internet, with its capacity to overcome distances and put people in contact, also presents great possibilities for the Church and her mission. With the necessary discernment to ensure it is used intelligently and prudently, it can be a useful tool, not only for study but also for the pastoral work of future priests in various ecclesial fields, such as evangelization, missionary activity, catechesis, educational projects, and administration of institutions," said Pope Benedict XVI speaking to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education on 7 February 2011. *AF*

PANAMA

The mission of Jesus Obrero de Tolé, in Panama, was founded in 1969 by the Augustinians of the province of Madrid, Tole, a district located in the indigenous region called Comarca Ngobe Bugle, is one of seven indigenous territories in Panama. Its 123,000

inhabitants make up 65.6 per cent of the total indigenous population of the country. The mission includes both the inland part of the district, mainly inhabited by farmers, and the inland of Comarca, inhabited by the natives. To establish a closer contact with them, the Augustinians founded a second community in the mountains, in the central village of "Llano Nopo", where the missionaries welcome young people by offering them the opportunity to study.

The mission of Tolé, which today is run by the Vicariate of Panama, is situated in one of the poorest states in Panama, in a mountainous region where the indigenous population lives, maintaining their own customs, traditions and beliefs.

The mountainous terrain, coupled with fast-flowing rivers, make it a region that is difficult to access. In some communities, the missionaries come only once a year. Recently, one of the priests drowned trying to swim across the river Tabasara to go to a pastoral meeting.

Nevertheless, the missionary work carries on. Besides adult formation, meetings are also led by catechists and song animators for children and young people. The territory of the mission is divided into several areas, each of which includes a number of base ecclesial communities. The Augustinians visit them periodically for the celebration of Mass, the sacraments and other religious activities. An important part of the missionaries' work is found in projects and public works including the construction

of bridges, water canals, schools and chapels, agricultural projects, the promotion of women, and support for families. Over time, the work of the Tolé Augustinian missionaries has led in recent years to many native vocations. AF

ITALY - Turin

On Sunday September 25, 2011 the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr. Pascual Chavez Villanueva, during a Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, delivered the crucifix and the missionary mandate to 31 Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), 21 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), 5 Caritas sisters of Jesus, 3 members of the Mission of the Lay Community of Don Bosco, 15 lay members of the Salesian NGO. In total, 74 missionaries left on their missionary journeys to five continents where they will present the Gospel in the educational style of Don Bosco.

Also noteworthy is that for the first time, the missionary expedition will see the participation of the Caritas Sisters of Jesus, an institution from Japan. It recently founded its first mission in Africa, in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. Five of the organisation's sisters from South Korea, Japan and Brazil.

This marks the 142nd Salesian missionary expedition. The departing missionaries participated in a preparation course which began on 1 September at the Generalate of the Salesians in Rome where they alternated training sessions in classrooms, group work, liturgical animation and leisure. AF □

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.*

Our sincere thanks for all the favours received and in special thanksgiving for securing my job through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. *Harold Rodricks*

Sincere thanks to Our Lady for granting my petitions. I faithfully prayed the three Hail Marys. *Theresa, Chennai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many graces and favours I received through the faithful recitation of the "three Hail Marys". My husband got his visa, my sons got 1st class marks in his SSC examinations. I'm sorry for the delay. *Cynthia Menezes, Mangalore*

In September 2011 my father-in-law was travelling home to Andheri around 10pm by an auto. It was raining and the driver was speeding when suddenly he went into a huge pothole. The auto overturned but my father-in-law escaped, hardly hurting himself but my mother-in-law dislocated her arm and got severe bruises on her shoulder. She was reciting the Rosary while travelling. It was Mother Mary's protection that saved them from a serious accident. Our sincere thanks for all the other favours received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. *Theresa D'Cunha, Mumbai*

Grateful thanks to Mother Mary for the successful completion of house repairs and other favours granted. *Louella Fernandes, Mumbai*

Sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for granting my three grand-children their successful operations and two marriages and all the other favours received. *Mrs. Fila Dias, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for the many favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys - the favours are endless. Thank you Lord Jesus, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. Please continue to bless our family. *Mrs. C. D'Sa, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus for the many favours I have received. I have received numerous favours through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. I am sincerely grateful to our dear Mother for all her blessings in my financial difficulty and for my Tanya attaining a good job while in Bombay and for granting her a visa to Singapore. Thank you dearest Mother for granting our prayers. *Godwin & Seema D'Souza, Mumbai*

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Our sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady for blessing my daughter with a healthy baby boy whom they named Ronan after two girls.

Grandparents, Joyce and Christopher

One after my granddaughter was playing on a glass-topped table and all of a sudden she jumped up and down on the table and it broke into bits. She escaped with a minor bruise on her leg and her bottom. Mary was there for us.

E.M. Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for the safe delivery of my daughter in London and for blessing her with a healthy son.

Hilda D'Souza, Mumbai

Belated and grateful thanks to Our Blessed Mother for curing me of eczema which I suffered from for fifteen years. This happened on one of my trips to Goa when I visited the place where Our Lady had appeared at Batim. Thank you Blessed Mother for this and many other graces granted me.

D. Deniese, Goa

Grateful thanks to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for granting me grace, health and strength to complete my tenure of service successfully and for helping me receive my final settlement in time.

Iris Rodricks, Mumbai

Zoe and Zara are thankful to Jesus and Mary for saving their lives and the lives of their mom and dad when their car met with a serious accident. They escaped without a scratch.

Zoe, Zara, Melwyn & Hyacinth, NZ

MARY WAS THERE

On 27th January 2012 my husband and were traveling on our ACTIVA from Margao to Colva. We were traveling behind some vehicles who suddenly braked. My husband, in his nervousness braked but banged the vehicle in front of him. With the impact the vehicle fell on its side. The vehicle was damaged but my husband was safe. We always pray the 3 Hail Marys. Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother for her protection.

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

We are grateful to the Infant Jesus, Our Lady and Don Bosco for all the graces and favours we have received.

Mrs. L. Noronha, Pune

Sincere thanks to the Infant Jesus, Our Lady and Don Bosco for my safe and normal delivery and the gift of a baby girl and also for keeping my family in good health.

Vinita & Nitin D'Souza, Mumbai

Belated but sincere thanks for the many blessings and favours received from the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the intercession of Our Lady and Don Bosco.

Victor & Afra Fonseca, Mumbai

My sincere gratitude to the Holy Family, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the numerous favours received. Please continue to intercede for my family.

M. D'Souza

Thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the delivery of a healthy grand-son to Alvaro and Sandra and sincere thanks especially for helping our son Dominic to finish his studies.

Alvaro and Sandra, Goa

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for giving me a son after four daughters who I have named Savio. Thank you Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted.

Mrs. Helen Pereira

My sincere gratitude to our Almighty Father, Jesus Christ, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the gift of a normal healthy baby girl.

Perpetua D'Souza, Goa

We thank Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my son complete his MBA and for protecting him for 7 years in the UK.

Bernie/Stanislaus Tavadia, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of

Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl child and for so many favours that my family has received. Please bless and protect us everyday. Please heal the eye of my son, Nash.

Ms. Cynthia Monteiro, Mumbai

I am grateful to Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and Dominic Savio for having blessed my daughter with the gift of a baby girl after 8 long years.

Mrs. Perina V. Rodrigues, Mumbai

My grateful thanks to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and the gift of a baby boy.

Mr. & Mrs. Mukherjee, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter, for helping my son and daughter pass their final exams and for several other favours.

Mrs. Dourado, Goa

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter-in-law with a healthy and normal baby boy after six years of marriage.

A.V. Pereira, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Blessed Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the delivery of my sister-in-law after a complicated pregnancy. She delivered a normal, healthy baby boy through a C-section.

Mrs. Florence Nazareth, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JUNE 2012

The Holy Father's General Intention: *That believers may recognize in the Eucharist the living presence of the Risen One who accompanies them in daily life.*

The Holy Father's Missionary Intention: *That Christians in Europe may rediscover their true identity and participate with greater enthusiasm in the proclamation of the Gospel.*

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MARY WAS THERE

On 10th January 2007 my elder daughter was returning from work at 2.30am when he car collided with another car. All the passengers were injured but my daughter suffered only a few scratches. Thank you Mother for protecting her. In another incident on 29th January 2012 my younger daughter was about to meet with a fatal accident when the brakes of the bus she was travelling in, failed on their way to Mahabaleshwar. There were 37 students and 4 teachers on board, but by the grace of God and the protection of our Lady (whose Rosary she always carries on her person) all of them were saved. We sincerely thank you Mother for protecting our family, do continue to bless us.

*Thomas & Leena Fernandes,
Pune*

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

The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail)). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors. Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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