

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*The Virgin Mary
heard with faith
and lovingly
bore him
in her
Immaculate womb...*

*- from the Preface
of the Annunciation*

**Cover: *The Annunciation*
Philippe de Champaigne
1602-1674**



From The Editor's Desk

OUR BEST SELVES

Here at the Shrine there is always someone sitting in the confessional and if there isn't any service taking place then in the Shrine Office there is always someone ready to hear confessions. I am reminded of our good Fr. Joe Vaz sdb - a revered apostle of the confessional. Even today we need three priests to take his place in the confessional every morning and evening! He would tell us 'youngsters' "just sit in the confessional someone might be tempted to come for confession." Several of us who minister in the Shrine can vouch for the veracity of that statement.

However, leaving such reminiscences aside, I can honestly say that I have never found the experience of hearing confessions unduly tiring, even if they were long sessions prior to Easter or Christmas. The reason, I think, is not because I am blessed with great patience or with endless reserves of stamina, but because I simply never grow tired of listening to people who are open and sincere.

When penitents come to meet Christ the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation they may at first feel hesitant or even fearful. They may be weighed down by a burden of guilt or overcome by an oppressive sense of shame. They may encounter strong resistance to the truth and struggle at times to bring their failings into the light, especially those that relate to the more sensitive areas of affectivity or sexuality. But one thing is certain: they are never insincere.

Some time ago I received eloquent confirmation of this as I listened to a preacher as he began his homily saying: 'In all the years when I was a student I used to think that in confession you would see people at their worst. But when I was ordained I soon realized that in confession you see people at their best.'

Afterwards, as I reflected on this miracle of grace I called to mind those telling words which Jesus spoke to his disciples: 'Happy the eyes that see what you see'. For, like every other priest who celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I have the great privilege of ministering to my fellow sinners and I have the consolation of seeing them at their best. I see, for instance, the transformation that occurs when they follow the gentle inspiration of the Holy Spirit and entrust themselves to the boundless mercy of Christ. And, as the years pass, I understand better why 'there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.'

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

DELAYED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

"My grandfather was the head of his village for nearly twenty years," so the story goes, "until we moved to a different city. Nearly a month back, my grandfather was out for his usual evening walk to a nearby garden and failed to return home. Worried we searched frantically for him everywhere but in vain. Later in the morning, we got a call from a hospital from an unknown person who said that he had remembered my grandfather very well, at least by his peculiar childhood nickname.

Arriving out of breath at the hospital we found that my grandfather had been hit by a vehicle and it was this person from 35 years ago who helped him reach the hospital. This modern Good Samaritan had stayed with him the whole night and paid for all his hospital bills (for the system there was that no one gets treatment unless bills are paid first). All this, and he only knew my grandfather with his childhood nickname. My grandfather was not even able to recognize that person!

While thanking him profusely we offered him the money he had paid towards the hospital bills, but he wouldn't accept any. He simply said: "He was a good father to me when I needed him, today I was able to play the role of a good son to him." We were dumbfounded that a stranger could do such a kind act, but more so that my grandfather's kindness could have stayed vivid and alive

with someone for 35 years!"

The Secret?

Reading of an occurrence like this cannot but force us to ask, 'What is it that touches the hearts of people to such an extent that they will never forget a selfless act of kindness?' Amidst the ocean of emotionally wounded and needy persons we find that it is only a selfless and limitless love that will make them feel truly loved and valued for what they are. Almost every person on earth receives a fair share of love, but most often what s/he does receive is only a limited, faltering, 'self-centred' love, a love that is in fact a travesty of love and in reality a self-seeking love. This is not because people are intrinsically evil, but simply that the human heart cannot offer truly selfless love, when left to itself. Even when a person reaches out to another with genuine selflessness, his/her love cannot really 'satisfy' the other or meet his/her needs completely! There will always be something missing, something not quite according to his/her taste, which leaves the recipient feeling unfulfilled and searching for more.

The Solution?

Left to our own resources, we would inevitably offer one another only an unsatisfying love as the remedy for the ills all around us. That is why God sent his only Son Jesus in human form so that he could show us the way

to truly 'sacrifice' ourselves for others, so that they may be healed and live a genuinely human and humane life. It is this selfless and limitless love that Jesus showed for us sinners when he accepted to die for our sake on the Cross at Calvary. And that too when we hardly appreciated his gift to us! As Paul reminds us, "...and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For, while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:5-8).

Transformation Effected

Now, when a person realizes that God loves 'me' with such an extravagant love, he cannot but choose to respond in like measure because this unlimited love of God is of the kind that heals all the negative thoughts and feelings we harbour against ourselves. Because of Christ's concern for us and his readiness to 'pay the price' of our return back to the Father, we feel good about ourselves - for we reason to ourselves, 'if I were totally useless, Jesus would not have died for me, or shed the very last drop of his blood for me, would he?!' This experience is however, only the beginning of the change in our lives. We would still need to deepen it through repeated and regular reflection along the same lines. The more we reinforce the fact that basically 'I am good'



though some of my actions are certainly not good, the more we will be open to lending ourselves as instruments to allow God's Spirit to reach out others through us.

Further, the fact that God blesses others perhaps even more than we ourselves are blessed will not rankle or make us jealous because we are grateful for what we have received, knowing that every bit of it is sheer gift, totally undeserved and unmerited. That is also another reason why we are ever ready to share our blessings with others. In short, it is only unmerited, unlimited and selfless love that makes even a deeply scarred, emotionally wounded person to become whole and an asset to humanity.

Eucharistic Thrust

Where do we find this unlimited, unmerited love of Jesus for us shown more clearly than in the Eucharist? It is true that Jesus' love for us shines more brightly at Calvary. But liturgically we contemplate this 'Calvary' love only once a year for about a month of so - during Lent. And that would not be sufficient to turn things around in our distorted lives. We need a daily dose, if possible, to keep us ever reminded of this truth. The reason for this is that it has been

dinned into our heads so often that we are useless, sinful and so on, that this kind of negative thinking has become part and parcel of our very lives. Besides, once this mind-set has taken root, then every little negative experience reinforces the basic unhealthy message we get about ourselves. So, it is only through an equally strong, or better still, much stronger positive message that the negatives will be either totally removed or at least reduced to the point that they do not have too much of an influence in our lives.

Further, at each Eucharist we are reminded of what Jesus did: he took the bread, said the blessing ... We too are called to 'bless' God for all his goodness towards us. When we can do this sincerely and in some detail then we realize more clearly how much we have been favoured by God. Again, when we see others around us who are in some way deficient, we appreciate our own blessings much more. Besides, the very word 'Eucharist' means thanksgiving and so we learn at each Eucharist how we ought to give praise and thanks to God, always and everywhere. Merely saying 'Thank-you' to God is insufficient. The best thanks is given first of all, by making the maximum use of the gifts we have received and secondly by sharing these gifts with others. So, the more we use God's gifts for our benefit and also for that of others, the more grateful we show ourselves to be. And obviously, this approach enables us to be more open to receive all the further gifts God has in store for us.

One further suggestion would

be in place. When it is a question of expressing gratitude for God's gifts to us, the best approach would be to do that as soon as is possible. This is not just because if not done immediately it is likely that we will forget, or that the intensity or fervor of our giving thanks would diminish, but also because the more promptly and genuinely we thank God, the more likely are we to receive even more blessings.

Never Outdone in Generosity

In his goodness, God wants to shower his blessings on us in abundance. It is always we who in some way place restrictions on God's goodness because we are unable to receive his good gifts with the right dispositions. In this matter, it is precisely our 'passing it on' that makes all the difference. We soon learn the all-important truth is that we see ourselves as channels more than as receptacles of God's graces. Besides, God cannot see us empty of all his blessings. No sooner does he see some 'space' in our lives than he rushes to fill it up. However it would be worth remembering at the same time that if we did give only in order to receive more from the Lord, then probably we would receive nothing. The fact remains that God cannot be outdone in generosity and will always repay us a hundred times over all that we do for him.

And isn't it Jesus himself who reminds us: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren you do it to me?" And so, when we lend our faculties, our energy, our talents, our time, in fact, our very selves, would he not bless us in marvelous ways so that we

ourselves enjoy his life to the full while at the same time becoming instruments to bring that life and love to so many others around us? The key then is to bring our self-centredness and place it together with the bread and wine on the altar for Jesus not only to transform into himself but also to make of ourselves bread broken for others!

What a beautiful world would we not have if many more Christians could live in this way giving to others more than

receiving themselves! When this begins to happen we will find ourselves living the Eucharist more than merely celebrating it – which is the way things should be in our Christian lives! Through his marvelous death and resurrection Jesus has already conquered the world and all the evil in it. The challenge he places before us is to make that victory of his more clearly visible and palpable as we lend ourselves to be his living instruments in our world! □

walking with the Church



The Meaning of Lent

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *Many of my friends, even those who claim to be Christians, do not believe in Lent. They say that all that was abolished. Is that right? I would like to do the right thing but I would like to know has Lent the same importance that it used to have long ago?*

A. Thank you for your letter and your question of which the above is a brief resume. Lent has the same importance as it always had because it is a preparation for the Greatest Feast of the Christian year which is Easter. We need to prepare for Easter and we do so by prayer, fasting and almsgiving and a sincere effort to change our way of living to a way more pleasing to Christ who died for us all. This is what Lent is all about, time spent in preparation for our greatest feast. Christ fasted and prayed for forty days

and we the followers of Christ imitate him by our prayer and fasting during the forty days of Lent. In the past the Lenten fast was very severe.

However that strict discipline has been relaxed and Christians are now expected to keep the fast and abstinence only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. However all Christians are still encouraged to make a special effort at prayer and penance during this time. This may mean spending more than our customary time at prayer and making a sincere effort at curtailing our appetite for food and drink in imitation and in union with Christ who suffered and died for us. Lent has often been called 'a growing time of the spirit.' May it be so for you and for all of us.

A TIME OF REDISCOVERY

by Domenico Volpi

*One day you, Lord, you will tell me about the hour of my death.
And those words will mark the beginning or an end without end.*

*Lord, may I die hearing your loving and merciful words
let me not ignore them.*

*Help me to welcome the present, with an understanding heart,
whispering your last words on the Cross. (Karl Rahner)*

For the Church, Lent like Advent, is a "powerful season," a season of waiting and preparing and therefore a time for sacrifice, repentance and purification. But in our hedonistic society of today these words seem to strike a rather discordant note.

In the sixties I was a father with teenage children, and perhaps, recalling the privations of the war, I tried to cultivate in them a sense and perhaps a taste for little sacrifices to suitably test their willpower. I told them that the sacrifices they made when necessary would not have to be imposed on them. They were only a kind of training.

Forty years have passed, and psychologists are warning us not give our children complexes with all our prohibitions. Some educators and sociologists even preach sexual freedom and other fancy modern theories, exalting rebellion and disobedience while our consumer society encourages the instant gratification of all our desires. Sin and the concept of sin have nearly disappeared because all we need to sanitize ourselves is the latest deodorant or detergent.

So, is it fair to ask: how do we speak today about sacrifice and

how do we practice it?

Lent lasts for forty days - as many days as Jesus spent in the desert before he took on his mission of salvation. It is a sacred number in the Bible: the Deluge lasted for forty days, Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai in the presence of the Lord, besides it was the temporal distance between the Resurrection and the Ascension. It was for forty years that the Jews remained in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. It was the duration of the reign of Solomon. In fact, the number forty appears innumerable times in the Bible.

In the past, when times were tough and people were pious and fervent, the Church imposed strict rules about some things: penances, even harsh ones like fasting and austerity on monks in order to subdue the instincts of "brother ass" i.e. the body; and sobriety on the bourgeois who were supposed to abstain from meat and forego hunting as a sport reserved for the nobility. This saved them from gout and other ailments. Fishermen abstained from fishing allowing the replenishment of marine life and farmers in this season promoted the fertility of farm animals. They were also

forbidden from any forms of public entertainment; that was why people wore purple, characteristic of the season of Lent. It was a symbol of bad luck in places like theatres and arenas.

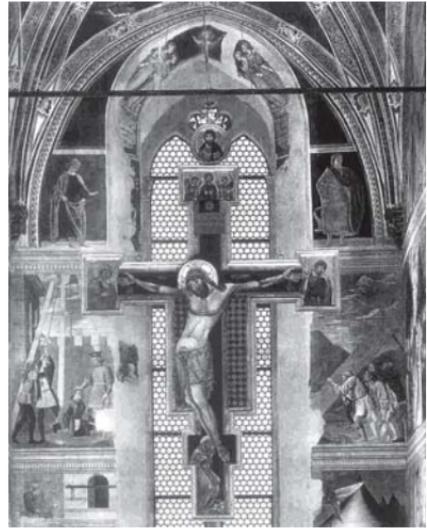
Today we are pampered, with just two days of fasting and abstinence (which are official) we are allowed all the culinary delights we crave. How can we live like this in Lent and be spiritually alert at home with our families, helping us and our children to be aware of this season of grace?

There could be moderation in what we eat, both as regards our choices (holding back on certain things) for example, fried and fast foods, buying only seasonal produce and giving the children only what is nutritious though sometimes it is unwelcome both in quality and quantity.

But there are things we can fast and abstain from that are both modern and necessary.

Fasting from the noise, the noise of everyday life like the turned-on TV and headphones at full volume, frivolous talk, gossip, verbal bullying that sometimes hurts more than physical assault in order to find silence in meditation and prayer.

To abstain from TV: fix a day in the week when you won't switch it on just so that you may rediscover the joys of reading a good book or be able to have a heart-to-heart talk with your own child, teenage or spouse rather than looking at the TV screen all the time. You will rediscover the liberating feeling of a 'text-free' existence which allows you to discover that it is actually not necessary. These 'disciplines' are



*The Chapel of St. Francis
of Assisi in Arezzo*

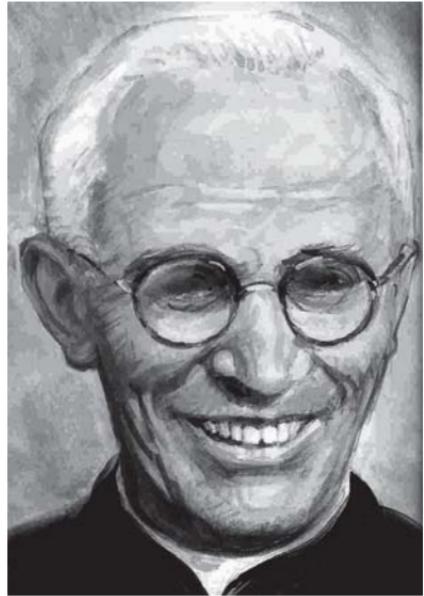
not easy to obtain, but they serve to make us aware of what we have all become slaves to, leading us to a continuous hype and craving for gratification of one kind or another. There is yet another problem: the media and secular society often present Christianity as the religion of renunciation, but - if properly understood - is a religion that offers us proposals for living a wholesome life.

Lent, therefore, must not be celebrated as a time of "deprivation" but rather as a gesture of love and a time of rediscovery, of yearning for personal growth and enrichment. Modern man and even modern children live everyday "besides themselves" distracted by so many voices and blinded by so many bright lights.

Here is an opportunity to retrieve yourself and "replenish" empty selves. □

AUGUSTUS ARRIBAT 1879 - 1963

Joseph Augustus Arribat was born on December 17, 1879 at Trédou in the canton of Aveyron (France), to the family of farmers, poor materially but rich in Christian values. The family's poverty forced the young Augustus to start school only at the age of 18 at the Salesian Oratory in Marseilles. Augustus asked to enter the novitiate and become a Salesian. In 1902, the radical Combes expelled 30.000 from France and so the novitiate moved to Avigliana in Piedmont. Augustus received his cassock there at the hands of Blessed Michael Rua thus becoming a Salesian at the age of 25. He was ordained priest in 1912. During the First World War religious were again expelled from their institutes and compelled to defend the homeland. Together with other religious Augustus risked his life working as a nurse and an ambulance man. After the war, Fr. Arribat continued to work intensively in La Navarre animating the faith of the youngsters till the end of 1926 when he went to Nizza where he remained for six years till 1931. Out of obedience he accepted to become the rector of the house of La Navarre in 1931 where he was also entrusted with the parish of St. Isidore in the Sauvebonne valley. His parishioners called him "the saint of the valley." Augustus was



kind and the people loved to be in his presence. Both youngsters and adults flocked to him for confession because he understood them and forgave them; he never judged them. Many there recall his spirit of temperance. The most significant time was his tenure in Villemur during the dangers of the Second World War. German soldiers of the SS occupied the school where he hid Jewish children. A short distance from the Salesian house he frequently met Spanish workers who were militant communists. He greeted them by doffing his cap and they were impressed by his Salesian loving kindness. He had a candid aspect and always had a smile on his face. His asceticism and apostolic dynamism reminded one of the Salesian motto: "work and temperance" that Don Bosco constantly recommended to his Salesians. Fr. Arribat returned to La Navarre in 1953 and remained there till his death on March 19, 1963. He is buried at La Navarre. □



FR. LIONEL BRAGANZA, SDB

*Principal and Vice-Rector in the Indian English Academy School,
and Episcopal Vicar for Youth in the Vicariate of Kuwait*

No problem father! was my favourite reply; but I had a problem...I failed in Std. VII, but this was only the tip of the iceberg. I was the naughtiest of five kids and was a bully in school, a thief (stamps and chocolates) in particular, a liar of sorts? Shocked! But that's it in a nutshell.

Every afternoon the building boys would get together and play a number of pranks. I never took studies seriously and would get single digit marks in Hindi and Marathi. I repeated std. VII. But one teacher called me by name and told me "Lionel, come to my class, you will not fail again". That's where the transformation began...

My parents were very religious and we had to say family prayers everyday even when we returned very late. Mummy and daddy would say the angelus at 5.00 am. Mummy taught by example to always have great concern and respect for the less fortunate. She encouraged us to serve at the altar and always spoke well of priests.

I joined Don Bosco Lonavla in 1965 and was a boarder till 1970. My mom was hesitant to write to Rector of Lonavla (the Salesian Apostolic School) because I was such a brash brat. Well I took up the matter in my hands and wrote a small letter to him and he immediately replied with a graceful welcome. My experience of the Salesians was a tremendous one. When I finished Std X, Fr. Olivio Miranda called me to the



office and asked me if I wanted to be a priest. I immediately said, NO PROBLEM FATHER and till today I can say No Problem. Praise the Lord!

After my ordination I was given my first posting as Vice Principal of Don Bosco Matunga where I was for two years. Today, I have completed 30 years of my Priesthood and 40 years of Religious profession. I am the Principal of the Indian English Academy School, Kuwait having a most fulfilling experience of my life working with kids from 25 different countries.

I am a happy Priest of the Lord and would love to continue being one all the days of my life. Being in the counseling field and listening to parents and teenagers, I feel I have much work still to do in His Kingdom. □

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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. JOHN OF GOD (1495-1550) FOR LOVE OF GOD AND OTHERS (March 8)

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

Sometimes it is tempting to believe that all the progress we see around us began with the Age of Enlightenment, roughly from the 1700s onwards; that the so called great achievements were possible only when reason was freed from the shackles of religious belief. But that was not so.

For example, look at our modern hospitals. About two hundred years before the Age of Enlightenment there was a saint, John of God, whose extraordinary insights, keen intelligence and love for God and for the sick had a great role to play in that field.

Up to the 1500s hospitals were meant for all kinds of patients who were literally 'dumped' together. One can only imagine the consequences.

John of God, however, in the first hospital that he started in 1539, in Granada, Spain, was surprisingly organized. His hospital was divided into departments according to diseases. Each patient was given a clean bed (not at all obvious until then). There was a high standard of cleanliness and he ensured that patients were given meals at



regular intervals. The patient was above all, a person to be loved, treated and cured especially by loving him/her.

For those with mental illnesses, John of God was even stricter, being aware of their condition himself. He stripped them of the stigma that easily stuck to them because of which they were rejected. They were

subjected to coercive methods such as floggings and shackling. For him, the sick were even more dear since they were mentally more fragile, more in need of care and human affection.

Patients in his hospitals were not just bodies that needed to be healed or persons to be respected, they were souls to be saved. Because of this his preoccupation was for an assistance of a spiritual nature. Someone wrote that **“in hospital management, John of God merits a place that can never be erased.”** That is enough for us to get to know him more closely.

For the sick and the poor

Juan Ciudad lived just 55 years of which it took him a good 43 years to find his real vocation and the rest of the time he grew in holiness through his great love of God translated into service and assistance towards the sick and the poor. He was born on the 18th March 1495 in Portugal. We find him next at the border of Spain at the age of eight where he was adopted by the Count of Oropeza who gave him a good basic education, both scholastic and religious. He was a good lad and reliable that was why the count put him in charge of his flock of sheep and later entrusted him with the care and the management of his estate with the added prospect of marrying his daughter. This gives us an idea of the great respect he had earned in the count's estimation. But the count did not know him well enough. After 22 years, the yearning for freedom and curiosity overtook him and he joined the army and left for the north of Spain to fight the French against the armies of Charles V.

For two innocent misdemeanours he was expelled from the army. But then again in 1532 he enlisted to fight against the Turkish Muslims who had besieged Vienna, their first attempt to conquer Europe (they would attempt, unsuccessfully, 40 years later at Lepanto by sea, by land and again they would besiege Vienna in 1683).

To Serve Christ in the Poor

In the following years we find him in Andalusia, then in Gibraltar and from there, with a Portuguese family in Ceuta (Africa) after which he returns to Spain, adapting to circumstances, and consequently learning several skills. John of God could be named patron of workers and a model for our post-modern world. What we need now more than ever, is creativity, a spirit of adaptation, flexibility, a willingness to change one's profession given the continuously changing landscape of employment. During his life he learned many trades: a shepherd, farm hand, bricklayer, soldier, salesman, bookseller, nurse, administrator, skilled in business-hospital management, and beggar (to pay off his debts). Not bad for flexibility (versatility and professionalism).

But the real breakthrough or his conversion came in 1538, in Granada, and through an instrument that the Holy Spirit used was a preacher, a certain John of Avila (now Blessed). Our dear Saint listened and was conquered by the idea of suffering for the love of Jesus Christ, to suffer with Him. Struck by this idea, he began to take on strange behaviour, such as breast-beating, screaming in pain,

pulling at his hair as though he seemed to have gone out of his mind. After a while people took pity on him, detained him and brought him to John of Avila. They assured him that he was a spiritual director. He suddenly learned that those suffering fools needed to be treated with dignity and understanding.

He worked for those who were his fellow patients and for other patients in other hospitals in Granada. He made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe (Spain), to receive her counsel. This came in the form of a vision: Our Lady gave him the clothes with which he had to dress the baby Jesus. John knew that his mission would be to dress and to look after the sick and the poor, in whom Christ himself was present.

Good to others as to oneself

In a second vision the Madonna, holding a crown of thorns, said to him: "It is with thorns, through work and suffering that you must win the crown that my son has prepared for you." And those thorns were the many hospitals that John founded.

When the bishop and other dignitaries of the city summoned him to question him, he showed up wearing the clothes of a mendicant that were given to him a short time earlier. The bishop encouraged him, helped him materially and morally, and also suggested that he wear a habit and a badge. That was when he donned a religious habit as a symbol of his consecration to others for the love of God. John and his collaborators accepted that. John now took on the title "of God," almost like a surname.

Thus was born the Congregation of the Brothers of St. John of God (best known as *Fatebenefratelli*), so famous in the field of hospital administration. They are called so because of the expression the Saint used when begging: "You do well brothers, for the love of God and for yourselves." He often said to potential donors who gave him something – what they gave him, they gave Christ who would recompense them abundantly.

John went ahead through great difficulties, always trusting in his benefactors, and especially in "Christ will provide." After thirteen years of hard work and penance he was now at the end. Before his death he had to face another criticism, rather bitter. He was summoned by the Archbishop who told him that the accusation that was circulating was that John made his houses available for women of ill repute and so he was unworthy of any assistance. He threw himself at the feet of the bishop, saying: "The Son of God came for sinners and we are forced to strive for their conversion. I would be unfaithful if I cannot do the same, but **I guarantee you that in my hospital there is no evil person except myself who am unworthy to eat the bread of the poor.**" That was the response of a real saint. And the evil voices of slander ceased.

Knowing that he was going to die, he asked to be left alone. He got up from his bed and went to kneel before the altar, ending his earthly experience praying on his knees. It was on March 8, 1550 that John of God died, but his memory and his example lives on to this day. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Tough Teacher

A school teacher injured his back and had to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. It fit under his shirt and was not noticeable at all.

On the first day of the term, still with the cast under his shirt, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in school. Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, he opened the window as wide as possible and then busied himself with desk work.

When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he took the desk stapler and stapled the tie to his chest.

Discipline was not a problem from that day forth!

4 Waiting Fathers

Four expectant fathers were in a Minnesota hospital waiting room while their wives were in labour.

The nurse comes in and tells the first man, "Congratulations, You're the father of twins."

"What a coincidence!" the man exclaims. "I work for the Minnesota Twins baseball team!"

The nurse returns a short while later and tells the second man, "You are the father of triplets."

"Wow, what a coincidence!" he replies. "I work for the 3M Corporation."

When the nurse comes again, she tells the third man that his wife has given birth to quadruplets.

"Another coincidence!" he tells her. "I work for the Four Seasons Hotel!"

At this point, the fourth guy faints. When he comes to, the others ask him what was wrong.

He moans, "I work for Seven-Eleven!"

Reward Change

A lady lost her handbag at the mall. An honest young lad found it and returned it to her.

Looking in her purse, she said, "Hmm, that's funny. When I lost my bag, there was a \$20 bill in it. Now there are twenty \$1 bills."

The boy replied, "That IS funny. The last time I found a lady's purse, she didn't have any change for a reward."

Bigger and Bigger

A Texan farmer goes to Australia for a vacation. There he meets an Aussie farmer and gets talking.

The Aussie shows off his big wheat field and the Texan says, "Oh! We have wheat fields that are at least twice as large".

Then they walk around the ranch a little, and the Aussie shows off his herd of cattle. The Texan immediately says, " We have longhorns that are at least twice as large as your cows".

The conversation has, meanwhile, almost died when the Texan sees a group of kangaroos hopping through the field. He asks, "And what are those"?

The Aussie replies with an incredulous look, "Don't you have any grasshoppers in Texas"? □



ON THE MOUNTAIN

(Mark 9:2-10)

by Carlo Broccardo

Each year, the second Sunday of Lent brings us back to the Mount of the Transfiguration where Jesus – in fact – was transfigured in the presence of three of his disciples, Peter, James and John. Rereading this passage, which, in principle, we already know, allows us to decipher some bits that may be difficult especially from the point of view of the three disciples of Jesus.

First of all, Jesus takes them with him and leads them up a high mountain, apart, by themselves. In ancient cultures high mountains were privileged places where divinity could be encountered. That was how it was with Moses in the book of the Exodus where he met God on Mount Horeb. The Gospel of Mark tells us of two other instances of Jesus going up mountains: the first is immediately after a tiring day when he had multiplied the loaves and the fish after which he retired by himself to pray (cf. Mk. 6:46); and before that, when from among his disciples he chose his twelve apostles. He went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted to be with him, (Mk 3.13). Going up a high mountain, separating themselves from the others, they were able to get closer

to God. In fact, Peter, James and John would be alone with Jesus for a very intense experience of God. On this very high mountain, which tradition has identified as Tabor, the three disciples saw Jesus “transfigured.” What did that mean? The verb literally means “a change of form, shape and appearance.” Mark immediately made it clear, saying that “His clothes became shining white.” Not that Jesus was unrecognizable. He remained himself but much brighter. In the Bible, whiteness and luminosity are the colours of God, an expression of his heavenly glory. For example, the prophet Daniel writes: “As I looked, thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days took his seat (God). His raiment was white as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool” (Dan 7.9). Therefore, Jesus is revealed to the three disciples in all his glory, his splendour was more than human.

In addition, Peter, James and John saw two other personages from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah. They lived many centuries earlier and according to Jewish tradition were swept up to heaven (Elijah even before he died). The fact that Jesus was speaking to them and being dressed in which was a reaffirmation that Jesus was already in heaven even though he was still standing before his disciples. And even here, in flesh and blood, he was already clothed in heavenly splendour while still on this earth. With his feet on the ground he was already in communion with the saints in heaven.

These early events upset the three disciples more than a little.

Mark says that they were very frightened, bewildered. They perceived the beauty of what was happening but could not understand. Then there were two other things that happened that were no less disconcerting: "And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, and a voice came out of the cloud: 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him.'" The cloud was a sign of God's presence already from the book of the Exodus: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light" (Exodus 13:21). So, the voice that came from the cloud was that of God. Not only was Jesus transfigured and perceived by his disciples but God himself "descended" in the cloud and made his presence felt.

That day, on the high mountain, Peter, James and John had a powerful experience of God. In fact, we notice that all their senses were involved. They saw the resplendent Jesus while he was conversing with Moses and Elijah and while they were enveloped in the cloud, they heard the voice of God. An intense experience, but very brief; Peter wanted to improvise three tents but he only had time to formulate his proposal when "suddenly looking around they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only." Jesus, for a moment, had led them up a high mountain by themselves, separating them from the other disciples, bringing them closer to God, but that was not to be their vocation. A few verses later they needed to descend and once more join the others.

With this episode of the Transfiguration in the ninth chapter of Mark we are more than half way through his Gospel (there are sixteen chapters in all). The disciples did not have an easy time. They left everything to follow Jesus and from the beginning things began to escalate, the enthusiasm of the crowds and the criticism from the scribes and Pharisees too. But over time difficulties begin to arise, despite all the miracles of Jesus there were those who still said: "He is only a man" and at best, they thought he was just a prophet who was confused with John the Baptist. Still others even said he was an imposter, an emissary of the devil. Eventually they would kill him and Jesus began to tell his disciples this very openly.

It is at this precise point in the Gospel that Jesus is transfigured; Moses and Elijah are talking to him, and God himself intervenes to say: "This is my Son." For Peter, James and John this is a breath of fresh air, a flash to illumine the dark sky and the gathering storm. The Transfiguration is an exceptional event, a moment of special intimacy with God giving his vocation a singular clarity and the disciples did well to follow Christ - he is truly the Son of God. It was the same for Moses on Mount Horeb, for Gideon at the threshing floor behind his house and for Elijah when he hid in the cave. It will be a moment of light for our lives, a light that might never occur again but which will be enough to brighten all our days and that memory will be enough to bring us peace. □

A LIGHT MORE INTENSE

by His Holiness Pope Francis

On 20 March, the Second Sunday of Lent, before leading the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter's Square the Holy Father commented on the Transfiguration, recounted in this Sunday's Liturgy. The following is a translation of the Pope's Reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday, the Second Sunday of Lent, is called "the Sunday of the Transfiguration" because the Gospel recounts this mystery of Jesus' life. After Jesus had foretold his Passion to the disciples, "he took with him Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" (Mt 17:1-2). According to the senses the light of the sun is the brightest light known in nature but, according to the spirit, the disciples briefly glimpsed an even more intense splendour, that of the divine glory of Jesus which illumines the whole history of salvation. St. Maximus Confessor says that "(the Lord's) garments appear white, that is to say, the words of the Gospel will then be clear and distinct, with nothing concealed" (*Ambiguum* 10: PG 91, 1128 B).

The Gospel tells that beside the transfigured Jesus "there appeared... Moses and Elijah, talking with him" (Mt 17:3); Moses and Elijah, figure of the Law and of the Prophets. It was then that Peter, ecstatic, exclaimed "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Mt 17:4). However St. Augustine commented, saying that we have only one dwelling place, Christ: "he is the Word of God, the Word of God in the Law, the Word of God in the Prophets" (*Sermo De Verbis Ev.* 78:3: PL 38, 491).

In fact, the Father himself proclaims: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Mt 17:5). The Transfiguration is not a change in Jesus but the revelation of his divinity: "the profound interpenetration of his being with God,



WISE THAN THE SUN

Pope Benedict XVI

which then becomes pure light. In his oneness with the Father, Jesus is himself 'light from light'" (Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, Doubleday, New York, 2007, p. 310).

Peter, James and John, contemplating the divinity of the Lord, are ready to face the scandal of the Cross, as it is sung in an ancient hymn: "You were transfigured on the mountain and your disciples, insofar as they were able, contemplated your glory, in order that, on seeing you crucified, they would understand that your Passion was voluntary and proclaim to the world that you are truly the splendour of the Father."

Dear friends, let us too share in this vision and in this supernatural gift, making room for prayer, and for listening to the Word of God. Further, especially in this Season of Lent, I urge you, as the Servant of God Paul VI wrote, "to respond to the divine precept of penitence by some voluntary act, apart from the renunciation imposed by the burdens of everyday life" (Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini*, 17 February 1966, III, c: AAS 58 [1966], 182).

Let us invoke the Virgin Mary so that she may help us always to listen to and follow the Lord Jesus, even to the Passion and the Cross, in order to also participate in his glory.

After the Angelus the Pope said:

I am pleased to greet the English speaking pilgrims present at this Angelus prayer. As we continue our journey through Lent, today at Mass we recall the Transfiguration of the Lord and how it prepared the Apostles for the coming scandal of the Cross.

Strengthened by our faith in Jesus, true God and true man, may we be inspired, not scandalized, by the Cross given to our Saviour and to our fellow Christians who suffer with him throughout the world. Especially during this holy season, I invoke upon you and your families God's abundant blessings! I wish you all a good Sunday. Thank you all. □



THE UNSEEN GUEST

From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories

Have you ever been in a home, and seen on a wall a plaque that read: "Christ is the unseen Guest in this house"? The Kennedy family, father, mother and young son Chuck had a plaque like that on the wall of their home, in their dining room. They went even farther, they kept up even the age old custom of setting an extra place for Christ.

One morning they were having breakfast as usual when all of a sudden they saw, sitting in the extra chair at the table Christ himself! They were too dumbfounded to say a word. Christ smiled and motioned them to go on with their breakfast. That morning they had only porridge, toast and coffee and yet it seemed to them the most delicious food they had ever eaten. The wonder of Christ's presence filled the whole room and warmed their hearts to a peace they had never known. After they finished eating, they sat still, looking at the Lord. Christ said to Mr. Kennedy:

"It is your time to leave for work." "I don't have anything important to do at the office today." "I won't even have to go to the store, we have enough in the house to eat." "It won't hurt me to miss one day of school. I haven't been absent once this semester."

Three answers that bespoke of just wanting to be with Christ and nothing more.

Christ continued, with his gentle yet firm voice: "No, go about your work as you would do on any other day."

They did not want to leave, but Christ assured them: "I shall be here again when you come home. If

today you would do everything you know how I would want it done."

Mrs. Kennedy was so excited. Her mind raced to supper that evening as she heard Christ say: "I shall be with you at supper time if all things go well today."

A minute after he had finished speaking, there was only the empty place at the table. But the peace of his presence lingered in the room and hovered over their hearts. The boy started off for school, whistling. The Father kissed the mother tenderly before he left for the office. The mother sang as she washed the dishes and made the beds. Then she took her market bag and walked to the department store at the end of the road. She was picking up a loaf of bread when she saw old Mrs. Willis enter. The mother stepped quickly behind a tall stack of brooms.

"Oh, old Mrs. Willis again," thought Mrs. Kennedy, "if I get caught she'll talk my ears off. She's always picking my shoulder to cry on! Not today, when all I want to do is to get back home to that wonderful peace. Christ is coming home this evening if...oh, oh what would HE want me to do now?"

She walked up and wished the old lady: "Good morning, Mrs. Willis." "Oh, is that you Mrs. Kennedy? I thought that was you, but I wasn't sure my eyes are going back on me again those glasses the doctor gave me, don't do me any good at all would you read the label on this can for me? They keep making the print on these things smaller all the time. Is this green peas in brine?" Mrs. Kennedy assured her it was. But that was not what old Mrs. Willis wanted so she

started again." "Oh then I don't want that, I don't like brine I wanted baked beans in tomato sauce. I was getting something in case one of the children came. Clive said he was coming for my birthday but then his oldest boy got a ear infection or something." Mrs. Kennedy tried to be sympathetic. Old Mrs. Willis continued to mumble, leaning on Mrs. Kennedy's arm: "I wish I lived next door to the super market, gives me the backache every time I carry these bags I wish one of the children lived near enough to bring me in the car." Mrs. Kennedy said simply: "Why don't you put your groceries into my bag and I'll walk home with you." Mrs. Willis seemed embarrassed: "Oh, no, wouldn't that be out of your way?" Mrs. Kennedy assured her that it was just at the other end of the street on the second floor.

Mrs. Willis didn't leave Mrs. Kennedy's arm and she continued: "Well I'm really grateful you could find me, I sure do thank you. I wish I lived close by. Could you pick up one more can of baked beans for me with tomato sauce, you know I always keep something in the house in case one of the children come. I've been losing my appetite lately it doesn't taste any good when you have to eat alone. Clive said he was coming for my birthday but his boy got a ear infection or something" and the story started again. Mrs. Kennedy listened patiently till they reached the cashier and paid their bills.

Mrs. Kennedy listened to the story she heard every time she met Mrs. Willis then she helped the old woman home with her groceries. She even promised to stop in the next day for a cup of tea.

When she came back to her house the telephone rang, it was her daughter-in-law, Lucille: "Mum,

this is Lucille." "Oh it's you, what happened to you the other night?" "What night?" Lucille seemed to have forgotten that they had promised to come over and both she and Mike her husband didn't turn up.

Mrs. Kenney just said: "We had the Stanleys over and we waited two hours for you."

Lucille didn't think it was anything, not keeping an appointment. "Oh, you shouldn't have done that!" "We'd expected you, you should have phoned. We hadn't a word, until just now."

"Oh, I'm sorry mother, but Mike was late coming home from work and when you have three babies to wash and dress before you can take them any place... I've been meaning to phone you but it's like I said, when you have three babies...." "How's everything otherwise?"

Lucille got down to telling Mrs. Kennedy that her husband wanted her to go out and buy herself something to add to her wardrobe but Lucille complained that with the youngsters around it wasn't possible. Lucille sounded like she was getting emotional. Just then she seemed preoccupied and she said: "Oh, wait a minute I can't see Bobby. He must be up to something."

Mrs. Kennedy's mind began to race again: "Oh yes, she can telephone fast enough when she wants something if I went over. I won't get over until supper time oh...oh, this is no way to get the Lord to come back to supper. He wouldn't want me to think this way about Lucille; stay angry with her poor Mike. No use making things harder for him maybe Lucille will grow up someday good hearted, just no brains. I should do something to show her I'm not mad at her anymore; a little thing like this, and keep the Lord away?"

Lucille was back on the phone

hysterical: "Oh mum! I don't know what I'm going to do,"

"What's the matter, Lucille?"

"I was going to make salad ready for dinner and Bobby found a bottle of chilli sauce in the kitchen. He poured the whole bottle of sauce on the salad." "Lucille get ready to go to town, I'll be over on the next bus." Mrs. Kennedy gently put the phone down.

About the time Mrs. Kennedy started for the grocery store, Mr. Kennedy arrived at the office building where he worked. He still glowed with the wonder of the morning - Christ had sat at their table and he might come back in the evening! He knew that the Lord would want him to put in an honest day's labour. About 10 o'clock he saw a man walk into the office slowly and slumped into a chair, two desks away.

It was poor Mr. Collins, thought Mr. Kennedy his wife must be sick again. He thought: "Maybe I should...no, no, let me stay out of this. It'll cost me, can't really do anything for him. Looking at him I realize how lucky I've been. I even had Christ at my house! Oh, I've got to do something for the poor chap! Well, now here goes."

"Collins, Collins?" "Oh, good morning, Mr. Kennedy I...I didn't even hear you, I was miles away." "How are things going?" "OK" "How's the wife?" "Fine, thanks," "Doctors didn't find any malignancy yet?" "They are not sure yet." "Is she back in the hospital?" "Supposed to go at the end of this week" "Means you'll have to have somebody to look after the kids." "We'll get someone." "Sure, it'll only be a question of time till everything straightens out." "Yes, sometimes these humps are a little rough to get over financially, I mean." "I can make out little lift over the rough spots never hurt

anybody let me offer you a little something, you can pay it back anytime. Say \$100.00?" "Oh no, no, I just couldn't." "You have to think of the family." "Yes, that's right, I do. Thank you Mr. Kennedy. It will help."

Mr. Kennedy worked through the afternoon with only a 10-minute coffee break. The thought of Christ coming in the evening spurred him on. By 5 o'clock he could hardly wait to get home and see if the Lord was there. He was clearing his desk when Mr. Williams, the office supervisor walked up to him.

"Hey, Kennedy, I was in the chief's office, I happened to notice an authorization for 200 new desks."

"Yes, Mr. Williams, they are for the branch offices that are opening next month. I'm going to contact the salesmen for tenders tomorrow. Maybe I can give you a little help on that." "Thanks, but I don't think it'll be too big a job." "My brother-in-law works for the Ajax furniture company. He's a salesman for office equipment. Now he could probably give you a good price on those desks." "Maybe he could. Of course he'll have a chance to submit a bid."

"Well, now why go through all that trouble it'll come out to about the same thing any how. This way you can help yourself a little, eh?" Mr. Williams gave him a knowing wink. "I can?"

"This is the way people in your position do it all the time. You might as well get the benefit before somebody else does. You could use a little." Mr. Williams looked away and said: "Excuse me, there's somebody waiting to see me. I'll be back."

Mr. Kennedy thought to himself: "You don't have to send me a telegram. Williams, wants a break for brother-in-law and break for me just a couple of

100 more on the bill for the company. Like you said, William's been doing this all the time. Well, why not? And then you too get something out of it. OK! Ah, what's the use of trying to call black, white? It's dishonest! It's a crooked deal! And the Lord wouldn't come back."

Williams was back: "As I was saying about those two hundred desks..." "Mr. Williams I think I can get a pretty good price from the bids." Kennedy said curtly. "Well, I guess, some people have to learn the hard way." Williams was a bit cynical.

In the mean time, the boy Chuck was at school. What he had to do was simple: keep his mind on his books. Somehow it always seemed the hardest thing to do. But it was worth it, today of all days to have the Lord come to supper. Chuck had never known a school day to go faster. He was hurrying off the grounds at three when he heard.

"Hey, Chuck, come here, Dale's got his brother's new car we're going driving down the Pacific sea face." "Oh no, count me out today, Eddie, I've got to get home." "Why? Is it because your father told you not to go racing in other people's cars? So did mine, so did Bill's." "So did the Police," Chuck continued. "Just because they had a couple of accidents on the sea face. They have accidents every place." "Go racing where it's safe. Nobody's had a bad accident there." "That's kid's stuff. What's the matter? You're frightened?" "I told you I've got to get home. Sometimes even *you* have to go home." "Not *this* afternoon I don't. I called up my mother and told her I'm going to a basketball game you can do the same thing. You'll still get home in time for dinner. Hey! Wait a minute there's Larry, I want to catch up with him before he gets away." Eddie ran off.

"Sure I could tell mum anything and she would believe me. I've never lied to her. She wouldn't think I would. Go and the Lord won't come home. Keeping away for Bill and Eddie? No wonder I can never get along with them."

"Ok Chuck, Bill's waiting for us." Eddie shouted. Chuck shouted back, he wasn't going. All they did was call him 'chicken' and drove off.

At suppertime, Mrs. Kennedy used her finest Irish linen tablecloth she set the extra place with the best china and silver. They sat down at the table and waited, but the extra place remained empty. Mr. Kennedy drank a glass of water slowly, finally with a little sigh he bowed his head and started to say grace as he finished they all heard another voice add: 'Amen!' They lifted their heads and there HE was sitting in the extra place - Christ the Lord. He smiled and their hearts sang. They were too happy to speak. Supper passed like a dream after it was over they found words.

"Lord you came back!" said Mr. Kennedy.

"We so hoped you would," Mrs. Kennedy added.

It was Chuck the Lord looked at: "You did just like you said."

"If everything went well, and it did go well. You've had a good day." The Lord smiled.

"We only did what we were supposed to do." Mr. Kennedy didn't find anything odd.

"You have done God's will, not your own. It was not easy." The Lord said.

"It could have been worse." Pictures of the day flashed across the Kennedy family.

"It doesn't matter now." Mr. Kennedy said rather lightly.

"This is worth anything," said Chuck.

(Continued on pg. 29)

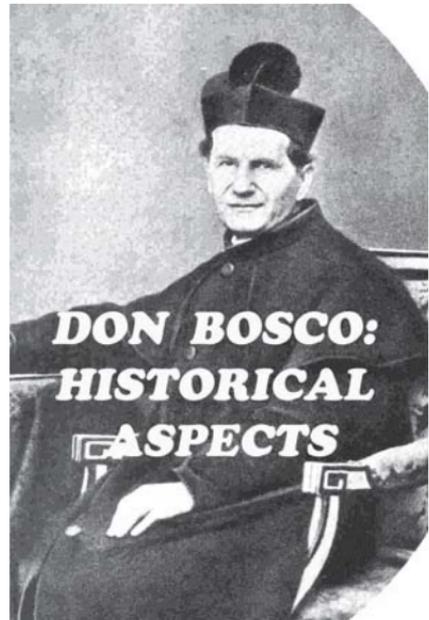
DON BOSCO'S LIFE AT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AND HIS SEMINARY LIFE

3

by Fr. Elias Dias

One day, the well-known and learned Cardinal Pie of Poitiers, told this story to his collaborators. There was once an orphan boy who wanted to be a priest but he had no means. A gentle lady who was selling flowers in the open compound of the Cathedral helped him to become a priest. Who was that priest? That poor orphan boy was none other than myself, your cardinal and the gentle lady is Madame Marietta who is sitting on the first pew. God gives a vocation but many people help to nurture this vocation.

On August 16, 1831 John reached his 16th birthday. His mother, more than anyone else, understood her son's hunger for an education. She was determined to send him to school in order to fulfill his ambition. She thought of the Public school of Chieri but she was very poor. John's family reached the decision that he should enroll in the public secondary school at Chieri. John began to collect money and things necessary for his room and board. Fr. Joseph Dassano, the pastor of Castelnuovo and local Catholics encouraged him with financial help. At the end of October John obtained the required *admittatur* (permission to be enrolled) from the pastor and on November 4, 1831 he walked the 8 miles to Chieri with a fellow



student named John Filippello who was also to be John's companion in the seminary and his life-long friend. On the way John told him that he was going to be a priest.

Fr. Dassano introduced Margaret to Lucy Pianta whose son John Baptist was also going to Chieri for studies. John enrolled at the public school in Chieri in 1831 and he boarded with Lucy Matta. The scholastic programme was confirmed to the requirements, set by the *Regie Patenti* (school laws). The students had to complete a six years programme: three years of Latin, Grammar, Humanities and Rhetoric. John was admitted to the last grade. He completed the first three grades in just ten months (1831-1832). His teachers were Frs. Valerian Pugnetti, Placidus Valimberti and Cleric Vincent Cima. John amazed the class and Professor Cima by reciting the day's lesson from memory having forgotten to bring his book. The

teacher was going through a Latin passage from Cornelius Nepos' life Angerilaus and he asked John to read and explain the passage. He took his grammar book and read the passage and explained it while all students laughed. The teacher came to know the reason for their mirth and Prof. Cima told him to put his remarkable talent to good use. At this time he organized the "Happy Times Association," in 1833 not in 1832 as mentioned in *The Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco*. This Association followed two basic rules: Good Christian behaviour and exact performance of one's scholastic and religious duties. John became the Association's leader.

In 1832 he was admitted to his Grammar year and Fr. Hyacinth Giussiana was his teacher. On completion of the lower section the examination was given by Fr. Dr. Joseph Gazzani. Everyone was promoted only John failed because he had passed his work to the others students. Fr. Giussiana interceded for him and gave him another examination which he passed with full marks and won an exemption from the tuition fee. John learnt how to deal with his fellow students: good, indifferent or bad. He resisted their bad suggestions. On August 4, 1833 at the age of 18 John received his Confirmation in the parish church of Buttigliera from Archbishop John Anthony Gianotti of Sassari.

In 1833-1834 he started his Humanities year. In the summer of 1833 Lucy's son had to quit the school but Lucy did not return to Chieri. For a time, John slept in the stable of a certain Michael Cavallo and looked after his horse. He also did some work in his vineyard. During his Humanities year he



became a boarder and a part-time waiter at the bar of John Pianta. Fr. Peter Banaudi was his teacher and advised him to skip the first Rhetoric year and give his first year Philosophy exams which he did successfully. At this time he studied the Italian, Greek and Latin classics borrowed from Elijah Foa's bookshop where he read one volume a day. This avid reading damaged his health. One day John met a remarkably good looking Jewish boy named Jonah with whom he struck up a friendship and who was later baptized on August 10, 1834.

On returning to Chieri in November 1834 John decided to stay on for the Rhetoric year. He found lodgings with the tailor Thomas Cumino for 8 lire a month and for a few months he slept in a small humid room. At that time Fr. Joseph Cafasso, who had been a boarder in that same house urged Mr. Cumino to give him better place. John played "white and black magic" on his landlord, the tailor Mr. Cumino and on the school Principal Canon Massimo

Burzio. Early during that year in November 1834 John met Louis Comollo. Louis had just transferred from his hometown of Cinzano and enrolled in the school at Chieri with a view to entering the seminary. He was two years younger than John.

In 1835, during this period when he was in the Rhetoric year he had a crisis in his vocation. He wrote that the vocation dream had been recurring and that to follow its suggestion he would have to become a priest. But in order to avoid the spiritual risks of the priestly life and caring for souls in the world, he suffered an inner struggle. His confessor Canon Dr. Joseph Maloria did not give him any answer. John read many books on vocation and finally decided to join the Franciscan Order. On April 18, 1834 he took and passed the admission examination to the novitiate of the Reformed Friars Minor of the Observance at their Chieri monastery of La Pace. He confided the entire matter to Louis Comollo. Louis wrote to his uncle Fr. Joseph Comollo for advice. John and Comollo made a novena to Our Lady of Grace in the "Duomo." At the end of the novena he had a dream which indicated that that place was not for him. Then something happened which changed John's mind. Fr. Comollo and Fr. Cafasso advised John to join the diocesan seminary.

The University in Turin offered a five-year curriculum of theological study to which one had access after fulfilling a pre-requisite of a two year philosophical course and giving an entrance exam. A candidate who studied for the priesthood in this way would normally be a resident of Turin and live at home or as a boarder

somewhere while attending classes at the University or seminary. Non-resident candidates for priesthood would belong to a "clerical community" set up in a designated parish. The "externs" would often bring a not so desirable dimension to the life and discipline of the seminary. There were also resident candidates for the priesthood residing in the seminary.

Archbishop Colombani Chiaverot (1754-1831) established the major seminary at Chieri in 1829 in the former monastery of the Oratorian Fathers of St. Philip. His intention was to provide a more secluded environment for priestly formation, as well as to cope with overcrowding at the seminary of Turin.

The priestly formation in the seminary programme left much to be desired. The study of theology was scholastic-tridentine with emphasis on apologetics with a leaning towards predestination, defending the Christian faith and solving the moral problems. The programme of study was not applicable to life. There were two currents in moral theology one was called the Rigorist - close to Jansenism and other was more benign this was the teaching of St. Alphonsus Ligouri.

John Bosco donned the clerical habit at Castelnuovo on October 25, 1835. Fr. Pietro Anthony Cinzano performed the ceremony. John was now 21 and only his entrance to the seminary could exempt him from military service. The admission to military service was to take place on November 5, 1835 John had disqualified himself by opting for the seminary and by receiving the clerical habit. He entered the seminary on October

30, 1835 as a resident seminarian. At the entrance of the seminary there was a sundial with the motto "The hours drag on for those who are sad and fly for those who are happy." He spent six happy years in the seminary. He chose good friends and among them was Louis Comollo. At mid-year examination he won a prize of 60 Lire, and he won the same prize every successive year. He gave up games of *bararotta* and *tarots*. He joined study and discussion clubs. In the summer of 1836 a cholera epidemic threatened the city of Turin. The Jesuit school of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Montaldo closed early for vacations. At the request of Fr. Cafasso, John helped them as dormitory prefect and as a tutor in Greek. In 1837 John converted from classical literature to Christian literature. Beginning to read *The Imitation of Christ*, John gradually became an avid reader of religious books.

Holidays were dangerous for seminarians. John kept busy by doing manual work and gathering local youngsters in order to take up their lessons. Louis Comollo often visited him and they discussed several spiritual topics. The unpleasant experiences of the brawl, the violin and the hare took place during those vacations. John also made some attempts at preaching. He preached in the town of Alfiano on the Holy Rosary, in Castelnuovo on the feast of St. Bartholomew, in Capriglio on Mary's Nativity and in Cinzano he extemporized a sermon on St. Roch. Fr. Joseph Pelato advised him to preach in simple Italian.

In 1838 John was appointed sacristan for which he received 60 Lire. He used this money to pay



part of his fees while Fr. Cafasso paid the rest. During Lent John met Fr. Borel who came to preach the retreat at the seminary. He advised John to preserve the spirit of the priestly vocation. On April 2, 1839, Louis Comollo died. After his death he mysteriously appeared to John. In 1840 John fell grievously ill and went into a depression. It may have been because of the death and appearance of Comollo. It was also possibly because of an ascetic tension, the theological emphasis on predestination and the anxiety of his forthcoming priesthood. As his illness worsened the doctor prescribed absolute rest for a month. In spite of his weakness on March 29, 1840, John received the tonsure and four minor orders. In the summer of 1840 John asked Archbishop Fransoni permission to do his fourth year of theology by himself. He took examinations from Fr. Cinzano of Castelnuovo. After an important spiritual retreat on September 19 he received the subdiaconate and on March 27, 1841 John was ordained a deacon. □



NO MATERNITY WARD FOR MARY

by Valter Boero

These days motherhood is less and less a personal affair. It is more a health issue. The little baby exiting the body of the mother is not easy and even if we admire the perfection of the human body, the awareness that we are in a maternity ward is helpful and reassuring. You might know of places where the presence of midwives is still prevalent.

It is almost shocking, then, that the birth of Jesus took place in a stable. Although not written in the Gospels (and with all due respect to some scholars), Mary had no help except Joseph and he was a carpenter. He was certainly not a vet or even a shepherd. We could only imagine the palpitations of both Mary and Joseph and their emotion at the moment of the birth of Jesus and their joy when they first held their child - no delivery room, no disinfectants.



An obstetrician named Joseph
I held in my arms my firstborn.

Every baby is a gift of God

I washed him and “wrapped” him. Outside the delivery room I was tormented with waiting because my son was born by a caesarean section. I was torn between the joy and anxiety at my first encounter after that operation which was a regular surgery. I like to imagine Joseph holding his Child in his arms, Mary lying on the stable floor tired and perspiring after giving birth while the Baby screams in Joseph’s arms. Were they ready to cut the umbilical cord that linked Mary to Jesus? Joseph probably was. It is really heroic how Joseph always rises up to the most difficult tasks!

The description of Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant six months earlier was also striking. Today, with the help of sonography we have the possibility of appreciating this awesome experience. Imagine how easy it is for the child to move about in the mother’s womb. Luke, the evangelist also notes that John the Baptist did a summersault in the womb of Elizabeth when he became aware of the arrival of

Mary who was pregnant.

The efficiency of new “Advances”

The latest scientific prenatal findings highlight this relationship between mother and child not only on the metabolic level but even on the emotional level already from the first weeks of life. This masterpiece of human life is growing in an underwater environment!

It’s too bad that today the tools we use for our investigations to admire the development of human life are being used to choose whether to “keep” a child or not. In short, we are intoxicated with so many demonstrations in defence of minors, against discrimination, including the protection of animals and yet we select normal children but reject those who are sick or with some defect. Do we only need a cold shower to wake us up out of this inhumane savagery? Dear Mary and Joseph intercede for us and grant us the grace of immediate repentance so that we may quickly recognize our folly. □

(Continued from pg. 23)

“So you shall have my blessing before I leave.”

“Don’t go!” All three pleaded.

“Please don’t leave.” Mrs. Kennedy stood up.

“Can’t you stay?” said Chuck.

“When I say, ‘I must leave you’ I mean you will not see me again with your eyes. But I shall still be with you. I shall be your guest as long as you want me even though you will not see me again. I shall be in your house with you. Save my

place for me.” The Lord said.

This is the marvelous thing that happened to the Kennedy family. Now, you may never actually see Christ sitting at your table, but he wants to be your guest just the same, your unseen guest. He is hoping that you will ask him in. Your invitation to him is your willingness to live in His presence everyday. Save a place for him in your home and in your heart and he will fill them with his peace and his joy. □

NEWSBITS

MUMBAI

The Green Schools Campaign is a programme initiated by GreenLine, the Don Bosco Environmental Forum, Mumbai. It is open to all schools in Mumbai, Salesian and others. The first edition of the Campaign was held during the academic year 2009-2010, with 12 schools participating in the same. The second edition of the Campaign (2011-2012) is presently on, and has a total of 30 schools participating. This campaign seeks to educate children about their responsibility towards the environment and to offer them the opportunity to actually be involved in 'greening' projects. The overall aim of the campaign is to create the next generation of environmental leaders.

The present edition of the campaign is focusing on Waste Management, Energy Conservation and Water Conservation. The outcomes that the campaign seeks to achieve are: enabling the school to become a 'zero garbage campus'; lowering the electricity consumption of the school by adopting energy saving

measures; saving water by eliminating wastage and introducing water conservation techniques.

All through the campaign, the GreenLine team conducts regular sessions in the participating schools, assisting them to achieve the desired outcomes. They focus especially on the school's Eco Club, since this group can be a catalyst in greening the school. At the close of the campaign (last week of March), awards will be given to the 'greenest school', the school that has come up with the most innovative ideas and the school that has had the most impact on the neighbourhood.

The campaign has received a very enthusiastic response from the participating schools. The students are busy with a host of activities to green their schools and also to influence the neighbourhood. The campaign also includes other fun events like nature trails and green celebration of festivals. Through all these creative initiatives and fun activities, the next generation of environmental leaders is definitely being born!

For more information on the Green Schools Campaign and the other activities of GreenLine, write to info@greenline.org.in or visit: www.greenline.org.in

BERLIN

We need a greater awareness of solidarity and we need to learn to live it more deeply: this was the prompt given by Br Alois, Prior of Taizé on the occasion of the first meditation given to the





peoples and continents but also near us and in our hearts". He therefore urged them "to break down these walls, we should seek in these days to draw a new impetus from sources of trust. No human person, no society can live in isolation without trust".

youth who, since 28 December 2011, are giving life to Berlin, Germany at the European gathering of the ecumenical community. A gathering that, for the first time is being held in the German capital, offers ample space for reflection on the necessity to identify "new paths of trust" to respond to the crisis and challenges of contemporary times. "In a time when many ask themselves 'what is truly the meaning of my life?'" underlined Br Alois, "as brothers from our community we would like to clearly say that it lies in solidarity with others, lived through concrete action. Such solidarity prefigures the love that goes beyond us. Solidarity brings us to believe in the love of God for every human being". According to the Prior, the practice of this solidarity must be paired with a feeling of trust. Berlin, he observed, "is a symbol for all those who, in the whole world, that search to go beyond the walls of division to spread the faith. Walls exist not only between

Until 1 January thousands of youth from all over Europe and other continents found themselves united to share in moments of prayer, ideas and proposals in the German stage of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth". Various messages of good wishes were sent to the youth, among them was that of Benedict XVI. Among the others was that of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew who underlined that "solidarity must not only be the slogan of some political parties, but a promise that engages the whole person both on the level of action". The Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow also wrote a message: "The deep commitment of human solidarity is rooted in the revelation made to us by the Christmas event". Other encouragements came from the Primate of the Anglican Communion, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and the Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation. □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Thanksgiving to the Infant Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for saving my son Mark from a serious accident which could have been fatal, but he always wore a medal of Our Lady and that saved him. Now he has a small fracture on his back. May Our Blessed Mother take care of him. *Claudette Armstrong, Secunderabad*
My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for her intercession with Jesus for blessing my niece with a loving and caring husband.

E. Fernandes, Dahisar

My family and I are grateful to the Most Holy Trinity and Our Blessed Mother for saving my life and surviving a major heart attack.

Mr. Charles Parrie, Udaipur, Rajasthan

Thank you Mother Mary for a safe delivery and for other favours. Sorry for the delay.

Dalma D'Silva, Goa

These few lines express my extreme gratitude to Our Lady Help of Christians for keepin gme in a lively faith in Jesus and her dear self. Forty plus years ago I received Don Bosco's Madonna and it followed me from Mumbai to Kenya and back to Goa. I've scores of old issues which I read to date. Now as testimony of Our Lady's help, my daughter-in-law had a painful lump under her ear. After medication it returned more painful than before. Our sincere prayers were answered and it vanished. Jesus and Mary we always turn to you.

Jessie deSouza, Goa

Yohan and Simone Traynor, 16 month old twins of Elvis and Chhaya say: "Thank you Mother Mary" for our lovely parents, Nanas Colleen and Surekha, grandpa Gerald, aunties and uncles and cousins. Thank you for our nice house, food, water, toys and clothes, our sweet maid and pet Snoopy too. *Yohan and Simone Traynor, Mumbai*
On 22nd May 2010, (a rainy day) I was driving home from work when my car skidded. I lost control and before I realized, the car had overturned. Whilst this was happening I repeatedly kept praying the Hail Mary. I actually felt Mother Mary holding me around my shoulders. Some good people stopped me and helped me out of the upside down car. I came out without a scratch or injury. Thank you Mother Mary for protecting me always. *Mrs. J. D'Cruz, Australia*

I always rise at 4am and pray the Divine Mercy prayers. Today being Wednesday I prayed the Novena of the Perpetual Succour. Since it's very dark I switched on the tube-light and continued to pray the rosary. (I have a rosary with large wooden beads and the cross of St. Benedict). The tube-light suddenly detached itself from the wall and came down without breaking. Had it broken it could have been very dangerous. I got up from where I was sitting and switched off the mains. Our Lady was certainly there, and I am grateful for her protection.

Mrs. Marcelina Miranda, Goa

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for the many favours received, for healing our daughter's shoulder pain without a surgery and my husband's knee and eye problems without a surgery. Continue to shower on us your blessings and keep us in your care.

Philip and Maria, Mumbai

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for favours received and the blessings bestowed on our family, through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Mr. & Mrs. D.O. Berger, Guntakal

Dear and everloving and Mother, Mary Help of Christians and mother of us all, I humbly and sincerely thank you for the successful angioplast and the good health of my brother who had a heart attack. I thank you loving Mother, the recitation of the Three Hail Marys has really been my strength, courage and support and help in my difficult moments.

Vina Dias, Mumbai

Thank you for so many blessings that our family has received.

R. & C. Athaide, Australia

I wish to thank you dear Mother Mary as I recited the three Hail Marys when I was in trouble in a land-disputed matter and a case in the court. Mother Mary rushed to my aid and help me win successfully in the end.

Manuel Fernandes, Mumbai

During the month of September I was diagnosed with Malaria. I was admitted to the Holy Family Hospital. During my days of agony I called upon Mary Help of Christians praying the three Hail Marys. My sickness receded and I returned to normal and was discharged. Do continue to protect me and my family.

Franky Miranda, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for her protection when I met with a road accident and escaped death.

Raymond Fernandes, Mumbai

My son Valient Shenoy passed in his 10th class, always reciting the three Hail Marys. I continued even when he was in the 12th, HSC reciting the three Hail Marys in spite of repeating the class. Now he has passed in October 2011 by the grace of the three Hail Marys. Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Angelina M. Shenoy, Navi Mumbai

My sincere thanks to our Lady for blessing my son with a suitable job thanks to the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Aleyamma Joseph, Kerala

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Mrs. E. Medeira, Mumbai

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

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Don Rinaldi for favours received.

Mrs. N. Ray, Australia

My heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the job my daughter secured and a house for her.

M.P. Johnny, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping my daughter find a suitable partner and to help my son sort out his visa problem. I apologise for the delay.

Maria D'Souza, Mumbai

Thank you very much, Mother Mary and all the saints for countless blessings that we received everyday.

CRU, Mumbai

Dear heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, Mother Mary and all the saints thank you for saving my son from the jaws of death due to pancreatitis.

Mr. & Mrs. Lartius, Ranchi

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks and love to our dearest Mother Mary, St. Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe confinement and normal delivery of our beautiful little Jesmaria to the family. We thank you Heavenly Father, Jesus and Mother Mary for gifting us this miracle in spite of difficulties during the pregnancy period.

Mr. & Mrs. Varghese, Mira Road

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for favours received.

Deney Xavier, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Don Bosco for the gift of a house and the many favours received by me and my family.

Corina D'Souza

Thanks dear Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby boy to my daughter-in-law after six years. Also for all the other blessings in the family.

Aurora D'Souza, Pune

My sincere and grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints for granting my petition. Please continue to bless our family.

A Client

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing my brother of depression and my sister with good health and solving my court case and blessing and helping me to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties. I also pray that Mother Mary protects and blesses us.

Rosemary Rebeiro, Mumbai

I had a very bad fall and with the impact I felt my bones broken. My first words on falling were Jesus I trust in you. I recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet regularly. After a few visits to the doctor and medication I am on my way to recovery. My grateful thanks also to our dearest Mother who always protects me under her mantle blue.

Maria, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the quick recovery of my grandson from dengue.

Mrs. Joanita Figueiredo, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for granting my daughter the grace of conceiving after 9 years and many difficulties and complications.

Ana D'Souza, Goa

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery for my daughter.

Trofy Viegas, Goa

St. Dominic Savio, thank you for healing me from the severe allergies and also for making my stomach pain better.

A Devotee

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery and the gift of a baby daughter and for the innumerable favours we have received. Do continue to bless our family.

E. Barreto, Goa

Our sincere thanks to Dominic Savio for good health and other favours granted.

Dominic and Sandra Fernandes, USA

My sincere gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the birth of a healthy baby boy. I am sorry for the delay.

Mrs. Perpetua D'Souza, Goa

My daughter-in-law Claudia began bleeding in her seventh month and I prayed to Mother Mary and Dominic Savio. Mother Mary came to her rescue and stood by her. She delivered a baby girl in the 9th month. I am very grateful.

Carmin D'Souza, Mumbai

We thank Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph and Dominic Savio for giving us 'ADITI' our grand daughter and for keeping both mother and child in good health.

George & Elise, Kochi, Kerala

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a successful bypass and for the constant blessings showered on me and my family.

Emma deSouza, Mumbai

My belated and grateful thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for protecting us all in our troubles and for many blessings and favours received. Whenever and wherever and whatever we do, we always pray to Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the Name of the Holy Trinity and then begin our work.

Cindu N. Monteiro, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

MARCH 2012

Holy Father's General Intention: *That the whole world may recognize the contribution of women to the development of society.*

Missionary Intention: *That the Holy Spirit may grant perseverance to those who suffer discrimination, persecution, or death for the name of Christ, particularly in Asia*