

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>The Poor and the Wet</i>	3
You are What You Make Yourself - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS...	4
Walking With the Church: Secularism Patron Saint of Computers	7
The Spirit of Service - Bruno Ferrero.....	8
Jan Swierc (1877-1941).....	10
Fr. Marek Mariusz Rybinski, sdb - Abp. Maroun Lahham.....	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi (Apr 4)</i> - Mario Scudu.....	12
Lectio Divina: Go Into the Whole World (Mk 16:15 - 20) - Carlo Broccardo.....	17
Quietspaces: Blessed Are You John Paul II - Pope Benedict XVI.....	18
The Story of a Mother - Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection..	20
Historical Aspects of Don Bosco: The Wandering Oratory... - Fr. Elias Diaz, SDB.....	24
Reflecting on Mary: With the Magnificat in our Hearts	28
NewsBits.....	30
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i>	15
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco</i>	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio</i>	35



*Mary is full of grace
and she invites us
to live like her
always and only
for God!*

Cover: **St. Dominic Savio**
by Crida



From The Editor's Desk

THE POOR AND THE WET!

One hot summer's morning as I was walking down the verandah of the seminary as a young student of philosophy, I sauntered by the lecture halls of the theology faculty. Without being noticed I slipped into the imposing classroom where a rather severe looking professor was giving one of his lectures. Before long I found out that it was a Canon Law class. This morning he spoke to them about their (our) canonical duties to the poor. "The legal situation is this," he declared. "You have an obligation to help the deserving poor. You have no obligation to help the undeserving poor." "But how can we tell the difference?" a student asked immediately. "I have no idea," he replied frankly, "that is a matter for you to discern. You know, of course, that Jesus likes to hide amongst the poor. So just make sure you never pass him by."

Some months ago, during the peak of a very wet monsoon I was returning home late one evening, after having been caught in a torrential downpour and it was then that those gentle words of advice came floating back to me from the past. I had just entered the campus and was making my way to the building where I lived when I was approached by a middle aged man who was soaked to the skin and not too steady on his feet. His opening gambit was one I had encountered before. 'I'm short of Rs 200/-. I need to get to Pune immediately to attend the funeral of my child. Any chance, Father you could spare me that much?' 'I'm sorry,' I replied, 'I haven't got that much on me.' 'Would give me about 100?' he continued. 'I don't have that much either,' I said apologetically. He was not put off. 'In that case,' he persisted, 'could you give me whatever you can spare. I'll give it back to you tomorrow, as I'm coming back to the city then.' I replied, 'I was out on a walk and so I don't even have my purse on me.'

At this point I was nearly as wet as my friend and more than willing to accept defeat. 'Come in,' I said as I reached the building, 'and I'll see what I can give you'. I fetched him the amount he wanted. He thanked me politely and then, he disappeared quickly into the darkness.

Next morning at breakfast I told my story to a colleague who had spent much of his life working with the poor. 'You'll never see that money again,' he smiled. 'I'm not really bothered,' I replied. And I wasn't either. That money was set aside for charity in any case and I had learned long ago to be wary of that rational streak in me that searches too eagerly for the dubious consolation of certainty.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

YOU ARE WHAT YOU MAKE OF YOURSELF

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Taking charge of your body can help you take charge of your life. And that power can help you go wherever you want to go, every single day.

~Cheryl Bridges Treworgy,

member of five U.S. World Cross-Country teams

Struggling to put on my favourite pair of trousers I was confronted with a very unsavoury truth about myself: 'I'm fat!' I caught a glimpse of myself in the hallway mirror and I positively didn't like the person I saw! A few pounds here, a few pounds there, and the scales continued to climb higher each year. The problem was I hated the word 'diet' and even more I hated the thought of saying 'I can't or shouldn't' every time I wanted something.

Not long after, I met with a friend at my favorite restaurant for lunch. "I'm tired of denying myself," I complained. "I can't have cake, ice cream, fries. Is there anything I can have?"

"You can have lots of things," she said encouragingly.

"Yeah, right. You're not the one trying to lose weight." I sulked in my chair and I closed my eyes for a few seconds. When I opened them, my thoughts were finally clear. There was *something* I could have. Control! ... Control over my own decisions. I could pick something I knew would be good for me, or I could pick something that wasn't in line with my goals. It was all a matter of choice. And that's how I started in right earnest!

Slow and Steady

The weight came off slowly and my husband began to get

anxious. "You'll get sick if you don't eat more. It's not good for you. Later that night, we talked. "I'm doing this to feel better about myself," I emphasized. "I can't go back to the way I was. I won't. But it hurts when you don't support me in what I'm trying to do." He apologized profusely for his lack of sensitivity and promised to do better. And by gosh, he stuck to his word! I added exercise by peddling for thirty minutes after dinner. And I continued to make changes. One night, several weeks after this, my husband commented with a joyous smile on his face: "You really look great," as he put his arms around me.

"Thanks," I said. Just that morning I'd tried on my favourite trousers again and they fitted perfectly.

A year later I was in the doctor's office for a checkup. I'd shed fifteen pounds. She confirmed that my blood pressure was normal. Two years later, I've still kept off the weight. I like how I look in the mirror, but more so how I feel on the inside. No more "I can't" talk for me. I can lose weight, and keep it off. With the power that comes from wise choices, I know I'll have no trouble sticking to the lifestyle I choose.

It's All in the Mind

Knocking off unwanted

pounds is a battle that many people have to wage nowadays but with the majority it seems to always end up as a losing battle that they wage. The negative outcome seems to stem from a confusion that arises in the person's mind – a confusion between two similar realities: pleasure and happiness. Happiness is what we are all made for, and even Jesus in his final discourse encouraged his disciples saying, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11) and again, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete (Jn 16:24). Further Jesus observes, "But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves" (Jn 17:13).

Because of this inner mental confusion, we fail to see that while there are a few similarities between the two, they are as different as chalk is from cheese. Pleasure is generally localized at some point in the human body, is intense but fleeting and short-lived and hence leaves behind a feeling of dissatisfaction and a craving for more. Again pleasure is experienced mainly when we get something for ourselves. Happiness is more spiritual and



can last much longer than does pleasure and is generally associated with giving to others, making them happy, meeting their needs and helping to solve their difficulties. No wonder Jesus could say in his famous 'Sermon on the Mount': "Blessed (How happy) are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when

people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:3-12).

Another strange fact with regard to chasing after pleasure is that the more we taste of it the more insistently do we go after it; we never seem to be satisfied! While with genuine happiness it does remain with us sometimes even with a mingling of some

painful aspects and no matter how long or short its duration it somehow makes us glow from within. Adapting the line from the psalm (84:10) we could say, 'One moment of true happiness is better than a thousand fleeting moments of pleasure!' Applying all this to the question of losing weight, we see that while this exercise does not often bring us pleasure, rather we have to forego a lot of pleasure if we are to truly lose weight and keep it down, but there is a lot of genuine happiness in being a person who is fit and totally in control of one's life.

Eucharistic Support

When Jesus walked this earth, he told his disciples several times, "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full!" (Jn. 10:10). But to attain that fullness of life, one would need to 'take up one's cross and follow Jesus!' In fact, one of the key reasons why we celebrate Eucharist each Sunday is precisely to bring our own little sufferings and unite them with the suffering of Jesus as he offers them to the Father. United with his redemptive suffering, our little aches and pains take on a tremendous value and become redemptive too 'for the life of the world.'" But this is true only if we do unite our crosses consciously to the sufferings of Christ.

That is one of the reasons why the liturgical rubrics at the time of the presentation of Gifts suggests that if at all there is singing it should be *only* while the gifts are brought up in procession. Once they reach the altar, the singing should stop. Or,

if there is no substantial procession, then preferably there should be no singing. This is to allow the people enough silence to figure out what exactly they mean to unite with the gifts of Jesus as the second part of the Eucharist begins. The more clearly we think this out the better would be the "fruit" of our celebration.

Real Offering After Consecration

It is worth noting also that while the gifts are presented, there is no real 'offering' as our gifts by themselves have no great value. It is only after the Institution Narrative in which our gifts are transformed into 'the body and blood of Jesus' that they are *offered* to the Father (see Eucharistic Prayer III where the word 'offer' and 'offering' come only after the Consecration). Unfortunately, most Christians are accustomed to singing a hymn at this time - in fact they feel that if they do not sing at this point, they do something wrong! But the unfortunate effect is that they have neither the freedom nor the atmosphere to quietly reflect on what really do they present to God as symbols of themselves!

A Simile

If we place ten hosts on the altar at the Presentation, Jesus would be able to transform only those ten while if we did place a hundred, it is a hundred that he would transform. The principle then is, that Jesus can transform only what we consciously place before him on the altar. So, if we place only 2% of our lives together with the bread and wine on the altar, Jesus will be able to

transform nothing more than those 2% of our lives because that is all that we have surrendered. Even if the rest of ourselves is present before the altar, he will not forcibly transform that which hasn't been freely and lovingly surrendered. So, by our unnecessary singing we could be reducing the effectiveness of our participation in the Eucharist.

Returning to our initial story, the more deeply we are

conscious of how much we are blessed the more heartfelt and sincere (and lasting) our gratitude. How deeply do we appreciate God's blessings showered on us so lavishly that we often take them for granted? How deeply do we value the freedom God gives us to take charge of our lives and become the kind of persons we freely choose to be?!?□

walking with the Church



Secularism, Patron Saint of Computers

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *The Pope spoke of 'aggressive forms of secularism.' What is secularism?*

A. 'Secularism is a system of thought that rejects any reference to God or to religion and seeks to improve the human condition solely through science, social organization and human reason.' Aggressive secularism is the attempt to drive religion out of the public arena and to relegate it to the private sphere only.

Q. *Who is the Patron saint for computer users or computer technicians?*

A. There is no listed patron but St. Isidore of Seville is mentioned and regarded by many as the unofficial patron saint of computer science. It is possible that he may well be officially designated as such by the church authorities. In a sense he is an extraordinary choice

considering that he lived in the sixth century, 14 centuries before computers were invented and came into daily usage. He was born in Seville and was educated by his brother a monk and became one of the most learned men of his time. Possessed of an encyclopedic knowledge which he communicated in his books, he became most influential in clerical and monastic education. His most famous book is called 'Etymologies' which is a kind of encyclopedia containing elements of grammar, theology, history, mathematics and medicine. He shares the unofficial title of 'Schoolmaster of the Middle Ages.' He succeeded his brother as Archbishop of Seville and presided over Church councils and was noted for his austere life and his charity to the poor. He was canonised in 1598. His feast day is on April 4th. □

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

by Bruno Ferrero

There is a dangerous misconception that eats away at the happiness of families. Too many people live in families with this particular fallacy: they expect others to serve them.

If these expectations and this mentality are not corrected, families will miss out on one of the great mysteries of life: true fulfillment and happiness does not come from being served, but by serving. In more familiar and understandable terms: it is better to give than to receive. Of course, real service can never be provided in a context of fear. If someone in a family, spouse or a child, serves because s/he is afraid of the reactions of others, they are not serving out of love.

Loving service is freely given, desiring to make others happy and this is the most important reason that should motivate the individual.

In a happy and constructive family, loving service becomes part of everyday life. Someone does the laundry and prepares the feed for the baby, makes beds, scrubs floors, prepares meals or washes the car. There are enough occasions to be of service at home.

What parents and children need to understand is that even if a single member chooses not to do his or her chore the result is an increased amount of work for another member of the family.

Necessary skills

This is how one starts out teaching children to do their chores. One doesn't have to *preach* to them about the *value* of work or tell them the story about

their grandfather who worked in a mine for twenty-two hours a day, seven days a week.

Teach them *concretely* to perform certain chores at home. Encourage them to work together with you while you're loading the dishwasher, switching on the vacuum cleaner, cleaning the bathtub or changing the oil in the car. You must be willing to show your kids how to do things and invite them to try it themselves. It is a "hands on" approach. By giving your children the skills they need to perform various jobs, increases their self-confidence and removes one of the most serious obstacles to loving service. When you need a break from a given job, your children will no longer claim to be unable to do it nor have the excuse that they have never done it.

It is also important to teach children the purpose behind learning to do housework and why this is done.

An attitude of service is more than the willingness to do a chore. In building a family everyone knows of something useful they can do for the benefit of others (even if it is just washing the dishes or folding the clothes) everything is beautiful and noble and necessary. Everyone believes that performing banal acts of service are often thankless but somehow important. It is from this that

they draw a sense of emotional satisfaction. In a family of four, cooperation can be likened to a self-propelled coach on four wheels: each member represents a wheel, while the family life is the coach. All four wheels must revolve together if the vehicle has to advance smoothly. If in fact a wheel locks itself, the coach spins out of control, or if it moves in reverse or in the opposite direction or if a wheel comes off, the coach cannot proceed without prior repairs or some readjustment. Each wheel is as important as the other, none is the most important. The direction of the vehicle is determined by the simultaneous labour of all the four wheels. If one of the wheels decides to go it alone, that would be the ruin of the coach. It would become totally unstable. The size of a family does not change anything. The 'family' coach can be supported by any number of wheels. Does one of us parents have the task of deciding at what age we wish to allow our children begin helping at home? When a girl, taking her first steps wants to help to set the table we say: "No! You're too small," and then, when she is six years old we demand that she performs this chore. At this point the child may ask why she should help because we've done without her so far. We waste so many opportunities by not allowing our children to make their own voluntary contribution. If instead, from the outset, we allow the child (not pretend!) to help, they begin to savour with a sense of pride, the results obtained.

Presence and participation

Identify specific examples of services that can be performed at home, find out what kind of service the members of your family enjoy, **but do not link expressions of affection or self-esteem to acts of service.**

The last thing you want is to teach your child that your love must be earned by doing good deeds. Do not say: "You can sit on mummy's lap after you've put your toys away" or "daddy will give you a hug if you put your bike back where it belongs." Expressions of love should never be the subject of "contracts" with your children.

When work is a pleasure, life is a joy. When work is duty, life is drudgery. Similarly, if your child's self-esteem is tied to how well she performs her chores ("You can't even load the washing machine without making a mess!") you are starting her on a lifelong trip of guilt and inadequacy. When it comes to acts of service, the efforts of your children should in themselves be sufficient to justify your praise and support. If children live within their families the experience of "presence" and "participation" **they will tend to extend this attitude of service even outside of the family**, encouraging them to seek opportunities where they can individually commit themselves to serve at school or at work or in the parish. Therefore help them discover their talents and their strengths, characteristics that they can make good use of in their experience of service. □

JAN SWIERC 1877 - 1941

Jan Swierc was born to Matthew and Francesca Rother at Królewska Huta, in Upper Silesia, on the 29th April 1877. Thanks to the well-known Salesian Institute at Valsalice he came to Italy for his secondary studies.

He asked to become a Salesian and began his novitiate at Ivrea. In Turin he took up his philosophical and theological studies. On 6th June 1903 he was ordained priest in Turin by Cardinal Richelmy.

Back in Poland, he began his Salesian teaching activity with much diligence and care, proving his excellent ability and virtue as a Religious. He was the first Rector at Oswiecim, then in other Salesian Houses in Poland.

He was a provincial councillor from the first moment the Council was set up and until his death. Fr. Jan was an exemplary Salesian and Religious, loved the Congregation and Don Bosco, and showed that he possessed its spirit completely. He was especially known for his prudence. The most difficult and delicate matters were entrusted to him.

On the 23rd May 1941, while Rector and Parish priest in Krakow-Debniki, he was arrested with other Confreres by the Gestapo and taken to the prisons in Krakow.

He was then taken to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. On the 27th June 1941 Fr. Jan was



cruelly tortured and killed by a German soldier because he was a priest, and because he would not cease calling on the name of Jesus. He was 64 years old, 42 years professed and 38 years as a priest. We can add that he left a reputation for holiness of life, quite apart from his martyrdom.

Others martyred with him at Auschwitz included: **Fr. Ignacy Antonowicz**: Rector of the Seminary at Kraków; **Fr. Ignacy Dobiasz**: killed in the gravel pits; **Fr. Karol Golda**: killed for hearing the confessions of German soldiers; **Fr. Franciszek Harazim**: killed in the gravel pits; **Fr Ludwik Mroczek**: died at Auschwitz; **Fr. Włodzimierz Szembek**: died in Auschwitz; **Fr. Kazimierz Wojciechowski**: killed while working in the gravel pits. **Fr. Franciszek Misk**: died through malnourishment and torture on the 30th May 1942.

Diocesan inquest opened 17 September 2003 □



FR. MAREK MARIUSZ RYBINSKI SDB

Killed at Mahouba, Tunisia on 18/02/2011 at the age of 33

by Archbishop Maroun Lahham of Tunis

The Salesian fathers said that last Eid, the murderer had borrowed 2000 Tunisian dinars to purchase equipment for their work. He seems to have spent the money for other things, so the supplier refused to send over the material not paid for and Fr. Marek insisted that the money of the school be returned. In panic, and fearing that he would be discovered, says the statement from the Ministry of Interior, the murderer surprised the priest by violently striking him repeatedly with a blunt object on the head and neck, causing his death.

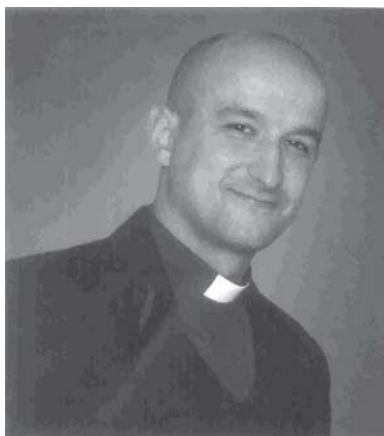
Why was Fr. Marek killed? For two thousand dinars! We can hardly believe that. Certainly there are details that we do not know. On the contrary, there are some things that I know:

I know that two weeks before his assassination, Fr. Marek wrote this about the Tunisian people: "It is a young nation, intelligent, incapable of violence (sic!), profoundly good and incapable of hate."

I know that he asked to come to Tunisia four years ago as a newly ordained priest.

I know that he asked for money from everywhere to find new premises for the school that he loved very much and of which he was the bursar.

"If a seed falls to the ground and dies..." He fell, he died and following the example of Christ, to whom Fr. Marek was consecrated and he has borne



fruit. There were so many messages of solidarity, so many scenes of grief and condolences, the flowers laid at the door of the Cathedral, Tunisian boys and girls gathered outside the Cathedral with slogans: "Marek, forgive me!" Young Tunisians came to the Cathedral on Sunday the 20th February with flowers and tears in their eyes... "We did not kill," they said, "this is not Tunisia... Forgive us!" and they went away embracing one another.

Now what? Well, let's move on. This is no time to panic. It is a time of faith, patience and caution. Shall we leave? No way, hard times are not times to escape. We remain in this country that welcomes us, that loves us and whom we love. We also want to offer you the values that we believe in. Life is stronger than death, also LOVE. □

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

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MARY MAGDALENE DE' PAZZI (1556-1607)

I DESIRE NONE BUT THEE (MAY 25)

by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)

It would be easy to concentrate on the mystical experiences God gave this saint, rather than on her life. In fact, it would be difficult to do differently, so overwhelming were those gifts from God. The temptation for many modern readers (including the author) would be to see little to identify with in these graces and walk away without seeing more. The other temptation would be to become so fascinated with these stories that one would neglect to dig deeper and learn the real lessons of her life.

But Mary Magdalene de Pazzi is not a saint because she received ecstasies and graces from God. Many have received visions, ecstasies, and miracles without becoming holy. She is a saint because of her response to those gifts — a lifelong struggle to show love and gratitude to the God who gave her those graces.

Seventeen Years In the Convent

Geri Catherine de' Pazzi was born in Florence in 1566 to a

wealthy noble family. She made her first Communion when she was ten years old, something very unusual in those days, and in the same year she had her first ecstasy, a gift from the Lord that would be repeated at other times later on.

Back in Florence, after a short stay in Cortona, at the age of fifteen she asked to spend two weeks discerning her vocation, not at home but in a convent, to study her future, and to try out that life as her vocation. She went through this experiment at Carmelites of *Santa Maria degli Angeli* in Florence, a convent of the strict observance and she passed the test brilliantly, realizing that that was the path that God wanted her to follow despite her young age.

The family put up a stiff resistance: become a nun? She was a noble girl, rich, beautiful, with a great marriage on the horizon? She was rich and she had brilliant future with no economic problems, she would

easily insert herself into noble Florentine society. What more could she ask for at sixteen?

Yes, Catherine wanted more, much more, she wanted God Himself, the 'All' that could give meaning to everything. It was not a teenage infatuation with her but a firm decision, not a short-sighted choice, but a life plan.

The pressure increased, but she did not buckle. How many "modern" parents do not accept that their children could have a "religious vocation"? Catherine's father did not want to. But in the end he gave in, and to console him because of the "loss" of his daughter so young and so beautiful, he obtained her permission (it was a condition) to paint her portrait, to be admired at home and be shown to her friends.

And so in 1582 Catherine entered the convent, wearing the Carmelite habit, and taking a new name: Mary Magdalene.

Already during her novitiate she was struck by a mysterious and painful illness. The doctors could do nothing; they already saw the gates of Paradise open for the young nun. The Mother Superior then, a very caring nun, allowed her, in advance (as she had not much time!) to make her religious profession. For this ceremony she was taken to the chapel. It was the morning of May 27, 1584, feast of the Blessed Trinity.

Soon afterwards she went into a very deep ecstasy that spiritually united her to the Trinity, during which, as she said, she had offered God her own heart. She "awoke" in tears for the consolation and joy that



she had experienced and she miraculously recovered.

Sharing in the sufferings of Christ for the Church

That first supernatural experience was not an isolated event, in fact, the ecstatic phenomena continued to get even more awesome. On June 8, 1584 she saw a depiction of the Passion of Christ; two days later she exchanged her heart for the heart of Jesus. On June 28 she received the stigmata and some days later, on July 6, the crown of thorns.

In the lions' den

Her confessor, in order to make sure that what she had experienced was from God and not just illusions or the result of hysteria, ordered her to put

everything in writing. Of course, she obeyed, but then she said that despite all her efforts she could not put into words the experiences that she had. Her confessor then commissioned with three of her sisters to put down the words spoken by Sister Mary Magdalene during her ecstatic raptures.

It was this fortunate intuition that gave to posterity as many as five volumes of manuscripts, full of deep spiritual doctrine, which had a profound impact on Christian spirituality down the centuries, up to our days. In the same year 1585, she was told she would be deprived of her perception of divine grace. She would feel existentially and spiritually useless and even abandoned by God, subjected to every kind of temptation, ending with something like a terrible and tragic suicide. But even at that moment of utmost desperation her faith remained firm. In fact, she placed a knife at the foot of a statue of Christ and totally entrusted herself to him once more. After surviving the "lion's den," as she called that terrible trial, in 1598 she became Mistress of Novices, and some years later also vice prioress. Sister Mary Magdalene, through her own experience, would teach the other sisters how to endure and overcome their sufferings and spiritual trials.

But her teaching was not only theology and contemplation of the ineffable and inexpressible mystery of God, there is also a chapter on asceticism whereby the soul of the disciple is configured and united to God in so far as it divests itself of everything

superfluous on its path to God and becomes a "nothing."

Mary most Holy is held up as a model of unique holiness, "**she was the most holy of all those present and those who were to come in the future,**" because of her spiritual motherhood and her being the Mediatrix of grace.

Even Mary Magdalene, like Catherine of Siena, worked (at the request of the Lord) to reform the Church. It was a difficult but important task. It was a task that frightened her because she considered herself unsuitable and incapable. Was it perhaps an idea of the devil or self-delusion? Her spiritual director encouraged her to go ahead. He wrote several letters to the Pope and other prelates about this.

But it seems that those letters never reached their destination or were not taken seriously.

"Like other mystics even our saint enjoyed wonderful visions and ecstasies, but she was also subjected to enormous suffering (...). Of few other saints can it be said that they contributed to such an extent in "making up in themselves what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (Cor 1:24) (A. Butler). Three years before her death the ecstasies ceased and she had to face the Passion and the journey up to Calvary in union with the suffering Christ. She agreed to accept all that suffering and pain, always supported by the love of Christ and she coined the famous phrase "**to suffer and not die,**" which that meant that she was sharing in the passion of Christ for the Church and the world. Her life ended at the age of 41 and it was the year 1607. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Ahh . . . Friendship

A man, fond of practical jokes, decided late one night to send his friend a collect telegram which read: "I am perfectly well."

A week later, the joker received a heavy parcel...collect...on which he had to pay considerable charges. Upon opening it, he found a big block of concrete which had this message:

"This is the weight your telegram lifted from my mind."

Battling Salons

A new hair salon opened up for business right across the street from the old established hair cutters' place.

They put up a big bold sign which read:

"WE GIVE SEVEN DOLLAR HAIR CUTS!"

Not to be outdone, the old Master Barber put up his own sign:

"WE FIX SEVEN DOLLAR HAIR CUTS."

Lunch On The Bank

A pastor and two of his deacons are out on the river fishing in their rowboat. Twelve o'clock rolls around, and one of the deacons notices a nice spot on the bank to have lunch. He turns to the others and says, "That looks like a nice spot for lunch. What do you say we have lunch over there?"

The other deacon agrees, and so does the pastor. The deacon stands up in the boat, steps out onto the river and walks over to the bank. The pastor looks on with amazement, and thinks to himself, if his deacon is holy

enough to walk on water, surely he can.

The other deacon stands up, picks up the picnic basket, steps out of the boat, and walks over to the bank and sits with the first deacon. Again, to his amazement, the pastor thinks again, if his second deacon is holy enough to walk on water, surely he can.

The pastor stands up, steps out of the boat, and sinks into the water. The first deacon turns to the second and says, "Think we should have told him where the rocks are?"

Rejected Invitation

Mrs. Jones was reading a letter at breakfast. Suddenly she looked up suspiciously at her husband.

"Henry," she said, "I've just received a letter from mother saying she isn't accepting our invitation to come and stay, as we do not appear to want her. What does she mean by that? I told you to write and say that she was to come at her own convenience. You did write, didn't you?"

"Er, yes, I did," said the husband. "But I couldn't spell convenience, so I made it risk."

Sick Day

Our local newspaper ran several stories about a study that tied male obesity to a virus.

One evening my brother came home exhausted from a long day at work.

"Did you read the paper?" he asked.

"I'm not going in to work tomorrow. I'm calling in fat." □



GO INTO THE WHOLE WORLD

(Mark 16,15 -20)

by Carlo Broccardo

Despite their fragility and their fears, the mission that Jesus entrusts the apostles is awesome. So too is it for every Christian today.

On a Sunday in May when we hear this reading from the Gospel of Mark we will know we've reached the end of his Gospel. It will be Ascension Sunday; and this is already significant. During the last months we have heard the narration of Mark leading up to the death of Jesus on the Cross. It is here that we truly see his Holy Face and it is here that we begin to comprehend the profundity of the Name of God. The Cross of Jesus is so important for Mark that he dedicates only very few verses to the resurrection; and that is why in the liturgy for Eastertide, we have recourse to the Gospel of John.

If you really want to be precise, Mark wrote his Gospel in 60 AD (or around that time) and he concluded it with verse 8 of chapter 16: the women, having learned the news of the resurrection of Jesus from the angel, were commissioned to bear those glad tidings to the disciples but they fled from the

tomb full of fear and said nothing to anyone. That was the original ending to Mark's story. He brought us an episode that the other evangelists did not record, that of the first reaction of the women which was negative since they were afraid.

Then, a few decades later, a disciple of Mark thought he should add some verses (Mk 16.9 to 20) to make us understand how, if women had fled, did the Gospel reach the whole world and why was their flight only their first reaction. Later they plucked up courage and went to the disciples. To us it matters little who the material author of these verses is: even if, in the end, it is one person (the evangelist) who gave the Gospel its written form, their origin was always in a community that recalled and recounted the events and the teachings of Jesus.

Let us return to the text of Mark: our first verse says that when the women brought the message of the resurrection, the Eleven did not believe them; and again when Jesus appeared to the two disciples (the Emmaus experience), the eleven did not believe the latter either. Jesus himself had to intervene, to convince them: "Last of all, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were eating. He scolded them, because they did not have faith and because they were too stubborn to believe those who had seen him alive" (Mk 16:14). It is always amazing (and consoling) that Jesus places his message of Salvation in such fragile hands.

But the passage today skips all these premises, however, and it



beautifully summarizes them in the usual phrase: "At that time". The issue on which we are led to reflect is not so much the fragility of the apostles, but the fact that - despite their weakness - the mission to which they are sent, is great. Jesus says: "Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all mankind." This is the mission of the Church: to go into the whole world; and the recipients of this action are every living creature on earth. If we happen to be locked up in church, or worse still in the sacristy, we know full well that we are not doing what Jesus wants of us.

The responsibility that has been entrusted to the apostles (and thence to the Church) is enormous: 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.' This is a very tough phrase; echoing the words from the Gospel of John where Jesus says that salvation is a gift: those who welcome him, believing in Jesus, receive salvation - and those who refuse to believe are left out (to use another image dear to John: Jesus is the light and the one who welcomes him refuses to remain in the dark). The Church then has this enormous task: to ensure

that the whole world knows and believes in him in order that they be saved, in this way, she makes her light shine in the world.

"These are the signs that will accompany those who believe," Jesus adds: "In my name they will cast out demons, speak in new tongues, they shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly thing, they will be unharmed, they will lay their hands on the sick who will recover." These are all miracles done by the apostles (apart from drinking poison) and they are present in one passage or another. Beware though, because the risen Jesus did not tell the eleven that they would work such miracles, but that these prodigies would accompany "those who believe." That is: Jesus did not give special powers to the apostles or to the Church (and in fact neither through our baptism nor through our ordination are we conferred with such powers) but we are told that the proclamation of the Gospel will change the world! Those who hear the Gospel and believe in Jesus will have the ability to make the world better by overcoming evil and healing disease.

The Gospel according to Mark started with the "springtime of Galilee" Jesus goes through the towns and villages and brings life and hope is reborn. Just then, firstly he called four disciples to follow him, and now gives them a mandate to continue doing what he had done: to continue going through the cities and villages bringing life, serenity and hope, but not only in Galilee but throughout the world. □

BLESSED ARE YOU

by His Holiness P

"Blessed are you, beloved Pope John Paul II, because you believed! Continue, we implore you, to sustain from Heaven the faith of God's people". This was the prayer Pope Benedict XVI addressed to his immediate Predecessor at the Mass for John Paul II's Beatification at which he presided on Sunday May 1, 2011 in St. Peter's Square. The following are excerpts from the Pope's homily given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Six years ago we gathered in this Square to celebrate the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Our grief at his loss was deep, but even greater was our sense of an immense grace which embraced Rome and the whole world: a grace which was in some way the fruit of my beloved Predecessor's entire life, and especially of his witness in suffering. Even then we perceived the fragrance of his sanctity, and in any number of ways God's people showed their veneration for him. For this reason, with all due respect for the Church's canonical norms, I wanted his cause of Beatification to move forward with reasonable haste. And how the longed-for day has

come; it came quickly because this is what was pleasing to the Lord: John Paul II is blessed!

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, which Blessed John Paul II entitled Divine Mercy Sunday. The date was chosen for today's celebration because, in God's providence, my predecessor died on the vigil of this feast. Today is also the first day of May, Mary's month, and the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker. All these elements serve to enrich our prayer, they help us in our pilgrimage through time and space; but in heaven a very different celebration is taking place among the angels and

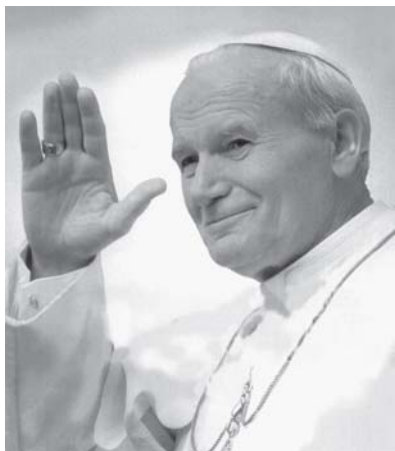


U JOHN PAUL II!

Pope Benedict XVI

saints! Even so, God is but one, and one too is Christ the Lord, who like a bridge joins earth to heaven. At this moment we feel closer than ever, sharing as it were in the liturgy of heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters, today our eyes behold, in the full spiritual light of the risen Christ, the beloved and revered figure of John Paul II. Today his name is added to the host of those whom he proclaimed Saints and blessed during the almost twenty seven years of his pontificate, thereby forcefully emphasizing the universal vocation to the heights of the Christian life, to holiness,



taught by the conciliar Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*. All of us, as members of the people of God – bishops, priests, deacons, laity, men and women religious – are making our pilgrim way to the heavenly homeland where the Virgin Mary has preceded us, associated as she was in a unique and perfect way to the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Finally, on a more personal note, I would like to thank God for the gift of having worked for many years with Bl. Pope John Paul II. I had known him earlier and had esteemed him, but for 23 years, beginning in 1982 after he called me to Rome to be Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I was at his side and came to revere him all the more. His profound humility, grounded in close union with Christ, enabled him to continue to lead the Church and to give to the world a message which became all the more eloquent as his physical strength declined. In this way he lived out in an extraordinary way the vocation of every priest and bishop to become completely one with Jesus, whom he daily receives and offers in the Church.

Blessed are you, beloved Pope John Paul II, we implore you, to sustain from Heaven the faith of God's people. You often blessed us in this Square from the Apostolic Palace: Bless us, Holy Father! Amen.

THE STORY OF A MOTHER

From Fr. Ian Douulton's collection of stories

*This heartwarming tale is adapted
from a story by Hans Christian Andersen.*

*Just a spark in comparison to the love
of our Heavenly Mother for us, you'll see.*

A mother sat by a little child in its cradle. Its little face was pale and its eyes were closed. The child drew its breath with difficulty and then the mother looked at the little creature and feared that it would die.

Outside the wind blew so sharply that it could cut one's face and everything was covered with ice and snow. Then there was a knock at the door. The mother opened the door. A poor old man came in, in something like a great horse blanket. The old man was Death! He sat down and rocked the cradle with his wrinkled gnarled hands and the mother seated herself in the old chair by him. She looked at her sick child that drew its breath so painfully and seized the little hand. Then she said to the old man with fear in her voice: "You think that I should keep the child, do you not? The Good God will not take it from me. You nod, but in such a strange way that I cannot tell whether you mean yes, or no. It is my only child." Tears rolled down the mother's cheeks, her head became heavy. For three days and three nights she had not closed her eyes. Now she dozed off, but only for a minute and then she started up

and shivered with the cold. "What is that? My child! Where is my child?" The old man was gone and her child was gone. Death had taken it with him.

The poor mother rushed out of the house crying for her child. Out in the snow sat a woman in long black garments and the mother said to the woman: "Did you see an old man with a child?" Her voice was feeble yet frightful: "Death was with you in your room. I saw him hasten away with your child."

"Which way did he go?"

"He strides faster than the wind and never brings back what he's taken away."

"Only tell me which way he has gone. I will follow him. I will find him. I will make him give me back my child." The woman pleaded.

"I will tell you, but before I tell you, you must sing me all the songs that you have sung to your child. I heard those songs before and I saw your tears when you sang them. I loved those songs."

"Who are you?" The mother asked nervously.

"I am night, and I am dark. I am weary of my darkness."

"I will sing all the songs, but do not detain me long. Let me

overtake death and find my child."

But night sat dumb and still and the mother wrung her hands and sang and wept, for there were many songs and many more tears until Night's garments began to sparkle with jewels more brilliant than the stars. Oh, so beautiful is the sacrifice of a mother that it lights candles in the heart of night itself and so Night said to the mother: "Now go to the right and into the dark far wood, for I saw Death take that path with your little child."

The mother went into the dark forest. Deep in the forest, she came to a crossroad and she did not know which way to take. There stood a thorn bush with not a leaf or blossom on it and the mother said to the thorn bush: "Did you see Death go by with my little child?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"Which of these two roads did he take?"

"I will not tell you which way he went unless you warm me in your bosom. I am freezing to death here. I am turning into ice. Wind and winter have turned my branches into barren sticks, my leaves into cruel thorns."

The mother pressed the black thorn bush to her bosom, quite close so that it might be well warmed and the thorns pierced her flesh and the black thorn bush shot out fresh green leaves and blooms in the dark winter night. Oh, yes, so warm is the heart of a mother it can soften life's sharpest cruelties and melt

the deepest ice of loneliness, so the black thorn bush said to the mother: "Take the road to the right, Death went that way with your child."

The mother followed the road that Death had taken with her little child. Then she came to a great lake on which there was neither ship nor boat. The lake was not frozen enough for her to walk upon and was too deep for her to wade through. She said to the lake: "Tell me how may I cross you, so that I may find death who has taken my child."

"I love pearls and your eyes are the two clearest eyes I have ever seen. If you weep them out to me, I will tell you how you may continue to follow them."

"What I would not give to get back my child."

The mother wept and her eyes fell into the depths of the lake and became two shining pearls. So generous is the heart of a mother that her sacrifices make her more precious than any jewels. The lake said to the mother: "Now I will carry you across. When you reach the other side, walk straight ahead." "Carry me across, so that I may find my child."

The lake lifted her up as if she sat in a swing and she was wafted to the opposite shore. There stood a wonderful green house, miles in length. This was the green house of Death. An old white haired woman was going about and watching the plants. The poor mother could not see the house or the old woman for

she had wept her eyes out. But she heard footsteps and she cried: "Where shall I find Death that went away with my little child?" "He is not around here yet, how have you found your way here? Who helped you?"

"The Good God has helped me. He is merciful and you will be merciful too. Where, where shall I find my little child?"

"I don't know your little child, and you have no eyes to see with. I help death in his green house that is filled with trees and flowers. Each human being has a tree of life here. The flowers are the lives of the children. Every hour many of these plants fade and Death comes and transplants them and into the unknown land. These trees and flowers look like any other plants, but each one has a heart that beats. You may not see but perhaps you may recognize the beating of your child's heart."

"I would notice it at once. How often have I felt the beat against my own heart."

"There is more that you must do. If I tell you, what will you give me?"

"My eyes are gone, what more do I have to give? But I will go for you to the ends of the earth."

"I have nothing for you to do there. But you have beautiful long black hair and it pleases me. Give me your hair. You can take my white hair for it."

"Do you ask for nothing more? I will give you this gladly."

And the mother gave the old woman her beautiful long black hair and received in exchange the white hair. So unselfish is the

heart of a mother who suffers her loveliness to be changed into wrinkles and her bright hair into grey for the sake of her child. And then the old woman took the mother into the great green house of Death. Each tree and flower had its name. Each was a human life. The sorrowing mother could not see, but she bent down and felt with her hands among the smallest plants and heard the human heart beating in each and she came to a little crocus flower, which hung down quite sick, and pale. Out of millions of hearts she recognized the heartbeat of her child. "This is it."

"Don't touch that."

"But this is my child."

"Do as I tell you."

"Place yourself here beside the flower. When Death comes, I expect him any minute. Don't let him pull up this plant. Threaten that you'll do the same to the other flowers. Then he'll be frightened. He has to account for them all. Not one may be pulled up until he receives permission from heaven.

There was a sudden chill in the air as the two talked:

"How cold the wind is!"

"That is death arriving."

"I must go. Do as I've told you."

A stern voice said from somewhere the mother could not see:

"How did you find your way here? How have you been able to come quicker than I?"

"I am a mother."

And death stretched out his

long hands towards the little delicate flower but the mother kept her hands tight about it and held it fast. She was full of anxious care lest Death should touch one of the leaves. Then Death breathed upon her hands and the mother felt it as cold as the winter wind and her hands sank down.

"You can do nothing against me."

"But the merciful God can."

"I do only what he commands. I am his gardener, I take all his trees and flowers and transplant them into the unknown land."

"Will you give me back my child?"

"I may not."

"It is my only child."

"I have a command."

"Give me back my child, or I will tear up this other flower for I am in despair."

"No!" Said Death rather sternly.

"Don't pull up that flower, do not destroy its life. You say you are so unhappy, now you will make another mother just as unhappy."

"Another mother? I will let the flower go." Sadly the mother let go of the flower.

"Here, here are your eyes for you."

"My eyes! I was glad to give them for my child."

"I saw them in the lake, the lake gleamed up quite brightly so I fished them out. When I saw you, I knew they must be yours. So great is your love for your child."

"It is my only child."

"Keep it back. Your eyes are clearer than they were before your sorrow. Now you can see

deeply into many things. Come here to this well, look down into it and tell me what you see.

"I see two lovely flowers growing. They grow while I look!"

"That is the well of the future. One flower is the life of your child and the other flower is the life of the one you wish to pull up. Now tell me what you see?" asked death.

"I see one life growing up in beauty, a blessing to the world and spreading joy and gladness. The other life is become sickly, it's dark with care, poverty, misery and woe."

"One of these two is the life of your child."

"Which one? Which future belongs to my child?"

"I cannot say."

"Tell me, tell me, which one."

"God alone knows."

"My child? To endure that misery? That might be my child."

"Will you have your child back? Or shall I carry it into the Unknown?"

The mother barely thought for a moment about all that she had gone through and said in haste, her heart breaking with grief:

"Forget my child, forget my entreaties and all that I have done, or could do. I will not go against your will. Oh God, your will is at all times the best!"

The mother bowed her head and Death went away with her child into the unknown land.

So wise is a mother, when she comes to understand that God's love for her child is greater even than her own. □

THE WANDERING ORATORY AND THE PINARDI HOUSE

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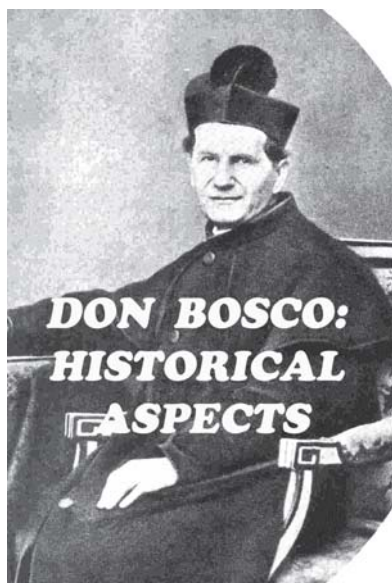
by Fr. Elias Dias

In Chapter 12 of the book of Genesis we read the call of Abram. God said to Abram "Leave your country, your relatives and your father's home and go to a land that I am going to show you." Abram left everything and followed God's command. It was in much the same way that Don Bosco responded to God's call.

Don Bosco completed the course in moral and pastoral theology in 1843 and he stayed for one more year at the Pastoral Institute (*The Convitto Ecclesiastico*). In the summer of 1844, Don Bosco had to make a decision regarding his future ministry, about being gainfully employed. In his *Memoirs* he mentioned that he received a request from Archbishop Fransoni himself, to help old Fr. Comollo as administrator of the parish of Cinzano, an offer that was politely declined on the advice of Fr. Guala. There were three other offers that were conveyed through Father Cafasso: the curate in the parish of Buttigliera, as a tutor of moral theology at the Pastoral Institute and in the employ of the Marchioness Barolo as chaplain. This last offer was the one he was advised to accept. During this time Don Bosco was faced with two vocational crises.

Dual Crises And Barolo

The first: like the earlier vocational crisis that he had at



Chieri, was a personal one, and it had to do with the choice of a future ministry. Don Bosco wanted to join the religious congregation the Oblates of Virgin Mary and go to the foreign missions. The second crisis was that Don Bosco wanted to commit himself to working for young people which meant he had to keep running the Oratory. External circumstances seemed to militate against it. In June 1844 Don Cafasso asked him to make a spiritual retreat at St. Ignatius Retreat House. At the end of the retreat and on leaving the Pastoral Institute, Don Cafasso told him to forget about becoming a religious and asked him to work for the boys.

In 1844 he had another dream similar to the one he had at the age of nine which clarified his view about his vocation. He narrated this dream to Fr. Julius Barberis on February 2, 1875. Don Cafasso



The Marchioness Barolo

asked Don Bosco to accept the chaplaincy at Marchioness Barolo's little hospice of St. Philomena that was still under construction and to assist Fr. Borel at Barolo's *Refuge* (a home for wayward girls). On October 13, 1844 Don Bosco announced to his boys that the Oratory would thereafter meet at the *Refuge* in the Valdocco district of Turin. The boys met first time at the *Refuge* on October 20, 1844.

Juliet Colbert Marchioness Barolo was a descendent of Louis XIV of France. She married Carlo Barolo, a nobleman of Savoy. They had no children. After the death of her husband the Marchioness continued to work for the poor especially for women. Fr. Borel was attached her institute - the *Refuge*. She offered Don Bosco a job, salary and two rooms for his apostolate and Frs. Borel and Pacchotti helped Don Bosco. The

Oratory of St. Francis de Sales was started by Don Bosco on December 8, 1844 but after sometime he realized that place was not very convenient. The boys were a great disturbance on the premises.

St. Peter in Chains

On May 18, 1845 the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales met at Holy Cross Cemetery (St. Peter in Chains) with due permission from the local civil and religious authorities. Holy Cross Cemetery was a property of the City Council and located a short distance from the *Refuge*. It was no longer used as a cemetery but its sizeable chapel was still serviced by a resident chaplain appointed by the City Council. The chaplain's name was Fr. Giuseppe Tesio who had a housekeeper named Margherita Sussolino. Early in the month of May, the City Council permitted the catechetical congregation of St. Pelagia to use the chapel of St. Peter in Chains for the office of the dead. The City Council therefore decided to forbid all access to the chapel effective from May 23. With the publication of the ordinance at the end of May, Don Bosco was forbidden to use the premises. Fr. Tesio died on Wednesday May 28 at 12.30am at the age of 68. After his death the housekeeper left the residence and so it must be noted that the pastor and his housekeeper had nothing to do with the evacuation of Don Bosco from that place.

Thus from June 1 to July 6 Don Bosco assembled the boys at the *Refuge*. He took them to various churches that were situated outside the city like Sassi, Our Lady of the Pillar, Our Lady of the Fields, the Mount of the

Capuchins. He even reached as far as Superga.

The Borgo Dora

Some time between July 3 and 9, 1845 Fr. Borel and Fr. Pacchiotti applied for permission to use St. Martin's chapel which was attached to the public gristmills in the Borgo Dora district. The city Council granted permission for its use from 12 to 3p.m in the afternoon. The Oratory met at St. Martin's on Sunday July 13, 1845. At the first meeting Fr. Borel delivered his famous sermon about the transplanted of the cabbages. Permission to use the mill premises was terminated after a complaint made by the locals. The city Council voted to terminate the concession, effective January 1, 1846.

Having learned of the decision taken by the city council, Father Borel and Don Bosco immediately began looking for another place in which to gather the boys. At this point an old retired priest, Father John Baptist Moretta came to their rescue. He owned a large house only a short distance from the Barolo *Refuge* in the Valdocco district. Fr. Borel and Don Bosco rented three rooms from him for the sum of 15 lire a month. It was here that several priests and a group of young students from the city began to help with catechetical instruction, evening classes and Sunday instructions. The Oratory began meeting at Fr. Moretta's house from early March 1846. Sometime later, Fr. Moretta was pressured by disgruntled tenants and so he refused to renew the lease.

The Oratory moved to the grassy field surrounded by a



St. Philomena's Hospice

hedge that belonged to the Filippi brothers. But they regretted having leased the field because the youngsters trampled the grass and destroyed the pasture.

Wandering Around

It was after leaving the field of the Filippi brothers that Don Bosco exclaimed how deeply troubled he was without anyone to help him and nowhere to go. Difficulties came from local pastors who disliked him and opposed his works. It was Don Bosco's desire to have complete autonomy regarding his Oratory ministry. The Vicar of Turin, Marquis Michael Cavour harshly opposed to Don Bosco's work but we must remember that at that time there was a lot of political turmoil in Piedmont and any gathering such as Oratory was treated with suspicion. The Marquis Cavour was not personally against Don Bosco and we can attest this from his letter dated March 13, 1846. Don Bosco also experienced difficulties and disagreements from among his coworkers too. In his *Memoirs*, Don Bosco wrote that

Frs. Borel and Pacchiotti thought that he was becoming insane. There was also a confrontation with the Marchioness Barolo. She had hired Don Bosco to serve as chaplain of the Little Hospice of St. Philomena and offered him the chaplain's quarters with a salary. While she was occupied in Rome, Father Borel, in a letter to her on January 3, 1846 reported that Don Bosco's health was deteriorating. The Marchioness advised Don Bosco to leave his boys and take some rest so that he may be well enough to work at the *Refuge*. Don Bosco refused the offer and continued to work for the boys.

First Sight of the Pinardi Shed

It was at this point that Mr. Pancrazio Soave informed Don Bosco of the availability of a shed and a property owned by a certain Francesco Pinardi, a migrant from Arcisate. On July 14, 1845 he had purchased a building and some surrounding land from the Fillipi brothers for 14,000 lire. On November 10, 1845, Pinardi leased the house and the property but not the shed to Mr. Soave who was a starch manufacturer. It was a two-story structure of modest dimensions. Mr. Pinardi was contacted and the deed was signed on April 5, 1846. Fr. Borel mentions that he came to bless the Oratory on April 13. So we can conclude that the chapel was used on Easter Sunday on April 12 and was blessed by Fr. Borel on the following day. The chapel was dedicated to St. Francis de Sales.

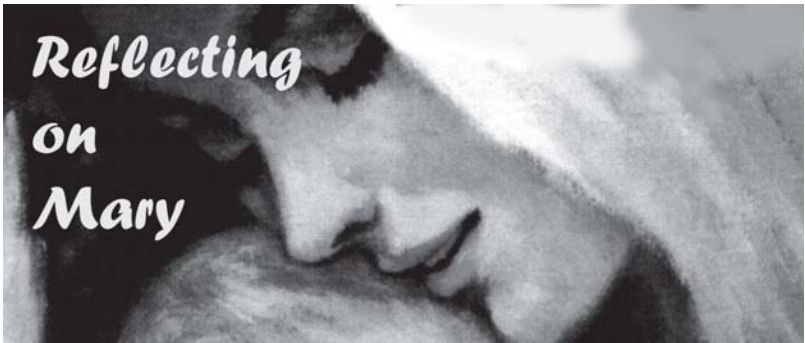
According to the correspondence of Don Bosco with Vicar Cavour dated on March 13, 1846, Don Bosco was in touch with

Mr. Pinardi earlier than March 13. The secretary of Marquis Cavour called Don Bosco to the Vicar's office since he had desired a permit by March 30.

Once the Oratory settled on Pinardi's property in 1846, Don Bosco developed a plan for the systematic development of the premises with a view to further expansion of his work. Don Bosco and Fr. Borel moved to sublease and later to buy the Pinardi house and the adjoining property. The original Pinardi-Borel contract for the shed was signed for three years on April 1, 1846. When Mr. Soave's lease from Mr. Pinardi expired, Father Borel signed a lease for the house and the property with Mr. Pinardi for an additional 150 lire a year.

This contract was to cover the period from April 1, 1849 to March 31, 1852. This was a place of ill-repute on account of a murder that took place on the premises of the Bellezza house in the neighbourhood. Pinardi offered to sell the house and the property to Don Bosco in partnership with Fathers Borel, Cafasso and Roberto Murialdo for 28,000 lire. The deed was signed on February 19, 1851. By this final deed the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales was definitively settled on its permanent home at Valdocco.

Don Bosco fell seriously ill and his boys prayed fervently for his recovery. In the second week in August 1846 he went to Becchi for a long period of convalescence. During this time Fr. Borel directed the Oratory with the help of some other priests. On November 3, 1846 Don Bosco not yet fully recovered, returned to Turin with his mother Margaret. □



Reflecting on Mary

WITH THE "MAGNIFICAT" IN OUR HEARTS

The month of May invites us to trustfully turn our gaze to Mary and we do so with that age-old and timeless pious practice of the Holy Rosary, which, when it is not a mechanical repetition of traditional formulae, is a biblical meditation that leads us through the events in the life of our Lord in the company of the Blessed Virgin. Let us ponder on these events, like her, in our hearts. At her school, the lamp of our faith burns ever more brightly, shining on our hearts and our homes.

The month of May closes with the beautiful Marian feast of the Visitation, which could seem like a "red cord" that accompanies us through the entire month. The Gospel of Luke recounts the journey of Mary from

Nazareth to the home of her elderly cousin Elizabeth. Let us try and imagine Mary's frame of mind after the Annunciation,



after the angel left her. Mary found herself in possession of a huge mystery residing in the womb. She knew that something extraordinarily unique had happened and she realized that it was the beginning of the final chapter in the history of the world's salvation. But everything around her was as before and the village of Nazareth was completely unaware of what had happened.

However, before worrying about herself, Mary thought of the elderly Elizabeth, who by now was in the final period of her pregnancy. Urged by the mystery of love that she had just welcomed into herself, she set off "quickly" to assist her. Just marvel at the simple yet sublime greatness of Mary! What a profound and beautiful moment that was, when she reached Elizabeth's house. No artist could adequately depict the inner light of the Holy Spirit that enveloped the two women. Elizabeth, inspired from on high exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! Why should I be granted a visit from the mother of my Lord? Behold, as soon as your greeting reached my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed what the Lord said to her" (Lk 1, 42-45).

In reality these words may have a discordant ring about them. Elizabeth is one of many old women in Israel and Mary, an unknown girl from a remote village in Galilee. Who can be and what they can do in a world

in which other people and powers are valued? However, Mary once again amazes us; her heart is pure, totally open to God's light, her soul is without sin, not weighed down by pride and selfishness. Elizabeth's words ignite in her spirit in a song of praise that is a genuine and profoundly "theological" reading of history: a reading that we have to absorb from the One whose faith is without flaw or shadow. "My soul magnifies the Lord!" Mary recognizes God's greatness. This is the first indispensable sentiment of faith, a sentiment that assures the human being of a sense of security and freedom from fear even amid the storms of history.

Going beyond the surface, Mary "sees" through the eyes of faith the work of God in history. For this reason she is blessed because she believed, in faith, in fact, she received the word of God and conceived the Incarnate Word. And her *Magnificat*, after centuries and millennia, still remains the true and profound interpretation of history, while the writings of several of the world's sages have been refuted by the facts down the course of centuries.

Let us spend this month with the *Magnificat* in our hearts. Like Mary, let us carry within ourselves the same sentiments of praise and thanksgiving, of faith and hope, of docile abandonment into the hands of divine Providence and imitate her example of generous service to our neighbour. □

PAKISTAN - Lahore

Proclaiming Christianity on public roads may be a rare sight in Pakistan, but Christian tuk-tuk drivers have their ways.

Every Sunday the parking lot at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Lahore gets crowded with Christian "auto rickshaws", a kind of three-wheel taxi locally known as tuk-tuks. Most can be identified by the rosaries hanging from the rear view mirror, but several go even further with stickers of the cross, Jesus, Mary and St. Anthony on the windscreens and biblical verses on the rear coverings. Similarly, customized rickshaws can be spotted in Christian neighbourhoods all over the country.

There are over 300,000 rickshaws in Lahore alone, but the Christian versions offer more than just cheap transport. Shahid Masih uses his to bring his family to pray at the Cathedral. "Not only does it accommodate the whole family with five children, it also earns me an extra 6000 rupees (US\$ 70) every month, as I've been driving it part-time in the evenings for a year," he said.

Masih, who works by day for a telecoms company, takes care to use a special cloth to clear the dust off the Jesus stickers, which he bought from the Cathedral bookshop. "Having them on the front assures me of safe travel and it also gives me a chance to talk about my faith to Muslim

customers when they ask about them."

Nadim Fida has worked for the Young Christian Movement, campaigning for the rights of rickshaw drivers for the past five years. He is fully in favour of the Christian-customized rickshaws.

"It's a positive sign," he said. "The Christian faith is a minority and many are poor, but we must take pride in that faith, amid rising intolerance and discrimination." *from ucan on-line service*

NEPAL - Kathmandu

A new Catholic mission has been established in Tipling, a remote village development area in northern Nepal. The permanent mission in the upper part of Dhading district comes three decades after a visit to the area by Father Casper Miller, an American Jesuit priest working in Nepal.

Tipling consists of five villages where the majority of the population is mainly Protestant with about 100 Catholic families.

"For some years there have been regular prayer services on Saturdays in some of the villages conducted by catechists but now we will be able to have Mass," said Yoteman Ghale, one of the area's lay Catholics.

For several years, the Jesuit priests have been helping educate the children of Tamang, migrant families in north Kathmandu along with the

Sisters of Charity. The Jesuits will live in rented accommodation for a year in Thulo gaon, the central village, and plans are afoot for them to start helping out in the local government-run school, which lacks proper teachers. *Ucan on-line.*

*Tamangs: an ethnic indigenous people living in the hills surrounding the Kathmandu valley.

MALAYSIA

Vatican City -Bishop Joseph Hii Teck Kwong, Auxiliary Bishop of Sibiu, located in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, describes the relationship between Muslims and Christians as one of "religious harmony". In his diocese, as in all of so-called "East Malaysia", the faithful belong to the local indigenous tribes. "The native people of Borneo are devout Christians, who live in harmony with Muslims. The religious harmony in Borneo should be a model for the entire nation. In the late 1800's, the many different indigenous tribes were evangelized by missionaries, who learned both the local language and Iban, a language still in use today. We have a deep gratitude to them for bringing us the faith and for having allowed the Gospel to take root in Borneo."

In the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, the indigenous Christians make up 50% of the total population, with Malay Muslims at 30% and the Chinese community at 20%. "In

Borneo's society there is social and interreligious harmony. We have cases where, in the same tribe, there are Muslims and Christians who share the same culture and traditions. The relationship with the Muslim Malays is marked by mutual respect and is devoid of conflict. I believe that this experience could be a model for the entire nation." *An edited version, taken from Agenzia Fides*

SOUTH SUDAN - Juba

The Catholic University of Southern Sudan is attracting an increasing number of students due to the quality of its teaching according to Richard Mirigga, academic Institute administrator. This year (2011) his office has received over 600 registrations, but only managed to accommodate 219 new students due to lack of space.

The Catholic University, in its two campuses in Juba and Wau is one of the few private institutions that offer degree courses to young men and women in the newborn state. In addition to local students, some Ugandans are enrolled at the Catholic University in South Sudan. The Catholic university is about to get a piece of land on which to build its permanent office in Juba, thus increasing the available spaces for students. The Catholic University has 407 students enrolled in Economics in Juba. The first 29 graduates will obtain their university degree in 2012. *Agenzia Fides* □

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Our belated thanksgiving for a miraculous recovery of our son Savio (aged 29) who was given just 48 hours. I never gave up hope and depended on God's mercy. On receiving the "anointing of the sick" and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist he recovered the very next minute. My son Savio was half paralyzed on the left side. Please pray for our other son Elton who has just recovered from depression.

Francis & Catherine Fernandes

On 11th February 2010, I was driving back in my car from my village. Suddenly an animal crossed the road and I swerved the car, lost control and it went off the road climbing over some debris and it overturned and I lost control of the car. Death was so close, yet I survived without any injury. I was wearing the medal of Mary Help of Christians attached to my scapular. I attribute my new life to Jesus and Mother Mary.

Nevin D'Silva, Goa

Our grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians for the innumerable favours received. Oh, mother always protect our family from every danger and sickness.

Louis Nogueira, Mumbai

My belated but sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for all the favours granted to me. When I was in the Gulf I had to face several problems. I kept fighting with Jesus and he answered all my prayers. Both my boys did well in Dubai, they have now settled in Canada. The boys are far away and we have learned to take it a day at a time. I have a heart problem and recently my left leg was painning and I was frightened. I went to the doctor who ran some tests and with my trust in Jesus, everything was OK. Jesus and Mary are protecting my whole family. I always say the 3 Hail Marys and "Sacred Heart of Jesus I trust in you." I say it 50 times a day. Thank you Jesus for everything.

Mrs. J. Paes, Goa

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and St. Joseph for helping my eldest daughter to pass her Final CA Exams and also for good health of my mother.

Maria David, Bangalore

Oh, Holy Trinity, Mother Mary and all the saints, I thank you for giving my son his permanent visa to Australia. Thank you for all the graces bestowed on our family. Please continue to protect us always.

M. D'Souza, Mumbai

Thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco who blessed my daughter-in-law with the gift of a baby boy after many years.

Maria Luisa Noronha, Goa

My sincere thanks to the Almighty Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for granting us good health and for the safe delivery of my daughter's second child - a baby girl and I also thank you for my son's job and many other favours bestowed on me and my family.

Maria Nunes, Mumbai

Dear Jesus, Mary, Joseph and all the saints, thank you for all the favours received. Do continue to pray for us.

Liz Pires, 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 3 Hail Marys.

Mrs. Berger, Guntakal

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians Don Bosco and Dominic Savio, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys for the success of my daughter Merlin Thomas, in her X, XI, XII exams, for her good health and a safe journey.

Marina Thomas, Vasai

MARY WAS THERE

A few days back, my sister and I had been to a mall. Whilst returning, outside the Mall there was some sand which my sister did not see and the bike skidded and I landed on my back but there were no broken bones and thank God that no vehicles passed by at that moment if they were I would have been 'shaking hands with St. Peter' This would not have been possible had it not been for the fact that I pray the three Hail Marys every day. My grateful thanks to her.

Mrs. Ann Fernandes Vaz, Pune

My stomach was paining very badly throughout the day on 8th February 2012 and I remembered that it was the novena for the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes so I drank some Lourdes water and said an 'Our Father' and the gripes stopped. I thank God and Our Lady for the innumerable favours and miracles worked in my life especially the cure of migraine several years ago after making the sign of the Cross on my forehead with my index finger, the one I used when I touched the Holy Eucharist.

Fatima Luis, Goa

I am grateful to Our Lady, Help of Christians and Don Bosco for the petitions granted to me.

Thereza Pereira, Mumbai

My heartfelt thanks to Our Blessed Lord and Our Blessed Mother for helping my husband to stop smoking.

Mrs. Hollarene Parrie, Udaipur Rajasthan

Thank you, Mary Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for the gift of a cute and healthy baby boy. Continue to bless us always.

Oscar & Savita Soares, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary for protecting my husband during a fatal accident. Although a car ran over him, he was saved with minor scratch marks.

Johnsy Gino, Ahmedabad

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

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and St. Joseph for the many favours and graces received. I am extremely thankful. May they continue to always bless me and my family.

Jason Bosco D'Souza

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for my sister's good results in her SSC examinations and for many other favours received.

S. Afonso, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for granting our prayers. I was given complete bed rest throughout the nine months of my pregnancy. Though there were a lot of complications I delivered two lovely daughters in the 8th month.

Bernice and Gregory D'Souza, Sharjah

Our sincere gratitude, though belated, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary - our mother dear, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping in solving our property matters and sale of the same.

Norris and Maria, Mumbai

My belated and sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for providing my son with a good job in the Airlines in the Gulf and for other favours received.

Maria Gomes, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Clara Carvalho, Mumbai

My married daughter is an epileptic and is under treatment since 1994. After a confirmed pregnancy the doctors advised her to stop medication. She worked till the day of her delivery without even half a tablet even travelling by train. To the joy of the doctors and all of us she had a normal delivery and was blessed with a normal healthy baby boy. She is well by the grace of God and thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio.

Mr. & Mrs. B. Pinto, Vasai East

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for securing a good job and for many other blessings and favours.

Mrs. Celina Nathan, Pune

Belated but sincere thanks for the many blessings and favours received from the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and the Holy Spirit.

Mrs. S. Vaz, Mumbai

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

Mr. & Mrs. W. Henricus, Australia

I just want to thank Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for freeing my son Krishna from a court trial. He did not have to go to prison. I prayed and recited the Novena of Don Bosco everyday.

Coopamah Paravedy, U.K.

Thank you, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping me to get a job in aviation and for many other favours received.

Carlton, Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



This is my thanksgiving to Dominic Savio when I was pregnant I was going through a lot of difficulties. I had brought a Dominic Savio scapular and put it round my neck asking for a boy child but God blessed me with a beautiful baby girl and I was very happy but a little sad as I wanted to name my child Savio. But by God's grace I got pregnant again and again Dominic Savio blessed me with a boy child and this time I named him Rafael Savio. This is my thanksgiving to Dominic Savio for helping me in both my pregnancies. *Sandra Pereira, Mumbai*

Our sincere and grateful thanks to Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio whose scapular my daughter wore for a safe delivery and for protecting her baby throughout a troubled pregnancy. *Mr. Willie & Janet Fernandes*
Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Lady and St. Dominic Savio for giving our daughter a good life partner. *Mrs. Hazel Pope, Pune*

Belated thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for many favours granted, especially for the gift of a baby boy to my niece who had a normal delivery. The baby is now 21/2 months old.

Ms. Rosaline Simoes, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter. *Mrs. L. Correa, Tuticorin*

Thank you for a safe confinement of my grandchild Dominic. Please continue to bless my son and his wife, so that his writing talent be recognized. *D. Assey, Sydney, Australia*

We have a daughter of 10years and after 10years we have another baby girl. Though the doctors advised us against it because they thought the baby would not be normal because of my age. We prayed to Mother Mary (the 3 Hail Marys) and to St. Dominic Savio and we have a healthy baby girl. Always keep us in your care, under your powerful protection.

Loyal and Sheryl Rodrigues, Goa

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER MAY 2012

The Holy Father's General Intention: *That initiatives which defend and uphold the role of the family may be promoted within society.*

The Holy Father's Missionary Intention: *That Mary, Queen of the World and Star of Evangelization, may accompany all missionaries in proclaiming her Son Jesus.*