

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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## CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>Slow Down</i> .....	3
Fostering Generosity - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS.....	4
Walking With the Church: The Healing Power of Jesus.....	7
A Thought For Lent - Wendy White.....	8
Francis Convertini (1898-1976)....	10
Fr Ajoy Fernandes sdb - Fr. Michael Fernandes sdb	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>St. Matilda (March. 14)</i> - Mario Scudu.....	12
Lectio Divina: The Gracious Father (Lk 15:1-3; 11-32) - Carlo Broccardo.....	17
Quietspaces: The Path of Love From Tabor to Golgotha - Pope Benedict XVI.....	18
The Far Away Heart - Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection....	20
The Preventive System of Don Bosco For Simple People (1) - Fr. Elias Diaz, SDB.....	24
Reflecting on Mary: Our Mother In Pain - Joseph Pelizza.....	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 &amp; Don Bosco</i> .....	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio</i> .....	35



***Lovingly she  
bore him in her  
immaculate womb,  
that the promises  
to the children  
of Israel  
might come about  
and the hope of  
nations  
be accomplished.***

*From the  
Preface of the Annunciation*

**Cover: "And they took him  
down from the cross  
John Walter**



## From The Editor's Desk

### SLOW DOWN

The pace of modern life is accelerating to the point of dizziness. My refuge from modernity is to stand on the terrace adjoining my room and survey the east side of the city across the railway tracks and onwards as far as the eye can see. It's a good feeling to step out of busy life for a brief spell – and to do so frequently – minus the mobile phone and be unreachable.

Eloquently put by poet William Henry Davies when he writes, *'What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare,'* he may have been on to something more basic to our human nature. To be alone for a while; to be quiet; to revere creation as a gift of God and to re-value our relationships with each other.

Technology is a marvellous thing. Mobile phones, email, social networking sites are a way of life. We couldn't live without them. However, we could exist nicely with less of it. Are we in danger of losing interest in one another? How many times do we meet people and ask of their welfare out of politeness without any genuine concern, interest or empathy? God forbid they should tell us every woe, ache and pain they have suffered when we have enough troubles of our own and precious little time to stand, listen and take stock of someone else's misery!

*"As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Over all these clothes put on love, the perfect bond. Teach each other and advise each other, all in wisdom."* (Col. 12:14,16) This piece from St Paul's letter to the Colossians is a mighty task for anybody with a busy life. As a start, can we give a little more of our precious time to someone who needs it? Can we be a better example of God's 'chosen'? Is it possible for us to listen more carefully when someone needs to talk? Are we humble enough to berate less the wrong actions of another? Do we look at the seasons changing? If not, take time to stand, stare and *rejig* those priorities.

St. Francis of Assisi, whose feast occurs in the month of October wrote the *Canticle of the Sun* a couple of years before his death in 1226, in praise of God's creation. He encountered his fair share of troubles, but never lost sight of the beauty of this world moulded by the hands of the supreme Creator. He took time to stand and stare, otherwise he could not have written the *canticle* as lyrically and with such great appreciation of life and nature as he did. His view of the importance of people and environment were adequately balanced. He said, *"we have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way. The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today!"* And I say: ***Amen to that!***

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

# FOSTERING GENEROSITY

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

**I**t is a well-known fact that gift giving is an integral part of every festive season or of happy occasions in one's life. Now that we are better informed that gift-giving actually activates parts of the brain associated with pleasure and social connection; releases endorphins in the brain, producing a "helper's high"; and provides many other long-term health benefits, temporal and also spiritual, wouldn't it be a good idea to see how we can foster this habit in ourselves so that not only do we gain from practising it, but that others also could benefit from it!?

But we aren't always as giving as we could be. *Greater Good* has published dozens of articles on how to foster generosity in children, institutions, society - and within ourselves. We list here the seven top tips, culled from the archives - notably from Jeremy Adam Smith, for encouraging people to give all the year round.

**1. Communicate the value of giving.** As Christine Carter writes in her Raising Happiness blog, "Research suggests that altruistic children have at least one parent ... who deliberately communicates altruistic values to their kids." The same observation applies to political, business, and non-profit leaders, who can make a difference by talking about the value of giving and sharing.

Yet this kind of communication need not always be verbal. Researchers tell us that even

small visual cues can help children act on their natural inclination to help other people. And we all know that example speaks much louder than words, in the case of every human being.



*Jeremy Adam Smith*

"What you are speaking so loudly that I cannot hear what you say!" sums up this principle. Many studies have shown conclusively that 'priming' people with a single word, concept, or image can affect their behaviour in positive ways.

**2. Provide models of giving.** It may come as a surprise to us to learn that a great deal of research points to the fact that kindness is highly contagious. One such recent study found that around 15 percent of people in a given group emerge as "consistent contributors" who donate to non-profit enterprises. Now it is these people who inspire others to give more than they would otherwise.

In another such study,

participants read articles and watched videos about both extraordinary and ordinary acts of kindness – and were then given the opportunity to give money to others or to keep it for themselves. “The results show that hearing about these good deeds made the participants more likely to give away their money,” writes Carmen Sobczak, “but only if they had been exposed to an extraordinary good deed, not just an everyday act of kindness.” In his essay for *Greater Good*, “Wired to be Inspired,” psychologist Jonathan Haidt calls this feeling “elevation...a warm, uplifting feeling that people experience when they see unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, courage or compassion.”

**3. Get Personal.** When natural or man-made disasters occur, we are often confronted by staggering numbers of dead, injured or persons who have lost everything except their lives. Here again research shows that when abstract figures are offered, they can actually suppress the instinct to provide humanitarian gifts. Instead, when the loss is somehow made personal by giving the disaster a face and an individual story, the results are dramatically better! “A pitch from a charity or a news article that personalizes suffering or tragedy is the most effective way to get people to care,” says Small. “Finding a way to make people feel a personal connection to victims should increase giving.”

We must be further reminded that children particularly should not be shielded from people who need help. Too often we tend to protect our children from pain and

suffering, but in so doing we shelter them from the needs and sufferings of others. If it is true that compassion is a positive emotion strongly correlated to happiness we would do well to provide them with opportunities to feel compassion. We benefit from teaching even little children that compassion is a gift, a human and humane way to give of their time, attention and energy to another.

**4. Be reasonably status conscious.** Giving generally confers prestige and social rank. That is why museums, hospitals and other non-profit organizations make sure that they publicly thank their benefactors, even to the point of naming rooms and buildings after the most generous among them. Thus it always helps to make giving look good for the donor’s social status.

But we must be careful not to subscribe to the belief that the high-status rich give more than the low-status poor. In fact, experience shows that people who have less money or less rank are more likely to share with others, even of the little they have. And that is an important point to drive home when dealing with our children. The Bible provides us with several examples of extraordinary generosity shown by the very poor – the classic cases being that of the widow who, before taking care of herself, first offered the last of her food supply to the prophet Elijah during the famine! (1 Kgs. 17:8-16). And who has not heard the story of the ‘Widow’s Mite’ as told by the evangelists? (Mk. 12:41-44)

**5. Make people feel that they’re connected both locally and**

**globally.** In general, people tend to give more freely and generously to members of their own kin group, tribe, clan, ethnicity, or nationality – they’re even more likely to help fans of their favourite team over fans of a rival.

But the tricky question often is: who belongs to this “in-group”. One 2009 study found that people from countries with higher levels of economic globalization were more likely to give money to international groups and causes – but so were individuals who made a point of watching foreign films or had international friends and experiences. The implication of this is that it is important to frequently remind ourselves of our global inter-connectedness – a task that starts at home with raising our children to embrace other cultures and connect with their neighbours.

**6. Volunteer in the neighborhood.** An important study analyzed the relationship between a neighbourhood’s support structures, like religious institutions and parks, and the amount of kind, helpful behaviour among teens in that area. Not surprisingly, they found that individual altruism is directly correlated to neighbourhood quality. That is another good and effective way to increase the amount of giving in one’s community: Volunteer at youth centres, schools, and churches. One not only feels good engaging in such altruistic activity but one will also help build a more giving neighbourhood.

**7. Express gratitude and indebtedness!** Probably the best

thing one can do to foster generosity is to never let a gift go unacknowledged. “Gratitude serves as a key link between receiving and giving: It moves recipients to share and increase the very good they have received,” writes Robert Emmons, who is currently working on a new gratitude project. “Because so much of human life is about giving, receiving, and repaying, gratitude is a pivotal concept for our social interactions.” The bottom line then is: If you want to foster generosity, be generous in your gratitude!

### **Core Teaching of Christianity**

When we review the cream of Jesus’ teachings we find that what is special is precisely that the Christian needs to go beyond what the Old Testament prescribed. “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20) and again, a little later, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”

Now we can say with absolute certitude that when Jesus gave us this teaching he was not merely indicating what we need to do merely to get to heaven. Rather he pointed out what is the true nature of a Christian and hence what is his/her characteristic

way of acting when dealing with others, especially in difficult circumstances. When we follow this teaching in our interactions with others, the results cannot but be beneficial all round. Consistent practice of this teaching presumes that one is deeply conscious of God's own generosity to us his beloved adopted children. It also assumes that like St. Francis of Assisi one is convinced that 'it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned, and in dying

we are born to eternal life!' Without this conviction being deeply embedded in our Christian consciousness, all we would be capable of is to secure our own selves in the best way we know and that is what leads to widespread discontent and misery for all. But in this area as in all others, 'many are called but few are chosen' - it takes a full-blooded Christian to practice this fearlessly to everyone's advantage! □

## walking with the Church



### *The Healing Power of Jesus*

*From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland*

**Q.** *Jesus the son of God has the power to heal. It must be obvious that healing people of physical illness or disability would immediately bring followers to believe and follow Him.*

*This is a problem I have and I would like you to write about it in your question and answer column.*

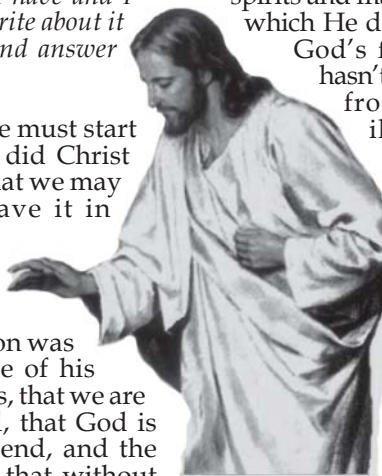
**A.** To answer it we must start with asking why did Christ come? He came that we may have life and have it in abundance. He came to bring us wholeness and completeness. His life and mission was to make us aware of his Father's love for us, that we are important to God, that God is the purpose, the end, and the fulfilment of life, that without

God we are nothing. And so Christ tried to make us conscious of sin and of our need to open our hearts to God and accept his love and forgiveness. He came to heal our spirits and make us whole again which He does by bringing us

God's forgiveness. Who hasn't prayed for healing from the various

illnesses which affect the human body? Most people suffer from one illness or another and those with faith in God will ask His help. In Lourdes, Fatima, and other great shrines to Our Lady we see the

*Continued on pg. 17*





# A THOUGHT FOR LENT

by Wendy White

**W**hen we contemplate the Way of the Cross we see Christ fall not once but three times, and each time he gets up and drives himself on even though it is to worse torture ending in death.

These falls are telling us something very important. God was using the very last stages of his Son's life on earth to drive home to us something vital, something that we all need to know: that we must never give up once we have accepted to do God's will.

Going back over our Lord's life during his ministry we know the miles and miles he travelled. It is assumed that he went mostly on foot, but if he did ride on a donkey sometimes it is not the most comfortable form of transport, and always he was followed by a crowd.

## Always a Crowd

Whenever he got to his destination there were more crowds, crowds to be taught, and so many to be healed. Frequently he was mobbed and had hardly room to move; remember when that poor woman suffering from a haemorrhage could only touch his garment and how difficult it was in all that crowd for our Lord to find out who it was who touched him. Again there was the time when they had to take the tiles off the very roof of the house in order to let down the paralytic, the only way that they could reach our Lord.

What an exhausting way of life it must have been! When he was on the way from one place to

another there was usually a crowd with him, and if not then there were always the disciples. Although he loved his disciples very much there were times when he found them exasperating: "Oh ye of little faith," he cries in desperation. There were times when he wanted to get away from them and from everyone else and be on his own to talk to his Father, but how seldom was he able to do this.

## Helpless and Hopeful

There was the time when they brought him the news of the death of St John the Baptist and he was deeply sorrowful. John was the only one who knew that he was truly the Son of God. The only one who had complete faith.

He had seen the Holy Spirit come upon him in the form of a dove and he had heard the Father confirm that 'This is my beloved Son' and now he had been ruthlessly killed to please a little chit of a dancing girl. Sad and sickened our Lord turned to the mountains to get away and draw comfort from his beloved father, but even when he felt he could bear no more the crowds followed and pressed upon him and seeing them so helpless and so hopeful he had compassion on them. That was the time when he worked the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

No, he had no peace, no comfort, the Son of Man indeed had 'nowhere to lay his head.' Always there were the disciples whom he had to teach, they were



*Jesus Falls the 1<sup>st</sup> Time H. Lazerges*

his children, his pupils and he loved them dearly. But just as a mother who loves her children with all her heart yet feels at times that she has to get away from their constant chatter and demands, so our Lord loved to go aside and pray on his own. Still they always came and found him and received a welcome that never failed.

### **To love and Serve**

This is what a life of service to God our Father means. It really comes down to utter selflessness, thinking only of others, 'Not my will but thy will be done.' The Christian way of life means seeing in every other person, be they rich or poor, strong or weak, good or bad, someone beloved of God, someone that we too must love, and love through service, no holding back. We must not listen to words such as, "Why bother, they won't thank you for it," Our Lord fell and it hurt him, the heavy cross on top of him, the hard stony ground beneath his raw and battered body, yes it hurt

him but he did not give up, he did not say, "What good is this doing; who really cares?" And indeed who did care at that time? They were all around him, jeering and shouting abuse at him, and still he had compassion on them: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." All that our Lord taught about loving and serving all that he showed by example in his own way of life can be summed up in these terrible falls.

Life may hit us hard. It often does and we collapse and are near despair. How often at those times have we been told to look around and we will be sure to see someone who is worse off than ourselves. It is not very comforting but it is true.

We must not give in, but instead put all our trust in the Father who will help us up so that we can carry on and help others in our turn.

### **Words are not Enough**

Our Lord showed by his passion and death exactly what he meant when he said we must love and serve. Words alone are not enough. In true humility we must be prepared to serve whomsoever of our fellow men may be in need, not rust when we feel like it, but even when we are feeling down ourselves. Mother Teresa sums it up with the words, "Give until it hurts."

After the cross the glorious resurrection; every effort we make in the Lord's name the Father will reward, giving us all the graces and strength that we need to keep us going until the great moment of our own resurrection when at last we shall know the peace of God which passes all understanding. □



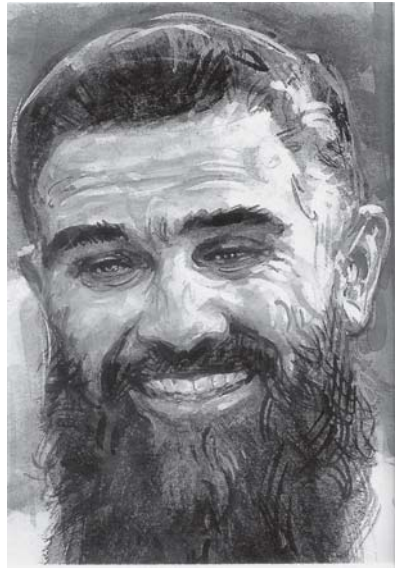
## FRANCIS CONVERTINI 1898 - 1976

**F**rancis Convertini was born in Marinelli close to Cisternino, in the province of Brindisi, on the 29th August 1898. His family was very poor, and from the time he was very little he was compelled to work. As soon as he turned 18 he was called to fight in the First World War. He was captured by the Austrians and sent to a concentration camp. After he was freed and after recovering from meningitis, he decided to join the Guardia di Finanza.

He went to confession in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and Providence saw that his confessor was Fr Angelo Amadei, the second great biographer of Don Bosco. Fr Angelo became his spiritual director.

After inviting him to attend the handing over of the missionary cross to eleven missionaries leaving for India he said to him: "Why don't you also become a missionary?" Francis took on studies with much effort at the Salesian missionary institute in Ivrea and, after receiving his mission cross from Don Rinaldi, on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1927 he embarked for India.

In Shillong his Novice Master was Fr Ferrando and he became a disciple of Fr Costantino Vendrame. Francis learned of Don Bosco's life from Fr Amadei



and in India learned how to put into action his missionary zeal. He felt close to the people with Fr Vendrame: they covered many miles visiting villages, going into homes to talk about Jesus. He finished his philosophy and theology with some difficulty and was ordained priest in 1935. The new bishop, Bishop Ferrando sent him to the Salesian mission in Krishnagar.

He was very popular in Krishnagar and had many friends among the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the clever too. He was one of the few missionaries who was able to enter a Hindu home and go even further than the front door.

He died on the 11th February 1976 murmuring: "Mother Mary, I never displeased you during my life. Now help me!" His body lies in the garden adjacent to the Cathedral of Krishnagar. □



**FR. AJOY FERNANDES, SDB**

*Vice-Provincial of the Salesian Province of St. Francis Xavier, Mumbai  
by Fr. Michael Fernandes, SDB*

**A** pint-sized bundle of energy and enthusiasm! That is how one may describe Ajoy Fernandes, the man and the priest who personifies the proverb "good things come in small packages"!

Ajoy was born on 19th September 1959 to Molly and Alex Fernandes. He did his early schooling in Don Bosco High School Matunga, where his mother was a well respected teacher, and then moved to Don Bosco Lonavla to complete his schooling. He undertook his novitiate and philosophy in Yercaud; and did his theological studies in Kristu Jyoti College Bangalore. He was ordained on 19th December 1987 in Mumbai.

Ajoy holds post-graduate degrees in philosophy and theology from Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth Pune; and a doctorate in clinical psychology from De La Salle University Philippines.

Ajoy is meticulous in planning; he is organized and resourceful; he carries out his commitments with finesse -these bear witness to the instrumental leader that Ajoy is. His simplicity of life and his deep trust in God are expressions of his spiritual depth. He is a man of profound integrity; he leads by example and inspires people with his life of prayer, holiness and hard work. He is gentle, serene and composed. He is ever-available to people and confreres, who find him a good spiritual guide and counsellor -



empathetic, insightful and competent. Ajoy is, thus, a beautiful and balanced blend of both instrumental and expressive leader! As parish priest, Ajoy cared for his flock as a real shepherd.

As rector of Dominic Savio Boys' Home Andheri, he was deeply and enthusiastically involved in the lives of the boys.

As the vice-provincial of the province, he has brought vibrancy and enthusiasm, especially vis-a-vis the youth pastoral sector. Ajoy has brought into focus the ideal for Salesian youth ministry and has worked out, with his collaborators at all levels, a definite intelligible plan for it.

May he continue to touch the lives and hearts of people through his person and his ministry of animation and counselling. May there be unexpected moments of joy and laughter, of fulfilment...a feeling of closeness to those he loves... confidence and enjoyment in all that makes him special to others... and for a deep and abiding peace within. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## **ST. MATILDA (895-968) HER ENTIRE LIFE FOR GOD AND FAMILY (March 14)**

*by Mario Scudu (TA/ID)*

**M**atilda was a happily married princess who became the responsible mother of a family not without her family problems (with her children!) and later Queen of Germany and was declared a saint by the Church.

### **Responsible Woman and Mother**

Matilda was born around 895 into an aristocratic family in Westphalia, north-east of Germany. According to the custom of the time - her parents Count Dietrich and Reinhilde placed their baby girl in a monastery where her paternal grandmother had become the abbess after her husband died. According to a document that was found it is believed that Matilda was placed in the monastery not to become a nun but to gain an education and grow intellectually in keeping with her status. It was the practice in those days. In 909 she married Henry of Saxony and bore him five children all destined to greatness: Otto I who would be called the Great, Gerberga who became the Queen of France,

Hedwig, Henry the Younger, and Bruno who would become Archbishop of Cologne.

The first real difficulty for Matilda came in 936 at the death of her husband. He left her a considerable legacy but she did not favour the fact that her firstborn should succeed his father. She rather favoured Henry her second son who was more worthy and because he was born after her husband had become king. This led to a conflict between the two brothers but despite her support, Otto won the day. She quickly dismissed the family squabble about the right of succession and wisely gave it up. In 955 Otto defeated the Hungarians, ending their looting spree over many parts of Europe (even Italy). He was crowned emperor in Rome in 962 and with his coronation also came the reconciliation with the whole family. Interestingly the two brothers estranged their mother but this only led her to give away all her assets to the church and the poor and shut herself up in a

monastery. But Matilda overcame this crisis too and from 946 until her death she regained all her authority and influence, continuing her work for the church and the poor. She founded monasteries at Poelde and Quedlinburg and convents at Enger and Nordhausen. During all this time she was honoured and respected by her people. She died at Quedlinburg on 14 March 968 and was buried next to her husband Henry.

As mother and queen she lived a very active life and one through which shone her Christian virtues even though she was surrounded by much wealth and luxury. Her holiness was immediately recognized locally, especially through two biographies that were circulating at the time, even though the ecclesiastical authorities did not recognize it right away.

Veneration of her was confined only to Quedlinburg. Matilda's name was mentioned in some compilations of the martyrology of the XV and XVI cen-

turies, only later did her name enter the Roman Martyrology and her holiness began to be recognized even outside of Germany.

It is interesting to note that the hagiographers of Queen Matilda could only offer a conventional image of her holiness: maybe insisting on her pious widowhood and her association with monasteries and abbeys. Instead, her holiness should be presented as someone who took on the entire responsibilities of the family life. Matilda is a saint because she lived a holy life as a bride-to-be, as a mother and also as a queen, with all the duties proper to that state and that was not simple. We may say that in her there was a royal holiness, a matrimonial and a familial holiness. Her biographers have shown a genuine holiness that was lived day by day within the family with the joys and sorrows that it entails. She is one who, by her life proposes a new model of holiness, one that was different from that which was lived in monasteries and abbeys. Of course, her husband Henry approved of her way of life. In one



*the family tree of King Henry and St. Matilda, a page from the chronicles of St. Pantaleone*

of the biographies there was comment circulating that Henry had married a nun who was very dedicated to prayer. **“During the night ... Matilda rose and without the knowledge of her husband fled the royal chamber to give herself to prayer, trying to give back to the God who had loved her with a pure love her unwavering faith. Who would doubt that she would do something like this without the king knowing? And in fact if he saw it, he pretended to ignore it, knowing that Matilda’s deeds would be a blessing to both of them. Then gave his consent to whatever she desired.”**

One final note: As soon as her husband Henry died Matilda asked the first priest she met who was fasting, to pray for her deceased husband. She gave him a bracelet, saying: “Receive this item in gold and celebrate a Mass for the deceased.” This

seems to be one of the first examples of prayers for the repose of deceased souls. The widow Matilda never stopped being spiritually united to her husband even though he was deceased. She still felt “responsible” for him

because she still loved him and wanted the salvation of his soul. Even after the death of either spouse, the couple remained a small unit of Christians bound together by an eternal and indissoluble love. The prayers of one can serve (and still need) the salvation of others. Marriage in this world comes to be conceived as a genuine and important instrument for the salvation of the couple! It is also important to note the amazing positive visions of Christian marriage. It was seen as a real “locus” of the movement of God’s grace.

How many Christian couples live their marriage as a “virtuous circle” with one another in the way that is was for Henry and Matilda? □



St. Matilda a relief in wood at the end of XIV The Cathedral choir loft of Nordhausen, Germany

*The sons Otto and Henry estranged their mother Matilda from the court because she gave much of her legacy to the poor instead of to them*



# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## **A Quick Job**

A husband and wife entered the dentist's room. He said, "want a tooth pulled. We are in a hurry - so no Novocain or gas. Just pull the tooth out."

"You are a brave man," said the dentist. "Now show me the tooth."

"Open your mouth," said the man to his wife and show the dentist which tooth it is, dear."

## **Expecting**

For weeks, a 6 year old lad kept telling his first grade teacher about the baby brother or sister that was expected at his house. One day his mother allowed the boy to feel the movements of the unborn child. The 6 year old was obviously impressed, but he made no comment. Furthermore, he stopped telling his teacher about the impending event.

The teacher finally sat the boy on her lap and said, "Tommy, whatever became of that baby brother or sister you were expecting at home?"

Tommy burst into tears and confessed, "I think mummy ate it!"

## **Tireless Fidelity**

The after dinner speaker was droning on and on and on, bringing everyone to tears. One of the guests, fighting to keep his drooping eyelids open, turned to the lady on his right and said, "Can nothing be done to shut him up?"

"If there is I'd like to know," said the lady, "- I'm his wife and I've been trying to shut him up for thirty years!"

## **Baptism**

A father is in church with his three young children. As was customary, he sat in the very front row so that the children could properly witness the service. During this particular service, the minister was baptizing a tiny infant. The man's five-year-old daughter was particularly enthralled by the procedure of pouring water over the infant's head...

With a quizzical look on her face the little girl turned to her father and whispered, "Daddy is he brainwashing that baby?"

## **Doing Business**

The banker was walking down a street in New York's financial district when he was accosted by a mugger.

Ordered to hand over all his money, he did so, placing one hundred dollars in the mugger's open hand. The banker then casually retrieved two dollars from the robber's hand slipped them back into his money clip. The crook said with disbelief, "What the heck are you doing?" The banker replied, "A two percent fee is customary for cash transactions."

## **Prognosis**

"What are the chances of my recovering, doctor?"

Doctor: "One hundred percent. Medical records show that nine out of ten people die of the disease you have. "Your's is the tenth case I've treated; the others all died. □"





## THE GRACIOUS FATHER

(Luke 15:1-3;11-32)

by Carlo Broccardo

*The true protagonist of one of the most beautiful parables of Jesus*

**F**or this month of March we reflect on a fictional character that comes out of the mind of Jesus through which he communicates something very profound to his listeners.

The parable that we will hear on March 10, the fourth Sunday of Lent is known as the “parable of the prodigal son.” It is better by far to call it “the parable of the merciful father” because the real protagonist is not the son who gets lost and then comes back, but his father who waits for him and welcomes him.

Let us read it calmly and we will discover a great treasure that lies therein. First of all, in the opening few lines we are introduced to the characters: a father and two sons, then, the youngest demands his share of the inheritance and taking it he goes off to seek fortune elsewhere. Actually, he does not invest his assets in the far country to which he goes, instead, he squanders it. Then to make his life more miserable he experiences a famine in that country. Very soon he is left without money and nothing even to eat. He is

compelled to take on a very mean job that is extremely poorly paid: the humiliating task of feeding pigs. The Jews considered them unclean animals.

At this point something important takes place, “At last he came to his senses and said, ‘All my father’s hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say: Father I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers’” (vv. 17-19). If you like you may call it his conversion, but that would not be entirely fair. Jesus rather describes this as an argument of expediency, a well-calculated decision: here he is dying of hunger while at home the servants have enough to eat, so it is better to go back. The feet of that son making his way home were not motivated by the conviction that he had hurt his father but rather his hunger that was gnawing within him!

The father, however, does not let him even complete a sentence but immediately organizes a feast to celebrate his return. It is not right of you to judge the elder son, who is good and upright, in fact, he tells his father, ‘this son of yours (not calling him “ my brother” ...) has spent everything on prostitutes and it is not right that you to welcome him home. “Look all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends!” (v. 29) It is true: the two brothers made very different choices in life, but



*The Return of the Prodigal Son by Murillo (1668c.) Washington National Gallery of Art.*

in the end we see that both of them think alike. Both consider the father as an employer, one who keeps the score. Those who work deserve to be paid, those who do not, do not deserve to be paid.

That was also how the Pharisees thought. They complained because Jesus associated with sinners who did not deserve anything, what a pity! But Jesus is like the father in the parable, he does not reason with a calculator. The two

*Continued from pg.7*

healing hand of God at work where many miracles of physical healing have occurred. But Christ seems to be deaf to the prayers of the vast majority. There is no visible healing but our prayers are answered with a deeper healing - a healing of spirit. This is why God became man. He answers our prayer in the way which will most

brothers were good at mathematics, deciding who was right and who was not but it was the father who had a unique yardstick: his graciousness. He loves his children because they are children, that's exactly what they are and so he invites them to come to the feast.

Listening to this parable in

the middle of Lent is good for us. The penitential journey in preparation for Easter, which is punctuated by prayer, fasting and almsgiving, it is not a way for us to earn eternal life. It is just an attempt to stay in the house of the Father, not to lose the joy of our life with him. At the end of our Lenten journey we will encounter Jesus crucified who offers his body to us all; as we hear every time we come to Mass: "This is my body, given for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins." □

benefit us on our journey to eternal union with Him. As we have seen this may sometimes mean miraculous physical cures. Finally it doesn't follow that a person who is cured of a bodily illness by divine intervention will follow Christ and be faithful to Him. Remember the 10 lepers who were cured? They, with one exception, didn't even return to thank him. □

## THE PATH OF LOVE FROM

by His Holiness P

*The Lenten Itinerary which leads from Mount Tabor to Golgotha points out to Christians “the path of luminous love that overcomes darkness” and opens “the door to freedom and the newness of the Resurrection”, The Pope was speaking to the faithful at the parish of St John Baptist de La Salle on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2012. This is a summary of his talk which was given in Italian:*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

Today’s liturgy prepares us both for the mystery of the Passion — as we heard in the First Reading — and for the joy of the Resurrection.

The First Reading refers us to the episode in which God puts Abraham to the test (cf. Gen 22:1-18). He had an only son, Isaac, who was born to him in his old age. He was the son of the promise, the son who would also bring salvation to the peoples.

Nevertheless one day Abraham received from God the order to sacrifice him as an offering. The elderly patriarch found himself facing the prospect of a sacrifice which for him, as a father, was without any doubt the greatest imaginable. Yet not even for a moment did he hesitate and having made the necessary preparations, he set out with Isaac for the arranged place.

And we can imagine this journey toward the mountain-top, and what happened in his own heart and in his son’s. He builds an altar, lays the wood upon it and having bound the boy, grasps the knife, ready to sacrifice him. Abraham trusts totally in God, to the point of being ready even to sacrifice his own son and, with his son the future, for without a child the promised land was as nothing, ends in nothing. And in sacrificing his son he is sacrificing himself, his whole future, the whole of the promise. It really is the most radical act of faith. At that very moment he is restrained by an order from on high: God does not want death, but life, the true sacrifice does not bring death but life, and Abraham’s obedience became the source of an immense blessing to this day.

In the Second Reading, St Paul says that God himself has made a sacrifice: he has given us his own Son, he gave him on the Cross to triumph over sin and death, to triumph over the Evil One and to overcome all the evil that exists in the world. If God gives himself in the Son, he gives us everything. And Paul insists on the power of Christ’s redeeming sacrifice against every other force that can threaten our life.



## M TAVOR TO GOLGOTHA

*Pope Benedict XVI*

We are in God's heart, this is our great trust. This creates love and in love we go towards God. If God has given his own Son for all of us, no one can accuse us, no one can condemn us, no one can separate us from his immense love. Precisely the supreme sacrifice of love on the Cross, which the Son of God accepted and chose willingly, becomes the source of our justification, of our salvation. Just think that this act of the Lord's endures in the Blessed Eucharist, and in his heart, for eternity, and this act of love attracts us, unites us with him.

Lastly, the Gospel speaks to us of the episode of the Transfiguration (cf. Mk 9:2-10): Jesus manifests himself in his glory before the sacrifice of the Cross and God the Father proclaims his beloved Son, the one he loves, and commands the disciples to listen to him. Jesus goes up a high mountain and takes three Apostles with him — Peter, James and John — who will be particularly close to him in his extreme agony, on another mountain, the Mount of Olives.

The Transfiguration is a moment of light in advance, which also helps us see Christ's Passion with a gaze of faith. Indeed, it is a mystery of suffering but it is also the "blessed Passion" because — in essence — it is a mystery of God's extraordinary love; it is the definitive exodus that opens for us the door to the freedom and newness of the Resurrection, of salvation from evil. We need it on our daily journey, so often also marked by the darkness of evil.

Dear brothers and sisters, from Mount Tabor, the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Lenten journey takes us to Golgotha, the hill of the supreme sacrifice of love of the one Priest of the new and eternal Covenant. That sacrifice contains the greatest power of transformation of both the human being and of history. Taking

upon himself every consequence of evil and sin, Jesus rose the third day as the conqueror of death and of the Evil One. Lent prepares us to take part personally in this great mystery of faith which we shall celebrate in the Triduum of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Christ.

Let us entrust our Lenten journey and likewise that of the whole Church to the Virgin Mary. May she, who followed her Son Jesus to the Cross, help us to be faithful disciples of Christ, mature Christians, to be able to share with her in the fullness of Easter joy. Amen! ☐



# THE FAR AWAY HEART

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

**I**t is so easy to get involved and to enjoy what we're doing but without realising that there is always a deeper reason that so often eludes us because we do not see God's great plan for us. That was how John Winslow came to realise the 'deeper reason' and this is the story of how that reason changed his life and his work forever. This is how he remembers it:

"My name is John Winslow. You will find that name signed on nearly seventy paintings in various churches. Art critics have called those canvases 'the height of popular religious art.' Now, in their columns, they wonder about the change in John Winslow's work since his 'Crucifixion' was unveiled in the Cathedral three years ago... This is the answer; the tremendous thing that struck me in the forty-eighth year of my life, at the peak of my success...

I look upon the old John Winslow now with profound astonishment and deep regret. I see him again, young and hungry for success walking into the little art store with his folio of sketches under his arm. The old shop keeper was used to seeing these budding artists coming around to sell their work...but times were hard and people weren't buying, at least they weren't buying just anything. So, as soon as he saw John come in...

"Oh, I couldn't be interested, young man, got too many pictures now. They don't sell."

"I'm sure mine would, if you just let me show you a few of them."

"Oh, I got no time."

It suddenly struck the old man:

"Need some money? I guess you artists are always hungry. I'll give you a dollar to help me clean out the back store room."

"No thanks, I'm not a starving artist. I did work my way through art school but my family is going to help me till I start selling. They're proud to have an artist in the family."

"Unusual family!" mused the old man.

The young artist wasn't going to give up so easily. He opened his folio on the counter and took out a sheet... "Here's a sketch I did of my mother and here's a water-colour of our house."

The old man, who was busy at the till just looked up and mumbled: "Um...but they won't sell. No name in value. Got anything else?"

"Don't know, I guess I draw just the usual things. Oh, there's a landscape here I'd like to show you..." John was shuffling through the sheaf of paintings...and this got the old man interested. He stepped off his stool and came up to John...

"What's that? Turn back the page..."

"That? That's just a Madonna. I do those more for practice..."

"Looks better than most of the Christmas cards I've seen." Being a devout Catholic and knowing his clients well...he knew what would sell and what wouldn't. But John's mind was elsewhere.

"Look, I'm not interested in commercial art, I want to do something better with my name than signing it for advertising soap."

This was getting interesting and

the old shopkeeper asked more warmly: "Got any more Madonnas or stuff like that?"

"Oh yeah, I have another one here. I've also done a Saint Joseph in his carpenter's shop, an infant Christ, and sketches for a number of other saints."

Here was a deal in the making...and so the old man suggested: "Well, if you want to do a couple of those Madonnas for me, I'll see how they go."

John was confused, but content: "Well, thank you, I'll have some of them for you by the end of the week. They're the easiest things I do. Perhaps later you could use some of my more serious work."

The old man knew his wares and could recognize a good thing when he saw it.

"I'd advise you to stick to religion. You've got the knack for this popular stuff and it sells...what more do you want?"

After he had sold three Madonnas in a week, he decided the man was right. He stayed with religion. He painted and prospered. He passed from gift shops to religious goods stores and from there to commissions for churches. The work grew easier with every picture. With what swiftness and ease did he portray Divine Love, heroic sacrifice and the joy of the Mother of God. He made it a practice to attend High Mass and solemn benediction whenever possible. The rich atmosphere of organ, candles and incense put him in an excellent mood for finishing a job. When he first talked to the Archbishop about the assignment for the Cathedral, he had no idea that this would be different from any of the others. The fee would be larger of course.

John entered the Archbishop's rectory and was ushered into his office by his secretary. He had never stepped into such a grand office before. The old Archbishop quickly put him at ease...and after telling him that his curia had suggested that he be given the commission to paint a picture in the space above the high altar...the soft and gentle voice continued: "You understand Mr. Winslow that we wish a painting of the Crucifixion for this space directly above the high altar."

"Yes, I understand, with the usual figures I suppose...Christ, the Blessed Mother and Saint John."

"And Mary Magdalene."

"Oh, yes, of course, the Magdalene. Will there will be nothing else about the composition?"

"I wish it to be extraordinary in effect, Mr. Winslow."

"Oh yes, I understand. How do you wish Christ pictured on the cross, living or dead?" "Living... living..., Mr. Winslow; I want my people, when they look up during Mass to see the Holy Sacrifice as it was first offered. All the figures should look up towards the Saviour, and he should bend down to them as he does to us as he does at every Mass."

"Oh certainly, I understand."

"Well, then, we have nothing left to discuss except your remuneration. I am willing of course to pay a substantial amount but I hope that there may be a possibility of an adjustment for the sake of the Church."

"Well, your Excellency, even religious artists must eat!"

John had the keenest interest in this painting. He had never attempted a Crucifixion before or



any painting on so grand a scale. The fee was also the largest he had been offered. He set all other work aside and painted day and night. And in five weeks the canvas was so nearly complete that he called in the Archbishop for a preliminary showing.

The Archbishop arrived at his nondescript studio and seemed to unsuccessfully hide his excitement: "Well, Mr. Winslow, I never expected to be invited for a showing so soon! You must have worked under inspiration."

Meeting him at the door John said rather casually: "I had no trouble at all. I've had years of experience and success with this type of thing." As they passed the foyer John led the way: "This way your Excellency. The painting is over here." Drawing the curtain aside and looking at the Archbishop's reaction he said rather apologetically: "There's just one item missing, the figure of the Magdalene....and I could add it later. There your Excellency!"

"Um, this is just the way it will look above the high altar?" Asked the Archbishop rather puzzled.

"Yes, except for the Magdalene. That will make no essential difference."

"The painting is good... I'm sure you've spared no pains Mr. Winslow." He went on rather pensively as he looked away at the palette and the brushes

"Your Excellency sounds disappointed?" John didn't understand his reaction.

"Not disappointed, just... shall we say, reflective."

John tried to add, rather uselessly: "Of course it may not be exactly as you pictured it in your mind. Sometimes people have a

preconceived idea which it is not entirely possible to express in a work of art."

"Not a preconceived idea, Mr. Winslow... call it a cherished hope."

John didn't tell the Archbishop, but he knew that there was something missing in that picture of his. Nor did he tell him that he had left Mary Magdalene until the last because he found her impossible to paint. Her face was as hard for him to put on canvas as the face of a repentant Peter or a despairing Judas. He had been living in a different world among sweet Madonnas and pure saints. He was upset and felt helpless. He had made and thrown away dozens of sketches and was getting nowhere.

Then this was what happened and how he recounts it: "Late one afternoon I went across to the other side of town to find a Magdalene, a girl whose face would mirror all the evil she'd seen and done. I stood in front of a cheap jewellery store scanning the reflected faces of all who passed. Finally I saw it. That lovely face, those eyes so hard with life's bitterest wisdom. I offered her twenty-five dollars a day for posing and we closed the deal quickly. When we arrived at the studio the first thing I asked her to do was to wash off her makeup.

She seemed pretty cut up: "You mean I got to pose without any makeup. Why, I'll look like..."

"Never mind what you look like... sit down here. Bend your head sideways a little. No!" He was getting irritated with her.

"Don't bend your neck, just your head. Shake out your hair so it falls naturally."

"What am I posing for, shampoo?"

"Keep your head down. Now, hold it."

"I'm getting a crick in my neck."

"If you must talk, stop turning your head."

"I was just looking..."

"Ah, now I'll have to pose you all over again. Keep your head down...close your eyes if you want to...why do you keep lifting your head all the time? I'm paying you for this, remember?" She was so unprofessional and he was quite impatient.

"I was just trying to look at the picture..." she pleaded.

"You can look at it when we're finished here."

"What's it about?"

"The painting? It's the crucifixion."

"What's that?" she asked innocently.

"Good heavens, don't tell me you've never heard about the crucifixion. It just isn't possible. Haven't you ever heard of God, or Christ?"

"Yes, something. What have they got to do with the picture?" She was now getting curious.

"Look, if the painting's going to bother you so much, I'll tell you what it's about. Then perhaps we can get back to work. That central figure, the one on the cross..."

Many years later this was how John spoke about this: "I had intended to describe the picture sketchily so that I could get back to my work but the girl sat perfectly still only occasionally shifting her gaze from me to the painting. Under the flattery of her wrapt attention I began to paint my word picture in the most vivid colours at

my command. I told her about Christ, the kind master, the friend of sinners. I dwelt at ironic length on the story of Mary Magdalene. I took her into the room of the Last Supper where Christ ate with friends who later would all desert him and run away. Her eyes widened at this. I made her see Christ in agony beneath the olive trees. When Judas Iscariot blistered Christ's cheek with a traitor's kiss I saw her tremble and I raised my voice with fine dramatic fury till you could hear Peter swear: 'I do not know the man!' and the mob cry out: 'give us Barabbas, crucify this man!' I thought she grew pale here and carried away by the force of my own voice and the power of the tragedy I made her hear the whistle of the whips at the scourging, the sound of blows and the mocking laughter as the blood ran down under the crown of thorns. *"And bearing his own cross he went forth to Calvary and they crucified him there, nails in his hands...nails in his feet and all this because he was God and he loved us. And I paused and saw tears in the eyes of this girl in the streets."*

"What a story! Did you make it up yourself?" She asked quietly.

"My dear girl, this isn't a story. It's the truth. It happened."

"You mean - he really did suffer like that? Why?"

"Because he was God and he loved us!"

"How long have you known this?"

"A long time - I learned all about it when I was young."

"Oh, you must love him!" She said softly as she looked at her feet and two large tear drops rolled

*(Continued on p. 29)*

# THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM FOR SIMPLE PEOPLE

## Part 1

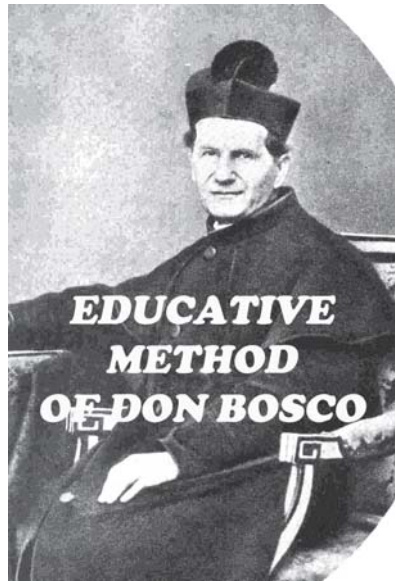
by Fr. Elias Dias

### With a Mission and a Method

When John Bosco was about nine years old he had a dream. He tried to stop a group of ruffians from cursing and swearing by plunging into their midst with his fists. Soon at his side he saw a man of noble bearing who called him by name and told him to take charge of those boys *"not with blows"* he said, *"but with patience and charity, he must make them his friends.*

*Instruct them on the wickedness of sin and the excellence of virtue."* John was confused and frightened. The personage gave him a Mistress who had majestic appearance. She said to him, *"this is your field of mission, be humble, brave and strong and what you are going to see that happened to these animals, you will do to my children."* Thus we see that at this early age God called John Bosco by name, gave him a mission to look after the wayward boys and a method to follow in his work of educating youth.

Just as God called Jeremiah (1:4) the same God called John Bosco at the age of nine. In the book of Exodus Ch. 3 we read of the call of Moses. God commanded him to go to the king and to ask him to let his leave the slavery of Egypt. God sent John Bosco to deliver his chosen portion - youth - from the clutches of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and the



immorality of the XIX Century in Italy. In Genesis Ch. 13 we read of Noah's call to build an ark. That was the same God who gave John Bosco a life long project and in order to fulfil this project, God gave him a method to follow: *not with blows but with love and patience you will succeed.* This method is called the "Educative Method of Don Bosco" or the "Preventive System."

### Don Bosco's Educative Method

Don Bosco saw the human miseries of his time and was spurred on to do something to alleviate it. On numerous occasions people asked him to explain his system in training youngsters so successfully according to Christian principles. His reply would simply be: "The Preventive System - Charity!" and in 1877, he wrote the synthesis of his system in a booklet: "The Preventive System in the education of the Youth."

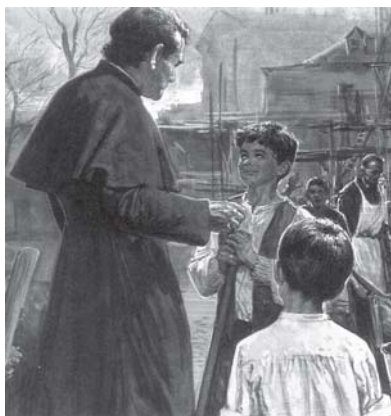
**In Don Bosco's time there were two systems of Education:**

Actually there were various systems of education in the world. They could be roughly grouped into two categories, namely, *The Preventive System* and *the Repressive System*. The Repressive System consisted of making the law known to the subject and afterwards watching to discover the transgressors of these laws and inflicting on the necessary punishment when they deserved it.

The Preventive System, on the contrary, consists in making the laws and regulations of an institute known, and then watching carefully so that the pupils may at all times be under the vigilant eye of the educator who, like a loving friend can converse with them and take the initiative at every moment in giving them some kindly advice and correction so that the pupil has only a rare possibility to commit a fault. Don Bosco followed this system. His insights and intuitions are confirmed today by psychological investigations. The ultimate aim of the Preventive system was salvation of souls in order to make his pupils - "Good Christians and Honest Citizens."

This system is based entirely on Reason, Religion and Loving-kindness.

For Don Bosco, *Reason* means a number of things. First, Reason may be defined as justice, in the sense that the educator, as well as the youngster is subject to the rule. Not the whim of the educator but the rule must prevail. Secondly, Reason also means reasonableness. Everything demanded of the youngster must be reasonable in the sense that it



*The boys of the Oratory were always attentive to what Don Bosco said or wanted of them.*

must be proportionate and possible. Thirdly, Reason may be understood as rationality. The reason for all educational decisions and demands must be made evident, and the good in them appreciated by the youngster. Fourthly, even more generally, Reason may be thought of as motivation for the youngster to make an intellectual commitment.

Don Bosco not only loved the boys but made them know that they were loved. The loving and vigilant presence of the superior put the boys in the rare possibility of doing evil. The corrections and admonitions were given in a humane way. In order to achieve this end, Don Bosco created a family environment which was healthy, safe and growth-promoting, where there was joy, acceptance and freedom. In this way Don Bosco offered his boys a way to sanctity.

**This system seems preferable for the following reasons:**

1) The pupil having been

advised beforehand does not become dejected by the faults he has committed, as often happens when these faults are brought to his notice by the superior. He appeals to his reason and generally wins him over.

2) The primary reason for this system is the inconstancy of the youth, who in a moment forget the rules of discipline and the punishment which they threaten. He certainly would have avoided it, had a friendly voice warned him.

3) The "Repressive System" may stop a disorder but only with difficulty but will it make the offender better? The "Preventive System" on the other hand makes a friend of the pupil who recognizes the educator as a benefactor who advises him to become good.

4) The "Preventive System" enables the pupil to accept the advice in such a manner, that the educator can always speak to him in the language of the heart even after he has completed his education.

5) Whatever may be the character, disposition and moral state of the pupil at the time of his admittance, the parent can rest assured that their son will not get worse. Sometimes a wayward boy changes his life and becomes upright. He becomes the pride of his family and a credit to the country he lives in.

6) The pupil brought up in the "Preventive System" will always be respectful towards his educator and will ever remember him with gratitude and love.

### **Imitation of the Good Shepherd**

The concept of the Good

Shepherd is the nucleus of the Educational Method of Don Bosco. In the Old Testament, the concept of a Shepherd was natural as they lived in the heart of a pastoral civilization hence the scripture brings out the example of the Shepherd. There were Good Shepherds but there were also false shepherds. In the New Testament, Jesus declared himself as the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep and leads them. The sheep know the shepherd, listen to the shepherd and follow the shepherd.

**The Shepherd knows and loves his sheep:** Love occupies a central place in the life of an individual. Everyone wants to love and be loved. The Good Shepherd *loves his sheep*. Don Bosco like the Good Shepherd loved his boys and this love impelled him to be always present among his boys, run after the erring one and sacrifice his entire life for his poor boys. The Good shepherd *knows his sheep*. Don Bosco knew his boys, their difficulties, problems and aspirations and dealt with each one of them individually.

A Good shepherd *leads the sheep* while false shepherds feed on them. Don Bosco led his boys so that they could live fulfilling lives and become saints. The sheep not only know what the shepherd wants of them but they know the shepherd. The boys knew Don Bosco because of the rapport he had with them. Sheep are always attentive to the voice of the shepherd. The boys of the Oratory were always attentive to what Don Bosco said or wanted of them. Just as sheep follow the shepherd, the boys at the institute



of Don Bosco followed him and his method of education and they reached their goal of becoming "Good Christians and Honest citizens."

### **A Critique of Preventive or Educative method of Don Bosco:**

There are some who criticize the Preventive system of Don Bosco saying that it prevents the growth of the pupils because, being always under the eyes of the educator, restricts their freedom. Secondly, the preventive system makes the youngsters puerile and they never achieve maturity. They achieve maturity only by confronting their mistakes. If boys are not allowed to experiment, to make decisions, they remain childish. Another objection against Preventive System of Don Bosco was that the presence of the educator makes the boys always dependent on him thus making them incapable of ever adjusting to life situations.

"To prevent" has different meanings in different contexts. It is equivalent to protect, to separate. On the effective plane it means: to take the first step, to search, to meet, to get near, to be approachable, be available. The Educational system of Don Bosco produced saints in the Church.

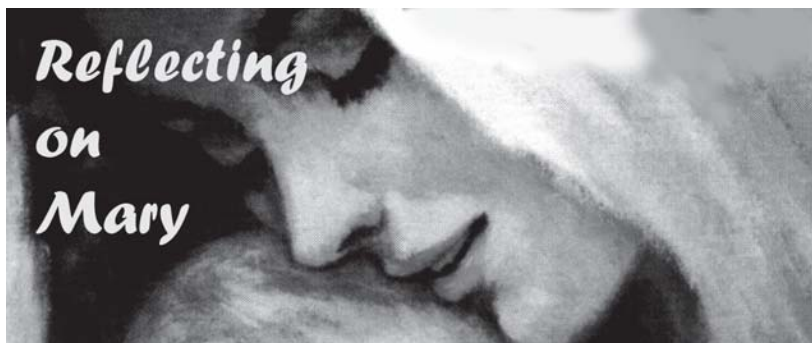
To the educator it certainly does present some difficulties, which however can be diminished if he applies himself to his task with love and zeal. An educator is one who is committed to the welfare of his pupils, and therefore should be ready to face every difficulty and fatigue in order to attain his goal, which is the civic, moral, intellectual and spiritual education

of his charges.

In 1847, Don Bosco had a very important dream: "The Dream of the Rose Pergola." Don Bosco narrated this dream only in 1864 to the first Salesians. He said that Our Lady led him to a beautiful garden. The portico was wide, rustic and charming. The pillars were dressed with climbing vines. There was a beautiful pergola, whose sides were lined with enchanting roses in full bloom. The ground too was covered with roses. Don Bosco took few steps and immediately felt very sharp thorns piercing his feet and making them bleed. Some who stood watching him began to comment saying: 'Don Bosco is lucky. His path is forever strewn with roses.' Only after walking the whole length of the pergola did Don Bosco find himself in another enchanting garden with imposing and majestic buildings where there were roses without thorns. In order to fulfil the mission of Don Bosco one must be ready to live a life of mortification.

It is very easy to speak or write on the Educative Method of Don Bosco but it is difficult to put it into practice. When little Johnny found it difficult to understand and put into practice this system, the Majestic Person gave him a Mother. This Mother taught him, guided him and remained by his side as he fulfilled his mission and made the destitute boys from "wild animals into meek lambs." Practicing this system of education and his spirituality Don Bosco became a saint in the Catholic Church and made his pupils "Good Christians and Honest Citizens." □





## OUR MOTHER IN PAIN

by Joseph Pelizza

Difficulties, sufferings, sorrows and the many changes in love's rhythms, affect the desire of those who strive to love tenderly. Even in its fullest expression, love would curl in on itself when it realizes that between a lover and his beloved there is still a distinct separation.

One who is captivated by love senses a constant yearning for the object of his love as he becomes aware of the absence of his beloved and yearns for his/her constant presence.

That was the pain which Mary experienced when she felt within herself the anguish of being separated from Jesus for the three days that she lost him in the temple of Jerusalem. *"Behold, your father and I were worried and we were looking for you"* (Lk 2:48). Mary's pain was a spasm of anguish dictated by alienation and separation, by an instant change to the course of predictable events.

In her anxiety, Mary returned to Jerusalem and to the temple to seek her Son and we see herein the full manifestation of her concern as a mother manifested in her loving tenderness. *"(We) were worried and we were looking for you"* is

what Mary said to Jesus on our behalf, when the darkness of sorrow and loneliness surround us and he seems to asleep and far away just as he was asleep on that boat that was battling a heavy sea and the apostles had to wake him up.

With the loss of Jesus in the Temple anticipating the three days of the Passion, Mary senses that her love is inseparable from her pain. At Bethlehem, when she experienced the bitterness of being refused and excluded, she had a presentiment that St. Luke recorded in a few brief words as man's refusal: *"there was no place for them"* (Lk 2:7). When she suddenly fled into Egypt she felt like an illegal immigrant seeking refuge from the cruelty of Herod. Her life now takes on a new intensity that is more profound and dramatic.

Earlier it was men who caused her such affliction, now it was the Son whom she strenuously defended who was the cause of her pain: *"Son, why have you done this?"* (Lk 2:48)

If earlier, God had come into her life unpredictably, now he

becomes incomprehensible. In the face of this darkness, the anguish of searching did not diminish but only threw up new questions which extended the boundaries of her forbearance.

"Why have you done this?" was not just Mary's question, but they take in our words, our silences, our questions to God when we experience a night of suffering. And so, our questions are no longer ours but they become Mary's too: "Son, why?" All of us know Jesus' reply: "Did you not know that I...?" Incomprehensible words to Mary, and ours too, when we turn to God in our pain and find no answer.

If in those moments that seem to be filled with the absence of God, we feel abandoned by those who have tried to love us, we look to Mary and watch how she

*(Continued from p. 23)*

down her cheeks.

John was pretty upset as he continued: "Her last words hit me so hard that I staggered. I could do no more work that day. After she'd gone I sat for a long time looking at my picture. I kept hearing her words: "How you must love him!" And my soul replied the deep and bitter truth: *You don't love him Winslow; you don't care about him at all. I knew now that I had lived for nearly fifty years as if Christ had never been born.* I, John Winslow, a man who passed whole days even weeks with never one thought of God; I who mumbled prayers when occasion required but never really spoke to God; I to whom the Commandments were rules for lesser men to keep than for me to break without a moment's hesitation, church was a place to

accompanies Jesus without saying a word as she embraced once more when she found him in the Temple. And in silence, like her, let us withdraw from that place of unanswered questions, holding his hand as she his mother, in pain yet with tenderness.

Only in time will we understand that those days of having been lost in the temple would have produced so much anguish and pain but which was nothing compared to the pain of the Passion which was to come. They were to remain in the Temple of His Father, to rebuild His body that was broken by pain, our hope and our life. That is how we will be able to fathom the silence of God in our suffering and his solidarity with us in helping to build up within us a love that no longer knows the anguish of absence and suffering. □

go when the mood was on me, the gospel, a story to be listened to with the comfortable thought that everyone understood but which was too hard to follow. Oh yes, the problem was that I should have gone down on my knees, but when? Had I ever humbled my heart? Counterfeit, fraud, man with the name Christian and the heart of a pagan. I didn't need to paint like a Christian because I didn't understand what I was painting. And as I sat there in the darkness old terrible words sounded in my soul: "*this people have honoured me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.*" Their hearts are far away.

Morning stood pale at the windows before I rose from my knees. It was the dawn of a new day and the beginning of a new life for me..." □

## NEWSBITS

### PARIS, FRANCE

A French cabinet member announced that the government will monitor certain groups for "religious pathology," including a traditionalist Catholic organization, and will shut them down if it is discovered.

"The objective is to identify when it's suitable to intervene to treat what has become a religious pathology," Interior Minister Manuel Valls told a conference on the official policy of secularism, according to Reuters.



*Interior Minister Manuel Valls in Lyon, France on Sept. 14, 2012. Credit: fhrhone via Flickr.com*

"The aim is not to combat opinions by force, but to detect and understand when an opinion turns into a potentially violent and criminal excess," he said at the Dec. 11 conference.

Valls' remarks come in the wake of President Francois Hollande's announcement Dec. 9 that he would create the "National Observatory of Secularism" to promote France's policy and to "formulate propositions for the transmission of 'public morality,'

giving it a dignified place in schools."

Hollande's announcement of the observatory was made on the anniversary of the adoption of a law in 1905 that established secularism as state policy in France. It was accompanied by the decision to honor the sociologist Emile Poulat, who helped to "promote secularism as an essential value of our living-together." (CNA/EWTN)

### VATICAN CITY

As young people become more concerned with quick professional success and rely on social networks as a replacement for community, Pope Benedict said that families and governments must work for the authentic education of students.

In an address to new ambassadors, the Pope turned the diplomats' attention to the "unprecedented" rifts in society that need to be addressed.

"Family and school no longer seem to be the first and natural fertile ground where younger generations can receive the lifeblood of their existence," Benedict XVI said.

The Pope asserted that the "natural areas of society and communications" have been replaced by the "novelty" of social networking.

At the same time, he observed that many young people seem to be increasingly concerned with speedy economic success without paying attention to the "required skills, training and experience" needed to achieve such goals.

Modern technology has

contributed to this dilemma, the Pope noted, saying that it makes the temptation to achieve success while "making the minimal effort" even greater than before.

Pope Benedict urged parents, educators and governments to respond to this situation by striving for a more balanced education of students, one that encourages "effort and perseverance through difficulties."

He called the "education in correct values" a "right" that should "never be forgotten or denied" due to politics.

The Pope also asked the ambassadors to urge their leaders to courageously "work on the consolidation of moral authority" that is "necessary for a true and healthy upbringing of the younger generation."

Such formation requires "the promotion of a sound anthropology, which is an indispensable basis for any genuine education, and consistent with the common natural heritage."

The pontiff noted that today many people ask the same question that Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?"

"Nowadays telling the truth makes you suspect, wanting to live the truth seems outdated, and promotion of the truth futile," the Pope remarked.

Nonetheless, "the future of humanity" rests in "the relationship of children and young people with truth," he said. (CNA)

### **SANTIAGO, CHILE**

Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati of Santiago opened the Chilean

bishops' annual meeting by emphasizing the priority of Church leaders to help young people encounter Jesus and follow him.

"As bishops of the Catholic Church we want to fix our gaze upon the lives of young people, to discover in them the seeds of so much good and so much hope, in order to be mediators of the encounter with the Lord Jesus for them, so that they might have abundant life," Archbishop Ezzati told reporters during the bishops' Nov.14-18 meeting in the city of Punta de Tralca.

Archbishop Ivo Scapolo, the apostolic nuncio to Chile, presided at the assembly's opening Mass.

In his homily, he underscored the need for communion among believers who live in a society that overlooks essential values such as life, the family, and the dignity of persons, particularly children.

He noted that 2012 was especially devoted to young people, with the celebration of the country's youth mission, which is part of the Great Continental Mission taking place across Latin America next year. In addition to those involved in education and youth ministry, he added, the entire Church in Chile is invited to participate in the outreach.

Archbishop Ezzati said he was looking forward to hearing from the 15 young people invited to address the bishops during their meeting.

"The life of the Church is everything good that is being done in the country: the work with poor, the proclamation of justice, the reflection on what is happening in Chile today," the archbishop added. (CNA)

## BEIJING, CHINA

For the past decade and a half, an American couple living in China have cited total reliance on God as the source of their success in giving aid to hundreds of medically-fragile orphans.

"You really have to have an absolute dependence on God that the money's gonna show up when you need it," Brent Johnson of China Little Flower told CNA Oct. 17.

Founded in 1998, China Little Flower is the parent organization of Brent and Serena Johnson's "apostolic hobby," Little Flower Projects, a charity that seeks to reach out to the most vulnerable of China's population by providing medical care to abandoned orphans and children.

The two first met in China in 1990 while there studying Chinese. Brent later converted to Catholicism and the couple married on December 28, 1991.

When they returned to China as teachers shortly after the birth of their eldest son, Thomas Becket, in 1993, the Johnsons were confronted with the "unbelievable" conditions of Chinese orphanages.

"It was a confrontation with the truly ugly side of humanity," Johnson said. "So we said, 'We gotta do something.'"

Although conditions in the government-run orphanages have improved since the 1990s, for a variety of very complex reasons and difficulties, he said about one-third of the country's roughly 700 facilities still maintain very high infant mortality rates.

The Johnsons asked the

orphanage leaders if they could foster one of the children in their own home and were granted permission.

"We were just kind of ordinary, young Catholics living our faith, trying to do the right thing," Johnson said. "When we started this, we didn't think of ourselves as on any special kind of a mission."

After fostering the first child, the couple worked hard to convince others in China to do the same, especially Chinese families and also began to help pay for the costs of the care.

Since then, the Johnsons and their work with Little Flower Projects have given aid to 1,400 orphans who would have otherwise have perished.

In 2005, the organization also began to arrange group homes for children with physical disabilities, where they can live and be educated in a family-like setting and eventually live independent lives.

Johnson, who works full-time as a business manager and now has 6 children of his own, said the charity generally only boasts about 2-3 months worth of funding in the bank at one time.

Regardless of one's opinion of China, Johnson said it is important that Americans not "forget the little people" who make up the "bottom rung" of the country's nearly 1.4 billion person population.

Prayer and educating oneself about China's orphans is the best way to get involved, he added.

To find out more about China Little Flower, visit <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Little-Flower-Projects/230680524654>. □

## **Form IV**

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March 1, 2013

Sd/-

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb



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

Our sincere thanks to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Family for helping and protecting our family.

*Lloyd D. Parakh & family members*

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for being saved from drowning, secured admission and for many other favours received.

*Shawn B. Dias*

Thank you Mother Mary for granting me my passport in such a short span of time and for all the favours bestowed on me and my family.

*A Devotee, Mumbai*

I'm grateful to Our Blessed Mother for miraculously saving my son from an overdose of drugs given to him by his friends and also for protecting him in a car accident in Goa when he had gone on a holiday with them. Their speeding car turned over many time and stopped only when it hit a pole. My son fell out unconscious but he and his friend were safe though the car was totally destroyed. I thank you dear Lord Jesus and our Blessed Mother for protecting him.

*A Devotee*

I thank Our Lady and Don Bosco for blessing my family.

*Sherry D'Sozua, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for the successful operation of my dad of an enlarged prostate at the age of 70 and for the numerous other favours.

*Mrs. Joyce Coutinho, Thane*

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My son Adam Anjum suffers from hemophilia-a bleeding disorder. He is 4 yrs 8months old & studying in Kindergarten. Adam bleeds internally off and on, for which he is induced with factor VIII. He goes through endless pain during these times. We always feel the presence of Mother Mary with Adam, she is with him giving him the courage to bear his pain and hopefully move on.

*Giselle Anjum, Karachi-Pakistan*

I am grateful to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady, Help of Christians for taking care of all my needs.

*Mark W. Todd, Pune*

On 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008 my dad was dressing up to go to church and he fell, but was not hurt. I'm grateful to Our Lady for protecting him. Many thanks for all the favours received too.

*A devotee, Wadala*

I am grateful to Our Blessed Mother for protecting my grandson who fell from a height. I am also grateful for protecting me always as I go to church. I pray the three Hail Marys everyday. *Filu Noronha*  
Our sincere thanks to the Divine Mercy and the Mother of God for all the favours received.

*June Monteiro and Family, Mumbai*

Our heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christians for all the favours received by our family and especially for giving my son a good job.

*Maria Fernandes, Mumbai*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Thank you Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a baby and also for all the blessings and graces received through your intercession.

*B. Rodrigues, Goa*

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for the gift of a baby girl to our daughter after 8 years of marriage. We are grateful that our prayers have been heard and will continue to pray for their protection.

*Mrs. E. Mascarenhas*

I thank Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for healing me of my right ovarian cyst and for many other favours granted.

*M. Cabral, Mumbai*

Thank you St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery of a baby girl.

*Janice and Ralph D'Souza, Mumbai*

Our grateful thanks to Our Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a healthy baby girl to my daughter. *S. D'Silva, Mumbai*  
My most grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours received.

*Sandra Sequeira, Bangalore*

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

*Mrs. B. Serrao, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a son in June 2011 and for the many favours granted to us.

*P. Coutinho, Goa*

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe and normal delivery of our third son 'SION DOMINIC'. Bless and keep our three precious sons in your loving care always.

*Shannon and Beverly Vassou, Tiruchy*

Thank you Divine Mercy, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted.

*Jennifer Patrick, Bahrain*

### **APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER**

**MARCH 2013**

**Holy Father's General Intention:** *That respect for nature may grow with the awareness that all creation is God's work entrusted to human responsibility.*

**Missionary Intention:** *That bishops, priests and deacons may be tireless messengers of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.*

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## **MARY WAS THERE**

My granddaughter was celebrating her 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had a small children's party at home. All the neighbour's children and my other grand children were present. After the party was over and all the children had left my grandchildren were playing in the hall. The elders were all busy cleaning up. Suddenly, we heard a loud bang. We rushed to the hall and were shocked to see that my eight year old granddaughter had fallen and there were pieces of glass all over her. While she was playing in the hall, she fell on the showcase and the glass of the showcase came crashing down on her. The broken pieces were pointed and sharp. My granddaughter was unharmed. We have a frame of our Lady Help of Christians placed right in front, inside our showcase. Mary our mother was truly there to protect her.

*Carlos B. D'Souza Mumbai*

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

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