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*O God,  
who prepared  
a fit dwelling place for  
the Holy Spirit  
in the Heart of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary,  
graciously grant  
that through her  
intercession we may be  
worthy temples  
of your glory.*

*(From the Opening Prayer of the feast of  
The Immaculate Heart of Mary)*

Cover: "**Jesus looked at him and  
loved him...**" **Mark 10, 21**  
John Walter



## From The Editor's Desk

### OUR SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

During the Month of June we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart. To me it is not just the supreme symbol of love, it is for me the supreme symbol of pain and it often calls to mind the many 'sorrowful' mysteries that we experience such as sicknesses, betrayals or failures. Or they may be interior things that we find hard to explain, such as a depression or a hidden conflict of the heart. Most of us simply *grin and bear it!* But is that the best we can do?

We show so much of ourselves by the way we respond to such trials. Some people cannot leave them alone. Some are determined to undo the past. They get stuck in the feeling; It should not have happened. It should not be like this. Quite right: it should not have happened!

There is evil in this world. God's work is never done under ideal conditions. Real success does not consist in getting it right all the time. Look at Jesus on the cross and we see the greatest, bitterest failure! Yet the Church calls it a happy failure, *Felix culpa*.

Jesus was human like us, and tasted failure. He chose Peter only to see Peter deny him. He chose Judas, only to see Judas betray him.

He was keenly aware of human limitations, of our pride, sensuality, self-centeredness. He knew what it felt like to fail and be betrayed by friends.

We say the Rosary round the events of Jesus' life. It is easy to imagine Mary reflecting on these mysteries, lingering on her memories of the angel Gabriel, of her visit to Elizabeth, of the birth in Bethlehem, of Jesus as a child. I suspect she would have found it hard to turn to the sorrowful mysteries, the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Some memories are so painful that we try to avoid them. They become a sore point in our minds. We need to see where God was in them.

Our sorrowful mysteries will be different for each one of us. Maybe it was a meeting with a friend, a lover or an enemy. Maybe it was a sickness, or a triumph. We are trying to see our life through the eyes of faith, with a confidence that God in his Providence can draw good out of the most awful and unwelcome happenings. It is not that we have all the answers, but we have enough to sustain our faith and love. Love is the fruit of faith, that is, of darkness. It is based on God's faithfulness.

This is true wisdom, to find a faith that can carry us through darkness, doubt, and suffering. They call it the mystical phase of religious development, and many of you readers are there. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus we see the possibility of a love that survives darkness and suffering.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

# SELFLESS LOVE: THE ONLY ADEQUATE ANSWER TO HUMAN PROBLEMS

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

I've learned from bitter experience that remaining positive is the most effective way to cope with life's mysteries, because there is really not much left to give once you have given up on hope, observes a well-known writer.

## A Dash of Hope

The author of the poem, "The Dash" which by now is famous, says that that exquisite poem is based on the tiny stroke on a tombstone, between the dates of a person's birth and death! Ultimately, that dash is a symbol which represents every day a person spends alive on earth. Therefore, how a person spends his/her 'dash' is all that really matters. While there are numerous stories of how several people have lived their lives in a way that continues to inspire millions of others long after they have left the scene and moved on, the following is an amazingly simple story about someone whose dash, albeit brief and in fact tiny, truly made a tremendous difference to quite a few.



"Recently I heard about a little girl named Hope Stout" – continues the author. "No sooner I learnt a little more about her life, I couldn't help but feel it was definitely not by coincidence that she had been named *Hope*. It had to be attributed to fate or destiny, or better to the hidden yet compassionate God we know as 'Our Father'. The compassion and generosity cradled in her young heart etched a lasting impression on me and countless others, and I keep learning how her legacy of love continues to bless lives every day. Though I never had the opportunity of meeting my little heroine, I often wish I had. It seems as though she was wise beyond her tender years and someone very, very special. When I tell people her story, I always add, 'if this doesn't inspire you, I don't think there's much that could ...'

## Favoured Recipient

Hope was a twelve-year-old girl who was gifted a 'wish' in early December 2003 by the "Make-A-Wish" Foundation after being informed that she had a rare type of fatal bone cancer. However, when she figured out that more than 150 children in her area were already in line, waiting for their wishes to be granted, she decided magnanimously that she would use her wish in a very novel and ingenious way; she made a wish that every one of those children should have their wishes

granted by January 16, 2004 (within about a month!). Unfortunately, however, the organization was forced to inform her that her noble request may not be granted as their funds were running desperately low. They calculated that they would need to raise more than one million dollars in thirty days in order to grant her wish.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, little Hope converted her dismay into an enthusiasm that fired the hearts of caring individuals to spearhead fundraising to help grant the wishes of the other children, and eventually hers as well. Newspaper columnists and reporters for radio and TV stations broadcasted the story of this caring young girl and as word spread, the entire community was challenged as never before. In a jiffy, serious and determined action had sparked off powerful ripples of loving concern and things began to move. Committees were formed and schools, corporations and various organizations assisted in raising money to help bring Hope's dream to fruition.

Though she lost her battle in 2004, confident that her wish was going to come true, Hope lives on in the minds and hearts of so many. Her selfless efforts were not in vain as they continue to help others, not only physically, but spiritually and emotionally as well. At the initial fundraiser and gathering to celebrate her life, "A Celebration of Hope" on January 16, 2004, the unprecedented announcement was made that the Foundation had indeed collected donations totaling more than one million dollars on behalf of Hope

Stout. Her wish had been granted and she had succeeded in making those 150 unfortunate children happy and eager to take off for eternity with a smile on their little pain-ridden faces!

### **The Power of Selfless Love**

Little Hope Stout demonstrated again in her own simple childlike way that love is stronger than death. She had also proved what psychologists and behavioural scientists claim as true, viz. that a human being is naturally oriented towards good more than towards evil. Although daily evidence all over the planet earth seems to proclaim the opposite message, yet she showed that deep down in each human person's being, there is a fund of goodness, waiting to be tapped! However, it sometimes happens to be true that this deep fund of goodness can be tapped only against the specter of death in the background. As long as life unfolds smoothly people tend to believe that each one is truly the centre of the Universe, and that everything should revolve round that centre.

It may be just a coincidence that Jesus too gave us his great commandment of love, precisely on the eve of his own hapless death! And yet, this was his priceless teaching all through his life. St. Luke reports in his version of the Sermon on the Mount, "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return, be measured out to you" (Lk 6:38). And a little further, "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does

a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. 'Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed" (Lk 6:43-49).

### **Led by Personal Example**

Having been sent by the Father to show mankind the true path of happiness, Jesus contributed to our wellbeing not by teaching only - he actually practiced what he preached - his was a 'walk the talk' show! He literally prayed for his torturous and executioners pleading, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." When they went so far as to divide his garments by casting lots while other people stood by and watched, and the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of

God" ...; When even the soldiers jeered at him as they approached to offer him wine calling out defiantly, 'If you are King of the Jews, save yourself,' Jesus' only rejoinder was a humble prayer on their behalf!

Granted that we lesser mortals would not be able to rise to such heights, nevertheless what a difference would there not be in our world today, overflowing with evils or every description, if at least the followers of Jesus were able to live up to the description of their name. For, a 'Christian' is one who lives not for himself but for others. This is Paul's conclusion evolved from a deep personal experience. "For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died *for* all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but *for him* who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor 5:14-15). While our world situation today seems desperately low on such attitudes, the likes of the little child, Hope Stout, remind us that all is not lost - there are, perhaps, numberless people who are ready to rally round a charismatic leader who dares to lead the way!

Would we be ready to undertake to train ourselves to become such leaders by daily doing little acts of kindness, especially of the variety that places the self totally in the background and works solely for the benefit of others? And here too the answer Jesus foresees is a resounding Yes, not merely said, but actually lived! That is why there is a stout hope for humankind - good inevitably triumphs over evil in the end! □

# walking with the Church



## *Praying to Mary, Brothers and Sisters of Jesus*

*From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland*

**Q.** *I was wondering about praying to Mary and to the Saints. God gave us ten commandments and the first of those is 'thou shalt not have strange Gods before me.' Is praying to Mary and the Saints not breaking that Commandment?*

**A.** The first Commandment as you rightly point out is about worshipping God and Him alone: True worship (as opposed to veneration or honour) does indeed belong to God alone, and we should never worship man or any other creature as we worship God. When we pray to Mary or to the saints, we're simply asking them to help us, by praying to God on our behalf. We do not worship them. We do not make them God. While we live together on earth as Christians, we are in communion, or unity, with one another. But that communion doesn't end when one of us dies. We believe that Christians in heaven, the saints, remain in communion with those of us on earth. So, just as we might ask a friend or family member to pray for us, we can approach a saint with our prayers, too.

**Q.** *In the Gospel of Mark 6:3 it says "Isn't this the Carpenter? Son of Mary and brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" Does this not clearly show that Mary had more children*



*other than Jesus - so why does Church teaching say she was a virgin?*

**A.** In Hebrew and Aramaic, which was the language spoken by Jesus and his followers, there was no specific word for cousin, so the word for brother was sometimes used for brother, sister, cousin or other relatives. Mary is identified in the Bible only as the mother of Jesus. There is no mention of Mary having other children.

Mary's perpetual virginity has been taught by the Church from the very beginning. The great St. Augustine who lived in the 5th century described our Blessed Mother as "a virgin who conceives, a virgin who gives birth, a virgin with child, a virgin delivered of child, - a virgin ever virgin." □

# WHEN HEART SPEAKS TO HEART

by Bernard McGuckian, S.J.

**W**hen created Cardinal, Blessed John Henry Newman took as his motto, '*cor ad cor loquitur*' (heart speaks to heart). He was envisaging an intimate sharing of mind and heart. This, I think, is also what you mean in expressing a preference for praying to a 'person'. In praying to Jesus under the symbol of his Heart we are praying to His Person. His Heart is the very centre of His Person.

The word 'person' or '*persona*', by the way, does not appear in any of the books of the Bible. It is a word that originated in pre-Christian Greek theatre where it had the meaning of a '*mask*'. All the actors wore a '*persona*' or '*mask*' to hide their identity.

This survives today in your theatre programme where it is still customary all over the world to use the Latin words, *dramatis personae*, literally 'the masks of the drama'. They are placed above the list of actors and their respective roles.

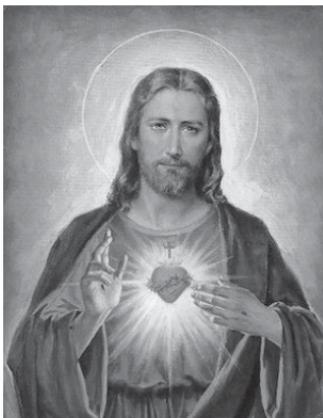
This word 'person' was pressed into service by theologians in the early church as they grappled with the mystery of the Trinity. One important early use of the word was in a definition used by the influential St Augustine who had spent much of his youth at the theatre. '*Person is what there are three of in God, no more, no less*'. Only later was this concept of

'person', now so much a part of all human discourse, used to describe an independent free-standing human being like you or me. Made in the 'image and likeness of God' each of us, in a certain way, stands alone.

The biblical word that most closely approaches to what we have come to associate with the word, 'person' is the word 'name'. We find it all through the Scriptures. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain'. 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. 'Holy is his name'. 'Name' here refers to the very being of God or what we would now call the 'person' of God. This manner of speaking has continued through the centuries. We have little difficulty knowing what it means 'to be arrested in the name of the King'. It refers to all about him, especially his kingly power.

The tradition of praying to Jesus, in a 'person to person' way, under the form of His Heart developed gradually over the centuries in Christianity.

It was Jesus himself who drew attention to His Heart in one of the most consoling of his sayings. '*Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls*' Mt. 11:28-29. At the Last Supper while resting his head on the breast of Jesus, St John could



not have been closer to this heart. It was on this occasion, according to a longstanding tradition, that John gained his deep understanding of how love, symbolized in all civilizations by the heart, is at the centre of our religion.

Around 200 A.D., St Irenaeus, the first Bishop of Lyons, France, wrote that 'the Church is the fountain of living water that flows to us from the Heart of Christ'. As Irenaeus was a disciple of St Polycarp of Smyrna who in turn had sat at the feet of St John in Ephesus, his writings are of the first importance for information on the authentic practice of Christian faith in its earliest days.

St Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), widely known as Father of Devotion to the Sacred Heart, invited his followers to pass, in spirit, through the wounded side of Jesus to the pierced heart within. A whole galaxy of the great men and women followed suit. Among these are St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Albert the Great, St Bonaventure, St Gertrude the Great and St Catherine of Siena. This form of spirituality took a tremendous leap forward when the Lord appeared to a Visitation nun, St Margaret Mary Alacoque in her monastery at Paray-le-monial in 17th century France. She described what happened:

'Around the Feast of Corpus Christi, showing me his divine heart, he said 'Behold this Heart which has so loved men that It has spared nothing even to exhausting and consuming Itself to prove to them Its love ...I (also) promise that My Heart shall shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love on all those who shall honour It or cause It to be honoured.'

This extraordinary event

features in statuary, stained glass windows and paintings in practically every Catholic Church around the globe. Pope Pius IX established a Feast of the Sacred Heart in 1856 at the express wish of the Lord to St Margaret Mary. All his successors ever since have encouraged the faithful to address themselves confidently to Jesus under this image.

'When we adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, we adore in it and through it both the uncreated love of the divine Word and also its human love and its other emotions and virtues, since both loves moved our Redeemer to sacrifice Himself for us and for His Spouse, the Universal Church'. (*Haurietis Aquas*, # 86. Venerable Pius XII. 1956).

'The Church seems in a particular way to profess the mercy of God and to venerate it when she directs herself to the Heart of Christ. In fact, it is precisely this drawing close to Christ in the mystery of his Heart which enables us to dwell on this point - a point in a sense central and also most accessible on the human level- of the revelation of the merciful love of the Father, a revelation which constituted the central content of the messianic mission of the Son of Man'. (*Dives in misericordia*, Blessed John Paul II. 1980).

'Practicing Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ means adoring that heart which, after having loved us to the end was pierced with a lance and from high on the cross poured out blood and water, an inexhaustible source of new life'. (Homily of Benedict XVI. 2005). In this year of 2013, the Feast of the Sacred Heart is celebrated on Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. □

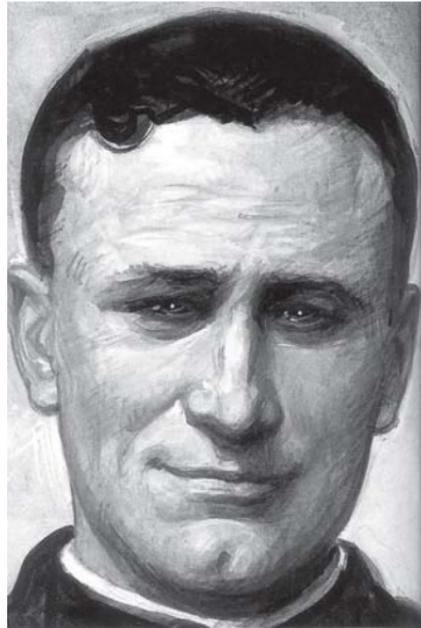
## ELIAS COMINI 1910 - 1944

Elias Comini was born on 7 May 1910 at Calvenzano (Vergato), Bologna, Italy. In 1914 the family moved to "Casetta", in the parish of Salvaro in Grizzana, Bologna. The archpriest of Salvaro, Mons. Fidenzio Mellini, in agreement with his parents he had him sent to school with the Salesians in Finale Emilia where Elias eventually asked to be a Salesian,

After his novitiate he made his first religious profession at Castel de' Britti (Bologna) in 1926. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1935 he was ordained priest.

As a new priest he was assigned to the Salesian School at Chiari (Brescia) as teacher and warden of the boys' hostel and in the Salesian Aspirantate of Treviso (Bergamo). He was known especially for a Don Bosco-style kindness. His warm character and smile was easily picked up by the boys.

During the summer of 1944 he had gone to his native place, Salvaro, to be with his mother who was alone and to help the elderly parish priest. That area had become the epicentre of the war between the Allies and the Germans, the people were terrified and the destruction was almost total. For more than two months, together with another heroic priest, Fr. Martin Capelli, he gave himself totally to God, body and soul, as His minister, celebrating holy Mass, preaching, teaching catechism, singing, visiting and comforting the refugees and caring for the sick. He was a peace-maker



between the people, the Allies and the Germans, even at the risk of his own life.

News came to the parish at Salvaro, filled with refugees that the SS had taken 69 hostages amongst whom were some close to death. Frs. Elias and Martino, under enemy fire, set out with the holy oils. They were captured and thought to be spies and given hard labour. Fr. Elias was allowed to go free, but he refused the offer and said, "Either all or none!" He preferred to remain with his fellow prisoners and be of help to them.

They were unjustly condemned to death. When they were about to be shot on Sunday 1 October 1944, Fr. Elias and Fr. Martino, like Bishop Versiglia and Fr. Caravario, heard one another's confessions. Then Fr. Elias gave absolution in a loud voice to the other hostages. His body was then thrown into the Rhine. □

**BR. EDWARD PEREIRA, SDB**

*Maintenance executive, environmental ornamentation  
and landscaping executive and hostel warden*

**E**dward was born on 15th December 1935 to Francis and Rosie Pereira. He grew up with the love and care not only of his doting parents but also of his two elder sisters and an elder brother.

After completing his matric he opted to learn tool setting, and joined the workshop of Premier Automobiles, Kurla. He worked for 25 years as a machinist and production line executive at Premier Automobiles and gained the respect and admiration of his colleagues and superiors.

Br. Francis Mascarenhas, now in Quepem - Goa, reminisces, "Edward was a regular choir member. All this while, he was fascinated with the call to religious life. I'm glad that he followed the Salesian way to praise God and to serve Him."

He made his first profession as a Salesian Coadjutor on 24th May 1985. He travelled next to Kalyani - West Bengal, for the Magistero course - a special formation for Salesian Brothers. He then moved a bit around Goa, as administrator of Don Bosco Benaulim, Odxel, Panjim, before he came back to the Provincial House, Mumbai in 2004. In all these Salesian communities, Edward was known to be a serious and committed religious, while remaining a cheerful and sociable person. His love for singing was still very strong, and his participation in Salesian celebrations and social gatherings gave ample evidence of this. But most of all, he was admired for his tremendous stamina at work... putting in more than nine hours of work without a siesta break! Besides



being an asset in the workshops or in the offices assigned to his care, he also proved himself to be an enthusiastic gardener.

In 2010, after a knee replacement surgery, he took charge of the farm at Don Bosco, Kapadvanj - Gujarat and from 2011 onwards, he is part of the Salesian community of Don Bosco, Chinchwad - Pune, where he combines various responsibilities as workshop maintenance executive and landscaping executive and hostel in-charge.

Fr. Corlis Gonsalves, says of him: "Br. Edward is a very exemplary Salesian... faithful to prayer life, to his duty. He is a role model of Salesian assistance. He is a man of few needs and simple living."

Br. Edward, despite his mature age and silver hair, still has plans to attend some courses of on-going formation. May his Salesian life inspire other young men who are still "searching" to have a close look at the Salesian vocation. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## ST. ROMUALD (950-1027) (JUNE 19)

**B**orn in Ravenna, probably around 950 and died at Val-di-Castro, 19 June 1027, St. Peter Damian, his first biographer, and almost all the Camaldolese writers assert that St. Romuald's age at his death was one hundred and twenty and that therefore he was born about 907. This is disputed by most modern writers. Such a date not only results in a series of improbabilities with regard to events in the saint's life, but is also irreconcilable with known dates, and probably was determined from some mistaken inference by St. Peter Damian.

In his youth, Romuald indulged in the usual thoughtless and even vicious life of the tenth-century noble, yet felt greatly drawn to the hermetical life. In the more than 1700-year history of Christian monasticism, there have, no doubt, been many reasons why a young person has decided to leave the comfort and pleasures of the world and take on the ascetic life of a monk or nun. It was at the age of twenty, struck with horror because his father had killed an enemy in a duel, that Romuald fled to the Abbey of San Apollinare-in-Classe and after some hesitation, entered

religion. San Apollinare had recently been reformed by St. Maieul of Cluny, but still was not strict enough in its observance to satisfy Romuald. After much time spent in weeping, praying and fasting, the young man gradually found peace within himself and he realized that, in this place, in this manner of life, he could have this peace always. That was why he begged to be admitted as a monk and, after some hesitation regarding his position as the heir of a nobleman, the abbot allowed him to join the monastery. His injudicious correction of the less zealous aroused some enmity against him, that he applied and was readily granted permission to retire to Venice, where he placed himself under the direction of Marinus, an older and more experienced monk. It was said that Romuald was not at all a fluent reader. Whenever he made another of his many mistakes, Marinus, his teacher, beat him on his left cheek. Finally it became too much for Romuald. "But, dear master," he said modestly, "hit me on the right cheek in future. My left ear is almost deaf." The master was surprised at such patience and

thereafter acted more considerably. The two became known for their holy wisdom and were often consulted by others for their wise counsel.

About 978, Pietro Orseolo I, Doge of Venice, who had obtained his office by acquiescence in the murder of his predecessor, began to suffer remorse for his crime. On the advice of Guarinus, Abbot of San Miguel-de-Cuxa, where he took the habit of St. Benedict, while Romuald and Marinus erected a hermitage close to the monastery. Romuald encouraged many other noblemen to follow the ascetic life and he was eventually able to convince his father to repent of his earlier sin and take on the monastic life. For five years the saint lived a life of great austerity, gathering around him a band of disciples. Then hearing that his father (Sergius) was tormented with doubts as to his vocation, he returned in haste to Italy, subjected Sergius to severe discipline, and so resolved his doubts. For the next thirty years Romuald seems to have wandered about Italy, founding many monasteries and hermitages.

Even though he was the founder of the strict Camalduli monasteries he could not decide, for a considerable time, whether to serve God in the religious life or to remain in the world. It was one of the strictest orders for men in the West (a branch of the Benedictine Order). Members live isolated in small huts, observing strict silence and perpetual fasting, constantly praying or being engaged in manual labour. Our saint enjoyed the grace of bringing sinners, particularly those of



*The vision of St. Romuald*  
Andrea Sacchi

rank and power, back to God. Throughout his life he never used a bed and always sought out ways of practicing severe penances. 15 years later his pupil, the holy doctor of the Church, St. Peter Damian, wrote his biography.

“His greatness lies in the rigorous and austere character of his interpretation of monastic life—an approach that was quite singular and unique. In the deepest recesses of his being, Romuald was an ascetic, a monk; not perhaps, a monk of that serene peace and self-possession exemplified by St. Benedict in his life and described by him in his Rule. Nor was Romuald an organizer who through prudent

legislation enabled his spirit to flourish and affect great numbers. He reminds us of the stolid figures inhabiting the Eastern deserts, men who by most rigorous mortification and severest self-inflicted penances gave a wanton world a living example of recollection and contemplation. Their very lives constituted the most powerful sermon. It is in company with men like these that St. Romuald continues to live."

For some time he made Pereum his favourite resting place. In 1005 he went to Val-di-Castro for about two years, and left it, prophesying that he would return to die there alone and unaided. Again he wandered about Italy; then attempted to go to Hungary, but was prevented by persistent illness. In 1012 he appeared at Vallombrosa, whence he moved into the Diocese of Arezzo. Here, according to the legend, a certain Maldolus, who had seen a vision of monks in white garments ascending into Heaven, gave him some land, afterwards known as the Campus Maldoli, or Camaldoli.

St. Romuald built on this land five cells for hermits, which, with the monastery at Fontebuono, built two years later, became the famous mother-house of the Camaldolese Order. In 1013 he retired to Monte-Sitria. In 1021 he went to Bifulco. Five years later he returned to Val-di-Castro where he died, as he had prophesied, alone in his cell. Not all was smooth sailing, however. When the Emperor Otto III asked Romuald to become the abbot of an ancient monastery whose monks needed a more disciplined way of life, the monks rebelled,

threw his abbot's staff at his feet, and forced him to resign. After so many journeys he was eager to begin his final pilgrimage to an eternal resting place. But Romuald was able to successfully establish other monasteries and hermitages throughout Italy - in Fonte Avellana Camaldoli, and Val di Castro. When the holy man felt his end was near, he retired to the monastery where he died on June 19, 1027.

An altar was built over St. Romuald's tomb, and many miracles were reported at this place. About fifteen years after his death, Peter Damian wrote the first biography of the saint. His relics, still incorrupt, were translated to Fabriano on February 7 in 1481, and this is the date which we celebrate as his feast day.

May we, like St. Romuald, resort to silent meditation, prayer, and the Psalms to still our souls amidst the crises and turmoil of our lives, and may we seek the intercessions of St. Romuald before the throne of heaven.

Before the reform of the Calendar in 1969 his feast was celebrated on February 7, the anniversary of the translation of his relics in 1481. His feast is now June 19, the day he died in 1027. Many miracles were wrought at his tomb, over which an altar was allowed to be erected in 1032. In 1466 his body was found still incorrupt; it was translated to Fabriano in 1481. In 1595 Clement VIII fixed his feast on 7 Feb., the day of the translation of his relics, and extended its celebration to the whole Church. He is represented in art pointing to a ladder on which monks are ascending to Heaven.□

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Vacuum Manure

A little old lady answered a knock on the door one day, only to be confronted by a well-dressed young man carrying a vacuum cleaner.

"Good morning," said the young man. "If I could take a couple of minutes of your time, I would like to demonstrate the very latest in high-powered vacuum cleaners."

"Go away!" said the old lady. "I haven't got any money!" and she proceeded to close the door.

Quick as a flash, the young man wedged his foot in the door and pushed it wide open. "Don't be too hasty!" he said. "Not until you have at least seen my demonstration."

And with that, he emptied a bucket of horse manure onto her hallway carpet.

"If this vacuum cleaner does not remove all traces of this horse manure from your carpet, Madam, I will personally eat the remainder."

"Well," she said, "I hope you've got a good appetite, because the electricity was cut off this morning."

## Shoe Coverup

One day a man drove his secretary home after she fell quite ill at work. Although this was an innocent gesture, he decided not to mention it to his wife, who tended to get jealous easily.

Later, that night the man and his wife were driving to a restaurant.

Suddenly he looked down and spotted a high-heel shoe half

hidden under the passenger seat. Not wanting to be conspicuous, he waited until his wife was looking out her window before he scooped up the shoe and tossed it out of the car. With a sigh of relief, he pulled into the restaurant parking lot. That's when he noticed his wife squirming around in her seat.

"Honey," she asked, "have you seen my other shoe?"

## Passed Note

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

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

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

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

## Yes, Always Officer

A lady who was speeding had an officer pull her to the side of the road.

She didn't have her seat belt on so as soon as she stopped, she quickly slipped it on before the officer got to her window.

After talking to her about speeding, the officer said, "I see you are wearing your seat belt. Do you believe in wearing it at all times?"

"Yes, I do, officer," she replied.

"Well," asked the officer, "do you always do it up with it looped through your steering wheel?" □



## THE PARDONED SINNER

(Luke 7,36 - 50)

by Carlo Broccardo

**O**n June 16<sup>th</sup> this year we will hear one of the most beautiful and yet one of the most difficult passages in the Gospel according to Luke, the episode of the pardoned sinner. It is the story of that woman who came into the house of a Pharisee during dinner and began washing the feet of Jesus with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with perfumed oil...and she is the protagonist from beginning to end. At the outset it must be truthfully said that she was not well-introduced. Luke says that she was “a sinner of that city” (v. 37): not wanting to directly call her a prostitute, even though Christian tradition often says so (linking her to Mary Magdalene but that is a mistake). It should simply be stated that she was a public sinner: everyone was aware of her sinful life; everyone knew well who she was. When she arrived at the house, in other words, it was, as if out of etiquette they labeled her with the title of sinner. And the first thing that Jesus does was to remove it! And that was the central and most difficult piece of the passage. With a little patience we will soon find out why.

First of all, Jesus tells Simon the

Pharisee, his host, the parable of the two debtors: and then he asks him who loves the master more, was it the one who owed him 50 denarii (• 2000) or was it the one who owed him five hundred (• 20,000)? The answer is easy: the one who owed him 20,000. This is the first thing that Jesus does: he creates a link between pardon (condoning the debt) and love: the one who is forgiven the greater debt is the one who will love the master more, isn't it obvious?

Having taken this first step, now he takes the second: Jesus invites Simon and everyone else to look at the woman standing by as she was washing his feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair etc. “You see this woman?” says Jesus: these are gestures of love! The woman was manifesting to Jesus her great love, extremely great even exaggerated love: only slaves wash the feet of guests. If, therefore, the woman was showing this kind of love to Jesus, what could have been her motive? Those who are forgiven their sins are like the debtors in the parable. The woman loved Jesus because he had forgiven her all her many sins. All the townspeople were saying of her: she is a sinner, so Jesus tells them all: that is not true! Look well, do you see that she is a new person, one fully reconciled? That is how Jesus is: he never stops at appearances.

But it doesn't end here, there is still the last verse: “Jesus says to the woman: “Your faith has saved you” (v. 50). Incredible: everyone considered this woman as a sinner (and the words of the Pharisees suggest a kind of



*The woman washing and wiping the feet of Jesus by Simon Vouet (1640) from a private collection in the US. Simon deplores the fact that Jesus allows such a woman to touch him. Jesus responds with great sensitivity to the perplexity of the pharisee with a hand raised in blessing, pardoning her many sins.*

contempt: 'if he knew what kind of a woman is touching him...' Jesus, instead, makes them understand that her sins are like water beneath the bridge. Then he adds: she has great faith, such great faith that it gained her salvation!

The story of this woman ends here: we know nothing more about her. Better, that is how we see so many people we encounter in our everyday lives. We look on them rather superficially and we seem to repeat whatever we hear other people saying about them (the usual criticism...). If, however,

we stop and calmly observe who they are, in addition to the labels we affix on them, we realize that the person in front of us has made his or her mistakes, but is also one who has been reconciled to Jesus. So, if we take another step to look at them through the eyes of Jesus, we almost risk being amazed at the faith we discover in them. Because faith is not like a precious stone so rarely found. It's to be found all around us. There is faith in abundance, in persons, and we are bound to find it if we look through the eyes of Jesus. □

**PETER TRUST**

*by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI  
At a General Audience the Pope spoke*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

Today I would like to touch upon the last episode in the life of St Peter recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, his imprisonment by order of Herod Agrippa, and his release through the marvelous intervention of the Angel of the Lord on the eve of his trial in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:1-17).

The narrative is once again marked by the prayer of the Church. St Luke writes: "So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church" (Acts 12:5). And, after having miraculously left the prison, on the occasion of his visit to Mary's house, the mother of John also called Mark, it tells us "many were gathered together and were praying" (Acts 12:12). Between these two important observations that illustrate the attitude of the Christian community in the face of danger and persecution, is recounted the detainment and release of Peter, during the entire night. The strength of the unceasing prayer of the Church rises to God and the Lord listens and performs an unheard of and unexpected deliverance, sending his Angel.

I would also like to highlight another aspect of Peter's attitude in prison. In fact, we note that while the Christian community is praying earnestly for him, Peter "was sleeping" (Acts 12:6). In a critical situation of serious danger, it is an attitude that might seem strange, but instead denotes tranquility and faith. He trusts God. He knows he is surrounded by the solidarity and prayers of his own people and completely abandons himself into the hands of the Lord. So it must be with our prayer, assiduous, in solidarity with others, fully trusting that God knows us in our depths and takes care of us to the point that Jesus says "even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore" (Mt 10:30-31).

Here it seems useful to recall another difficult situation that the early Christian community experienced. St James speaks of it in his Letter. It is a community in crisis, in difficulty, not so much because of persecution, but because of the jealousies and contentions within it (cf. Jas 3:14-16). The Apostle wonders about the reason for this situation. He finds two primary motives. The first is that they let themselves be carried away by their emotions, by the



## TS IN GOD (ed.)

*Emeritus Benedict XVI*

*about the Apostle and his liberation*

dictates of their own interests, by selfishness (cf. Jas 4:1-2a). The second is the lack of prayer — “you do not ask” (Jas 4:2b) — or a kind of a prayer that cannot qualify as such — “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (Jas 4:3). We must always learn again how to pray properly, truly pray, moving towards God and not towards our own good.

Instead, the community that is concerned about Peter’s imprisonment is a community that truly prays the entire night, deeply united. And it is overwhelming joy that fills the hearts of all when the Apostle unexpectedly knocks at the door. It is joy and amazement in light of the actions of the God who listens. Thus, from the Church arises the prayer for Peter and to the Church he returns to tell “how the Lord had brought him out of the prison” (Acts 12:17). In that Church where he is set as a rock (cf. Mt 16:18), Peter recounts his “Passover” of liberation. He experiences true freedom in following Jesus. He is enveloped in the radiant light of the Resurrection and can therefore testify to the point of martyrdom that the Lord is Risen and “sent his Angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod” (Acts 12:11).

Dear brothers and sisters, the episode of the liberation of Peter as told by Luke tells us that the Church, each of us, goes through the night of trial. But it is unceasing vigilance in prayer that sustains us. I too, from the first moment of my election as the Successor of St Peter, have always felt supported by your prayer, by the prayers of the Church, especially in moments of great difficulty. My heartfelt thanks. With constant and faithful prayer the Lord releases us from the chains, guides us through every night of imprisonment that can gnaw at our hearts. He gives us the peace of heart to face the difficulties of life, persecution, opposition and even rejection. Peter’s experience shows us the power of prayer. And the Apostle, though in chains, feels calm in the certainty of never being alone. The community is praying for him. The Lord is near him. He indeed knows that Christ’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). Constant and unanimous prayer is also a precious tool to overcome any trial that may arise on life’s journey, because it is being deeply united to God that allows us also to be united to others. Thank you. □



## BREAK SILENCE AT THE BRIDGE

*From Fr. Ian Douulton's Collection of Short Stories*

Red China glares at free Hong Kong across the La-Woo Bridge. These days strange things happen at the gate and at the barbed wire fence that marks the boundary.

There, on September 26, 1953 one man saw a 'ghost.' Fr. Poletti had come that afternoon to meet any missionaries who might have been expelled from China. Through the barbed wire he saw the figure of an old man who looked like 'Father Time' as he leaned heavily on a cane to support his unsteady legs. Fr. Poletti stared and gasped. He was seeing the shadow of a man who had not been heard of for quite some time.

Nearly three years earlier, when he had disappeared into the darkness of a curtained jeep everyone knew that he had either gone before a firing squad or died in the communist prison. Red China then and now still hated the Catholic Church for anything it did for it's citizens and anyone who 'helped' this process had to be prosecuted in one way or another sometimes crude and most often very cruel.

Here's how one man faced those years of silence, when no one heard of him, much less from him.

Now this ghost wavered over the La-woo Bridge. Red guards pushed him through the gate and he staggered slowly forward squinting is the bright Chinese sunshine. Slowly he approached Fr. Poletti and in a voice that was husky and weak he said: "I am Bishop Kowalski." Fr. Poletti

gasped: "Bishop, we thought you were dead!" The bishop's face scarred with time and strain broke into a smile: "Well, you see, I am still alive!"

Rembert Kowalski, Franciscan bishop of Woo Chang for twenty-seven years, a missionary in China was still alive! But where and how had he survived the last twenty-eight months? With no word having filtered to them through the bamboo curtain? This is the answer.

It was part of the pattern the bishop had seen before. It would concern the hospitals of the Holy Infants this time. In these houses of mercy the sisters had cared for babies abandoned by their parents, fathers and mothers driven frantic by starvation left their newborns along the roadside on heaps of rubbish and garbage anywhere and everywhere. By the time the infants were found most of them were dead or dying. In spite of the best medical care and all the love the sisters gave them only five percent survived. In communist hands this 'percentage' became a deadly weapon. The bishop waited and he prayed.

In 1949 the Army of Liberation came to Wo-Chang. They placed the bishop under house arrest. He thought of the three years he had already spent in a Japanese concentration camp and now he could only watch and suffer while the new terror machine slowly ground away any sign and practice of religion. After a year and a half the machinery began to speed up.

In a simple wooden barrack he

stood in front of an army officer who screamed at him: "American Bishop! Tell us how many babies died in your hospital?"

Kowalski calmly replied: "I can't tell you."

The officer went on: "We know that you killed thousands of Chinese citizens. You are a murderer! Your assistant Fr. Sigfreid Schneider and Fr. Sylvester Chang are also murderers. We know where to find evidence of your crimes."

They were immediately driven to the clinic and the officer gave the order to some soldiers: "Dig, dig, this is a cemetery; it must be full of bones! There they are!"

What delight lit up the officer's face as he continued to make the soldiers dig the graves. He was sure there were a lot of bones. To his dismay there were very few. He thought for some time and then shouted to the soldiers: "Stupid, fill the boxes with dirt and stones first then place the bones on top. It is part of the plan!"

Now he had evidence and he would take it all to convict the bishop. They were taken to the town hall. The officer at the town hall addressed the gathering of college students. He tried to tutor them into a rebellion against the bishop. They found it all very disgusting and cruel. They could not accuse the bishop who did so much good in their village. Many of the students were born safely, thanks to the bishop.

After the mock trial at the town hall only the soldiers went to the mission, the students were too shocked to follow. They just looked on in horror. The officer ransacked the clinic and the residence of the bishop. He

reached a door and tried the handle: "This door is locked! He is in here; break down the door, only blood can wipe out this crime," with bitterness in his voice he urged the soldiers to break down the door. Inside, the bishop waited and prayed. The door held. The soldiers and the officer went away.

A few days later the officers and the soldiers came back: "American Bishop! If you do not tell us how many babies died in your hospital, we will fix a number ourselves." He challenged the bishop.

The bishop was still very composed and replied: "I don't know."

The officer then blurted out: "You killed 40,000 babies, you and the other priests are now under arrest for the murder of 40,000 babies!"

That night they thrust the bishop, Fr. Sigfreid Schneider and Fr. Sylvester Chang into a jeep with the curtains drawn. It was May 25, 1951. The journey ended inside prison walls. The communists were determined to get a false confession from Bishop Kowalski. But Bishop Kowalski was determined not to give them one. They began by taking away his belt, his shoelaces, everything in his pockets. They never left a prisoner anything with which he might commit suicide. They shut the bishop in a cell with a dirt floor. The room reeked with reminders that it recently held 20 filthy prisoners. The bishop was so sickened with the stench that he could not touch even the boiled rice and turnips that they shoved at him each morning and evening. They kept a bright light on him all through the night. He lay on the

dirt floor with no blankets but only his coat for a pillow. In the morning a gong was sounded. A guard opened a flap in the cell door and shouted, "get up sit in the middle of the room!" After several hours the bishop's back started to ache. He edged slowly towards the wall until he could lean against it. Just as he began to get some relief the flap in the cell door opened and he heard, "come back, sit in the middle of the room," the voice came at him again and threatened: "If you lean against the wall, you will be handcuffed." The cell was stifling and the bishop tried to fan himself. Up went the flap in the cell door and the voice yelled: "do not fan! Do not fan yourself." The bishop's legs began to ache. He shifted a little from side to side. The flap in the cell door opened and the voice called out again: "do not move, do not move!"

From the rising gong to the last gong at night each day and all day the bishop sat in the middle of his cell. There was nothing to read and no one to talk to. The bishop spoke to God. He recited quietly, as much of the Mass and the Divine Office as he could remember. He said his rosary on his fingers.

The silent days dragged into silent months. The bishop fell sick and they immediately got a doctor to treat him. They could not let him die. They still wanted him to sign a confession.

Suddenly, one day - and he did not know when - he was taken out for questioning:

"How many Chinese citizens did you murder?"

"None" came the calm reply.

They tried again: "How many babies under your charge were

killed by bad treatment?" "None" he replied again.

The authorities were getting furious: "How many babies died in your hospital?"

"I don't know," said the bishop.

He was taken back to the cell. He sat in the middle of the cell. He thought of Gallup New Mexico, where he had worked for fifteen years before coming to China. He tried to remember the names of all his parishioners. He made a game of it. There was one parishioner whose face he could see but whose name he could not recall. All the time he was in jail he tried to think of that man's name. It kept his mind off his swelling legs, his growing weakness. He wondered if the day would ever come when he could offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or hold a breviary in his hands. He refused to worry about his health or in fact about anything. He was in God's hands. Whatever God had in mind, that was what the bishop wanted.

Somehow he kept track of the days, the months, and the years. He knew it was on August 20, 1953 that they hauled him and Fr. Sigfreid into court. A crowd of 700 packed the auditorium at Han-Kaw. It was a handpicked audience. There was no counsel for the defense.

The prosecutor announced the charges.

"These American priests are murderers."

Then turning to the Bishop the judge said: "American bishop! Confess your guilt."

The bishop looked up with tired eyes: "I am not guilty."

The judge said again: "Confess that you killed 40,000 babies."

The bishop denied it.

Then lifting a pile of files he shook it in front of the bishop: "You see this file of papers? They are all statements signed by witnesses who saw your crimes. Now will you confess?" The bishop just shook his head meaning: "No."

The judge had already decided what he was going to do. He called two girls from the audience and made them face the bishop. The bishop looked up and recognizing them he said: "Why, yes, yes, I do. They were novices in the community of sisters who operated the hospital at the mission." The judge shook his head: "Yes and now they will read their testimony. They will swear that you priests took the best food for yourselves and left the orphans hungry. That you kept the babies in poor quarters and caused them to die." The bishop denied this: "No, that is not true!"

The bishop refused to sign the pre-prepared confession. The girls could see how cruelly the treachery and the lies had hurt him. But even this had not wrung from him a confession. They were disappointed. They were angry. They sentenced him to three years in prison, Fr. Sigfreid to five. Even the handpicked audience gave only faint applause.

Now they began, what seemed to the bishop, the worst form of mental torture. "Here are your belt, your shoelaces, your other belongings. You are being taken to the police headquarters." The bishop knew that the return of the prisoner's belongings always meant one of two things: his transfer to another prison, or freedom. At the headquarters he saw Fr. Sigfreid. They were not

allowed to speak. Several hours passed. On the corridor of the office he saw the officer who called to him: "Come here, give me your belt your shoe laces, everything in your pockets." They took the Bishop and Fr. Sigfreid back to jail. Twice in the next few days they put them through the same ordeal. The bishop tried not to hope. It made the return to jail, somewhat less of a torture.

On September 16, 1953 once again he was told: "Here is your belt, pack all your belongings. You are going to the headquarters of the police. You are forbidden to speak to Fr. Sigfreid. Here is your trunk, open it. See if it contains everything that is yours."

The bishop, too feeble, opened the trunk with some difficulty: "Yes, everything, my crosier, my cross, my ring." The officer then handed him something: "Here is some Chinese money that will take care of your expenses up to Canton. Here is the American money for Hong Kong. Come, out of this door." Suddenly a door opened and he was facing the street. He turned back and asked: "But, what of Fr. Sigfreid?" From inside he heard a voice: "He is going back to jail. You go!"

The guards who accompanied him up to this point stayed with him as he changed trains. The bishop wondered where the trip would actually end. Would it be another prison, or the firing squad? He wondered even as he staggered unsteadily over the Le-woo bridge that leads to Hong Kong.

They could still take him back. With his guards, he reached the gate in the barbed wire fence.

*(Continued on pg. 30)*

# THE SECOND PILLAR IN THE EDUCATION METHOD OF DON BOSCO: RELIGION

## 4

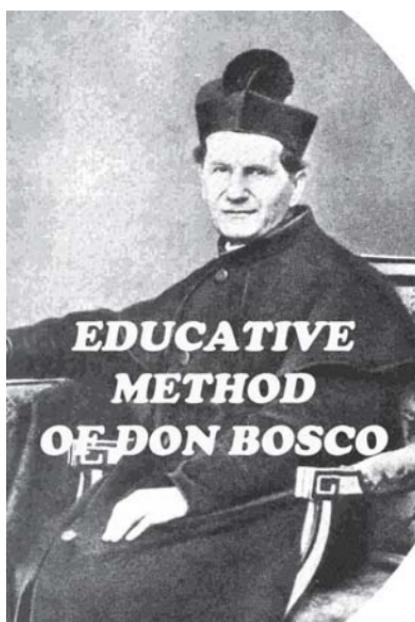
by Fr. Elias Dias

### Religious dimension in the educative method of Don Bosco:

One day an English cabinet minister visited the oratory in Turin and was brought into a large hall in which 500 boys were at study in perfect silence. It was mystery to him. "Is it possible?" he asked and inquired how they managed to get such silence and discipline. The Director told him that it was a means unknown to him and it was a secret revealed only to Catholics and the secret was, frequent confession, communion and daily Mass. "We lack these powerful means", replied the cabinet minister. "But can there be a substitute?" he asked. "Introduce religion in your schools. If you do not use religion, you will have to have recourse to threats and the use of the cane" was the prompt reply.

### The goal of Educative Method:

The goal of the educative system of Don Bosco was the salvation of souls. He was struck by the serene expression and cheerful but modest demeanour of Dominic Savio. Don Bosco saw that the boy was filled with the Holy Spirit and marveled at the work of divine grace in such a young boy. In the same year Dominic arrived at the oratory. He went to Don Bosco's office and told him that he wished



to place himself entirely in the hands of his superior.

Don Bosco said, "Religion will keep a youngster on the right road to success and achievement and make of him an upright and honest citizen of his country".

**Pedagogy of Grace:** Don Bosco's system is based on the "Pedagogy of Grace" (God's grace is necessary in human growth). Don Bosco met the young to make them conscious of their duty of committing themselves totally towards fulfilling God's will and giving God what he expects from them.

**Don Bosco's concept of religion:** Don Bosco was born and brought up in Catholic ambient. As a priest he worked in the Catholic Church. Religion means plumbing the depths of one's conscience, the motives that man considers absolute. Above all, it is the fullness of meaning; it means to acknowledge God as Father, to live in light of this conviction and

to model one's existence in line with this belief. It seeks to save the soul.

The practices of piety that Don Bosco followed were suggested by the catechism book of the archdiocese of Turin and by the devotional books popular to Piedmont. Based on his experience and understanding the needs of the youth he prepared a prayer book suitable for the young, with the title, *'The Companion of Youth'*. This book was published first in 1847 and went through more than 100 reprints in Don Bosco's life time.

The practices of piety in the Oratory mirrored these prayers. It is important to note that Don Bosco wanted the boys to be good Christians not only in the Oratory but also when they would leave the Oratory; hence the practices were not completely different from those used by other Christians. According to Don Bosco, genuine piety alone can bring about moral reform. Genuine Christian piety demands both the INTERIOR ELEMENT - rooted in faith and supernatural love for God and the interior relationship of dependence on filial devotion to him - and the EXTERNAL EXPRESSION of such a relationship manifested in the various "practices of piety." One becomes religious by acting religiously.

**Instructions in Religion:** Don Bosco realized fully that religious instruction had to go hand in hand with the practice of religious acts, which have enormous educative value. The Oratory was permeated with a deep sense of piety that would be immediately noticed by any visitor, as something exceptional. This intense piety was lived in an atmosphere of freedom, spontaneity and joy.

**Mass:** The teaching and the practice regarding the Mass were based on the teaching of the council of Trent and on the dogmatic, ascetical and devotional works prevalent in Piedmont. He always looked for methods which were useful and meaningful for the young.

Don Bosco wanted that every one of his boys in the Oratory know how to serve Mass well. A method of serving Mass consisted of Latin prayers with the rubrics. Even when the boys went home for holidays he wanted them to keep up the practice learnt in the Oratory.

**Real Presence and Holy Communion:** The frequency to receive Communion recommended was once a week. Though Don Bosco was brought up in this atmosphere, he insisted on preparation to receive Communion and encouraged the boys to receive Communion daily without being constrained to follow any particular order. This was done to give them full freedom.

As early as 1847, Don Bosco obtained from the Archbishop of Turin the permission to admit the boys of the Oratory to First Holy Communion and Confirmation at his discretion. This shows Don Bosco's great conviction that in the spiritual growth and education of the young, grace of God is the most important factor.

The focus on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was the basis of daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament. In the Oratory, Benediction was given in the evening of Sundays and Feast days. These devotions gradually helped the boys to avoid sin and grow in spiritual maturity.

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation:**

Don Bosco was an untiring apostle of Confession. In 1858, Pope Pius IX gave him the faculty to hear Confession everywhere. He had gained so much confidence among the boys that most of them went for their Confession to him. He urged the priests to be very kind, patient, and prudent so that the boys may not lose their confidence in the confessor. The saint would invite the boys to take life more seriously and apply themselves to a more sincere reform of personal life. By this insistence he wanted to educate the boys to take the Sacrament seriously and work at the reform of their life.

Don Bosco recommended general Confession to his boys especially on the occasion of spiritual retreats. It was also seen as a means of spiritual direction.

Confession is considered not only as a means of obtaining pardon from sins but also as a means of genuine spiritual direction that was why for Don Bosco confession is the foundation, the sustaining power of the educative process.

**Devotion to Mary:** Don Bosco, following the Catholic tradition, placed a great emphasis on devotion to Mary. The whole essence of his Marian education was to orient his youth to devout practices, filial devotion, and confident supplication to the Holy Virgin. The adolescent needed to relate to a paternal figure for their growing problems. The young people wanted a model to imitate. Mary was the best model in her obedience, charity and availability.

There were different ways in which religion was practiced in the



*During the summer holidays Don Bosco would try his hand at carpentry. He made this confessional, which is to be seen in the private chapel in Joseph's house. Joseph very willingly put his home at the disposal of his brother during the summer*

Oratory:

a) **A religious climate:** The educators, priests, students and lay persons contributed to it through their exemplary lives, so did public signs, like statues, pictures, crucifixes and inscriptions.

b) **A religious outlook on life:** Everything at the Oratory was lived and accomplished in the light of God and at his service. This was the religious source of the happiness that was to be found at the Oratory: "Serve the Lord with gladness".

c) **A solid catechetical instruction:** It meant knowing the articles of the Creed, studying sacred history and getting to know

more about the life of the Church. Further impetus was given it on special occasions like Triduums, novenas and months when interest was stirred up through prizes and competitions.

d) **Religious practices:** Daily prayers, which according to the catechism of the time, ought to take place at the beginning and at the end of the day, before meals, before beginning work, daily Mass, occasional commemorations and feast in honour of the Blessed Virgin, St. Aloysius, St. Joseph and others.

e) **Sacrament life:** The possibility and the availability of facilities for Confession and frequent Holy Communion. Once this took place, the youngster would find Christ his interior master who would then influence him far more than other teachers could do.

f) **Apostolic commitment:** It was inculcated in each one and encouraged in groups (Sodalities). It flourished within the setting of the Oratory, but it extended to the outside as well (time of cholera). Here was a proof of the solidity of religious formation imparted at the Oratory.

g) **The encouragement given to each one to strive for holiness:** This was the culminating point of all that was done at the Oratory. It consisted in an explicit resolve to respond totally to the love of God as Dominic Savio did by following the ordinary path of life of a Christian. He performed his duties well and out of love for God here in lay the source of serenity and happiness.

**Objections:** Some may object the strict and inseparable connection between education and

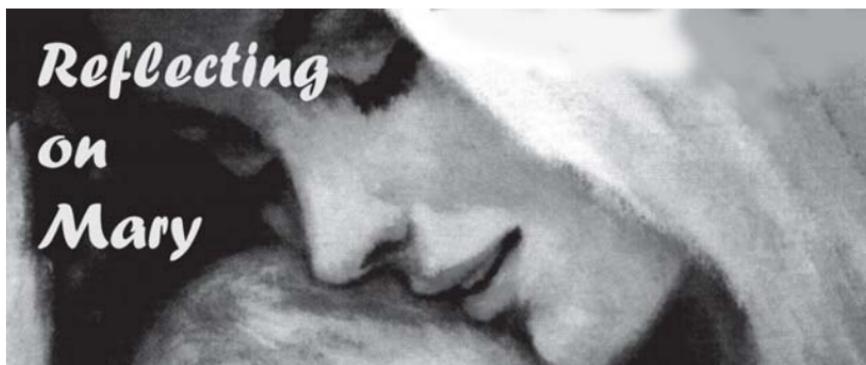
religion in the Educative Method of Don Bosco which makes the educational system a part of the theological sciences. Can we apply this method to modern youth? Did Bosco contribute anything towards education of youth?

Joseph Groppo of the Salesian University of Rome responded to critics in the following manner: Don Bosco's educative message is not to be identified with his ideology or theology. Every man is conditioned by the culture of the society in which he lives. Don Bosco lived in a precise socio-cultural ambient and he could not but be influenced by the ideology and theology prevalent in the society in his time that does not mean that he did not contribute anything to the educational system.

Don Bosco carried out his mission according to his particular theological perspective. In the past, in Christian countries all education tended to fulfil the religious ends. In today's pluralistic society it is no longer justifiable.

The Church believes in the educational act and salvific act or redemptive act and saw a connection between the two. Witnessing to Christ's love means having real love for one's brothers especially those who are in great need.

He had an ability to diagnose real social and religious problems of the youth and do something effective to alleviate them. The preventive system is an endeavor to meet the real needs of youth specially those who were poor, who live on the fringes of society, despised, unloved and uncared. Don Bosco was impelled by Christian charity. □



## MARY: LIVING FOUNT OF HOPE

by Mario Scudu

**M**ary of Nazareth also lived her faith in God: she trusted in God and entrusted her life to Him, especially after the Annunciation and she did this in an absolute manner. But she not only lived her faith but also her hope (and of course, her charity). It seems simple to bear this in mind but it is important because it also has implications on our Marian spirituality and spiritual attitudes that support it.

For centuries the Church has invoked her with the beautiful prayer: "*Hail Holy Queen*" praying to her as the "Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope." Dante wrote in his 33<sup>rd</sup> Canto on Paradise: "*She is the living fount of hope*". It is as if Mary is a live and living fountain, constantly flourishing and full of hope, not just a thing of the past. Even Vatican Council II records the rapport between Mary of Nazareth and hope, writing (in *Lumen Gentium* n. 68) that Mary is "the sign of certain hope for the pilgrim people of God" and so, in a theological and existential sense she becomes a model for all believers. (nn. 61-65).

### God "amazed" by our hope

Charles Peguy, one of the modern poets distinctly sings the praises of the beauty, the importance and the fragility of hope. For him, God is moved by hope itself: "Faith does not fascinate me. Charity does not enamor me but hope amazes me...."

This is a beautiful image: God "marvels" at our faith, our charity but he is *stupefied* by our hope. It is as if it is the most important and the most difficult of the three.

They are the three virtues that Mary of Nazareth, more than all the saints throughout history, lived to a very high degree during her life on earth and is justly invoked as the model of faith hope and love.

### Faith is the foundation of hope

Speaking of faith and hope and their reciprocal influence, we cannot but recall the verse from the letter to the Hebrews (11:1): "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval". And immediately after this the author

proposes for our admiration a long list of biblical personages even when they were “hoping against hope” (Rom 4:18). Consider Abraham “our father in faith” who was a supreme example of steadfast hope in the promise of God (a drama for his faith and hope was the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen. 22).

Abraham “believed,” he “folded up his tent,” Abraham “obeyed”, “Abram went to the place that the Lord had told him.” Here is where his hope was based and his faith which was firmly founded on the word (which was the promise) that God had made to him.

To promise is to hope and shape time. Etymologically to promise (from the Latin *pro-mittere*) means to “fast forward” or “send ahead of, creating a horizon that allows one to move forward.

Think of the famous words and promises that lovers say: “I love you” or “I’ll love you forever.” Being told this by someone is like receiving a powerful impetus to face the future. This seems to be a sufficient guarantee for us to face our struggles, notwithstanding everything else. That was how it was for Abraham and Mary and that is how it should be for us.

### **The faith and hope of Mary: like Abraham but greater**

St. Augustine wrote that “it is only hope that makes us truly Christian.” We should never forget that. It is also true that “*homo viator; spe erectus*” the man who has the courage to stand on his own feet (erectus) is able thus to go forward (viator) under the pressures along the path that leads to God. That is so only because it is sustained by the hope (spe) of an objective or a



*The first disciple, Mary expresses her faith in the divinity and the mission the Son, her Jesus*

goal. For the person it is a desired good and a guarantee of his own future happiness. In theological terms God becomes the absolute Good, the one who will carry us (in his time) towards total and eternal bliss.

On what, or better, on whom did Mary of Nazareth base her hope? Culturally and religiously Mary was a daughter of Israel. Her spiritual life was founded on the words and deeds of God throughout history; but above all on the promise of the Messiah and the Saviour of the people. “Behold, you will conceive a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, he will reign over the house of Jacob forever”. Those seminal words about the destiny and promise to humankind plainly outlined and defined Mary’s entire existence.

### **Mary, the First “Christian”**

From the Annunciation onwards she lived only and totally

for her Child who was her God. Every act, even the simplest, was obviously lived for the love of her Son, certainly a gift from God, but also the fruit of her womb. It is certain that every word, gesture, plan, suffering and choice she made were always with Jesus in mind. She was self-defined and would always and only be "the handmaid of the Lord" and therefore only and always "related to him," for the rest of her life. We can say that Mary became the first Christian and if she were not a Christian who could ever be a Christian?" (Card. Anastasio Ballestrero)

In all his letters, St. Paul always has a basic theme of hope, anchoring everything to the Risen Christ, the source and guarantee of every hope for the believer.

He sees Jesus Christ as the one in whom all the promises are fulfilled so that he becomes the

definite "yes" of God to men (2 Cor. 1:20), and so he hails him as "Jesus Christ, our hope!" (1 Tim 1:1) For Mary of Nazareth the Gospel - which is the Good News of God for the world - was her Son. She totally believed in Jesus (see Cana) and in him she placed every hope of salvation. She like Abraham always "hoped against all hope" even when Jesus was dying on the cross. She waited for the fulfillment of the promises, which through her Son, who apparently died as a failure and abandoned, was always the Son of God, and God. She firmly believed that he could not, not fulfill the promises of salvation. He would never delude her, ever. "In this faith, even on the darkness of Saturday there was certain hope and so you made your way to greet Easter morning" (Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 50). And so her hope was rewarded with a vision of the Risen Christ. ◻

(Continued from pg. 23)

They stopped - he waited. Then they pushed him through the gate. He was free! He looked back at the guards. In their faces he saw the terror that had imprisoned him without cause for nearly three years!. They had squeezed him dry of everything except the will to bear pain. Now they were casting him out of the land where his heart was.

But is this the climax of the story? The bishop's whole life was summarized in this moment. After all the pain, the sickness and the sadness, after three years of torture that ground a man down to the last fibre of his being, this was what came forth. It was as simple as the chime of a little bell, a bell that gave out the

sound of hope to our world.

"I am Bishop Kowalski. You see I am still alive." At the sound of Bishop Kowalski's feeble voice Fr. Poletti knelt to kiss the bishop's hand.

Bishop Kowalski walked with the living once more. He went back to the community of his own Franciscan brothers. Anyone who looked at him saw the eyes of a young man alight with the missionary vision. Those eyes saw beyond the prison bars of the world to the faces of the millions who have not heard of Christ, Christ who died for them.

Bishop Kowalski died a few years later in the comfort of his Franciscan community. A life spent in the service of the Gospel. ◻

## NEWSBITS

### YEREVAN, ARMENIA

Sarkiss Rshdouni escaped the fighting in the besieged Syrian city of Aleppo months ago but cannot shake memories of what he witnessed.

"I was with a friend when I heard gunshots," said Rshdouni, who is among hundreds of thousands of people who have fled the war in his homeland. "It was fast -- second by second, the sound was getting closer. I saw mass shooting, people running."

Aleppo is home to more than 80 percent of Syria's Armenian community, and those who are still there remain at the center of the battle for control of the country.

Syrian rebels recently pushed back army defenses and moved closer to the country's second-largest airport just outside Aleppo. The airport stopped commercial flights weeks ago because of the fighting, but it is used by Syrian President Bashar Assad's military to resupply troops and launch airstrikes against rebel positions.

The uprising against Assad, which erupted almost two years ago, has left more than 2 million people internally displaced and pushed 650,000 more to seek refuge abroad in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

Aleppo, Syria's largest city, has been engulfed in fighting for months between government forces and opposition militias, including al-Qaida-allied extremists. People there are dealing with shortages of food, medicine and electricity during the coldest winter in the Middle East in two decades.



*Aleppo Souk before the fire*

The Christian-Armenian community in Syria is relatively small - between 60,000 and 100,000 people, according to estimates - but its history has added to its unease. Armenians in Syria are descendants of people who fled to Syria after escaping a genocide against Armenians in Ottoman Turkey during World War I.

Many worry the same can happen in Syria, where the Christian Armenians are again at the mercy of Muslim factions at war, and they are desperate to get out.

"Syrian Air has rerouted all flights because of the conflict in Aleppo," said Gevorg Abrahamyan, press secretary of Zvartots International Airport in Armenia. "There's a flight arriving once a week now from Latakia (in Syria) to Yerevan."

Upon arrival in the capital city of Yerevan, they still face a struggle. Armenia is a former Soviet republic that's landlocked by Turkey, Georgia and Iran. Unemployment is estimated at 20 percent, according to the International Monetary Fund.

"Syrian Armenians are arriving every week," said Firdus Zakarian,

chief of staff at the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora's commission for Syrian-Armenian issues. "It is hard for Armenia. We do not have the strongest economy, but we are trying to do everything we can so they don't feel more pain."

To date, the Ministry of Diaspora estimates that more than 7,000

Armenian Christians have arrived in Armenia from Syria since the start of the conflict.

Armenian authorities are trying to find ways to speed the exit from Syria and make the adjustment to life here easier. The authorities have simplified the visa process out of Syria. Elementary schools have been established that teach classes in the Arabic language that Syrian-Armenian children have grown up with, according to a familiar Syrian curriculum.

One such school is the Cilician School funded by a charitable organization and the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Diaspora in Armenia. There are 300 students and 16 new teachers, all of whom lost their jobs in Syria.

"It was difficult for them at first, but they are now slowly adapting to their new lives," said Nora Pilibosian, director of the Cilician School in Yerevan. "Of course they miss their homes, their relatives and their toys, but they are adjusting."

While many new arrivals are finding housing in the capital, a small minority of the Armenians fleeing the conflict in Syria have become settlers in the breakaway



*Aleppo Souk after the fire*

southern Caucasus region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Vartan Boghossian, 30, left Syria with his family in September for Nagorno-Karabakh. He lives in communal housing, sharing a kitchen and a bathroom with five families.

Boghossian says it was his dream to come to Armenia, but now he faces the challenge of rebuilding his life.

"I want to stay here," said Boghossian, who took his citizenship exam last summer. "Life is difficult here. There are few jobs and everything is expensive. But I want to find extra work to help me stay and live normally."

Neighbouring Azerbaijan claims Nagorno-Karabakh as its territory and it has issued an official note of protest to Armenia about refugees settling in the disputed region.

Many of the refugees planned to stay in Armenia for a few months, but some now think they may never get back home.

"It is not the same Syria anymore," says Rshdouni, who is among the few refugees who has found work. "To watch my people killed, the city's destruction. I can't even imagine this." □

## 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.*

Thank you for curing me from a sickness through my devotion to the 3 Hail Marys. *M. Pereira, Goa*

I am grateful to Our Lady for granting my requests through the faithful devotion to the 3 Hail Marys. *Theresa, Chennai*

### **MARY WAS THERE**

My mother was hospitalized for a month and 13 days. For 22 of those days she was in the ICU and the doctors had given up on her. We could not take her home as we could not arrange for a nurse to help her with tube feeding. She eventually came around and we could bring her home. She is now eating normally through her mouth and is fine. I prayed the 3 Hail Marys before leaving for the hospital. I am most grateful. Thank you, dear Jesus and Mother Mary and continue to shower on us your blessings. Keep my mother under your protection.

*Charmaine Crasto, Goa*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks for the many blessings and favours received through faithfully praying the 3 Hail Marys. Specially healing my niece baby Nysa Mary who was hospitalised for dengue. Her blood count had gone down and kept fluctuating. We were all worried for our one-year-old baby. As always, I trusted in the 3 Hail Marys and once again it worked for me. I thank you dear Mother Mary for getting my niece out of the ICU and then from the hospital. *Vina Dias, Mumbai*

Many thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians for helping my brother and curing him of his throat problem and for the other favours received. Thanks for curing my brother of a minor surgery he had to undergo.

*Mrs. B. Colaco, Mumbai*

I am 78 years old and I can testify to the efficacy of the Rosary. I recited the 15 mysteries when I was in distress and immediately my pain and discomfort ceased. Being a lawyer I can admit that the Rosary has produced inexplicable results by reinforcing my stand on various issues very successfully. I am deeply indebted to our dear Mother and her intercession.

*A. G. D'Mello, Mumbai*

I am grateful to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Our Blessed Mother for saving my house and for getting a gas leak at my house attended to, in time and at no cost.

*Mark W. Dodd, Pune*

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

It was a morning of On the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011 the feast of Immaculate Conception. When no one was at home my mother switched on the gas to make breakfast for herself. All of a sudden the gas pipe came off and an intense fire started. Luckily the exhaust fan was on. My mother switched off the main button on the cylinder. Had she not done that there would have been a great disaster. We always pray the three Hail Marys regularly. Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary

*Felix & Joanna, Vasai*

Thank you, Mother Mary for interceding for my daughter's health and averting a very tragic accident. You are always present for my family and I thank you once again, mamma Mary!

*Dorothy Pais*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary for all the blessings and favours received for my husband's good medical report.

*Mrs. A. deSouza, Australia*

After returning from a trip to Europe and visiting various Marian and other religious shrines, I came home with the DVD of O.L. of Garabandal. I was taking it to a friend's place to view it. While on the way I realised that I had left some veggies to cook on the stove. I hurried back taking a wrong turn. Eventually I reached home. I'm grateful to Our Lady, the veggies were on the stove but I had forgotten to light it. Our Lady was there...I'm so grateful!

*Doreen Mahony, Australia*

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

My belated but heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Blessed Mother and all the saints for all the petitions granted during the past years and for protecting and helping our family in all our problems and difficulties,

*Faye & Daniel Parakh and Fly. Sholapur*

I sincerely thank Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints to whom I prayed when I was in desperate need while I was going through a bad time. I am grateful for all the graces received.

*Benedict Pereira, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Our Beloved Mother, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours and protection I have received and do continue to bless and protect our family.

*Julie Koyagora, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio all the angels and saints for answering my prayers and for the favours received. Thank you dear Jesus and Mary for your love and protection.

*A. Cardoz, Mumbai*

Thank you Holy Spirit, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the many favours received and for the gift of a baby boy to my son and daughter-in-law.

*Juliet Nunes, Thane*

We are grateful to Our Lady, Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours received through their intercession.

*Mr & Mrs O.P. Kennedy*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



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

*Clotilda Pinto*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for gifting us with a cute, healthy baby Makayla. Do continue to bless us.

*Rocky and Diana, Goa*

My grateful thanks to the Infant Jesus, Our Blessed Mother, Dominic Savio and Blessed Pope John Paul II for a safe delivery and the gift of a normal and healthy baby on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and for all the other favours granted.

*Janet Fernandes, Mira Road*

Our sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery of our girl

child and for taking care of me through the 9 months.

*Mr. Valentine and Mrs. Donna Godinho, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter.

*Mrs Lucia Menezes, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for curing our daughter Shruti and for all the graces and favours received.

*F. Fernandes*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the blessings of a baby boy for my granddaughter, after 5 years of marriage.

*Bernadette Fernandes, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary for the successful non-invasive surgery and to Dominic Savio for the successful surgery, please continue to intercede for my complete recovery.

*Louella Fernandes, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and for helping me get a job.

*A Devotee*

Our grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for their protection over Judith, Basilia Fernandes.

*A Devotee*

Sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for all the favours received and do continue to protect and bless our family.

*P. Mendes, Mumbai*

## APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JUNE 2013

**The Holy Father's General Intention:** *That a culture of dialogue, listening and mutual respect prevail among peoples.*

**The Holy Father's Missionary Intention:** *That where secularization is strongest, Christian communities may effectively promote a new evangelization.*

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## **MARY WAS THERE**

While returning by road on 28th December 2012 from Ratnagiri my daughter, who sat behind us with my wife felt inspired to ask us to put on our seat belts. 30 minutes later, our vehicle met with an accident. Our driver lost control and the vehicle toppled on its side and rolled down a small hill about 15 feet. My daughter and wife were constantly shouting "Jesus help us," and indeed they did save us. We were all saved and the seat belts securely held the four of us safe. My daughter and wife were totally unscathed - with not even a bruise or cut. Many onlookers retrieved us from the vehicle and after some first aid. Arrangements were made to ferry us home to Vasai. We are most grateful to Jesus and Mother Mary.

*John, Joan & Caroline Pereira, Vasai*

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

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

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