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***We pray, O Lord
 our God,
 that, as we proclaim
 the Death
 and Resurrection
 of your Son,
 so, being made partakers
 in his suffering,
 we may also merit
 a share in his
 consolation and
 his glory.***

*(From the Prayer on the Feast of
 Our Lady of the Rosary)*

From The Editor's Desk
IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK!

As I sat to write this piece, one of my community members reminded me that, because I'm quite a bit on the other side of 60 I ought to have a "full-body" check-up at least once a year, so I won't be in for some awkward surprises.

There was a time when the prospect of death, and preparation for it, had huge importance. I remember when I was a teenager, in our minor seminary we had this rather surreal occasion once a month to 'celebrate' the 'exercise for a happy death.' Not now. It's just called a 'monthly recollection.'

You, *Madonna* readers are reflective people, and many of you have noticed, as I have, the shadow across your path. You go to funerals of people younger than yourselves. Your doctor treats a skin cancer with the assurance that "You'll die with it but not of it."

So, I am gathering companions in my body for the last journey. The backaches, the high blood pressure, the cholesterol can all be kept under control, but they are going to stay with me to the end. Is it any comfort that my body has been deteriorating since the age of about seventeen, when my senses were at their sharpest?

What is marvellous is that we last so long nowadays, and that we can keep our ailments under reasonable control. Glasses, hearing aids, dentures, hip replacements - we would rather not need them, but they make it possible for our real life, the life of our heart and mind, to go on blossoming. How about this for a pattern of life, written by an 83-year-old: *I'm reading more and dusting less. I'm sitting in the garden and admiring the view without fussing about the weeds. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experiences to savour, not to endure. I'm trying to recognise these moments now and cherish them. I'm not saving my good body-deo for special occasions, but wearing it for assistants in the hardware shop and tellers at the bank. The terms 'Someday' and 'one-of-these-days' are losing their grip on my vocabulary; if it's worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see and hear and do it now!*

The world is hard enough without doses of other people's gloom to darken it. Someone told me: *"Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we're here, we might as well dance."* You could make a list of episodes that you are happy to recall, no matter what other people felt about them. Gratitude for God's gifts is different. There are other memories, your sorrowful mysteries, (and we all have them) that do not bring happiness but may point you towards unfinished business. When they asked Vincent de Paul on his deathbed if he forgave his enemies, he said: 'I have no enemies.' Not many people share that freedom. Most of us carry unresolved resentments or grudges that burden our heart; and sometimes we can shed the burden by reaching out to the one who grieves us. Don't put it off. The shadow may fall on one or other of you. Remember the motto on many old sundials: 'It's later than you think.'

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

LOVE IS FAIR

by Mons Gianpaolo Dianin, bishop

If loving means giving oneself to one's beloved, without counting the cost and without reservation, then is there still room for any kind of justice that inevitably refers back to a certain reckoning, an evaluation?

St Paul's hymn to charity (1Cor 13:1-13) has the ability to enter into the nuances of love, and love, when cherished, protected and nurtured is never a generic altruism, but an adventure that takes one ever deeper into and beyond intimacy and is experienced above all in specifics and gradations.

Here then is another shade of love: "Love does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices in the truth" (1Cor 13:6). Pope Francis comments on Paul's verse: "To rejoice in injustice is the poisonous attitude of those who rejoice when they see injustice being done to someone." When I do not like someone, I can come to rejoice in the bad and unjust things that happen to him/her. How can we not recognise that when faced with some misfortune that befalls a person we dislike, we come to say: "It serves him right" or "He asked for it!" One can inwardly rejoice in the evil that befalls someone.

True love, Francis continues, "we rejoice at the good of others when we see their dignity and value their abilities and good works" (*Amoris laetitia*, 109-110). The second part of the Pauline verse is by no means simple or obvious. In order to enjoy the good things that happen to another it is necessary that we are at peace with ourselves, that we are not envious, but free. For example, it is not easy to enjoy a colleague

who makes a career-leap and occupies a position that could have been mine.

This can also happen in marriage when a kind of competition brews between the two, because one believes he is superior to the other or because she wants to point out that the other is not doing everything s/he should be doing. So it happens that an error on the part of the other is pointed out and highlighted, almost as if to humiliate him/her. It happens that one can even enjoy the errors of others because they prove that I am right: "Do you see that what I think and what I say is true?" One can enjoy an injustice because it brings water to my mill.

True love, St Paul reminds us, and Francis in his commentary states that it does not enjoy injustice even when it might benefit me. It even rejoices in the good that the other does, and that could bring him appreciation and esteem. True love rejoices when the loved one is recognised, appreciated, esteemed. Love always promotes the other.

The figure of John the Baptist comes to mind because he is capable of standing aside at the arrival of Jesus, ready to leave the scene to his Lord. John defines himself as a voice before him who is the Word. John is not afraid to say: "He must increase, I decrease." We understand imme-

diately that when each one possesses this attitude towards the other, love becomes a spiritual race to seek and promote the other. Here are some incredible nuances of love! The Pope concludes: "The family must be the place where whoever does something good in life knows that we will celebrate it there together with him."

Delving deeper into these verses, we can ask ourselves what the relationship is between love and justice. If to love is to give oneself to the beloved, without calculation and reserve, we wonder if there is still room for justice that calls for a certain measure of calculation. For example, it is just to give a fair wage, but love may also exaggerate in the gift. Love seems incompatible with any kind of calculation. How then is justice to be positioned in this full gift of self that is love?

We can conjugate the relationship between love and justice in different ways. First of all, in love, justice means living up to that gift of self - promised on the wedding day and to do so not only when it is easy and comes spontaneously, but also when it is exhausting. Justice protects love from being at the mercy of emotions that come



and go. Marriage is born out of love, but bases the relationship on a covenant, on a promise. I cannot tell you, when I marry you, that every morning when I see you my heart will warm, but I can promise you that for better or worse I will be there for you, and that is the justice of love.

We can say that justice is the first form of love, it is the very condition of love. Love asks first of all to 'honour' the other, that is, to recognise and appreciate him in his uniqueness, in his desires and expectations, without submitting him to me. Being just means reviewing my priorities in the light of my relationship with you, shifting the centre of gravity of my life so that the 'we' is each time the fruit of a higher synthesis between the 'I' and the 'you.' □

"IT'S ALWAYS MY FAULT!"

The subject of "justice" at our home is a very sensitive one.

From the talk I hear from my children as they come back from school about this and that of other parents, I imagine is also from many families.

At the beginning of our 'career' as parents, we liked to settle our children's disputes in the 'Solomon' manner. Then we realised

that from an educational point of view, inserting ourselves into our children's dynamics from above was not having its desired effect.

Case number 1: the little boy takes away an Avengers toy from his half-brother, which he claims was given to both of them. The half-brother, on the other hand, is sure it was given to him on some specific occasion by his grand-

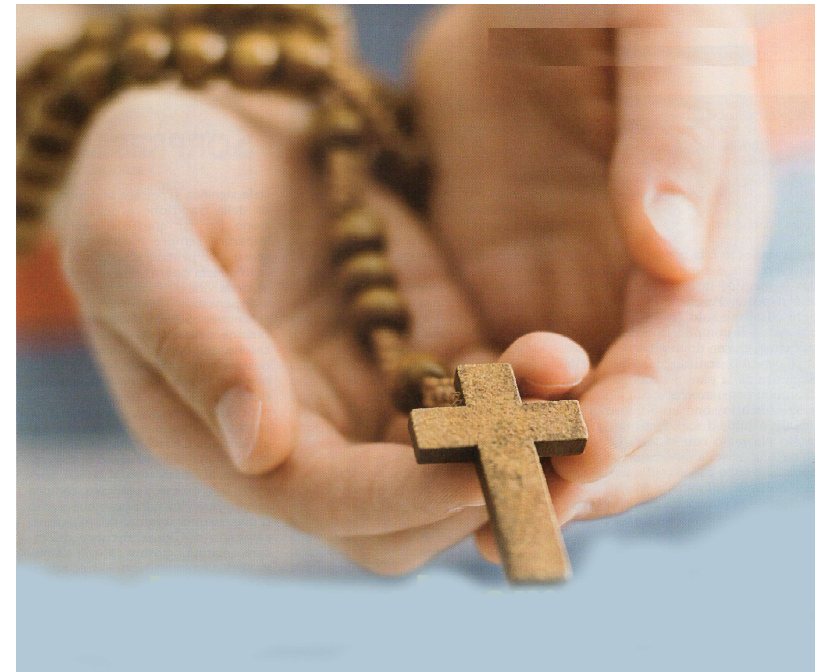
IN THE HANDS OF THE SIMPLE

by Chino Biscontin

In a textbook I used in elementary school, there was a story that stuck with me, along with an effective illustration. An acrobat who was very devoted to Our Lady had consecrated himself totally to her by entering a monastery. The acrobat could neither read nor write, much less study Latin, so he was unable to participate in the sung prayer of the other monks in choir. Secluded in a corner, he prayed the Rosary.

It happened one night that the abbot, unable to get to sleep, went toward the large church and, to

his amazement, he saw that the stained-glass windows were lit up. He went in to check and saw that the light was coming from the altar of Our Lady: the beautiful statue seemed to come alive, the face that had been smiling emanated an intense and warm light. In front of the altar the acrobat was performing his acrobatic stunts with all the effort of which he was capable. When he had finished, to the abbot who questioned him about what he was doing, he replied, "I do not know how to honour Our Lady with psalms and hymns. I wanted to



parents. We don't actually remember whether it happened that way. We proposed to the boys that they each use it for some time. After shouting and much tugging, we give them the alternative of breaking it in two and giving one part to each. In the end... they preferred this absurd alternative!

So, the point of contention or the triggering event stopped becoming the point of the situation and we started using the 'American court' mode, complete with witnesses and a jury.

Case number 2: reckless use of the play station by the elder. The younger one complained that, although the clock had rung indicating the end of the shift, the defendant did not leave the joystick. The elder justified himself by saying that he was just setting up a game for his other brother. The younger one, however, when called upon to say whether or not this was true, claimed that he did not want to say anything in the absence of his younger sibling.

That's it: invoking the Fifth Amendment would seem too much even for my family!

Conflicts at our home spring up all the time. The real challenge is not in quelling them, but together, finding a way to resolve them, to overcome them or to work past them and move on to something else.

So, for some time now, we have started suspending judgement and beginning a patient listening to what needs led that family member to behave that way. It was precisely those needs that had generated something in the relationship that had been judged unfair

or wrong... but if we started from those needs, we could (sometimes rarely) find a fair solution.

The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, who has held a series of meetings in schools to the topic of justice, argues: "Since justice involves the equality of people who are different and singular, justice is an infinite task. And to think that we are never just enough is already a way to start being just"

Case number 3: this situation is presented to us very often so insistently and is a source of endless arguments with our children. Each of the three, when asked, "What do you find unfair in our family?" replies and throws it back at us: "You're always blaming me for everything!"

It is precisely for this reason that I have decided, unless I see blood flowing, I will stay out of their quarrels and enjoy the ways that they find their way out of them. I'll praise the one who, for the sake of sharing (that is a value for us), perhaps gives up a little space to the others and supports everyone in the free and non-judgmental expression of needs, even the more profound ones.

And with my husband? I'll try to let myself be guided by the words of St Paul who invites Love to enjoy the truth and not to wallow in injustice. Better my spouse than me giving without counting if and what he returns! It would be nice if justice, in our family, would rhyme with sharing, joy of life and gratitude.

And for this we will avail ourselves of the intervention of our Advocate par excellence: Mary, a special mentor to the Just One. □

offer her what I know how to do best."

This account comes to mind when I think of the Rosary. For the knowledge we have, it seems in fact that the Rosary originated in monasteries for illiterate monks who were unable to sing and read Latin. At first it was the recitation of the *Our Father*: 150 in a day, as there were 150 psalms in the liturgy of the educated monks. During the Middle Ages the first part of the *Hail Mary* came to be added on to form the first part, in the 12th century, the second in the 14th. And it became familiar to replace the *Our Fathers* with 150 *Hail Marys*, divided into tens, each preceded by the *Our Father* and followed, as with the psalms, by the *Glory be*.

To count the *Hail Marys* they resorted to an instrument, already used in ancient times for other recitations, consisting of a string with knots, which later became our Rosary beads. In the 15th century, the recitation of the rosary spread among the people in a reduced form, with 50 repetitions of the *Hail Mary*, but enriched by meditation on episodes from the life of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. It was in the next century that the 15 "mysteries" were established and later became traditional, to which St John Paul II recently added the five "mysteries of light."

Over the centuries, and even recently, after the *Glory be* some particular devotions add invocations or various ejaculations. Not only that, but the announcement of the "mysteries" sometimes becomes the reading of a few sen-

tences from the New Testament to which a short commentary is added.

In my personal recitation I love the simple form, without additions, and I do not force my mind to meditate for the whole ten Hail Marys on the proclaimed "mystery," nor to devote explicit attention to each of the words spoken. The Rosary, I tell myself, is a prayer for the simple and illiterate, and it is the recitation itself that is not only prayer, but makes me prayerful.

I always carry the beads with me, and to make sure I don't miss them, I have scattered several here and there in the pockets of clothing I use. They must be crowns with the beads clearly perceptible between my fingers and properly spaced out: this is also part of prayer, the physical contact. So, for me the Rosary has become, I don't know how to put it, a "shrine." Just as when I am able to visit a shrine because of the grace of the place I am given an intense and abundant prayer, so the recitation of the rosary, gradually and gently, produces in me a state of recollection and peace that fills me with gratitude to Most Holy Mary.

A historical note. The feast (now a memorial) of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary dates back to the victory of the Christian Holy League fleet over the Turkish fleet in the dramatic Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. The pope, St. Pius V, had instructed Christendom to ask for Mary's help with the recitation of the Rosary. □

TAKING GRATITUDE FOR GRANTED

by Anastasia Dias

"Hey, did you hear of this guy who cured the leper?" asked the youngest of the ten. "Wait. What? Who told you this?" said another. "Hey, someone's probably lied to you. Don't take this stuff too seriously. If leprosy could be cured, you and I wouldn't be this way. No doctor can cure us. This is our death sentence! Go, get your facts checked" scoffed the oldest.

"I'm not kidding. There is a guy who *can* cure leprosy. And, and .. he isn't a doctor or a medicine-man. His name is Jesus, he's a Jew from Galilee. He's gained popularity because he has done many extraordinary things. He's cured blindness, deafness, restored speech, brought back people from the dead. And, most recently, he's healed a man of leprosy."

"What say, should we go and pay this dude a visit?? asked one of the ten people.

"I say we should. What have we got to lose? He's got a lot of followers. But if people see ten of us, they'll make way. And, even if they don't, he'll call us. We can easily meet him."

"Okay, let's see how it goes," replied the eldest.

"Come on soon, while it's still daylight," said the youngest.

A few of them crawled along

while others who could still walk, hobbling their way to the Galilee-Samaria border.

They saw Jesus coming their way. "Is that the guy?" asked the eldest sceptically.

"Yeah, yes. He's the one," said the youngest. "How sure are you?" quizzed another.

"One of the women who gives us food described what he looked like to me," whispered the youngest.

Let's all say this together when he approaches us, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us." Jesus came walking towards them. He heard their plea and advised them to go and show themselves to the priests.

So, they left the place and were on the way to the temple as quickly as their sore feet could carry them. The eldest leper had regained his limbs. The youngest saw his fingers turning full and fleshy again.

Yet, another witnessed his skin getting whole again.

"We are healed!" they shrieked. "I can walk again!", cried a leper. "I can feel my limbs," said another.

"Let's go back," said the youngest. "Why, what's happened? You look perfectly well to me. Are you not feeling ok?" asked



one of them. "No, let's go back to thank him," said the youngest firmly. "Thank him, for what?" said the eldest, surprised. "It was his duty and he did it. So, keep quiet, stay here and let's enjoy life once more," added another.

"You can stay here and enjoy your life. I'm going back to thank him. This would never have been possible without him. I'm leaving, good-bye." said the youngest, waving at them.

"What a fool he is!" declared the eldest, stupefied. "Let him go. He'll come back. Let's see how long he takes."

The boy ran, joyful to feel his arms and legs again. He saw Jesus at a distance.

"Rabbi, thank you ... thank you for everything. I praise you because only you could have done these things...no else ever could. How much we had begged so many of them." he cried, his voice reaching Jesus' ears.

He went closer to Jesus and flung himself at his feet. "Thank you for every single thing. But, thank you very specially for this, Lord," he said and he was weeping.

This man was a Samaritan. We know very well, that Samaritans and Jews had little to no contact. They never met or socialised together, let alone touch each other or eat the other's food or drink the other's drink. Basically, they hated each other.

But this man forgot his identity as a Samaritan and came to thank Jesus for healing him, without considering the fact

that Jesus was a Jew. It was the same thing that he and the other lepers never ever considered when they begged him to heal them.

Sadly, like most of us, the others forgot their blessings along the way. We're ungrateful, like those nine, plain lazy to go back to thank the person who'd healed them, made them whole again.

I can identify as the "ungrateful nine." Several times, I've been ungrateful to my parents, family, friends, teachers...the list goes on.

"It's their duty, they're supposed to do that" I've told myself and others.

"That may be so, but, you're fortunate that they did their duty. My parents don't because they can't," remarked a friend of mine who couldn't afford to go to tuitions. This is just a small example to cite. There must be several others.

Lately, I've noticed, as I've started to practise gratitude... things around me have begun to change. Maybe, it's a shift from within that allows me to witness this. Or maybe things have really changed for the better. What I'm trying to say is, gratitude makes life more beautiful. There's nothing like it. Being grateful brings immense joy. Saying 'thank you' from the heart fills one with a sense of deep gratitude which nothing can provide. This season, make a list of things, people, life situations and opportunities that you are thankful for. I assure you you won't be disappointed. □



MADAGASCAR REBORN

Kirsten Prestin (Don Bosco Mission, Bonn)

Fianarantsoa, which has a population of about 170,000, is one of Madagascar's largest cities

It took a long time for Faniry's injuries to heal.

The 17-year-old boy arrived at the Don Bosco home on the outskirts of Fianarantsoa with several broken bones, a triple fracture of his tibia and one in his shoulder. He had probably been beaten by a group of youths. Faniry is still unable to speak about the attack he was subjected to. He arrived here in serious condition and had a high fever. The Salesians took charge of the necessary medical care. The treatment he underwent lasted almost two months.

Faniry's father had left the family early. His mother lived with him and his two brothers in the poor area of Fianarantsoa. Since their family situation was precarious and they were in difficult economic conditions, the mother entrusted two children to an aunt to take care of them. The aunt, however, was violent and so one day Faniry fled her home and joined other street children.

Don Bosco centre workers found him living on the streets of Ankofafa, a poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of Fianarantsoa.

It was a long time before Faniry trusted them. Finally, he began to take part in the activities of the youth centre every day. In the Don Bosco centre he could eat and wash himself. He learned to respect others and to follow rules.

These were rules of solidarity, which do not exist on the streets. He finally decided to go to school and was housed in a shelter with other street children.

Learning to read and write with Don Bosco

Many children living in Madagascar have to drop out of school early because their parents cannot pay school fees, which



Young people trust Don Bepi, even Faniry

amount to about 50 euros a year per pupil. The Salesians pay school fees for about 262 children in the poor neighbourhood of Ankofafa. Seventy children who have never been to school participate in literacy classes at the Don Bosco Centre. They will earn their elementary school certificate within three years.

“Street children cannot go to school and will remain illiterate all their lives,” said Fr. Jannot, who has been caring for street children in Fianarantsoa for many years. “The Salesians want to show them ways to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty.”

The Salesians give children and adolescents from poor families the opportunity to have access to education by offering them educational programmes, schools and scholarships. Children who decide to permanently leave street life and cannot return to their families are given the op-



Faniry (left) arrived at Don Bosco Home with several broken bones.

portunity to live in an apartment rented by the Salesians and are cared for there.

Education for a better future

Since arriving in Madagascar in 1981, the Salesians of Don Bosco have established four vocational training centres for disadvantaged youth. The two largest centres are located in Mahajanga and Tulear. Each center offers training courses that can be attended by 250 students.

The peculiarity of the vocational training center in Tulear is that its courses are open to girls.

In Madagascar, 92 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Many children and adolescents suffer from malnutrition. Every year, 55,000 children die from these deficiencies or suffer serious physical and mental harm. For this reason, the Salesians of Don Bosco have organized courses in which principles of hygiene and instructions for proper nutrition are made known to them; they also offer hot meals to street children.

Faniry’s wound is still not healed, further treatment is needed. Seventeen again and at the hospital. He hopes, however, to be transferred to Don Bosco’s house soon. He feels safe there and knows that the Salesians will not send him away. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. BARTOLO LONGO 5 OCTOBER

Ian Pinto, sdb

You are going to be shocked with what you read here! Believe me, I have read at least a hundred if not more biographies of saints but I have never come across a story like this. It is simply incredible; it feels like this is taken from a Hollywood film but it is not. It is the true story of a real man who is now recognized as a holy person – a Blessed, on the road to canonization.



CATHOLIC UPBRINGING

Bartolo was born to devout Catholic parents in Brindisi which is in the south of Italy. It was the month of February and the year was 1841. The Longo family lived in a small town called Latiano. His father was a doctor and so the family was fairly well-to-do. Bartolo received a good education and his mother ensured that along with a good education, he was also trained in the Catholic practices of piety. Every night they would gather as a family and pray the rosary. His mother was a devotee of the Blessed Virgin, and she took care to pass this devotion on to her children. He was enrolled in a Catholic school run by the Piarists – a religious

congregation whose charism is education.

Bartolo described himself as a child as being “a lively and impertinent impatient, sometimes rather a rascal.” His teachers felt that he was very capable and intelligent although he nursed a fiery temper. He enjoyed and made the most of his schooling by doing well academically and participating in a number of activities.

TO HELL WITH GOD

When he was 10 years old, his mother passed away. It appears that with her died his devotion. Around this time, Italy was facing tremendous upheaval; the Church was under attack from political forces – the revolutionary, Giuseppe Garibaldi wanted to unite Italy under one political head but the Church posed a threat since it wielded tremendous power and exercised control over vast pieces of land – the Papal States. Nationalist aspirations had gripped the nation and the people were ready to destroy whatever stood in their way. Garibaldi capitalized on these brimming emotions and fought to rescind the political power of the Pope.

During this time, Bartolo was entering the University. He desired to be a lawyer and went to the University of Naples to complete his education. Most of the professors at the University were ex-priests who had put aside their clerical habit to fully embrace the *Risorgimento* (Unification Movement). Their opinions chipped away at the remnant of faith that Bartolo possessed and soon he began to develop antipathy for God and the Church. After attending a course in philosophy taught by an ex-priest, he developed the conviction that the Church was an anachronism that hindered the progress of the budding nation. He participated in demonstrations against the Pope and nurtured hatred for the things and people of God. The vitriol was so potent that he went to the extent of dabbling in occult practices like spiritualism and clairvoyance, if for no other reason than to wilfully oppose all that he was taught as a child.

Bartolo didn't stop with occasional occult activities; he became a Satanist!

It might seem strange to us but there are people who actively worship Satan. In 2012, a Satanic Temple was erected in the United States and subsequently in other countries like Canada, U.K., Finland, Australia and Germany. Officially, they say they do not worship Satan as a supernatural being but idolize the symbol as rebellion against authority and social norms. But there is another side to this seemingly innocuous worship – witchcraft and black masses which desecrate all that is considered holy by actual devilish activity. These might not be happening in the so-called Satanic Temples mentioned above but they do take place in many pockets of the world.

Bartolo dove so deep into Satanism that he entered into an elite realm – the Satanic priesthood. Satanic priests mimic the rituals of a Catholic priest but the object of worship is Satan. They actively curse God and perform actions aimed at humiliating the Divine. Striking or defacing a Bible would be the kindest of acts they commit. It can go as far as stamping on the Sacred Host and urinating on it! How far Bartolo went, I do not know but this much is true, he preached against the Church and openly criticized its leaders.

THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

His family tried to talk sense in to him but Bartolo had no ears to give to their pleas. He writes that he “grew to hate monks, priests and the Pope.” But Satanism took its toll on his physical and mental health. Bartolo was reduced to skin and bone and his mind was

fragile. It was at this time that he heard the voice of his deceased father begging him to turn back to the faith. He came into contact with Professor Vincenzo Pepe, an odd Catholic among the radicals at the University. He managed to convince him to meet with a Dominican priest for further guidance. Over the course of three weeks, Father Alberto Radente discussed and debated with Bartolo, and finally succeeded in winning him back. He made his confession, renounced his Satanic past and was welcomed back into the Church as a forgiven and repentant son. Providentially, his conversion took place on the feast of the Sacred Heart – a powerful witness to the never-ending, un-fathomable and even reckless love of God for each of us His children.

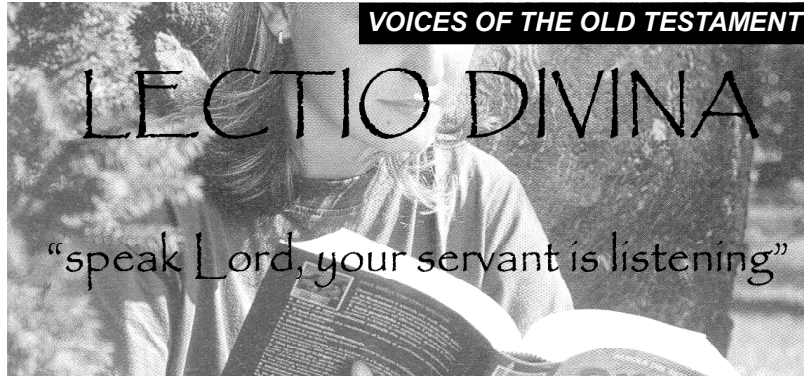
He wanted to make reparation for the evil he had done as a Satanist and so he dedicated a lot of time to works of charity and spreading awareness about the dangers of spiritualism. He went especially to college campuses and sought to help students to avoid falling into the same traps he had fallen into. Bartolo was disturbed by the ignorance of believers. He found that the faith of most people was largely composed of superstition and blind belief. He knew firsthand the dangers of insipid or misplaced spirituality and so he strove to educate people about the real value of faith.

The rosary played a special role in Bartolo's conversion, so much so that he decided to join the third order of Dominicans and take the name *Fratel Rosario* (Brother Rosary). His connection to the rosary didn't stop there. He erected a shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary

in Pompeii. Let him tell you why: “One day in the fields around Pompeii,” he wrote, “I recalled my former condition as a priest of Satan... I thought that perhaps as the priesthood of Christ is for eternity, so also the priesthood of Satan is for eternity. So, despite my repentance, I thought: I am still consecrated to Satan, and I am still his slave and property as he awaits me in Hell. As I pondered over my condition, I experienced a deep sense of despair and almost committed suicide. Then I heard an echo in my ear of the voice of Friar Alberto repeating the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary: ‘One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved.’ Falling to my knees, I exclaimed: ‘If your words are true that he who propagates your Rosary will be saved, I shall reach salvation because I shall not leave this earth without propagating your Rosary.’”

He spent the rest of his life spreading devotion to the rosary and doing good works under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin. He founded elementary schools and orphanages, a technical school and a printing press specially to offer children of criminals a chance at making an honest livelihood. On the spiritual side, his legacy is lasting. He is responsible for the Luminous mysteries. Pope John Paul II took the Luminous mysteries straight out of the writings of Blessed Bartolo.

We are in the month of the rosary. Let us remember that the rosary has tremendous power - It lifted Bartolo from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven; let us not take its power lightly but cling steadfastly to our faith like the rosary beads hang on to the thread. □



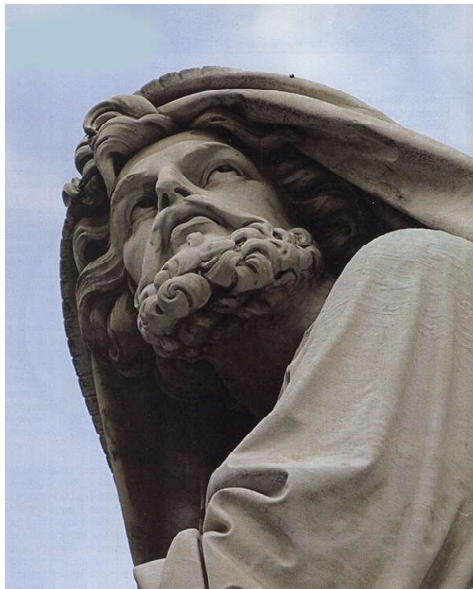
THE FUTURE PLANNED FOR US

by Carlo Broccardo

A world where there's no room for weeping, or oppression or for faces covered in sadness. Is this a future too good to be true? Isaiah's word invites us to trust God.

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek and can have two meanings. It can mean "one who speaks on behalf of," or "one who speaks before." The prophets of the Bible are both. They are men of the word (don't ask them to put themselves at the head of an army to free the people from oppressors!), but not of their word; they have received a revelation from God and pass it on to the people – or their representative, that is, the king. Their service to the people is to act as a conduit so that God's word, which they receive, reaches everyone.

In the passage we will hear on Sunday, October 15, Isaiah does not report God's exact words; rather, we can imagine the prophet having a strong exper-



ience of God, in which he "understands" his word, his plans for the future, and immediately runs to announce them to everyone.

These are hope-filled plans.

First, Isaiah speaks of the future. Let's look at the main verbs: the Lord *will prepare*, he *will tear*, he *will remove*, he *will dry*, he *will make disappear*; and in that day it will be said, "Behold our God..." The present is not the best: ordinary people manage to eat barely once a day what is there; a blanket covers all the peoples of the earth, as if a veil were hiding their faces (the image is a little difficult to decipher, but it certainly is not a glowing reality). Death reigns supreme; faces are streaked with tears; God's people are covered with ignominy. All this will come to an end, says the Prophet Isaiah; this is the word of the Lord: it marks the end of a present of suffering, it draws with bold strokes a different future.

This is how God has envisioned the future for us: a world in which there is no room for weeping (as an expression of sorrow), for oppression, for faces covered with sadness, for the empty bellies of those who have no food. Even for the people of Israel, the smallest of all peoples, the days of abandonment will end; its name will return as a blessing. Even, in the world as God envisions it, there is no room for death! It too will be defeated and will no longer reign over all the earth.

When all this happens, it is well understood that everyone will say, "Here is our God; let us rejoice, let us exult." It is a beautiful future; one cannot but be filled with joy, and gratitude for those who will bring it about. And a beautiful future, too beautiful to be true?

Today, we Christians are given the task of the prophet Isaiah. For, we live in a world that is quite different from the one sketched out on the biblical page we have just read, just as it was in Isaiah's time. We live in a world where there are too many injustices; people starve by the hundreds of thousands, every day. Peoples do not know each other – as if a veil covered their faces – and certainly do not esteem each other or live in peace. Too many people repeat the words of the psalm, "My tears have become my bread by day and by night." Death seems invincible.

In this world, precisely today, we have listened, the words of Isaiah, that is, listened to God's plan resound within us. We find in our hands, just like Isaiah did, this word that does not come from us and is not for us. It is a word that we are called to proclaim, to proclaim and to spread. It is a message of hope that we cannot keep silent about.

It is a word that asks us to be converted, because it demands of us that we trust God. There is no proof that the future will be as he says it will be; the only certainty is that this word comes from God: "for the Lord has spoken," says Isaiah. We know it will be so because God said so, and we trust him. And the more we are able to convey this trust, the more we will become builders of this new world that the word of the Lord is shaping, like in the beginning when he created heaven and earth. □

Quiet Spaces

GOOD MANNERS AND BAD HABITS

Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Friday, May 18, 2013

Acts 28:16-20, 30-31, Jn 21:20-25

After “armchair Christians” the pope turned again to “gossiping Christians,” who may lose a proper sense of belonging to the church, to the people of God.

This morning, Saturday, May 18, 2013 during the morning celebration in the chapel of St. Martha’s Guest House, Pope Francis stressed the “bad habits,” as opposed to the “good manners,” displayed by so many Christians. And among these bad habits is the habit of “tearing each other to pieces” with words, disinformation, and slander. “Gossips,” he said, “are destructive in the church.” Yes, Jesus spoke a lot with Peter and all the others, just as the apostles spoke among themselves and with the others; but it was “a loving conversation.”

Jesus, the pope recalled in his homily, asked Peter several times “whether he loved him. Peter said yes and the Lord gave him a mission: Feed my flock.” This was “indeed a loving conversation.” But up to a point, the Holy Father explained, Peter was tempted to interfere in the life of another, Judas. Peter asked Jesus why, when he knew Judas would betray him, he allowed him to go on following him. “On another occasion Jesus had to rebuke him: What is that to you? Those are strong words: ‘What is that to you? Don’t interfere in someone else’s life. What does it matter to you if I want this?’” repeated the pope, referring to the gospel passage from John (21:20-25).

Peter, explained the bishop of Rome, is a man and so he also suffers from the temptation to interfere in other people’s lives. that is, “as we say, to be a nosy parker.” This also happens in our Christian lives. “How often,” asked Pope Francis, “are we tempted to do this? The conversation, that conversation with Jesus went off the rails. And there are so many ways of interfering in other people’s lives.” The pope pointed out two: comparing ourselves with others and gossip.

When making comparisons, he said, we always wonder: “Why does this happen to me and not to him? God isn’t fair!” To make the idea clearer he gave the example of little St. Teresa, who “when she as a child was curious to understand why Jesus seemed unjust: he gave so much to one person and so little to another. She was a child and she asked her older sister. What a wise sister! She took a thimble and a glass. She filled them both with water. Then she asked: ‘Tell me, Teresa, which of these two is the fullest?’ But they are both full! And that’s how Jesus is with us. It doesn’t matter whether you are great or small. What matters is whether you are full of the love of Jesus and the grace of Jesus! That’s how Jesus is with us.”

But when we make comparisons “we end up feeling bitter and

envious. That’s just what the devil wants. We begin by praising Jesus and then, by way of these comparisons, we end up feeling bitter and envious.” Envy “corrodes the Christian community” and “does so much harm, so much harm to the Christian community.”

The second way referred to by the Holy Father is gossip. We begin politely, “I don’t want to speak ill of anyone but it seems to me that...” and we end up “tearing our neighbour to pieces. Yes, that’s what we do! How much gossip there is in the church! How much we Christians gossip!” And gossip is indeed “tearing each other to pieces, wounding one another.” As if we wanted to make the other person look small to make ourselves look great. For the pope this “won’t do! Gossiping seems delicious. I don’t know why but it seems delicious. Like honey sweets, doesn’t it? You take one and you say: yum yum! And then you take another, another, another, and in the end you get a belly ache.” Gossiping is like that: “it’s delicious at the beginning and then it makes you sick, makes your soul sick! Gossip is destructive in the church, destructive. And then the spirit of Cain: to murder your brother, with your tongue.” And we do it “with good manners. But that way we become Christians with good manners and bad habits! Christians who are polite but nasty!”

The Holy Father listed three negative ways of behaving. First of all, disinformation, when we say “only the half-truth that suits us and not the other half; we don’t tell the other half because it doesn’t suit us.” Then there is defamation: when “someone really has a fault, we make a big thing of it”; we have to blab all about it, “act the journalist, don’t we? And that person’s reputation is ruined!” And third, there is slander: “saying things that are not true. That’s really killing our brother!”

Disinformation, defamation, and slander “are sinful! They are sins! This is giving Jesus a slap in the face,” through his children, his brothers and sisters. And “the Lord knows this, because he knows us as we are.” That’s why “he says to Peter: What is that to you? You, follow me! He points out the way: looking neither to right nor to left.” Comparison with others “won’t do you any good, but it will lead you to envy and bitterness. Follow me! Gossip won’t do you good, because it will lead into this spirit of destroying the church. Follow me! That’s a fine word Jesus says, very clear, very loving toward us.” It’s as if he said to us: don’t daydream “thinking that salvation lies in comparing yourself with others or in gossip. Salvation lies in following me. Following Jesus! Today let us ask the Lord to give us this grace never to interfere in the lives of others, not to become Christians with good manners and bad habits.” □

THAT FINAL MELODY

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, sdb

Vanni returned to the house from his usual afternoon walk. Rather than a "house," that was a dump, but Vanni was okay with that. It had four wooden walls set just below the roof of an old tenement house, with a single window looking out on the dormer windows below.

In the centre of the room was a small three-legged table, moth-eaten and shacked up there by some "well-wisher" from the floors below. With the small table, a chair and a cupboard had likewise happened to be there, serving Vanni as a trunk, a desk, and a bed. The trunk passed for a bed, since its length allowed a human body to lie on it quite easily... but how could it serve as a desk if Vanni was a poor blind man who was subsidized by a paltry pension?

That afternoon, Vanni lightly pushed the door and entered his "home." The rusty hinges groaned as they moved into action, causing a pair of mice to flee and play catch around the legs of the coffee table. A faint ray of light still penetrated through the window and hit the chest, illuminating a bundle of papers and sheet music scattered in good order, in a circle. Vanni walked confidently to the chair, grabbed it and sat down beside the chest; smiling, he picked up a small booklet, it was the sheet music of a romance...

The blind man noticed that the sun's rays must have beaten on the paper for a long time, because the paper exuded a pleasant scent of ink. He opened the sheet music

and ran his fingers over the staves of musical lines.... No, it was not a score for the blind: Vanni could not have bought one. Vainly had he tried to decipher the characters inscribed on the paper with only the help of his fingertips. For him, for his artist soul, those sheets would never again reveal the delightful appeal of music.

The blind man's pursuit became spasmodic and feverish He tried for so long, to be able to grasp again the secret of the notes, once already studied.... and his hands ran with a rapid, mechanical motion over the printed sheets.... He kept trying for several hours, until late into the night. He was finally exhausted and abandoned himself on the chest, seeking relief in rest.

But Vanni's slumbers were not always restful. Sometimes he was assailed by nightmares that shook him and woke him up sharply: it was his torment. Even that night, he tried to sleep, while to his mind those nightmares returned incessantly. There appeared before him, as if carried by invisible strings, bundles of musical notes, cascades of chords, a flood of rhythms, murmurs, groans and calls...

Then Vanni jumped up and rummaged through his few belongings until his hands met the shaped form of a mouth organ. The blind man calmed down for a moment, but the instrument brought back to him memories of that time when he saw himself back there, in front of the blast furnace... He felt the blast of the boiler and the blaze of heat rise

to his face and eyes: he was blind!

At this point the man brought the instrument to his mouth and he drew magnificent notes and sweet melodies from it, but on that instrument, he also poured out all his tears. During the walk his intuition failed him and he had tripped on a step at the sidewalk. A group of boys had burst into laughter: they did not know. But that laughter now came back to Vanni's mind, hauntingly. He was a little nervous, and then he didn't feel well. He didn't know that his heart was disturbed by their malice; he only felt music, so much music rushing out of him, like an inexhaustible source of sweetness and love.

He decided to go out. With mechanical moves he dressed himself, picked up his shoes and headed for the door on tip toe.

"I will go out" he said, "I can't take it anymore. Maybe the night air will do me good" With cautious steps he reached the doorway: he put on his shoes and staggered out.

The icy night air had the power to make him momentarily forget his discomfort. And he commented to himself:

"I will walk along the river: no one understands the river at night. Instead, all that water has a murmur as sweet as music ...music...."

And here Vanni paused, then resumed, "It will pass, it will also pass the heart ache.... Here it's dawning, I feel the temperature dropping...."

Slowly Vanni crossed the city, which was still asleep: he glided lightly along the streets he knew so well and which he frequented every day. At that hour only a

few rare passers-by were hurrying back. Eventually, he came as far as the river... he skirted its bank for quite a while and finally stopped, panting, near a horse chestnut tree trunk. He slid down to the base of the tree. By now it was getting light.

Vanni fell asleep leaning against the tree while the murmur of the rushing water slowly lulled him.

Suddenly he woke up:

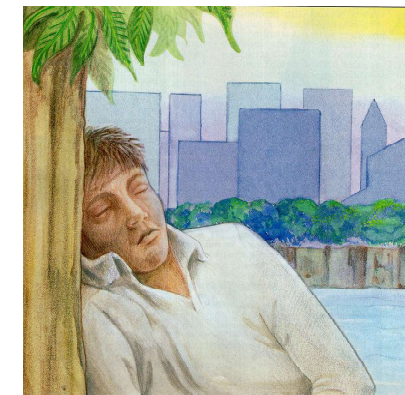
"Oh! What now? I can't remember anything anymore!"

He stretched his arms in front of him as if to get his bearings. A ray of sunlight hit him full on, brightening his face. The blind man realized it was morning, but he did not know how to direct himself. During the night walk he had lost his bearings. Here he heard a hurrying passer-by:

"Excuse me, I've lost my way," Vanni pleaded with him: "be so good as to accompany me to town?"

"But we are already in town..." "Yes, but walk with me, please... Until I've recovered...."

The other did not retort but, taking him under his arm, invited him, "Let's go.... you need to



follow me... You know, I walk fast, I'm already late..."

"Oh, if it's just that..."

Vanni and his guide crossed the block with quick steps. Slowly, light dawned in the blind man's mind:

"Yes, there: now we are near the square, over there is the way-side chapel. There's the avenue: another half an hour's walk and everything is all right." Suddenly he "felt" that he had arrived in front of the chapel.

After thanking his guide, Vanni entered the chapel without any hesitation. He stood in front of the steps leading to the staircase to the choir loft, where the organ was placed. He knew the chapel well. The temptation was strong ... music... and Vanni climbed and climbed, as the studied and never dormant melodies resurfaced in his mind...

"It seems to me that there's no one here ... come on, Vanni!" he encouraged himself.

Reaching the choir loft, he "saw" the organ and walked expeditiously to it. The seat, the music stand...and, below, the keyboard!

Anxiety and excitement triggered in him a dull intertwining of feelings. And the blind man felt a devilish sweat running down his forehead as his heart ached again.... The mind had become clouded and he had the sensation of being transported into the unreal....

"I feel as if I'm intoxicated," Vanni thought. Then he remained motionless. From below, toward the nave, rose a murmur of praying voices.

"You have to accompany them with some melody.... Come on

Vanni!"

And, without restraining himself any longer, he took to running his fingers across the keyboard. At first, they were motifs studied years ago, sweet melodies, a pastorale.... From below, someone turned around to spot the man who could draw such sweet notes from the old organ long presumed to being out of tune.

Vanni felt light. His hands ran across the keyboard rhythmically, caressing it. He did not even notice that his heart was returning to pound fervently again and again. The hazy veil that hung over his head became thick, but Vanni felt nothing: the pain in his heart changed in him to a stupendous "keenness," and in the opaque veil he "read" a budding of notes... He never wanted to stop... Suddenly, however, he felt that the old melodies could no longer express his intoxication, and so he paused a moment, indecisively. Just a moment, to concentrate, then....

At the door of the sacristy leading to the church, two priests were mumbling something:

"Who is it that plays so wonderfully?"

"You call that wonderful? It's just a jumble of notes!"

"No!"

"The faithful are getting disturbed! I'm going up now and I'll show that guy!"

"No, Father Paul... Leave him alone... We'll go later, he won't run away anyway."

"I don't understand it ... but I want to see his face."

What had happened was that Vanni, once he resumed playing, had raised a "fantasy" created on

the spot. It was a transcendence of notes, a succession of entanglements, a crescendo of motifs, a playfulness of tones, nuances and sounds... It was a gentle call, a prayer, an invocation... then it became like cries of hosannas waning into a lament... a gurgling of notes like a sob ending in grave and loud chords, gradually growing weaker, mournful, sweet, soothing... Something great that only Vanni's soul could create and that only a humble few could understand....

Everything seemed dormant in Vanni: he felt nothing anymore. His mind, his whole being wandered, quivering, with notes that seemed to chase each other in the vaults of the church. His dull pupils spoke of joy, then ... then the veil of fog seemed to thin out, while his heart ached again. The blind man wanted to forget and relied on the inspiration of creation. The organ came to life and quivered with Vanni's motifs, and the keys were from

time to time caressed, overflowed, touched, crushed, struck and stroked... certainly in them passed the creative spirit of the artist.

Then ... everything fell silent. In the air there still wandered the mystical playing of Vanni's music. The two priests in the sacristy stood still listening, facing the organ.

Up there Vanni had sprawled himself out onto the keyboard. His body had struck the keys for the last time and they had sounded false. And now it seemed that even the ivory keys spied the figure of the poor blind man.

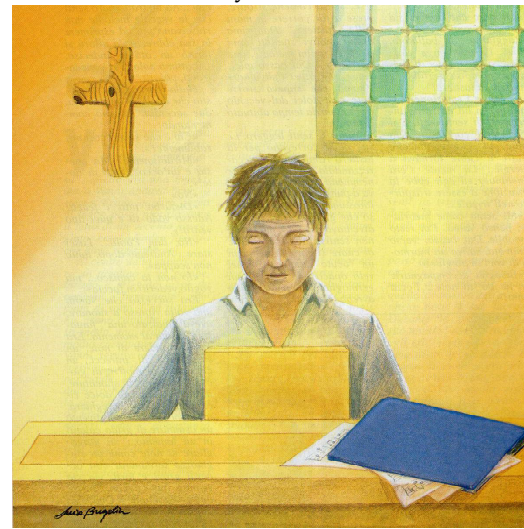
The two priests ran up to the organ. Vanni was still sprawled out over the white keyboard.

"What were you playing, good man? Don't you know that this is the house...."

"He cannot answer, Father Paul... he's dead! Certainly, a humble, great artist has passed away! And he wanted to rest his heart on the instrument he perhaps loved more than anything else...."

Vanni did not realize that he was dying: unconsciously he had "passed on" into the world of music, a world that Vanni's soul had so many times imagined beautiful and full of light.

The priests bowed their heads. And a ray of sunlight, forcibly penetrated the mosaic panes of a large window and lovingly caressed the keys of the organ, as if to reverence the remains of a humble artist with a big boy's heart." □



FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 45

by Michele Molineris

208. He will pay... if he can (1872)

Eusebio Calvi of Palestro was sad and worried, because his relatives, due to serious family difficulties, could no longer pay him his fees, and the prefect Don Bologna, adhering to Don Bosco's directives, Don Bologna seeing the small boy arrive, had written to them, that if they did not pay what had been agreed upon, they should come and collect their son.

Eusebius knew that only Don Bosco could rectify the matter by forgiving him that debt, as he was wont to do when it was convenient; but he did not have the courage to present himself to him. One day in 1872 the saint met him and, seeing him sad and dejected, immediately asked him, "What's wrong?"

"Ah! Don Bosco... my parents can no longer pay the fee and the prefect has written home...."

"So, what's happened?"

"I'm forced to discontinue my studies."

"Are you a friend of Don Bosco's?"

"Oh, yes!"

"So, this is easily settled: write to your father and tell him to forget the past and in future, let him pay what he can."

"But my father won't be satisfied with a generic condition; he would like to be able to pay, and he would be glad if he knows the amount that he should pay as the fee..."

"How much did you pay per

month?"

"Twelve liras!"

"Well, write to him that we have fixed the fee at five liras a month... and that he will pay it, if he can..."

At such words Calvi burst into tears of relief. He then had a note from Don Bosco to present to Don Rua to settle the matter, so he could continue his studies, become a Salesian and a priest (*M.B.*, X, 1013).

209. You will become a priest! (1873)

The can. Giuseppe Giubergia, rector of the Mondovi shrine, recalls seeing Don Bosco in Peveragno in 1873.

"It was," he wrote, "the year 1873, in September, I don't think it was later, because I remember a furious thunderstorm I, with some friends, and the children of the kindergarten, all returning from the Paschi were caught in. We went to visit that Don Bosco, who already then had the halo of a saint in the esteem of those who knew him. He had arrived in the morning, and we visited him in the afternoon. It was then that, with that smile that was so usual for him, he had to say to me: "You're going to be a priest!"

The next day in the afternoon he was in Peveragno, invited by a certain Giuseppe Campana, one of the choirboys of the Peveragnese tertiaries, a deputy municipal secretary. He alighted from the coach in front of Campana's house; he was in pain because of a bad leg, and used a cane so as not to tire the sick limb too much.

There was a reception, to which the civil authorities were invited, together with all the clergy...

"In 1875," the canon continued, "I had decided to don the clerical habit, perhaps, without much grace even remembering those words spoken to me by Don Bosco. I was admitted to theology at the diocesan seminary of Turin; but the previous evening I wanted to visit Don Bosco. Although two years had passed, he recognized me at once, and welcomed me with these words: "Giubergia, you have donned the clerical habit!"

I replied: "Yes, but I will not come to be with you, I will go to the major seminary."

And he: "It does not matter, but you will become a priest!!!"

He wanted me to be his guest at the Oratory; I dined in the refectory of the superiors, right next to him and he served me himself, saying to me (perhaps because I was very awkward by his great graciousness): "Eat, because you are young... and you still have a lot of work to do."

After dinner I accompanied him to the courtyard, heard the talk he gave to the youngsters after the prayers. Then I accompanied him to the staircase that led to his room, went to the church, and there I cried a lot with emotion. The next day I entered the seminary" (*M.B.*, X, 1215).

210. If Don Bosco is here, there's nothing to fear (1873)

On February 18, 1873, Don Bosco, accompanied by his secretary Don Joachim Berto, set out

again for Rome, by way of Piacenza, Bologna, and Florence.

In Bologna he received the most cordial demonstrations of affectionate respect from the archbishop. "As soon as we arrived," writes Don Berto, "Card. Morichini, the archbishop of this city, gave orders to tell Don Bosco, that he would suspend him from all ecclesiastical faculties, if he did not immediately come to see him...."; and "on the 21st the Cardinal wanted Don Bosco and his secretary have lunch with him...."

On the Bologna-Florence route the saint ran into a serious accident. A piece of rail had shifted at the entrance to a tunnel, and the train would inevitably have fallen into a precipice causing a horrendous disaster if it had not been stopped in time. The abrupt shock, the long stop, and the news of the danger that had occurred frightened the travellers; but when word spread that "Don Bosco of Turin" was also on the train, a person from a distinguished family exclaimed with a great sigh of relief: "Oh! if Don Bosco is with us, there's nothing to fear! Even if we were to plummet to the bottom of the ravine, we would not be harmed!"

Meanwhile on the other hand, perhaps precisely because Don Bosco was there the devil had tried to cause the disaster: the war he waged on the saint in every way was not yet over! (*Vita*, II, 75).

211. Happy? Both of you! (1874)

By the end of 1874, the first sprout of the mother-plant of

Mornese had been transplanted in the college of Borgo San Martino. A few months later, Don Bosco went to visit the place. And the principal Sister Felicita Mazzarello (sister of the superior general) came to visit him. She was all worried and said to him: "Oh! Don Bosco! What shall we do?"

"What difficulties do you have, my good daughter?" Don Bosco asked.

"The rector," continued Sister Mazzarello, "absolutely wants us also to be served two dishes at lunch because, he says, if we do not feed ourselves a little more, we will not be able to last long in this boarding school, where there is so much work to be done. But in the meantime, there in Mornese, at the mother house, they have but one dish for lunch, and they are always all cheerful and happy. Tell us, then, what shall we do? Shall we listen to the rector, or follow the custom of the mother house?"

"The affair is serious indeed," replied Don Bosco with mock seriousness; "one must think well before giving a decisive answer. The rector, has already made it known that one must obey him. On the other hand, the customs of Mornese necessarily need to be respected. And... I say too, how shall we do it?... but before we decide, bring me here, if you please, your two dishes."

They brought them to him instantly, for lunchtime was imminent. Then Don Bosco, pouring into one empty dish what the other contained, he handed it to the principal: "Behold," he said,

"here, all your scruples have been removed: here you have two dishes in one dish at one time; and so neither the principal nor those of sisters of Mornese will be able to say they are displeased with you (*M.B., X, 650*).

212. Healing a cripple (1874)

On the morning of June 4, 1874, the solemnity of Corpus Christi, on opening the church of Mary Help of Christians, an unfortunate man was found lying by the door. Questioned, he answered that he was a poor cripple who had come to beg for healing from the Help of Christians, and for that reason he came to ask for someone to bless him.

Transported to the sacristy, he waited until Don Bosco had finished hearing the youngsters' confessions, then held the following conversation with him: "I am a poor cripple asking for mercy."

"What do you want?"

"I ask you in your charity to give me the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, who alone can heal my ailments."

"What ailments do you have?"

"I am all distressed. Rheumatism, a contraction of nerves, an affliction of the spine made me hunchbacked and crippled so that I could no longer use my body."

"How could you come so far?"

"A charitable person brought me to this church last night on a cart; then with a cane and the help of a friend I was able to come all the way to the sacristy."

"Has it been a long time that you have been in this state?"

"Yes, it's already a long time; but for two months now I've been reduced to not being able to use even my hands."

"What do the doctors say?"

"The doctors have done all that their profession and charity could suggest: but every remedy was useless, and lately they told me that they no longer know what to do or what to suggest. My relatives, friends, the parish priest, all tell me, that for me there is no more remedy except the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, from whom so many have already received extraordinary benefits."

Then he was helped to get down on his knees, then, together with some bystanders he said some prayers. Don Bosco gave him a blessing, then said to him:

"If you have faith in Mary Help of Christians, begin to open your hand."

"I can't."

"Yes, you can: begin to stretch your thumb." He tried and succeeded.

"Now, extend the index finger." He stretched it: he did the same with the middle finger, the ring finger and the little finger of the whole hand.

"Now make the sign of the cross."

He did it with all haste. Then moved he exclaimed: "The Madonna has given me this grace!"

"If Our Lady has given you this grace, give glory to God and stand up."

He wanted to obey, leaning on his crutches.

"No," the saint resumed, "you

must do this as a sign of trust in Mary and stand up without leaning on or being held by anyone."

He obeyed promptly. The contortions of his back, shoulders, arms, and legs then disappeared; he stood up straight on his own, as if he had never suffered any ailment, then set out to walk briskly through the sacristy.

"My friend," Don Bosco added, "since the holy Virgin has protected you in such a sensitive way: show her gratitude by immediately using this body to make a genuflection at the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, without leaning on and holding on to anything but your person."

He did so with great ease.

"My God," he then exclaimed, "What a sight! It had been so long since I could perform this act of reverence, nor would I have imagined that I would succeed so soon! Virgin Help of Christians, pray for me!"

"My dear friend," concluded the saint, "in gratitude to Mary promise her that in future you will be a true devotee of hers and live as a good Christian."

"Yes, yes: I will be a good Christian, and first thing on Sunday I will go to make my confession and receive communion."

So saying, he took the crutch, which he had used just a bit earlier, put it on his military shoulder and, as if he had won a great victory, left without even saying goodbye to the bystanders (G. Barberis, *Veneration of Mary Help of Christians*, 144-45). □



Reflecting
on
Mary

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REVELATION

by Giovanni Zappino

Let us once again reread the words of John Paul II, which serve us as an inspiration and as a plot for these reflections: "Marian devotion, in order to be authentic, must keep itself away from all forms of superstition and vain credulity, welcoming, in the right sense, in harmony with ecclesiastical discernment, the extraordinary manifestations, with which the Blessed Virgin loves, not infrequently, to bestow herself for the good of the people of God" (September 24, 2000).

Mentioned here is the problem of visions, revelations, extraordinary manifestations, which today are multiplying at every turn...

The watchword, with which to approach the problem, is: "ecclesial discernment," discernment carried out by the Church, so as to distinguish the true from the false, authentic supernatural manifestations from others that are not. Among other things that the Holy Year 2000 gave us, there is also the reproduction of the criteria, for judging things correctly in this delicate area. This re-proposition occurred in con-

junction with the publication of the so-called "Secret of Fatima" on May 13, 2000.

The theological commentary that the Holy Father wanted to accompany the text in question, deserves to be known and meditated upon carefully, so as not to fall into the search for the sensational, even in things that concern the Christian life - as often, unfortunately, happens in the media, always in search of a scoop.

Theological comment.

Those who read carefully the text of the so-called third "secret" of Fatima will presumably be disappointed or amazed after all the speculations that have been made. No great mystery is revealed; the veil of the future is not torn.

Church teaching distinguishes between "public revelation" and "private revelations." Between the two realities there is a difference not only in degree but in essence.

The term "public revelation" designates God's 'revelatory action, intended for all mankind, which found its literary expression in the two parts of the Bible: the Old and New Testaments. It is called "revelation," because in it, God made himself known progressively to mankind, even to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to himself and reunite the whole world to himself through his incarnate Son Jesus Christ. Thus it is not a matter of intellectual communications, but of a vital process in which God draws near to man; in this process then of course, there is also manifested content affecting the 'intellect and the understanding of the mystery of God. In Christ, God has said everything, that is, himself, and therefore revelation ended with the realization of the mystery of Christ, which found expression in the New Testament.

The fact that the one revelation of God addressed to all peoples is concluded with Christ and the witness borne to him in the books of the New Testament binds the Church to the unique event of sacred history and to the word of the Bible, which guarantees and interprets this event, does not mean that the Church could now



Our Lady of Fatima, Queen of Peace,
The apparitions of Fatima are
part of private revelation

look only to the past and would thus be condemned to sterile repetition. The CCC says in this regard, "... even if Revelation is accomplished, it is not, however, fully explicated; it will be up to the Christian faith gradually to grasp its full scope in the course of the centuries" (no. 66). The two aspects of attachment to the uniqueness of the event and progress in understanding it are very well illustrated in the Lord's farewell discourses, when he takes leave of the disciples and says, "Many things I have yet to say to you,

but for the moment you are not able to bear the burden. However, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to the whole truth, for he will not speak for himself.... He will glorify me, for he will take of mine and proclaim it to you" (Jn. 16:12-14). The Second Vatican Council indicates three essential ways in which, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church and thus the "growth of the Word" is accomplished: it is accomplished by means of the faithful, profoundly and intelligently meditating and studying the Word, which comes from spiritual experience, and by means of the preaching of those "who by episcopal succession have received a certain charism of truth" (Dei Verbum, 8).

In this context it now becomes possible to understand correctly the concept of "private revelation," which refers to all visions and revelations that occur after the conclusion of the New Testament; thus, it is the category, within which we must place the message of Fatima. Let us listen again in this regard first of all to the CCC: "Down through the centuries there have been revelations called "private," some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church... Their role is not ... to 'complete' the definitive Revelation of Christ, but to help one live it more fully in a given historical epoch" (No. 67). Two things are made clear:

1. The authority of private revelations is essentially different from the one public revelation: this one demands our faith; for in it through human words and the mediation of the living comm-

unity of the Church, God himself speaks to us. Faith in God and in his Word is distinct from all other faith, trust or human opinion. The certainty that God speaks gives me the assurance that I encounter truth itself and thus a certainty, which cannot occur in any human form of knowledge. And the certainty, on which I build my life and to which I entrust myself by my dying.

2. Private revelation is an aid to this faith, and it manifests itself as credible precisely because it refers me back to the only public revelation. The Flemish theologian E. Dhanis, an eminent connoisseur of this subject, states succinctly that ecclesial approval of a private revelation contains three elements: that the related message contains nothing that contradicts faith and good morals; that it is lawful to make it public, and the faithful are permitted to give to it, in a prudent form, their adherence. Such a message can be a valuable help in better understanding and living the Gospel at the present moment; therefore, it should not be overlooked. It is an aid, which is offered, but which it is not obligatory to make use of.

The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it distances us from him, when it makes itself autonomous or even passes itself off as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us within the Gospel and not out of it. This does not exclude that a private revelation sets new accents, brings forth

new forms of piety or deepens and extends old ones, as for example the feasts of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart of Jesus show. From a certain point of view in the relationship between liturgy and popular piety, the relationship between Revelation and private revelations is delineated: liturgy is the criterion; it is the vital form of the Church as a whole, nourished directly by the Gospel. Popular religiosity means that faith takes root in the hearts of individual people, so that it is introduced into the world of everyday life. Popular religiosity is the first and fundamental form of "inculturation" of the faith, which must continually be directed and steered by the directions of the liturgy, but which in turn fertilizes the faith from the heart.

Thus we have already moved from the rather negative clarifications, which were necessary in the first place, to the positive determination of private revelations: how can they be properly categorized on the basis of Scripture? What is their theological category? The earliest letter of St. Paul that has been preserved to us, perhaps the oldest writing of all in the New Testament, the first



authentic photo of the three little visionaries, "taken shortly after May 13, 1917: from left, Jacinta"Francisco and Lucia

letter to the Thessalonians, seems to me to offer an indication. The apostle here says, "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophecies; examine everything, keep what is good" (5:19-21). In every age the Church is given the charism of prophecy, which must be examined, but which also cannot be despised.

In this regard, it should be kept in mind that prophecy in the sense of the Bible does not mean to foretell the future, but to explain God's will for the present and thus to show the right way into the future. The one who foretells the future comes to meet the curiosity of reason, which desires to pierce the veil of the



Only recently (May 13, 2001, the Church has published the notebook written by Sister Lucia Dos Santos containing the third secret of Fatima

future; the prophet comes to meet the blindness of will and thought and clarifies God's will as a requirement and indication for the present. The importance of

the prediction of the future in this case is secondary. Essentially it is the actualization of the one revelation, which concerns me deeply: the prophetic word is a warning or maybe a comfort or both together.

In this sense one can connect the charism of prophecy with the category of the "signs of the times," which was brought to light again by Vatican II: "... You know how to judge the appearance of the earth and the heavens, how is it that you do not know how to judge this time?" (Luke 12:56). By the "signs of the times" Jesus means whatever leads the believer to him. To interpret the signs of the times in the light of faith is to recognize Christ's presence in all times.

In the private revelations recognized by the Church - as also in Fatima - it is about helping us to understand the signs of the times and to find the right response for them in faith. □

Fatima and 20th century Popes

The apparitions at Fatima are closely linked to the Popes of the 20th century, intertwining with their personal biographies.

Pope Benedict XV, amidst the horrors of World War I, decided on 5 May 1917, to add the invocation "Queen of Peace, pray for us" to the traditional Litany of Loreto recited after the Rosary. A few days later, on 13 May, the first apparition of Our Lady of Fatima occurred.

This event coincided with the day Pope Benedict XV consecrated Bishop Eugenio Pacelli in the Sistine Chapel, who would later become his second successor, Pius XII. On 31 October 1942, Pius XII consecrated "the peoples separated by error or discord" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In May 1967, Paul VI became the first Pope to make a pilgrimage to Fatima to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the apparitions.

In his homily at Fatima, he urged, "Do not entertain thoughts of destruction, death, or revolution... Reflect on projects that promote common comfort and solidarity. Recognize the gravity and magnitude of this hour, which may prove decisive for the present and future generations." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Manner of Court

One day when old Stevens, the lawyer, was pleading a case in court, the judge ruled against him for the second time, and old Stevens got up scarlet faced and commenced gathering his papers as if to quit the courtroom.

"Do you understand, Mr. Stevens," the judge asked, eyeing him indignantly, "that you are trying to show contempt of this court?" No, your honour," replied Stevens, "I don't want to show my contempt; I'm trying very hard to conceal it."

The Sound of Peace

She was tucking her grandson in bed.

"Shall I tell you a bedtime story?" she whispered.

"Not tonight, Grandma," the child murmured.

"Then shall I sing you a lullaby?"

"No," replied the child.

"Suppose you go away and let me get some sleep?"

Precise Prayerful Petition

Little Ben, growing out of early childhood, was being taught to address his parents as "father" and "mother."

One night, saying his prayers, he followed the usual practice, "Lord bless daddy and mummy." Then suddenly he paused and in a most solemn and respectful manner offered a revision: "Excuse me, Lord, I should have said father and mother." He meditated briefly, then concluded, "But Lord, they are the same old parties.

An Irish Dying Wish

An Irish gentleman lying on his deathbed was questioned by his prospective widow. "Poor Mike," she said broken-heartedly, "is there anything that would make you comfortable? Anything you ask for, I'll give you.

"Please Bridget," the dying man whispered, "I think I'd like a wee taste of ham I smell aboiling in the kitchen." "Arrah, go on," said Bridget, shaking her head.

"Not a bit of ham you'll get! 'Tis for the funeral, man."

License to Kill

A policeman watched a woman trying to maneuver her automobile out of a parking space. She banged into the car ahead, then into the car behind and finally, when pulling out into the street, crashed into a passing auto. This was too much for the officer. He walked over to her and said, "Lady, let me see your driving licence."

She gave him a friendly smile and replied, "Don't be silly officer, who would give me a licence?"

Sacred Self Infliction

Gilbert Chesterton used to relate a conversation overheard in a tram in Dublin during the Eucharistic Congress of 1932. The week had been one of lovely weather, but as it drew toward the end of the celebration the sky darkened, and a storm seemed imminent.

"If it rains now, an Irish woman said somewhat tartly to her companion, "He'll have brought it on Himself." □

THE LITTLE BROTHER

B.F. Art by Fabrizio Zubani

A young mother was expecting her second child.

When she heard that it was a girl, she taught her first-born child, whose name was Michael, to rest his little head on her round belly and sing a "lullaby" with her to his little sister who was to be born. The little song "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are..." appealed to the baby so much that he sang it over and over again.

The birth, however, was premature and complicated. The baby girl was placed in an incubator for intensive care.

The anxious parents were prepared for the worst: their baby girl had very little chance of survival. Little Michael pleaded with them:

"I want to see her! I absolutely must see her!"

After a week, the new-born became even worse. The mother then decided to take Michael to the intensive care unit of the maternity ward.

A nurse tried to prevent this, but the woman was determined and accompanied the child next to the cot cluttered with wires and tubes where the little one was fighting for life.

Next to his little sister's incubator Michael instinctively brought his face close to that of the new-born and began to sing under his breath: "Twinkle, twinkle..."

The new-born reacted



immediately. She began to breathe calmly, without any sign of breathlessness.

With tears in her eyes, the mother said: "Go on, Michael, Michael, go on!"

The boy continued.

The baby began to move its tiny arms.

The mother and father cried and laughed at the same time, while the incredulous nurse stared at the scene with her mouth open.

A few days later, the little girl came into the house in her mother's arms, while Michael noisily expressed his joy.

The doctors at the clinic, embarrassed, found it difficult to express what they had witnessed. Mum and dad knew it was simply a miracle. The miracle of a brother's love for a long-awaited little sister. □

We can only live if we are sure that there is someone waiting for us. It was one of Jesus' most beautiful phrases: "I am going to prepare a place for you. So, you too will be where I am" (John 14: 2-3).

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

As I joined my new company, I received a call from my previous company to testify against my Boss. However, I refrained from doing so. But I was getting frequent calls for the company. My background verification had to be done by this organization. I was for no reason going to get involved in this controversy. I started praying the devotion of 3 Hail Mary's and 3 Memorare's to Mother Mary and was saved from being a part of it. My colleagues who were also involved in it were saved. My background verification for the new company was completed without any hassles. All Glory to God and gratitude to Mother Mary.

Elvis Pink

My son was suffering with a lot of post-covid complications. I prayed to Mother Mary for his recovery as he had to attend his Std. X board exams. Through Mother Mary's intercession Clint Savio was cured miraculously. He gave his Std X board exams and passed with distinction. Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary.

Vimla Mary Fernandes

Thank you Mother Mary for blessing our family with peace and good health.

Victor and Fra Fonseca, Mumbai

My the intercession and blessings of our beloved Mother, my shoulder injury was cured without performing a surgery.

Celine George

My heartfelt thanks to the Divine Mercy, Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. Anthony for the gift of a baby boy to my daughter and for a safe delivery. Always bless and protect my family.

Mrs. Judith Fernandes

My heartfelt gratitude to the Most Holy Trinity, Our Lady, St. Anthony and St. John Bosco for all the favours received. Do continue to bless us.

Glenn D'Souza and Family, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my husband the late Mr. Lancy Mathias Dias and Family for having taken us to Canada in spite of my husband being a diabetid and a stroke patient and who is no more. I thank Mother Mary Help of Christians for having blessed us, May she continue to do so.

Mrs. Maxy Dias, Vasai

My heartfelt thanks to St. Dominic Savio for my daughter's successful surgery, for his protection and for many other favours received.

Violet D'Sa

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

OCTOBER 2023

For the Synod

We pray for the Church that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a lifestyle at every level, and allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the peripheries of the world.

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MARY WAS THERE

Mama Mary was there for me!
I needed to speak with my
property buyer in Goa and for
some odd reason either the
phone was switched off, out of
network coverage or just ringing.
With no news or update from his
end, time was ticking away.
I very fervently prayed the 3
powerful Hail Marys and while
I was still saying them I had a
missed call from my buyer.
All glory honour praise to our
dear blessed Mary who's there to
hear every plea and cry of ours.
Thank you Mama Mary

Mrs C Pereira.

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
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tors.

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