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*May the venerable
 intercession of the glorious
 Virgin Mary
 come to our aid,
 we pray, O Lord,
 so that, fortified
 by her protection,
 we may reach
 the mountain which
 is Christ.*

*Memorial of
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel*

From The Editor's Desk
 THE POWER OF OUR TEARS

A woman once confided to a bishop her concern for the salvation of her child. His remark, on hearing her story, has echoed down the centuries: 'The son of such tears will never be lost.' All three involved in the incident are now among the best-known saints of the Church: St. Ambrose was the bishop, St. Monica, the distraught mother, and St. Augustine the errant child. Shortly afterwards, Augustine, already in his late twenties changed course so dramatically that he was to become one of the most influential figures in Christian history.

What Thomas à Kempis the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, says is profoundly true: 'There is no living in love without pain.' When you love your children, it is impossible to avoid the experience of pain, especially when something appears to be going wrong for them in an important area of life.

We must not let the pain paralyze us, however, nor allow worry to dominate our lives. It is important to distinguish between worry and concern. Telling someone not worry is not the same as telling them not to be concerned. Concern can lead to clarity and a well-thought-out plan of action, but worry gets you nowhere fast.

There is no stock answer that covers all cases where people have stopped going to Mass or a much bigger issue, where they have ceased or claim to have ceased believing in the Catholic Church. Things are done or not done for as many reasons as there are people. Motivation is so individual that it can only be learned through personal conversation with the other. In any case, great sensitivity and gentleness are required. If a parent tries too hard and too often to convince, this is often interpreted as nagging, something that usually makes things worse.

I have to realise in such moments, that God is already on the job. He is even more your youngster's parent than you are. With infinite power and wisdom, he is always working to bring all of us to himself. This he does while respecting our freedom, something which he never interferes with. Even when we are not cooperating with God in any conscious way, even when we are systematically thwarting his plans, he is always working for our good. His love for us has ways of bringing things about that are beyond our powers.

You've probably done the best for your son or daughter, making many sacrifices for them over the years. None of this will go amiss. Indeed, it will all add up and do untold good, both for yourself and for your daughter, in the long run.

During a sermon one day at the shrine, I referred to the famous meeting between Ambrose and Monica. Afterwards an elderly affluently-dressed lady who spoke very polished English and who with her husband, spent her summers doing social work in an orphanage in Southern India, said to me, 'So, all we have to do is weep for them.'

Fr. Ian Douulton, sdb

TRUE LOVE

by Mons Gianpaolo Dianin, bishop

The idolisation of the other, a seemingly innocent act, can have a toxic root: those who idolise risk losing sight of the person and wanting to mould them from their own desire, a dangerous path to tread.

The path we undertook, provoked by the drama of femicides, first led us to consider the couple as the encounter of a distinct “I” and “you.” We are overcoming the immature fusion experience that belongs to the experience of falling in love. Later, we recognised that patriarchy is only one aspect of the problem, but the causes are primarily the other. We distinguished the natural conflict in every relationship from the violence that is the sign of an inability to manage conflict.

Violence is the degeneration of love, but before mourning, it is the sign of a profoundly immature love that has never grown up to become ‘true love.’ Each person loves as they can, with their potential and limitations; however, we can recognise that there is an objective truth about love that certainly has the trails of an apple to

reach out to. But this should be apparent to those who embark on this path to be patient. But also, with resolution. A choice of the heart and praxis of action.

True love, a beacon of hope, lets the other be and does not imprison them either to themselves or to a relationship model decided by one of the two. It frees the other and fertilises their life potential. True love seeks the other’s good and finds joy when it sees the other happy; a truly liberating experience.

As Massimo Recalcati suggests in the wake of Jacques Lacan: “Love is always ‘heterosexual’ in that it is love for the *heteros*, for the other, and his differences. Altruism, a guiding light in every human relationship, is indispensable in saying that a relationship is one of love. And if there is an ongoing struggle between selfishness and



altruism, the awareness of the toxic virus of selfishness should be clear; a revelation that can transform relationships.

Teenagers unconsciously say when they have a crush: ‘I love you because I feel good with you because you make me feel good’. There is when it comes to teenagers inevitably still centred on themselves. But to love is to go beyond the centrality of the self and what one feels to be able to say ‘you.’ Sometimes, however, adolescence persists; it is prolonged beyond natural age, and the person struggles to get out of the enclosure of the ego: one’s well-being thus becomes a condition of love: ‘You must continue to make me feel good’. Thus, love becomes possession, control, and demand. To love, however, is to want the good of the other, their happiness. The greater the love, the more liberating it is.

The greater the love, the more they let the other be who they wish to be.

Not even God forces his creature to love him.

To love means to welcome people as a gift with their richness and limitations without expecting them to be what they are not or to give us what they do not want or cannot provide us.

Chiara Giaccardi reflecting on femicides invites us to focus on a cultural aspect: “At the root of the iceberg is the problem of a radical individualism where the other is an instrument for my well-being or becomes an obstacle to be eliminated. On the other hand, a healthy relationship is one in which the self, balances itself towards the other, puts itself a bit out of balance and frees itself, growing and transforming positively. He who, on the other hand, is obsessed with what is good for him not only does not do the other any good but does not even do himself any good either.” These words are echoed by Alessandro Zaccuri, who adds: “Love is not a competition; it has no victories to boast about or trophies to display. Love has nothing to do with possession. We will also have to change our language: “My girlfriend” could become “the girl who chose me”: “My daughter” could become “the daughter who was given to me.” □



LIVING IS MORE THAN EXISTING

Sr Marzia Ceschia

Among the thirteen patrons of World Youth Day in Lisbon was Pier Giorgio Frassati who died at only 24 years of age

Some time ago, I met a group of young university students: boys and girls with beautiful, bright, attentive looks, young people full of questions and capable of finding space to think and confront each other. There are some, but they don't make the audience ...

Luckily, I say to myself, they have more freedom to talk about something else and in another way than the clichés imposed by the exhibitionism and superficiality of those who want to feature at all costs. In dialogue with them, I mentioned some personalities I still consider exemplary for those seeking proof of an intelligent, concrete faith capable of combining belief with culture, thought and commitment: La Pira, Enrico Medi, Lazzati....

Who are they? For the majority, they are almost unknown. We 'older folk need to examine our consciences, and we do not know how to pass on what we do not communicate of the witness. Do we give young people inspirational figures? Do we leave them at the mercy of influencers without the courage to point out credible alternatives? It may be because we lack credibility ourselves.

In the face of those young and

thirsty faces, these questions tormented me inside. And that is why I propose we remember a young man who can inspire us in our times: Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. One who maintained among his peers that: 'we are not allowed to exist; we must live!' Pier Giorgio, from Turin, was born on 6 April 1901: he was from an upper-middle-class family, one of the most prominent in the city. His father was a journalist, and his mother was an established painter. A typical trait of youth emerges in him: the desire to belong and to share ideals. Frassati became a member of various associations, including the FUCI, the Catholic Youth, and the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul, which were particularly important in his experience. From a wealthy family, he was not indifferent to the precariousness and poverty of the workers in Turin, who were experiencing significant entrepreneurial growth. He devoted time to charitable activities in the service of the dispossessed and the poor, entering concretely and actively into situations of marginality that a city, then as now, reveals and hides.

He was cheerful and creative: he started a society with his closest friends called 'Shady Guys', (Tipi loschi) animated by the desire to help each other in their



Pier Giorgio Frassati (4 July)

inner life and to help the least fortunate ones. He was passionate about mountaineering, experiencing the powerful spiritual dimension of contact with the peaks, the fatigue of climbing, and the beauty of the mountains. Assiduous in prayer, with a solid faith in the Eucharist and the Mother of God, he was sustained by tremendous and profound tensions even in his studies. After high school, he enrolled in the industrial mining engineering course at the Turin Polytechnic to "serve Christ among the miners."

In 1920, he joined the Italian People's Party that Fr Sturzo had

just founded and, in the same year, he had the opportunity to follow his father, who had become an ambassador to Berlin, where he frequented circles attended by students and workers. It was an experience that profoundly marked him, so much so that in 1921, at the 10th national congress of the FUCI, held in Ravenna at the same time as the international convention of Catholic students of the organisation 'Pax Romana' founded in Freiburg in the same year, he proposed - unsuccessfully - that the Catholic student movement merge into the Italian Catholic Youth. He drew motivation from the writings of Catherine of Siena and the speeches of Savonarola, so much so that he decided to join the Dominican Third Order, where he took the name of Brother Jerome.

Two months before graduation, he was struck down by fulminating poliomyelitis, which led to his death on 4 July 1925. John Paul II beatified him on 20 May 1990. These words of his, in a letter of January 1925, resonate today: "... It is beautiful to live since beyond there is our true life, otherwise who could carry the weight of this life if there were not a reward for suffering, an eternal joy. How could one explain the admirable resignation of so many poor creatures who struggle with life and often die on the brink if it were not for the certainty of God's justice. The world that has turned away from God lacks peace and charity, which is true and perfect love. Perhaps if we all listened to St Paul more, human miseries would be somewhat diminished." □

GET OUT INTO THE RAIN OF LIFE

by Anastasia Dias

'Matt, there's someone at the door,' his roommate mumbled in his sleep. 'Who is it at this hour?' Matt asked. It was raining heavily outside. Matt opened the front door and saw an old friend of his from school. He was shivering in the cold.

'Can I please stay with you tonight? I've got nowhere else to go.'

Matt knew this friend since his childhood days. They had grown up together, but he had disappeared all of a sudden from Matt's life.

Matt felt sorry for him and allowed him to stay with him for the night. 'Do you have something to eat?' his friend asked softly, a bit embarrassed.

'What? You knock at my door at this hour and then expect me to offer you something to eat as well.' His friend whispered, 'I haven't eaten in days, I'm practically starving.'

Matt felt bad for screaming at him but then he felt sorry and he replied, 'Wait, I'll ask my neighbour if he has something to eat.'

Matt was a warm person and had made friends with almost everyone in the neighbourhood. But

his next-door neighbour was the closest friend he had in the neighbourhood.

He took an umbrella, went out in the pouring rain and knocked on his neighbour's door. The neighbour opened his door. 'Matt? You? At this hour?' he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes. 'I'm sorry, Fred. I have a friend who's just stopped by and I have abso-



lutely no food in the fridge... nothing I can give him. Do you, by any chance, have anything?'

'What's wrong with you?' His friend said cynically, 'everyone's asleep inside. My children have school tomorrow morning and I can't disturb my wife. Buzz off,' said Fred irritated.

'Please, please, Fred, give me a hand. The poor guy's starving.'

Fred sensed Matt was in despair and relented, 'Fine, hang on. I'll get you some milk and biscuits.'

'Thanks. Thanks so much! Truly, I can't thank you enough, Fred,' Matt said, through his tears as he stood outside in the rain.

Just pause here for a moment.

My dear readers and friends, you and I know this parable only too well. It's famously known as 'The Parable of the Friend at Midnight.' And the message that really hits you between the eyes is that the man finally agrees to help his friend not because they are good buddies but because Matt, is one persistent cookie.

Jesus goes on to say, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you.'

I paused for a moment when I reached this point and I suggest that you do too. I've got to be honest I struggle with opening up about my personal struggles. I struggle with asking for help. I struggle to share what's going on in my mind.

A couple months ago, when I moved to the US, there were days I felt terribly homesick, days where I didn't feel by best; days where I was too tired and couldn't get out of bed. I struggled a lot. But I didn't say a word to anyone about that pain, not even my parents. In hindsight, I wish I had. Then, one day, when I realized that I just couldn't hide those things anymore I promised myself that I was going to talk, and, I started talking and talking and talking and... I haven't stopped ever since. What was most beautiful was, that I realised that I was not alone. Others, even from other parts of the continent struggled with similar issues. I understood that I could trust

people with my story and that my story would be heard, understood and I would be respected. I wish I'd known this earlier. Nevertheless, in the process of asking and seeking for help, I found so many incredible friends, colleagues, peers and teachers. I'm so fortunate to know people like them, but, I find myself wishing I had reached out for help much earlier.

To me personally, this is the message of this parable. It was this parable that convinced me to stop suffocating myself with my issues and get out into "the rain" of my own inhibitions and ask for help. Dear friends, this parable to you may mean something else. It may surely mean having the courage to ask for help.

It could also mean, seeking love and acceptance, not validation and casual relationships.

It may perhaps mean, knocking on the door of a friend, a colleague or a peer who's shut themselves in their own rooms, houses and even their lives or away from the world, suffering alone, in their own agony. It might mean reaching out to them.

It could very well mean, asking people around you: 'how are you doing today?'

It could also mean, looking within and seeing what's causing the void within and seeking a solution to fill that void.

Go and knock on the door of someone you've deemed a foe and try making amends. Life is too short to hang on to pain.

This is my interpretation of 'The Parable of the Friend at Midnight'. You may have your own. Make sure to live out the message of this parable in your own lives and have a blessed month. □



SALESIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

For 130 years, the Sons and Daughters of Don Bosco have been a strong and living presence in the Land of Jesus despite wars, walls and misunderstandings.

The Salesian Province of the Middle East is taking on a growing role in the congregation's strategies, so much so that the other provinces are helping it grow and strengthen its activities. Four young missionaries will arrive at the provincial's disposal to give more vigour to the activities planned for Israel, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon. One of the first initiatives was to move the headquarters of the province from Bethlehem to Cremisan, which allowed the capacity of the local school to be expanded: till September 2018, they could only accommodate 180 students, but they now have the space to offer training to 90 more students.

Looking young people in the eye

Fr Lorenzo Saggiotto, a Salesian who has been serving in the Middle East since 1968 and who has so far passed through Salesian houses in Lebanon, Bethlehem, Cremisan and Cairo, and who in recent years has been the rector of the Salesian house in Nazareth, is head of the school in Bethlehem. He explains the reality of young Arab Israelis living in the Galilee town: "The youth environ-

ment in Nazareth is very difficult for Arab Israeli children, who are negatively affected by contact with the Jewish world. Here, more and more, religion is only an external image. We are witnessing a strong secularisation even in Islam. The biggest problem is that of the identity crisis: to understand this, consider the fact that among our Muslim students, who make up 80% of the total, only 20% respect Ramadan."

"But the identity crisis is not the only problem undermining young people in Nazareth in recent years. The other, which has developed aggressively since the 1990s, is that of crime. From the Western world, problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution and mafia-style crime have reached here. The heads of these organisations are foreigners, but the soldiers are



Cremisan couched in green

Arabs. This is tragic because it means anyone wanting to make 'easy money' knows exactly who to turn to. But what role can the school play in helping the boys of Nazareth on their path to growth? The only barrier that can come from the school is getting to know the boys personally. One stands on the stairs every day and looks the boys in the eye, greeting them. They often come from difficult situations or family conflicts, and personal contact with them is essential to understand who is having the most difficulty and to open a dialogue. We have cases of boys who have attempted suicide or girls who have been victims of violence, problems that can only be solved with close accompaniment."

Abir Shajrawi says: "I'm an animator at the oratory, especially with the girls, when I am free from studying. This centre is my second home; I have been attending it since I was very small. Today, when I work with the children, I see them happy, and this, in turn, makes me happy."

Similar is the path of Yousef Noufi, 23 years old, who attends the two-year course in mechanical engineering and helps his uncle in his carpentry business: "I take care of the children's sports activities. I am involved in the oratory because I received love, respect, and dignity from the animators when I was a child. And today, I feel obliged to do the same for the new generations.

The bakery and cellar

Among the activities of the



Yousef Noufi (Above)

Abir Shajrawi (Below)

Salesians in the Holy Land that have received the most visibility in recent years and have enabled the Salesians to be self-supporting are the bakery in Bethlehem and the Cremisan winery.

"I have been working here for more than 20 years," explains Ibrahim, who coordinates the bakery activity. "There are five of us working here, and we produce 15 types of bread in rotation during the week. We only sell the bread to local customers, we do not work for other shops," he emphasises, "and a hundred needy families come and get bread for the whole month without paying, thanks to a system of cards and stamps. We distribute about 3,000 loaves daily, using high-quality flour and traditional products, some of which have been produced in this area for over 100 years: we only use flour, water, salt and yeast, with no other ingredients added. The business was founded more than a century ago, initially to serve more than 100 orphans and religious people who resided in the Salesian home, and it has since opened up to the area.

The Cremisan winery, a few kilometres away from Bethle-

hem, dates back to 1885, before the arrival of the Salesians, who initially took it over to produce wine for Mass. Until 2000, it was one of four wine cellars in Israel. From then on, it remained one of the few such businesses in Palestine, while 100 were established in Israel. However, since 2010, we have invested in the relaunch of this activity, which involves internationally renowned oenologists in grape growing, wine preparation, and marketing. After constant experimentation, which lasted ten years, we now produce four types of 'top' wines: two whites, two reds, and four basics. In addition to limoncello cream, brandy and a sweet variant, 'Port'".



Sanctity and theology

About 35 kilometres from Jerusalem, descending towards the Mediterranean Sea, is the third Salesian work in the village of Beit Gemal. Again, this is a historical presence left to us by Fr Antonio Belloni, which was originally an orphanage and is now a centre of spirituality and inter-religious dialogue, particularly with the Jewish world. In Beit Gemal, the Salesians are the custodians of the tomb of Saint Stephen the Martyr. In fact, archaeological excavations conducted in the middle of the last century have ascertained that right inside our property are the remains of what was once the tomb of the young saint - Stephen - who died to bear witness to his faith in Jesus Christ.

The inclusive nature of our work at Beit Gemal, where the beauty of the place, the historicity of the Salesian convent, and the

architecture of St Stephen's Church attract many Jews, provide a warm and welcoming environment. This is a wonderful opportunity for Christians and Jews to meet and exchange ideas, fostering a respect for each other that holds significant symbolic value in the Holy Land.

The church of St. Stephen also houses the mortal remains of the Venerable Simaan Srugi, a simple Salesian coadjutor who lived humbly, was attentive to the poorest, and whose life was the odour of holiness while he was still alive. He was particularly loved by the Muslim population, whom he favoured in his support for the neediest.

Finally, the Salesian Theological Seminary has been in the Ratisbonne monastery in Jerusalem since 2004. The Studium Theologicum Salesianum is a university campus of the Faculty of Theology of the Salesian Pontifical University, headquartered in Rome. It offers a four-year course of higher studies in theology, open to Salesian students and students from other congregations, seminarians, and scholars. There are 40 boarders and 70 in all from all over the world ☐

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. FRANCIS MARY OF THE CROSS JORDAN (July 21)

Ian Pinto, sdb

A BLESSED AT THE ALTAR

A young couple in Jundiá, Brazil was expecting a child in 2014. Unfortunately, they were told at one of the routine check-ups at an advanced stage of pregnancy that the child had an incurable bone disease (skeletal dysplasia). The couple was taken aback by the shocking news, as one might imagine. A second and third opinion only confirmed the diagnosis and added to the panic. The couple was part of an ecclesial group called the Lay Salvatorians, and so they did the obvious and put forth their intention to the group for intercession. They prayed especially to the then, Venerable Francis Jordan. When the time came for the child to be delivered, it was discovered to everybody's surprise that the child was born in full health. The date was September 8, the very day on which Venerable Francis Jordan passed from this earthly life into the arms of God.

This miraculous occurrence was seriously studied by the Church and was approved as a fulfillment of the requirement for



the Cause of Venerable Francis Jordan to be furthered. Pope Francis declared that this healing was worked by God through the intercession of Francis Jordan. Accordingly, Francis Jordan was beatified by the Cardinal Vicar of Rome Angelo de Donatis on May 15, 2021.

JOURNEY TO THE PRIESTHOOD

John Baptist Jordan was born on June 16, 1848, in the town of Gurtweil in Germany. His family found it difficult to keep body and soul together as his parents struggled to eke out a living. John felt called by God to become a priest but he didn't dare to tell his parents as he knew they would only come under more pressure. So, Jordan decided he would keep his vocation a secret till an opportune moment presented itself, and in the meantime, nurture the divine call through prayer and works of charity.

While still a teenager, John would set aside time every day to spend in the presence of the Lord who called him and who kept the flame of his vocation alive in his heart. As a result of his family's dire straits, John went out in search of work. His search took him across many towns and villages of south-west Germany and he became increasingly alarmed at the dearth of spirituality of his fellow countrymen. The paucity of spirituality was aggravated by the harsh anti-Church policies of the Prussian Government of the time under Otto von Bismarck.

The detestable condition of the Church and its faithful turned the little flame of priestly calling that John had nurtured into a burning flame such that he could put off his decision no longer. John decided to enroll himself in school and educate himself so that he could join the seminary one day. On account of his advanced years, John did not go to a regular school instead he took personal tuitions from some of the local clergy. Once he had grasped the basics, he en-

rolled for secondary school. There he found that he did not have an aptitude for the sciences but he did have a penchant for languages. It is said that for his graduation exam, he presented a paper in eight European languages! He went on to pursue theology and philology at Albert-Ludwigs University in Freiburg.

On July 21, 1878, John was ordained a priest for the Arch-diocese of Freiburg. Thereafter, the bishop sent him to Rome to study Greek and Semitic languages. While pursuing his studies, John became more aware of the need for a religious society to defend the Catholic faith against the cultural, philosophical and theological challenges it was facing. As a part of his education, he stayed in the Middle East. There his initial awareness turned into a conviction, and so, on returning to Rome, he initiated the process for founding a religious congregation. His idea was of a congregation that consisted of three groups: 1) those who would renounce the world and live as religious in communities, 2) Academicians and scholars who would propagate and defend the faith through their writings and speeches and 3) Lay people who would proclaim Jesus the Saviour through their witness of living a good Christian life.

THE SALVATORIANS ARE BORN

On December 8, 1881, he founded the first of the three groups. They were initially called the *Apostolic Teaching Society* and later the *Catholic Teaching Society*. At this time, John decided to take a religious name at the time of making his vows in this nascent

religious community and so he came to be called Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan.

In April of 1882, Jordan got in touch with Baroness Maria Theresese von Wullenweber, a young woman who felt called to dedicate her life as a religious doing missionary work. She became the first female member of the society and eventually the foundress of the feminine counterpart of the *Catholic Teaching Society*.

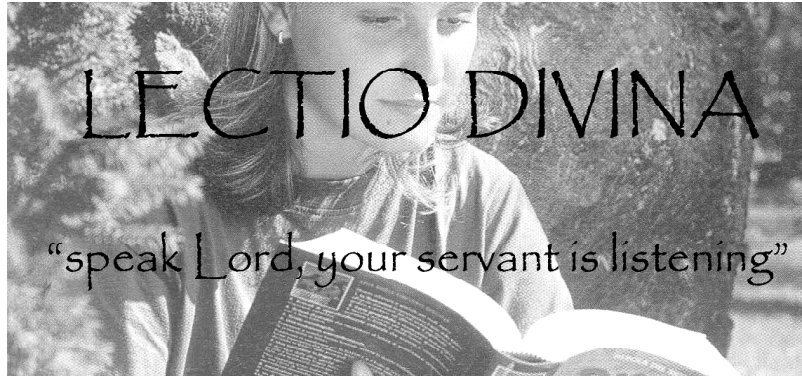
The congregations are commonly called the Salvatorians today. The name 'Salvatorian' comes from the Latin, *salvator*, meaning Saviour. This is taken from the official title of the Congregation – Society of the Divine Saviour. The female counterpart is the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour. The Salvatorian family of fathers, brothers, sisters and laity are motivated to spread the Gospel and introduce Christ the Saviour to people across the world. The Congregation spread rapidly across Europe. Their first presence outside Europe was in Assam, India. The Salvatorians have done a lot to propagate the faith in and around Assam. Many Catholics in North-east India particularly in Assam, owe their faith to the missionary fervour of the Salvatorians.

The charism of the Salvatorians is "to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all, without distinction." Therefore, they are continuously searching for new horizons to spread the goodness and kindness of Christ. Their missionary impetus has taken them to more than 40 countries and their total number is in the region of 2500 religious priests and nuns, not counting the Lay Salvatorians.

Bl. Francis Jordan died in Switzerland on September 8, 1918. He is buried in the chapel of the Salvatorian motherhouse in Rome. His feast day is celebrated on July 21 because he happened to die on the feast of the Nativity of Mary. July 21 is significant because it was the day he was ordained. Therefore, the date was changed.

In the homily delivered at his beatification, Cardinal De Donatis highlighted three aspects of Bl. Jordan's life that stand out: 1) His love for Scripture and his frequent proposal to meditate on it – we get to know Scripture only by reading it and meditating on it. Scripture ultimately gives us insight into the mind of God and reveal to us the Will of God. 2) His missionary fervour – Bl. Jordan would often say, "Proclaim to everyone in order to save every-one." His motivation was to make Christ known and in doing so, to offer people the chance to be healed and saved. 3) His vision for apostolic communion – Bl. Jordan saw the potential of a community of people with a common heart and mind. He realized the immense good they could accomplish if they channelize their energies and talents toward fulfilling a common mission. That is why he promoted the three groups that comprise the Salvatorian family.

"If we want to accomplish great things, we must have great trust. Human misery is so great that we can do nothing without the grace of God. When we are separated from the help that comes from above, when we have little or no trust, what will we be able to do for those who cannot even pronounce the name of Jesus without God's grace?... We look to God from whom we await our help." □



THE TWELVE SENT ON A MISSION

Mark 6:7-13

by Fr. Dinesh Vasava

1. Reading: Take a few moments to read the Gospel passage slowly and attentively. Pay attention to the story's details and imagine yourself in the scene. Try to understand the instructions and actions of Jesus as He sends out the Twelve Apostles on their mission.

2. Meditation: As we read the gospel passage, we are told of the triple action of Jesus

i) He called the twelve;

ii) He sent them out two by two;

and
iii) He gave them authority to carry out the triple mission of preaching repentance, casting out demons, and healing the sick.

Imagine that you have been invited to join the twelve apostles: you are excited about being sent out to speak of the kingdom of God. You expect to learn the master strategy from Jesus. Instead you are told to travel light: no show, no dependence on a bank account, no big car. You



are to depend on one thing only, the power and grace of God! Then amazing things can happen. Pope Francis wants a poor Church for the poor, and he bases his wish on today's text. We Christians may be reasonably well-to-do, but we should have a critical attitude to wealth and capitalism. The kingdom of God has little to do with affluence: it is all about simplicity of life and sharing with the needy.

3. Prayer: Jesus calls the apostles and sends them on a mission to announce the message of repentance, cure the sick and cast off demons. Notice how he sends them out in pairs instructing them to trust in Providence by taking nothing for their journey. They were to be dependent entirely on God and the presence of God in one another. Their goal was to go from house to house bringing the Good News.

Lord I pray that, strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, I may radiate the light of your love to those I encounter in my daily life. Help me to have a deeper understanding of the needs of others and give me the courage to witness to the joy of my faith.

I call to mind and pray for all who are enslaved by debt, possessions, addictions and anything else that limits them. I pray that I may live as a disciple, available to do the work of God.

4. Contemplation Here is the embryonic church taking its first baby steps! The story of human salvation is getting under way. We can learn much from it. The group is centred on Jesus, they are to carry his message to an un-

Jesus' trust in us is breathtaking. I too am being sent out each day to bring good news to those I engage with.

prepared world; they are being sent out on mission. They have to let go of their securities – a fixed abode, workplace, possessions, money. They must trust that Jesus knows what he is doing; they also need the good will of those they visit. In return, Jesus shares with them his authority over evil, and his power to heal. Is that a fair exchange?

Jesus' trust in us is breathtaking. I too am being sent out each day to bring good news to those I engage with. Jesus, make me aware that you are with me wherever I go.

5. Action: The teaching that God's love is present in welcoming strangers and neighbours has been a strong belief of many cultures. The Indian writer, Tagore tells us that when people left his hut, he found 'God's footsteps on the floor'. The Divine lies in each of us, and when we welcome each other we welcome God, and Jesus the Son of God. This is the welcome of the Church to all. Too often the Church has been choosy about who to welcome or not welcome to the table of the Lord or even to the community. Our country can be overly particular in welcoming the stranger in need. A call to the church today is to welcome all and be enriched by the variety of prayer, friendship and worship which all can bring. □

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS FRIENDSHIP

Pope Francis' homily on Friday, May 15, 2020

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see that in the Church, in the beginning, there were times of peace. It says that many times: the Church was growing in peace and the Spirit of the Lord gave it growth (see Acts 9:31). Moments of peace. There were also moments of persecution, beginning with the persecution of Stephen (see Acts 6-7), then Paul the persecutor, converted, but even he persecuted... Moments of peace, moments of persecution; there were even moments of turmoil. And this is the theme of today's first Reading: a moment of turmoil (see 15:22-31). "We have heard that some from our number," the Apostles write to the Christians who have converted from paganism, "we have heard that some from our number who had no mandate from us have upset you - have disturbed you - with their teachings that have disturbed your peace of mind" (v. 24).

What happened? These Christians, who had been pagans, believed in Jesus Christ and had received baptism. And they were happy: they had received the Holy Spirit. They went from paganism to Christianity without any intermediary stage. Instead, those People who were called "Judaizers" sustained that you could not do that, that if someone had been a pagan they had to become Jews first, a good Jew, and then become a Christian, so as to be in line with the election of the People of God. And these Christians did not understand this. "But why? Are we second-class Christians? We cannot go directly from paganism to Christianity? Didn't Christ's resurrection dissolve the ancient law and bring it to an even greater fullness?" They were disturbed and there were a lot of discussions among them. And those who wanted this were people who had pastoral arguments, even some moral ones. They sustained that no, you had to make the passage in this way! And this put into question the freedom of the Holy Spirit, and the free gift of Christ's resurrection and grace. They were methodical, and also rigid.

Jesus had said about these people, these teachers, these doctors of the Law: "Woe to you who traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him worse than before. You make him a child of Gehenna" Jesus more or less says that in the 23rd chapter of Matthew (see v. 15). These people who were "ideological" had reduced the Law, the doctrine, to an ideology: "you have to do this, and this, and this..." A religion of prescriptions, and thus they took away the Holy Spirit's freedom. And the people who followed them were rigid people, people who did not feel comfortable, they did not know the joy of the Gospel. The way of following Jesus to perfection was through rigidity: "You have to do this, this, this, and this". These people, these doctors, "manipulated" the consciences of the faithful, or they made them become rigid, or they would go away.

Because of this, I repeat this many times, and I say that rigidity is not from the good Spirit because it puts into question the free gift of the redemption, the free gift of Christ's resurrection. And this is something old: throughout the Church's history this has repeated itself. Let us think of the Pelagians, of those... those famously rigid people. And even in our own times we have seen some apostolic organizations that seem to be quite well organized, who work well..., but all of them are rigid, everyone is exactly the same, and then we have learned about the corruption that was inside, even in the founders.

The Spirit of God is not where there is rigidity, because the Spirit of God is liberty. And these people wanted to force these passages, taking away liberty from the Spirit of God and the gratuitousness of the redemption: "to be justified you have to do this, this, this, and this...". Justification is freely given. Jesus's death and resurrection are gratuitous. You do not pay for it, it cannot be purchased: it is a gift! And these people did not want to do it that way.

The path is beautiful [the way they proceeded]: the Apostles gather together in this council and in the end they write a letter that says this: "It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden" (Acts 15:28), and they put these obligations and a few common sense moral ones so as not to confuse Christianity with paganism, abstaining from meet offered to idols, etc. And in the end, these Christians who had been disturbed, gathered in an assembly, they received the letter, and "when they read it, they were delighted with the encouragement it gave them" (v. 31). From turmoil to joy. The spirit of rigidity always brings turmoil. "Did I do this all right?. Did I not do that all right? Scrupulosity. The Spirit of evangelical freedom brings you joy because that is exactly what Jesus did by His resurrection: He brought joy! Our relationship with God, our relationship with Jesus is not a relationship of "doing things": "I do this and You give me that". A relationship like that - forgive me, Lord - commercial. No! It is free, just like the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. "You are my friends" (Jn 15:14). "I do not call you slaves, I call you friends" (see v. 15). "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (v. 16). This is gratuitousness.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to discern the fruit of evangelical gratuitousness from the fruits of non-evangelical rigidity, and that He might free us from every turmoil caused by those who put the Faith, the life of Faith under detailed prescriptions, prescriptions that have no meaning. I refer to those prescriptions that have no meaning, not to the Commandments. May He free us from the spirit of rigidity that robs you of freedom. □

ABOVE ALL, LOVE

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, *sdb*

Daniel abruptly pulled back his chair, tossing his wife a look in which a little too vivid anger tried to conceal a shadow of remorse.

Jessica did not lower her sweet blue eyes; her pale lips quivered but did not open; she knew that no words would calm her husband at that moment.

"In the end I need to feel free to be able to work, to live... I'm not one to bend to sentimentality and jealousies..."

"Daniel, it's not about me, it's about you. You know your novel is due at the publishers in a week's time."

"It will have to wait!"

"But the mortgage on the villa expires on the 15th, and if you don't send off the novel..."

"Yes, yes, I know! But I've got no inspiration, no inclination, no will, in short, I just can't go on!"

"Sweetheart, I understand. What do you think of a few days by the sea? The air, the sunshine for you, for me, for the protagonist of your work... shall we take off Daniel?"

The long beep of a car froze the reply in the author's mouth. Jessica looked through the open window.

"It's Mary," she said simply, staring at her husband.

Daniel turned his back to her, searching carefully for his house keys and his wallet.

"Oh... I forgot to tell you. Mrs Varene is leaving tomorrow and I had promised to show her around the city."

"But today? Daniel, you've got plans..."

"Nothing important!" he said casually.

"Daniel!" called Jessica bewildered, but he was already at the bottom of the stairs.

She saw him smiling and climbing into the luxury sedan.

"See you tonight!" he said without turning around.

"Bye, Jessica!" Mary chirped with her youthful chatter, waving

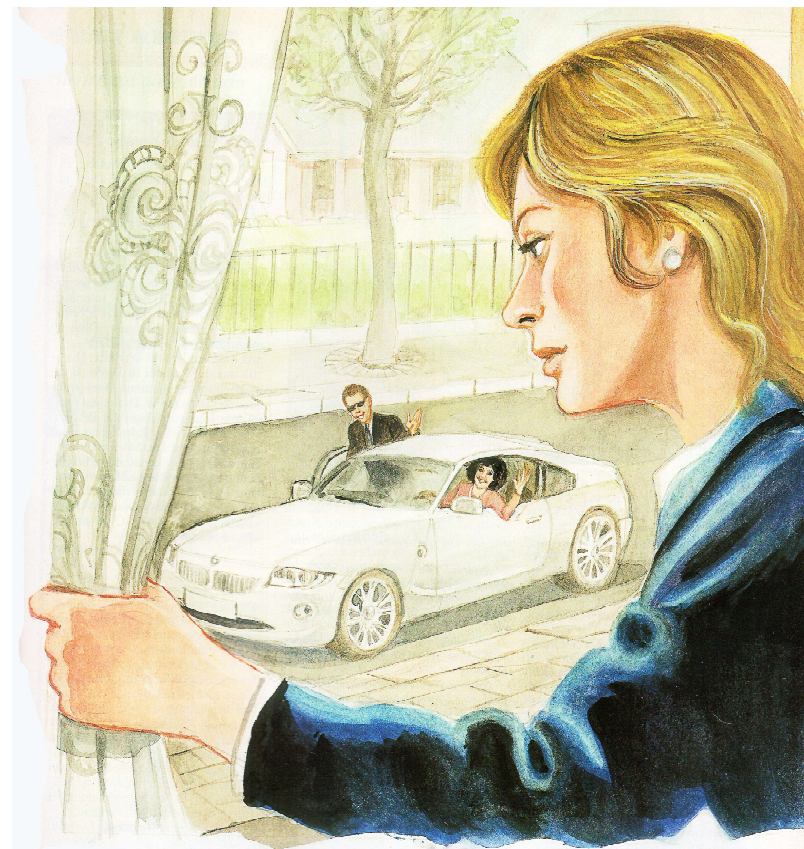


her hand in farewell.

The young woman watched as the car disappeared around the bend in the driveway. Her shoulders slumped as she walked back into the living room, dropping into an armchair and weeping bitterly, tears she had smothered so often. It was over! Every means to safeguard her love for Daniel was in vain. She looked at herself in the mirror: her thin body, that somewhat gaunt and pale face, the drooping mouth, the creased forehead and the dark-circled eyes did not hold a

candle to Mary's youthful and lush freshness. A deep bitterness overcame her. Why, then, insist on defending an affection that was crushing her heart? Why continue in her self-denial, trying desperately to adapt and understand? She silently wept bitter secret tears, in spite of her equally sweet smile, when all that had failed to preserve her husband's love.

A dark thought crossed her distressed mind. There were other devices: flirtatiousness, glibness, intrigue, fun.... She was



within her rights as a wronged and betrayed wife! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! She could still revive her beauty that the pain had covered over with a veil; she could still come out on top! Daniel would have had his way. No, she wouldn't hurt him, she was not capable of it, but to show him that she was his wife, that she was not just some plaything to be tossed aside, she could do that! She feverishly she opened her wardrobe, took out one of her best dresses; she dressed herself carefully. It was 5 in the evening. She would go out to tea at the café in the city centre where she was sure to meet many friends and casual contacts, among them the most frivolous and most unpleasant by her standards, but all the worse... she would talk, joke, laugh, have fun, so much fun!

She stopped on the threshold.

A ray of the setting sun, filtered through the thick curtains, glistened like a lamp in the antechamber like the glow of an altar lamp. Something sacred, something severe and something sweet seemed to exude out of the walls and the furniture, something indefinable and superhuman that held her back; stopping her in her tracks.

She looked around. She became aware of herself once more: It was well and truly her home and for the first time she was about to leave it with a less than honest thought. It was the home she had sworn to always love, to defend, to care for as a sanctuary. Still... Daniel had also sworn but forgotten his vows... she did not want

to die of pain and jealousy! Better to go out, better to enjoy life like that, as fate was handing it over to her, even if it was not the one she had so often dreamed of... But, what then? How would she then fill the emptiness in her soul when the strength of love, of hope and dignity had collapsed into the dull superficiality of everyday life?

She slowly retraced her steps and, in her room, she saw the picture hanging above her nightstand, the sweetest face of Our Lady was smiling at her.

She knelt down, clasped her forehead in her hands, not weeping and not even praying.

There are hours of grace, of prayer, of forgiveness. There are also hours of sublime lessons. "Life is not always joy but it can always be peace. It is not only love that brings smiles but also love that suffers. It is not only receiving but above all giving, not expecting but offering... It is not enough to love, it is necessary to know how to love beyond time, beyond right, beyond pain... She should set out to guard her home not desert it; her place was there, her heart still beat for her absent husband; her life one with his life..."

She rose pale but perfectly serene and calm.

Daniel did not return that night. The next day a short text message announced that some friends had persuaded him to go on a cruise; later some friends felt obliged to let her know that Mary

Vareni had also postponed her departure to go on the same cruise!

It was that very evening that Mr Fonseca, her husband's publisher, called for an interview.

"Rest assured, Mr Fonseca, my husband has left precisely to finish the work in a conducive environment. By Saturday evening you will certainly hear from him."

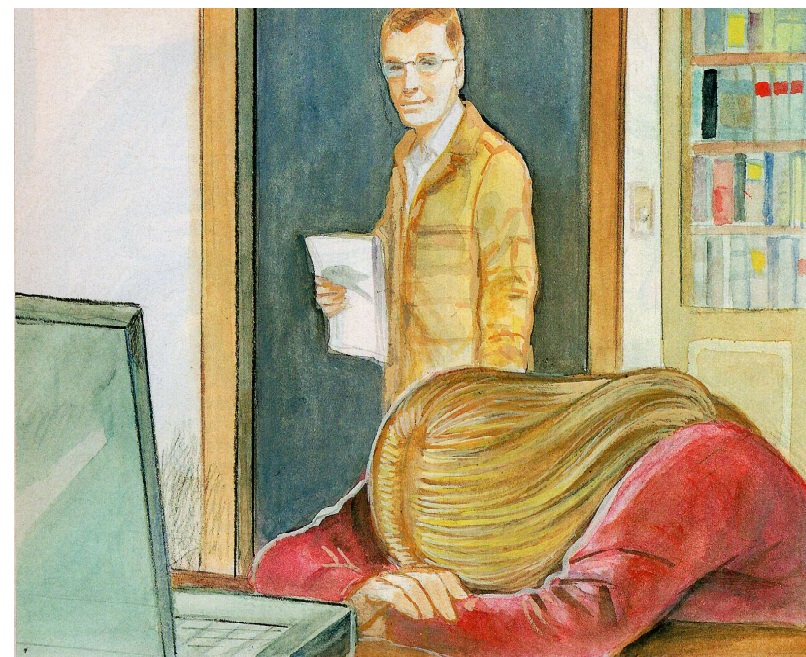
"Reassure me, madam... I was told," he interrupted himself, seeing the young woman's face blushing, "that he has left... Can you not see that your husband is becoming a celebrity and the public must not be led astray, do you understand?"

"Perfectly, Sir, have no doubt!"

It was Tuesday and Daniel was far away.

Jessica locked herself in her husband's study. Her head ached, a painful dismay gripped her soul, she felt so alone and defenceless against the destiny that was dismantling her few hopes one by one. But a voice, very sweet, arose from the depths of her heart: suffering must be fertile with goodness because love is stronger than hope... one must know how to love...

She felt calm, almost happy. Sitting down at her desk she tidied up the scattered folders, read the last ones, opened the computer, then, after a moment's hesitation, the thought suddenly sprang up, clear and beautiful. Her quick, light fingers tapped smoothly on the keyboard the



continuation of that complex love story. For four days she worked incessantly. It was Saturday morning when her frail, tired fingers tapped the three keys of the word 'End.' She dropped her head on the desk; she couldn't keep her eyes open any longer.

* * *

Someone was standing close to her, softly stroking her hair and gently calling her name. It made her flinch. The novel folders had been gathered together. In one corner was a large suitcase and standing there was Daniel, dressed for travel. He stared at her with a new light of tenderness and confusion in his eyes.

"Oh, Daniel, you're here?"

"Jessica, how... how did you know to do this?" He murmured barely above a whisper.

"I don't know, Daniel... Mr Fonseca wanted the novel for today, so I put myself in your place and tried... but now that you're here, you can revise or redo it..."

"No, no, there's not a comma I'll touch... I would never have known how to find such freshness, such candidness.... what

you did a miracle, Jessica, but why?"

"Because I love you, Daniel!"

The harsh sound of the telephone startled Daniel.

It was a woman's voice, impatient. She kept repeating that she had been waiting for him at the station for an hour.

"Forgive me... I can't leave... not now... never again... bye...."

Jessica was pale, she looked at the suitcase, she looked at her husband... there was in those poor blue eyes an immense offering of love and sorrow.

"Forgive me, Jessica, I'm a bad subject..."

"Come now, my dear, no recriminations!" exclaimed the young woman with adorable severity, "you're apparently leaving! Well, before you do, send these folders to the publishers first, then..."

"Then?"

"We're off! Don't you remember? A few days by the sea, the sunshine and everything for us, Daniel!"

"You're an angel," murmured Daniel, leaning down to kiss his wife's hands. □

A DAY MADE BY GOD

Every morning is a whole day that we receive from the hands of God. God gives us a day prepared for us by Himself. There is nothing too much and nothing not 'enough,' nothing indifferent and nothing useless. It is a masterpiece of a day that comes to us asking to be lived. We look at it like a diary page, marked with a number and a month. We treat it as lightly as a sheet of paper. If we could scour the world and see this day unfold and emerge from the depths of centuries, we would understand the value of a single human day.

[Madeliene Delbrel]

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 54

by Michele Molineris

241. Don Bosco dyes his hair! (1878)

Providence planned that Don Bosco send his Salesians to Farigliano (Cuneo) to officiate at a service at a shrine called the Mellea.

Due to the law of suppressing religious congregations, that shrine, which gathered so many faithful, was closed. Cleric Durando had carried in his heart the sweetest memories of that shrine, and he would have liked Don Bosco to accept it at the municipality's solicitous insistence. However, for various reasons, it was not possible to go, and Fr Durando was unfortunate to lose the opportunity to help the fervour of his compatriots in this way. The last time he went to Farigliano was in 1879. That sanctuary was to be entirely bought, and the mother house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was to be built there.

Don Bosco had also been to Nizza Monferrato that day, and on his way back, he arranged to stop at Farigliano, where Fr Durando had also come. When Don Bosco saw the clergy of Farigliano coming to meet him, all smiling and joking, he said: "This morning we went to see Our Lady of Grace, now we come to see another. Let us see which one will give us grace!"

This witticism was not the last on that day. They wanted to prepare some lunch for him, where all the priests of the parish, and also of the neighbourhood, could gather. Almost all of them accepted the

invitation to get to know Don Bosco and a few to see who their compatriot was, who made such a good name for himself in their province and Italy. Now it happened that at the table, it was remarked that Don Bosco, already over sixty, still had all his black hair, while Father Durando, not yet forty, had more than a few grey hairs.

Fr Arnaldi's old teacher, the knight D. Piacenza, playfully suggested that he ask Don Bosco about his hair. When the question was posed, Don Bosco, in his typical Piedmontese wit, responded: '*Mi i mie tensu i cavei: I dye my hair*'. (Francesia, Don Celestino Durando, 39).

242. Reason, Religion, loving kindness (1879)

As an old pupil of dear Don Bosco, wrote can. Laguzzi, I too took the liberty of sending a few notes that might help document the life of the saint.

Without mentioning the saintly person's friendly, helpful, wise and trustworthy counsels that he always used in directing hearts and souls, and especially of religious vocations, I would like to mention how much he was animated by that holy zeal that in everything and from everything he knew, he could draw motives to induce souls to love God, always seeking to raise every action and every thought to Him.

I remember it as if it were yesterday. It was June 1879. I had just returned from the music school - directed as always by the dear and friendly Maestro Dogliani - I was overcome by a temptation, albeit naïve, for, instead of going straight to the study-hall, I climbed the

stairs and saw a piano in a room. I could not resist that temptation. I went into that empty room, and without minding the disturbance I was causing the youngsters, I tapped those poor keys carelessly.

Just then Don Bosco passed by. He surprised me, and without my realising it, he immediately took me by the ears, but in such a gentle manner that I would have wished for that chastisement to last much longer.

Confused and humiliated, I didn't know what to say in Don Bosco's presence, but he was the first to speak and give me a fatherly admonition. I remember that, among other things, he said: "You see, I didn't scold you because you were playing, but because you were playing out of time" (*B.S., suppl. May 1917, 144*).

243. Don Bosco is a thief! (1879)

In Aix, France in January 1879 a curious episode took place and it was narrated later by Don Bosco himself and edited by Fr Lemoyne.

Having gone to visit Baron Martin, he was entertained by him at table with his family. He was very familiar with that noble family. Just before he was to sit down to eat, the saint, crossing the drawing-room where he saw silverware and cutlery on a table, he paused to look at that little treasure; then with affected seriousness and with all calmness, he stretched out his hand and piece by piece, part of it went into his pockets, part of it placed in the suitcase that was there in a corner. The baron and the others stood by to see how this joke would end. When he had finished, which took only a few minutes, Don Bosco asked him how much that table

service was worth.

"If it were to be bought new," he answered, "it would cost ten thousand francs: but reselling it would perhaps yield only a thousand."

"Well then," answered Don Bosco, "since the Baron is so rich, and I have to work so hard to feed my poor youngsters, give me a thousand francs and I will give you back your silverware."

The nobleman, with an air of utter serenity, paid Don Bosco a thousand francs and, with no less serenity, Don Bosco put everything back in its place (*M.B., XIV, 30*).

245. The Cyrenean (1879)

In September 1879 while I was at San Benigno to attend the spiritual exercises, I met Don Bosco on the stairs leading to the corridor on the upper floor. The saintly man was sitting one step above... and his whole bearing revealed that great fatigue had prevented him from continuing his ascent. Slumped down, he had, as it were, stretched himself along the stairs, waiting resignedly for someone to pass by to help him on. Divine providence disposed that I should pass, and I was asked to help him up. Shall I say how willingly I gave myself to that act of charity?

I will say first of all that, as it was very uncomfortable to lift him on my own arm, I preferred to carry him on my shoulders. The holy man also resigned himself to this, and in that stretch, which was not for me a Way of the Cross, with all the gentleness and sweetness of St Francis de Sales, he said to me very quietly: "The Cyrenean was much more fortunate than you. He lifted up Jesus, carrying his cross for a little while. But what are you

carrying? A poor sinner... But if you do it for the love of God, you will still get a nice reward because, you must never forget, Jesus Christ considers whatever we do to our neighbour for his sake as done to himself."

I would have many more of these episodes, which happened in the brief course of my secondary school studies at the Valdocco Boarding and under the direction of Don Bosco. In any case I will be delighted if I too can lay some stone to the edifice of that holy man's sanctity (*Can. Laguzzi Gius. In: BS, suppl., May 1917*).

246. I chastise my body (1879)

While making Don Bosco's bed one day Gastini found there, covered by the sheet, some pieces of iron, forgotten in his haste to go down for Mass. He did not mind so much that he put them on the table, without a word to Don Bosco; but the next day he did not see those scraps, nor did he see them again in the following months, during which he continued to tidy his room. Don Bosco never spoke to him about it; it was only many years later that Gastini reflected on that scrap, and understood what they had been used for.

"Some other time some pebbles and pieces of wood were found on that bed," said Card. Cagliero.

So, the saint used to torment his distraught body at night, which made the little sleep he allowed himself, painful.

Fearing that someone could have discovered this secret, he often made his bed himself, sweeping and tidying the room and dusting the poor household furniture. Joseph Brosio caught him one day

in these chores, and Don Bosco took advantage of this to draw a beautiful moral from it, referring to the tidiness of the room; but Brosio observed with surprise that, in such circumstances, the door was often locked.

It also seems that he reserved greater austerities for those days when he was the guest of his most distinguished benefactors, because the vastness of the buildings, and the spaciousness of the room assigned to him from those inhabited by the family of the guests, gave him greater security to escape indiscreet investigations.

Sometimes he accepted the invitation of a venerable noble lady, and went with a quiet and jovial demeanour to her holiday resort. Now, late at night, one of the family (it was perhaps 1879), while crossing the hall, from which one entered Don Bosco's room, heard a dull, monotonous and prolonged noise coming from there, as if of severe blows at regular intervals. He was suspicious, but did not tell anyone about it: instead, he kept watch and, noting that the phenomenon repeated itself every time Don Bosco was a guest at the villa. He was convinced that Don Bosco was imitating St. Vincent de Paul and resorting to that means to obtain special graces from the Lord. After a few years, the same person having confided the matter to other gentlemen, who were used to hosting Don Bosco, learned that they too had made the observation and were therefore convinced that the saint was disciplining himself. However, being prudent and courteous, none of them ever mentioned this discovery to him. (*Vita, II, 205*). □



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Emiliano Rigazio

Consecrating oneself to Mary is the easiest, shortest and most perfect way to consecrate oneself to God.

To come to us God passed through Mary; to go to God we must pass through Mary. Whoever walks towards God, encounters Mary; whoever encounters Mary, easily ascends to God.

Mary helps us to keep to the pacts of that bilateral contract between us and God, to which God is always faithful. She encourages us to press forward towards the goal of evangelical perfection. She is our guarantee of success in the apostolate and Mary is Queen of all saints and Queen of apostles.

Consecration makes us 'holy' persons. We belong to God to the point of being transformed, of identifying ourselves with him, who alone is 'holy', thus in turn, becoming 'holy.'

Then we will attain the full dignity of man, which comes from that one exalted vocation that is "communion with God." (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 19).

In the rationale of Baptism

In the absolute first place, the life

of a Christian is the consecration to the Holy Trinity, which took place at baptism and is indelibly inscribed on the soul by its baptismal character.

The logic of baptism is therefore, to 'live' this consecration: consciously and voluntarily.

It means practicing daily the most pressing and absolute imperatives of the Gospel: "Give to God what is God's" (Mt 22:21); "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33), which are the very substance of the Christian life, its essential core, its inalienable fullness.

Baptismal promises are nothing more than the voluntary awareness and acceptance of this baptismal reality: we belong to God. These "baptismal promises" are a humble but generous gesture of love that wants to become constant and habitual in order to live one's life in a climate of love.

Consecration to God is a choice of faith. It is a fundamental option, which requires us to be responsibly consistent with the choice we have made. And to protect one's acknowledged weakness and inconsistency with an extraordinary sup-

ply of grace, which commits us to use and nourish the divine power of prayer and the sacraments. A believer, in the light of faith and with the help of grace places this choice under the protection of that God in whom he has placed all his trust.

It is a spiritual rebirth, achieved by plunging back into the living and life-giving God, the perennial source and abundant nourishment of life.

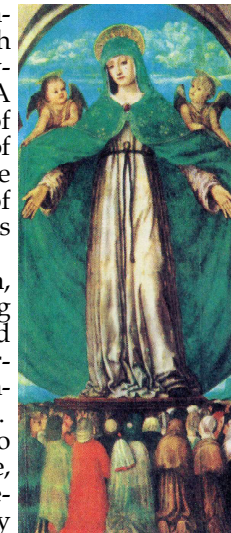
It is the gift of self to God who is infinite love, inspired and made perseveringly by a perpetually efficient sacrificial love, with the pacifying assurance that nothing like the gift of love made to Love itself is the person's best use of his destiny.

Thus, the loving motion of God who creates, corresponds to the loving motion of the creature who gives himself to Him from whom he receives being, intelligence and will. It is the mutual encounter of Creator Love with the love of the creature, in an interchange of gifts, expressing love. It is the loving return of one's being to its Source, which grants it greater efficiency and development.

A peaceful gift of love

The fear of the adult who prevaricates is puerile; the naivete of the child who gives himself without calculation is consummate maturity.

Trusting in the One who loves is the logical consequence of a love that is believed and reciprocated. This pacifying relationship of love lies at the root of the reciprocal gift



of self. Thus, 'give to God what is God's' (Mt 22:21) is not an imperative that comes from without, but an imperious demand that springs from within, from a turgid love that bursts forth like peas from their pods.

To consecrate oneself means to voluntarily insert oneself into salvation history, to become a protagonist in collaboration with God, sanctifying oneself even more.

Mary gave herself to God to fulfil the mission entrusted to her.

If we, by consecration, give ourselves to

her, Mother of immense goodness, she will give us to God in fullness and enable us to do his will entirely. We will also be, like her, in the logic of the 'fiat' and the 'ecce ancilla', totally consecrated to the mission that God entrusts to each one of us. St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort writes: "Happy is the soul in which Mary is planted; happier is the one in which Mary was able to grow and blossom; happiest is the one in which Mary produces her fruit; but happiest of all is the one that tastes and preserves this fruit until death and for ever and ever" (*The Secret of Mary*, 78).

The "fruit of Mary" is Jesus. Having Jesus and keeping him until death is the greatest happiness there is, a guarantee of the eternal happiness of heaven.

Every land of Mary has a tree that produces this fruit: Jesus. Every soul given to Mary is fertile ground, where the tree of life, Jesus, our saviour, rises, blossoms and bears fruit. □



MY VOCATION STORY

Fr. Ramón Darío Perera Provincial of South Argentina *O. Pori Mecoi*

Please introduce yourself

My name is Ramón Darío Perera. I have been a Salesian since 1985 when I made my first religious profession. I was born in a small town in La Pampa called Victorica, where we, as Salesians, have had a missionary presence and a school for a long time. Throughout my Salesian life, I have carried out several tasks. I spent most of my years at the Del Valle Agro-Technical School at different times and had various roles in the province.

Is it difficult to coordinate a complex reality like Southern Argentina?

This is a difficult question to answer. In some respects, the complexity, size, and number of houses mean it takes work. To give you an idea, our province has 64 houses. Between the northernmost house (Zarate) and the southernmost house (Usuhaia) on the island of Tierra del Fuego, more than 3100 kilometres of land stretch from the Atlantic to the Andes. A visit to a retreat house always involves a journey of many kilometres.

On the other hand, there is a very beautiful and thriving community. This immense mission we have in southern Argentina is carried out by Salesians and laypeople who are very committed to Don Bosco's charism. The Salesian mission is beautiful, and our homes are full



of life. It is a varied mission with very creative and daring proposals. So, if we take this into account, I can say that the task of animation is much easier.

Salesian Argentina is full of magnificent realities. What are some of the most significant?

There are many inspiring realities in Salesian Argentina. We, as two provinces, share a multitude of commonalities. The north of Argentina is adorned with significant and inspiring realities, where a demanding Salesian mission is met with an extraordinary commitment from Salesians and laypeople. However, to provide a more detailed account, I will focus on what I am most familiar with, namely southern Argentina.

1. The enduring presence among the indigenous populations: it is a well-known fact that Don Bosco dispatched the congre-

gation's inaugural missionary expedition to Patagonia. The bravery and audacity of those pioneering Salesians continue to inspire us today. Since then, we have maintained a steadfast bond with the Mapuche people, a testament to our enduring commitment.

2. Our presence among the poorest: In a long process of redefining our presence, we, consecrated people have progressively moved towards the peripheries, towards the most vulnerable sectors. In many different places, in the mountains and suburbs of Buenos Aires, as well as in the cities and towns of Patagonia, we have a significant presence among the poorest.

3. The mission shared with the laity: more than half of our houses are run by lay people. We form a significant movement of consecrated and lay people in favour of the poorest young people. We work side by side, shoulder to shoulder, and this is an extraordinary wealth.

4. The diversity of pastoral proposals: a great variety of proposals favour the poorest young people. The creativity and boldness of the proposals strike me. This is a characteristic we inherited from the first missionaries, who had an extraordinary capacity for initiative.

5. The robustness of the Salesian youth movement: it is a vibrant and thriving reality. Our houses are brimming over with young people, a clear indicator of our strong pastoral health and a beacon of hope for the future.

6. The school of holiness in Patagonia: Just as in Valdocco, there was a school of holiness where the educators were saints

(Don Bosco, Don Rua, etc.) and the pupils were saints (Dominic Savio), there was also a school of holiness in Patagonia. The saints were the educators (Br Zatti), and saints were the pupils (Cefferino, Laura). This is a great challenge for the Province.

The Salesians in Argentina have a wonderful experience in the field of agricultural schools: what are they today?

There is indeed a great tradition of agro-technical schools in Argentina. Agricultural education is something we have maintained for a long time. And we have made a significant contribution to the country. In this sense, we are very well known. In Argentina, agricultural production is very diverse, depending on the area. Our schools have also been included in these production contexts. For example, the northern province has a magnificent school in Rodeo del Medio with a teaching staff that has trained a large number of professionals in the field of viticulture and has had a significant impact on the area. In the south, we have the southernmost agricultural school in Rio Grande. In this area, we are pioneers in producing fresh food under complex conditions because of the climate. So, our schools are different and very embedded in the production context. Indeed, a challenge in which we want to be leaders is to produce while respecting the environment. This is the only way to make production sustainable. Our role as educators is vital in this field. Not only do we have to raise awareness about the importance of caring for the environment, but we must also show that producing

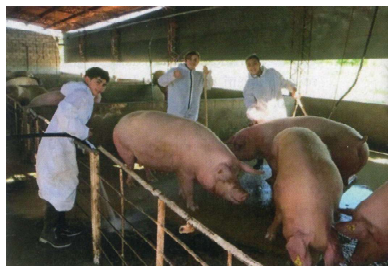
food and caring for the planet are not antagonistic terms.

What is your experience in this field?

As mentioned, I spent many years at the Del Valle agro-technical school. This allowed me to get involved in agricultural technical education. It is also a fascinating educational perspective because producing food is vital for humanity. At the same time, there is a profound connection between man and the land with work. It is a matter of passing on specific competencies and accompanying and developing all the values associated with the land, which implies the ethical commitment to take care of our common home.

Can you describe the Scuola Agrotecnica Del Valle?

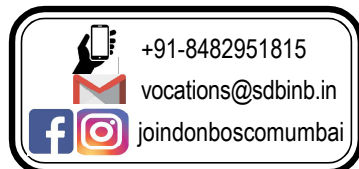
It is a beautiful school. Above all, it has a powerful experience, which is the residence. From Monday to Friday, there are about 300 boys and girls. Half boys and half girls. In my experience as a Salesian, there is no more robust educational experience than living with youngsters. And Valdocco. It is Don Bosco's experience. I understood the preventive system much more deeply in the experience of living with boys and girls. In the valley, I perceived the educational power of the environment, the value of the close presence of the adult, and the immense educational power of the bond in the academic relationship. We work hard to ensure that technical training in agriculture and animal husbandry is of the highest quality. But we know the school's most profound value lies in accompanying them to maturity as believers. It helps them



Salesian Argentina has a great tradition of agro-technical schools: it is not just a matter of transmitting certain skills, but also of accompanying and developing all the values linked to the earth, our common home.

grow as good Christians and honest citizens.

The other aspect of the school is agricultural education. The school prepares students to enter university or the world of work. We try to work a lot on basic training and technical orientation. The latter aspect we have a wide variety of productive educational sections. The main ones are on a scale, in a dimension, that allows us to incorporate students' practices into fair production processes. We have also made a great effort to incorporate the concept of sustainability and care for the environment into these processes. With the help of *Bon Procurement* and the German government, we built a biodigester that allows us to produce gas and biofertiliser. This helps us not only to convey an idea, but also to show a concrete experience and this has a very strong educational power. □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

The Right Sound

Sir Arthur Sullivan, the composer, returned home one night tipsy enough to make it difficult for him to remember in which row of identical houses he lived. He ambled down the row, pausing from time to time to kick the metal shoe scraper in front of the house. Coming to one, he paused, kicked it again and mumbled to himself. "That's right. E flat," and he entered the house.

Ahem...

She: "Oh, there goes Peggy Brown. Isn't she lovely? I wish I were half as good looking!"
He: (Consoling) "Oh, but you are!"

How Sad!

"Why are you so sad?"
"I was in the street-car and found a dollar on the floor. Nobody claimed it, so I shared it with my neighbour."
"I still don't see why you should be annoyed."
"But I do! I later discovered it was my own dollar!"

That's Why

Tommy came out of the room where his father had been tacking down the carpet. He was crying lustily.
"What's the matter dear?" asked the mother.
"Papa hit his finger with the hammer," sobbed Tom.
"You shouldn't cry for that; you should laugh."

"I did," said Tom sniffing.

Foresight

Visitor, (walking down the road):
"But dear child, you need not have run after me the whole way to return my umbrella, and on such a fine night, too."
Willie: "Yes, I know! But mamma was afraid if I didn't, you'd come back for it another day!"

Up and Away

Private Doherty was six feet four in his socks, and the sergeant was much shorter.
"Head up, there Doherty," called the sergeant, "There, that's better. Don't let me see your head down again!"
"Am I to be always like this?" asked Doherty, staring away right over the sergeant.
"You are, my man."
"Then it's good-bye to you, sergeant," sighed Doherty, "I'll never see you again."

Lasting Friendship

Social worker to convict: "Do any of your friends come to see you? You must be missing them."
"No, madam, they are all inside with me."

Wrong Tip

Convict No. 123: "One shouldn't take any notice of those advertising slogans. I followed the advice of one and here I am."
Convict No. 321: "Which one was it?"
"Make money at home." □

THE OPEN DOOR

A young girl living in a quiet town grew tired of the constraints of living with her parents, as is often the case with young people today.

That daughter also rejected the religious rules of her family and one day she said: "I don't want your God. I can't take it anymore. I'm leaving!" So, she left home determined to become a woman of the world. But after a short time, she was sad and discouraged because she could not find a job. She began to wander the city streets, living by her wits and poorly paid jobs. After a few years, her father died, and her mother was left alone, but the daughter was increasingly entrenched in her lifestyle.

There was no contact between mother and daughter during those years. Having learned where her daughter might be, the mother went looking for her in the city's slums. She entered every rescue centre she could find and asked: "Can I hang this picture here?" It was a photo of her in which the grey-haired woman was smiling. Beneath the photo was a handwritten message: 'I still love you...

come home!'

A few more months passed, and nothing happened. Then, one day, the daughter went into a rescue centre to ask for something to eat. As she sat absent-mindedly hearing Mass, her gaze wandered over to the notice board for no reason. She saw the photograph and thought, "But that's my mother!"

She didn't wait until Mass ended. She got up and went to look closely at the photograph. It was his mother, and she also saw what she had written: "I still love you. Come home!" Standing in front of the notice board, she began to cry. It was too good to be true.



It was already late and the sun had long set, casting a veil of darkness over the streets. But that message had stirred something deep within her, something that propelled her to start walking home. Each step was a battle against the night, and when she finally arrived, it was early in the morning. She was afraid and timidly approached the house, not quite knowing what to do.

As soon as she knocked, the door opened. She thought perhaps thieves had broken into the

house. Worried about her mother, the young woman ran into the bedroom and found her still asleep. Then she woke her up and said: "It's me! It's me! I have come back!" The mother could not believe her eyes. She dried her tears and hugged her. The daughter said: "I was so worried! The door was open, and I thought thieves had broken in!" But her mother softly told her: "No, dear. Since you left, I've never shut that door." □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I was born through a lot of turmoil externally because my paternal grandmother, and family were not accepting my mother and my birth. Throughout my life, there have been struggles on each front that looked so simple otherwise, and people did not see my internal problems or considered them flimsy, especially in my career, marriage, friends, family, and relationships. However, my most significant distress and sorrow for ten long years was to have a child. We wanted a child for about three years because we had a home loan, we waited. Then when we wanted one despite several doctors, attempts for seven years, there was no good news. The doctors could not find or explain a very severe issue. We were not aligned with the doctor's advice of IVF or IVI. After changing almost ten doctors, I prayed as always and asked God to be my doctor and healer. The Lord blessed us in the 10th year with good news, and before our 11th anniversary, we were blessed with a healthy baby boy named Rafael Asher Lima, Which Means God has healed. Also, our family prayed, especially my mother. She prayed that he be brought into the world despite the evil attempts of people to show his great power and blessed us with a child. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for blessing our child and our family. (A Devotee)

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JULY 2024

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MARY FOR US

Dear Heavenly Father,
Jesus, Holy Spirit, Mother
Mary, St. Joseph, the Saints,
the Archangels and
Angels, I thank you very
much for my safe and
successful surgery and the
good results. A special
“thank you” to St. Padre
Pio for the good results
after the surgery. Please
continue to bless and heal
us.

P. Healdt, Australia

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/benefac-
tors.

Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if
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