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*O merciful God,  
protection in our  
weakness:  
may we, who honour  
the holy Mother  
of God,  
with the help of her  
intercession,  
rise up from our  
iniquities.*

*(From the Common of Our Lady)*

## From The Editor's Desk

### WHAT ABOUT THE STONE?

Easter didn't begin as a slow, gradual triumph of dawn over darkness. It didn't creep upon us like little cats' feet. Moreover, it is not an event to be used in artful arguments or intellectual seminars.

In Easter, God confronts us - hits us in the face. This is confrontation of the highest order! Peter Gromes stated it this way: *God knows how to get our attention, and he really knows how to start a new relationship.*

Now, about the stone: Was it rolled away so Jesus could get out, or was it for us to get in? After all, God had already done a mighty work inside the tomb.

At first glance we might see rolling back the stone to be a necessary chore. But let's take another look. It would have been easy to place the stone in the opening of the tomb, but much more difficult to move once it had settled into the groove.

In his Gospel, Mark records the conversation of the women walking to the tomb on Easter morning to anoint Jesus' body saying, "Who will roll away the stone?" It was too heavy for them.

The stone would have been an obstacle for the women had the angel not rolled it away, but not the kind of obstacle God was thinking of.

The stone would keep the women from: Seeing the miracle of Easter; seeing the evidence that Jesus is alive and knowing that Jesus is not in the tomb, but in the midst of humankind.

The stone was rolled away by God's supernatural intervention, to allow us to enter the tomb to see what God had done.

Today, some of us have stones blocking the entrance of our hearts. These stones slid easily into place, but like the stone at the tomb's entrance, are difficult to remove. Stones like anger, adultery, bitterness, blame-shifting, greed, hatred, lying, (and you fill in the rest) keep us from walking in the Spirit and living a rich, fulfilled life with Christ. They block our ability to see, know, and serve him. Like the women, we may cry, "Who will roll the stone away?"

About now, someone ought to be saying, "Roll it away, Lord!"

Roll away the stones that keep me from a closer walk with you Lord. Roll away the people and the things that keep me from fully experiencing the joy of your love in my life. Roll away everything that keeps me from seeking you with the power of the Holy Spirit. Roll them away Lord, that I may see your glory in my life.

Then, like the women who, finding the stone rolled away, ran to tell the disciples all that they had seen, we too can run and tell the Easter message of new life in him to all who will listen.

Jesus is alive. He is risen! Our new life in Christ begins when we are able to take hold of what has been given to us and run with it, knowing that its success does not depend on us. Christ already has done the work of salvation once and for all. The battle is over, the victory is won. Alleluia!

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## COMMUNICATION IN FAMILIES

by Jeanette Brimmer

In the fifties, practically an eon ago for many of you, most of the moms in the neighborhood never worked outside the home. Those were the halcyon days when most families in Canada could get along quite well on one salary. Our family ate supper together and being the youngest of seven children, I would listen to my much older brothers and sisters discuss various topics with mom and dad. I was delighted when my brother announced he was going to be an engineer and I envisioned him travelling across the country and waving cheerfully at children when his train passed a crossing. I was so disappointed, when I learned that he was not going to be a train engineer but another kind, which meant he had to attend university. Those family dinners were warm and happy, especially on Sundays and we would pray the rosary together nearly every night.

When my sister, only three years older and I, would return from school, the aroma of dinner cooking and sometimes home-

made cookies or date bread would welcome us as we entered the house. When dad came home we would rush to greet him to receive hugs. Bedtime was always the same time except for special occasions when my brothers and sister would have a chaperoned party and played games and danced. They were older teens then and alcohol was absent, yet they always had so much fun! My grandpa Pat was there during a party, holding down the fort, and regaled us all with stories of his childhood such as dipping a pupil's braid in the ink well or watching the blacksmith toil away. After that my sisters' and brothers' pals wanted Grandpa Pat to attend their next party.

Children in those days weren't shunted off to highly organized sports such as hockey and baseball or dancing lessons which are prevalent today. My sister and I went to Brownie and later Guide meetings once a week and we took piano lessons but that was it. Playing outside using our imaginations was the most fun. We didn't have TV then so there was only radio to listen to when we were allowed to turn on a children's programme.

When our children were growing up we all ate together, since any events they went to didn't collide with supper time and when they became teenagers we would discuss many subjects including what was going on in

the world. We often went walking at Rondeau park in the winter and would have picnics and swim in the lake during the summer. We teased our son, Bryan, about getting so caught up examining something along the way that we would all have to wait impatiently for him to catch up. Computers were gradually entering the homes of a few families but they didn't do much. We took our kids to museums, pioneer villages, and fairs and when they visited their grand-parents in the city they loved going on the subway.

Children then were used to interacting with each other when they went skating, swimming or participated in other sports that were less formal and less expensive to participate in... unlike to-day. More parent started to work outside the home in the seventies but many of us chose to stay home and were there to hear about our children's day and listen to their concerns. Many moms volunteered for several hours each week either at the school, the Church or at the nursery school.

Nowadays it's different. Family dynamics have changed over the ages from the stone age when a teen might have disagreed with something a parents said, rolled her eyes and said "Ugh," to modern times today where many teens lives evolve around electronic devices such as Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, the internet and Skype. Generations Y and X in the modern world don't know life without these devices. And if electricity was suddenly not available they would be completely

lost.

Pope Francis commenting on the current reality of the family says: "Faithful to Christ's teaching we look to the reality of the family today in all its complexity, with both its lights and shadows ... Anthropological and cultural changes in our times influence all aspects of life and call for an analytic and diversified approach." Several decades ago, the Spanish bishops noted that families have come to enjoy greater freedom "through an equitable distribution of duties, responsibilities and tasks"; indeed, "a greater emphasis on personal communication between spouses helps to make family life more humane", while "neither today's society, nor that to which we are progressing allow an uncritical survival of older forms and models." It is also evident that "the principal tendencies in anthropological-cultural changes," are leading "individuals in personal and family life, to receive less and less support from social structures than in the past." (AL 32)

Electronic devices have both negative and positive uses. One family I know is so completely caught in the web of electronic equipment that they hardly communicate with each other at all.



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The kids take their gaming devices to visit their grandparents and other relatives and really don't interact with the older people. Even when they play with their peers they text each other and play games and seldom play outside in the sunshine. Even at bedtime they take their iPhones to bed and because they do not have a regular bed-time they sometimes stay up too late. And the bright lights of their devices keep their brains stimulated rather than allowing a dark room to soothe them to sleep. Lack of enough sleep is bad for everyone but especially school-aged children and teens.

On the other hand, a mother who escaped from Iran several years ago is not afraid to limit her children's devices as well as TV. She is a doctor and realizes how much watching too much TV as well as using the internet and playing games too often can stifle their creativity. Both her children learned to play the violin when they were very young and now play beautifully and the boy is touring with a youth orchestra besides getting excellent marks in school. Both seem to be well-adjusted teens that also play sports to round out their activities.

Many families find that even dinner-time is interrupted by media distractions such as cell phones, texting and e-mails. If parents want to save a stress-free time to communicate with their children during dinner they must be strong enough to declare that all devices must be turned off during a meal or family time. Parents often try to be their children's friends and forget that they must be the parents and set

certain boundaries.

An excellent example of an electronic device being used to improve communication in the family is Skype. A friend's parents live one thousand miles away from their grandchildren but they communicate with them regularly with Skype which allows both parties to talk face to face on the computer once a week. They can also e-mail or text their grandchildren and have established a close relationship with their faraway pals. Besides helping with communication skills over long distances computers can be used to help children as well as adults to do research using the internet but the information being used must come from a trustworthy source. Also parents can keep an eye on their older children when they are out and if a teen gets into a dangerous or unhealthy situation they can call or text their parents to pick them up.

Social skills can be adversely affected by too much time gaming, texting or being on the internet. When teens are not interacting with the outside world enough they cannot practice social skills and may even become depressed more easily according to some child experts. They also may not do as well in their school work. The brain releases dopamine which is related to focus and attention so when children become too immersed in the electronic world their brains become desensitized by stimulus surges and they are less able to concentrate on less exciting bookwork.

In the above mentioned Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

Pope Francis goes on: "Dialogue is essential for experiencing and fostering love in marriage and family life. Yet it can only be the fruit of a long and demanding apprenticeship. Men and women, young people and adults, communicate differently. They speak different languages and they act in different ways. Our way of asking and responding to questions, the tone we use, our timing and any number of other factors condition how well we communicate. We need to develop certain attitudes that express love and encourage authentic dialogue. (AL 136)

Families can do things to allow more interaction together in many ways. A game night using cards or playing board games such as Trivial Pursuit can bring family members together. A family night can be scheduled once a week or more. Parents can ask their pre-teens or teens to help out with chores such as raking leaves or shoveling snow or cleaning up garbage that has collected around the house. This not only gives them more fresh air but also a sense of purpose by contributing to their family through physical work. TV, computer and game time can be restricted to a certain amount of time, especially on school nights. Families could go on walks together to appreciate nature and get some exercise playing sports together but cell phones and other devices should be banned. Around the holidays such as Thanksgiving and Easter, all family members could work together while also having fun by decorating the home and baking and preparing special dishes for

the event.

I love to see a young mother or caregiver pushing a child in a pram or stroller while they talk and pay attention to the little one by pointing out the pretty butterfly, the bug crawling up a tree and other gifts God has given us through nature. Parents give good example by not constantly texting, or playing games on the computer or looking things up on the internet. They take time to be available to their children and interact with them.

Stress can build up to an unbearable degree when family members are stuck in their own little worlds and when the children's activities are too numerous that they don't have room for down time to just relax. Family life becomes too frantic for both parents and children. Memories of the family are built on the activities they do together. I doubt anyone would want to take pictures of everyone in the family caught up with an electronic device. In our super-paced frenetic age we need to slow down and savour life. We need to interact with other people and nature and enjoy the real world which is far more interesting than the virtual world. And we need God to guide us to bring our children up to be well rounded, creative and knowledgeable about history and other topics.

Families are precious and we need to value them and defend them to set an example for future generations. If we communicate well with family members including the extended family our children will be blessed with happy memories to dwell on in their adult years. □

## WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

by Melanie D'Souza

**W**ith four moves over the last twelve months, I've had some serious downsizing to do. It gave me the opportunity to reevaluate not only my worldly belongings but also the friendships I've had all these years.

Maybe you share the same sentiment or maybe you don't - but sometimes it is possible to stay strong friends with those you haven't seen or kept in touch with a while. And when you do meet, it seems like nothing had ever changed! While I've learnt to master long distance friendships as an international student, I've also now learnt to think about my friendships differently than ever before.

Weird as it may sound, this is why I've learnt to enjoy those 'unbearably' long transcontinental flights and cross-country bus rides. Each time I alight, having done the same thing: temporarily made friends with the stranger by my side - embarking on a story-telling journey even if I am never going to cross paths with them again. Sure, I might be more comfortable doing so than most folks - but it definitely makes the ride more interesting. Why? Because it is easy to see to the benefit in learning from others' life stories and backgrounds different from your own!

Most of us grow in places with people exactly like us. Similar families, demographic. If you grew up Catholic in Bandra or South Mumbai, India, chances are you attended convent school like the family members before you, gear up for a Catholic college education in one of those beautiful Gothic buildings. You may have different ambitions from your peers but it's only when you actually leave your nest that you realise what the world has to offer, right?

It was only when I shipped myself three continents and ten-something time zones away, that I realised that it was entirely possible to enjoy a great friendship with people completely unlike me. Often for most of us, this first brush with someone different, someone new comes in form of *The College Roommate*.

University of Paris, 1529. Three young men kickstart what becomes a friendship to remember. As *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything* tells us, Ignatius Loyola, Pierre Favre and Francis Xavier show us what it is to be 'Friends in the Lord', an Ignatius label. While Ignatius was significantly older, in his late 30s, than the two others in their young 20s, he also was a stark contrast to his friends'

personalities, thanks to his intense soldier-like avatar and strict habits. Francis, having come straight from his home in a Spanish castle, brought his pride, worldliness and enthusiasm along with him - which you would think was enough to overwhelm Pierre who came from a humble, simple, agricultural background. Yet these college roommates show us that **the greatest of friends need not be cut from the same cloth**. They also had much to learn from each other regarding their different spiritual journeys. While one of them had seen less of the world and his relationship with God was one that stemmed from his *cradle faith*, the other had experienced the world enough to undergo a dramatic conversion of faith.

### Sound Familiar Yet?

Think about the significant diversity in the 'friendships' that you have now! The friends of occasion - that friend from high school you occasionally Facebook message, those friends you meet back in your hometown or at a reunion that make you feel that time stood still. On the other hand, there are friends of convenience who are still as essential - peers at work, commuter buddies, neighbours and roommates. Some of us even consider teachers, employers and family as close companions.

While we treasure these friendships across the various spheres of life that we occupy, we also treat them differently based on our personalities. All the same, we know too well that the choices in our life we make and the characters we adopt have a great deal to do with our friendships - despite how independent we may try to project

ourselves.

Time and money aren't the only way to value these friendships. The ongoing political climate in the U.S., my current location, showed me how Catholics as a close-knit group can become polarised. It's unfortunate to see how people disregard valuable friendships and faith over man-made political issues of morality. Therefore it is time, we took steps to check our friendships.

Be unafraid of judgement - what manmade religion can bring with it. Team up with your friends to be more than just average Mass buddies - share some of the struggles that you have despite your beliefs and opinions. You might be in the same boat! Avoid drama and learn when to walk away from toxic relationships. It's easier than you think - know when the *basic tenets of friendship* seem scarce: *respect and mutual understanding*. Use your friendship as a great way to not only teach one another about each other, but to learn about yourself. Your friend can be your mirror, your moral sounding board!

Jesus shows us a great example of how we can see God's creation in every friendship and relationship that we have. He befriended tax collectors, Roman soldiers, Pharisees - so different from Himself - yet with a love so deep. It still stands that at times, it is hard to pursue and retain friendships with those who think differently from us. However, it helps to remember that we were all wonderfully made by Him - irrespective of our religious and worldly beliefs! Show each other the compassion and appreciation they deserve - *there's no better way to love Him than to respect his creation*. □



## SALESIAN SAINTS

### ANDREW BELTRAMI 1870 - 1897

**H**e was born in Omegna (Novara) on Lake Orta on June 24, 1870. Andrew possessed a lively temperament. At thirteen he entered the Salesian College of Lanzo, where he spent three years continuing the studies that he had begun and graduated to classical studies which he completed with excellent results. He had a firm will power and he spent happy years at the house of Lanzo. Writing to his mother he said: "In this college I am very happy because I have found the right answer to some of my deepest aspirations: a serious spiritual path, a strong sacramental experience and an invigorating family environment. He showed signs of a genuine vocation. After a long talk with Don Bosco he decided become a Salesian. "The grace of a vocation," he would later write, "was for me a wholly unique grace. The Lord had put into my heart a firm persuasion and an intimate conviction that the only way for me was to become a committed Salesian." He was the eldest of ten children. His parents were deeply Christian however they struggled to accept that their son wanted to become a Salesian. Ultimately his faith prevailed. His mother accompanied him from the Salesian house of Foglizzo and handed him over to the Novice Master.

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In 1886 he began his novitiate and received his cassock at the hands of Don Bosco himself who would say of the young novice: "There is only one Beltrami." On October 2, 1887, as was the custom, he made his profession to our holy founder. "From this moment, I promise you," he told his Novice Master, "I will double my efforts to become a saint. Not what appeals to me but everything that pleases the Lord." In the two years (1888-1889) he spent in Turin-Valsalice he completed the two-year course as a private student. At this time he came to know a Polish Prince, now Blessed Augustus Czartoryski, who had recently entered the Congregation. He would contract tuberculosis and would soon meet Fr Beltrami. They became good friends and the latter would become his guardian angel at Turin-Valsalice and in other places where the patient

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Don Bosco's Madonna

had to stay. The two developed a deep spiritual friendship, being of deep fraternal assistance to each other. It was not hard to imagine the influence that Fr Augustus exercised on the young Andrew, strengthening his faith, teaching him to suffer out of love and gradually instilling in him a spirituality of repa-ration that was to become a characteristic specific to Beltrami. When in turn Beltrami took ill with the same disease, among the probable causes we must also count that he was frequently in the company of Augustus.

It was a cold February day in 1891 when the first symptoms of the disease revealed itself that would eventually lead to his death. He was only 20 years old! He was promptly taken care of and he seemed to improve. But it was not long before the disease progressed inexorably. He wrote to his mother: "I know my health condition is unfortunate though there is an indication of a remission but how mistaken we were! The Lord has given me this sickness and I don't want to be healed. It is the folly of the Cross. In eternity we will know the reason."

He only feared that he would not have the time to become a priest and so the superiors, very wisely, while making novenas for his healing, also hastened his preparation with the necessary dispensations to admit him to the priesthood and it took place on January 8, 1893. He was not yet 23 years old. He was ordained in the rooms of Don Bosco by Monsignor Giovanni Cagliero, the first Salesian Bishop and later

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Cardinal. From then on it was Calvary: a long ordeal of five years. During this five-year period he advanced in sanctity thanks to the acceptance, love and offering of his suffering. He had a strong will which manifested itself in all his trials. A vehement desire for holiness consumed his painful existence which was filled with incessant work too. His room became his entire world, in it he wrote and celebrated his Mass.

His room was near the chapel, so he could see the Tabernacle. He spent long periods of silent adoration before that Tabernacle.

February 20, 1897, anniversary of his illness, he wanted to go to celebrate Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. It was his last outing. After this he gradually got worse. On December 29, his situation worsened. During the night he got up by himself and put on his cassock and reclined on his bed. Death came to him on the morning of December 30 in the presence of some of his confreres. He was 27 years old. Just three months earlier Therese of Lisieux had died at age 24 consumed by the same disease.

Don Beltrami announces to the Salesian Family the difficult message of redemptive suffering, indeed pain that can be mysteriously joyful in proportion to the love with which you accept it. "Believe," he wrote one day to his rector don Scappini, "in the midst of the pain, I'm completely and fully happy, so I can smile when people come to offer me their condolences and hope for healing."

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# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## ST PEDRO DE SAN JOSE DE BETANCUR

April 18

**M**any saints have given us an example of a life of poverty following Jesus Christ. They have also been able to recognize the features of the child of Bethlehem in the faces of the poor. On July 3, 2002, in Guatemala, the Pope Saint John Paul II canonized Saint Pedro de Betancur, a Third-Order Franciscan, founder of the Order of Bethlehem, who, through his love for Christ, took up the cause of the poor.

### Making himself small

Pedro de San Jose de Betancur was born on the island of Tenerife, part of the Spain's Canary Islands, which lie southwest of Morocco. He was born in the village of Villaflor on March 21, 1621, and was baptized the same day. His parents were fervent Christians for whom faith and God's love were the greatest of riches. The five children, of whom Pedro was the eldest, had right before their eyes their father's ardent prayer, as well as their mother's sacrifices for the poor. Pedro's character was influenced by certain qualities that came to him probably from one



of his grandfathers, a Norman gentleman who had conquered the Canary Islands in the service of Henry III of Castile. Pride, the desire to always be in the spotlight, the instinct for victory and domination, the inclination to make decisions alone but severe asceticism, sustained by grace, helped him correct these faults and practice the virtues of humility, simplicity, and obedience.

While still quite young, the boy looked after his father's flock which he led to the valleys and beaches of the island. This contact with nature developed in him a capacity for wonder and calm contemplation of God in creation. After his father's death, Pedro left his work as a shepherd to farm the family's small property. One day he heard Brother Luis de Betancur, a relative, speak about America, about its forests and its wealth, but also about the American Indians and Blacks who were reduced to slavery. A profound compassion for these unfortunate ones and a desire to go evangelize them was born in his heart.

However, Mrs. de Betancur was making marriage plans for her son. Pedro did not share his mother's intention. Finally, an aunt pointed out to her nephew the road to the sea and affirmed, "You must go meet God like Peter on the water." Filled with joy, Pedro boarded a ship to cross the Atlantic. Before he left, he wrote to his mother that a greater love and a service of utmost importance was pressing him to leave everything. He boarded a ship and signed on as a cabin-boy to pay for the voyage. He worked so ardently and his kindness was such that when the ship arrived at its destination, the commander did not want to give him his freedom. Shortly thereafter, he came down with such terrible fevers that they had to disembark him on a beach in Guatemala, a country in Central America that belonged to Spain at the time.

A witness to the suffering of slaves condemned to forced labour, he was interested in their

fate. He sought to improve their situation with his own salary, taught them with kindness, and recited the Rosary with them so as to change their depraved morals.

### At the foot of the crucifix

One day he knocked on the door of the Franciscan monastery. Father Fernando Espino welcomed him with kindness and, observing the depth of the young man's spirituality, invited him to study for the priesthood. He entered the Third Order of Saint Francis, taking their habit in January 1655 before withdrawing to El Calvario Church, where he assumed the role of sacristan. Pedro spent hours in adoration before a very expressive crucifix which was venerated in the sanctuary. In his free time, he performed works of mercy, looking after all the deprived, visiting hospitals, prisons, the poor, the hungry, and unemployed immigrants. He taught children their catechism with songs and games. Little by little, his kindness and his reputation for holiness drew throngs of people to El Calvario.

Brother Pedro bought, in February 1658, a very poor house, which he named "The Little House of Our Lady of Bethlehem." He welcomed there street children, whites, mestizos, Creoles, blacks. Soon, students, foreigners, and poor convalescents who had been turned away from hospitals were streaming there. Thus did this man with little formal schooling become the founder of the first free basic literacy school in Central America, and founder of the first convales-



cence hospital in the Spanish territories in the New World. His success was such that he quickly had to expand the location. Thanks to gifts, Pedro acquired neighbouring houses. Trusting in Providence, he did not look for fixed revenues, but relied upon the generosity of wealthy families which took turns providing food every day for the destitute who lived there.

#### He who will live, will see

Father Manuel Lobo, a Jesuit who was Brother Pedro de Betancur's spiritual director for fifteen years, wrote, "It was because of the great devotion he professed to the mystery of the birth of the Son of God, that, inspired from Heaven, he gave his establishment the name of Our Lady of Bethlehem." He gladly welcomed these companions and organized a very simple common life in which prayer and penitence alternated with works of corporal charity. His desire was to build a real hospital especially for convalescents who still needed care and had to recover both their physical strength and the health of their soul. The bishop granted the permission and work began immediately.

#### The greatest service of God

During construction of the hospital, Pedro continued to perform works of mercy. He provided hospitals and prisons with provisions, assisted the dying, restored harmony in divided households, and convoked prostitutes, for whom he obtained means of making an honest living. He gave special attention to those who were in a situation

of greater weakness, and consequently of greater need.

Another of the humble Tertiary's apostolates was to travel through the streets of the city at night, ringing a bell and shouting this warning: "Brothers, remember that we have a soul, and if we lose it, we will not be able to regain it." In this way, he reminded everyone of the great thought of eternity and brought about conversions.

On April 20, 1667, Pedro, weakened by his tireless work, came down with bronchopneumonia. Seeing death coming, he designated Rodrigo of the Cross his successor and, blessing him with the words "May God make you humble!" he outlined for him the guiding principles that he needed to maintain the work he had undertaken. On April 25, he rendered his soul to God in a rapture. Rodrigo of the Cross faithfully executed the founder's wishes and wrote the constitutions of the Order of Bethlehem. He accepted Sisters as well as Brothers. In 1674, Pope Clement X approved the rules of both communities.

#### A legacy that cannot be lost

At his canonization St John Paul II said: "Brother Pedro is a legacy that cannot be lost. He must be the subject of continuous gratitude; he must be imitated with renewed purpose. This legacy must inspire among Christians and among all citizens the desire to transform the human community into a large family within which the dignity of the person is promoted through effective recognition of his inalienable rights." □

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

### It's all changed

*Mary:* "I thought you and Tessie weren't speaking to each other."

*Roberta:* "Oh, yes, we are now. I wanted to find out what Elsie told her about me."

### Correction, please!

*Violet:* "What is your worst fault, my dear?"

*Vera:* "My vanity. I spend hours before the mirror admiring my beauty."

*Violet:* "That isn't vanity, that's just imagination."

### Quite strange welcome

"Do make yourselves at home, ladies," said a lady one day to her visitors. "I'm at home myself, and I would like you all to be."

### Turns out all right

"I do hope that my visits aren't boring to your husband, Julia dear?"

"Oh, no, indeed. However dejected he is when you come, he's always happy when you go."

### Great hopes

"Well, and how are you getting on with your courtship of the banker's daughter?"

The young suitor beamed happily. "Not so bad," he replied. "I'm getting some encouragement now."

"Really?" put in his friend. "Is she beginning to smile sweetly on you, or something?"

"Not exactly," replied the young man, "but last night she told me she had said 'no!' for the last time."

### Just the same

"Betty," said the father, "your young man, Freddy, stays until a very late hour. Hasn't your mother said anything to you about this?"

"Yes, daddy," replied Betty sweetly. "Mother says men haven't changed a bit."

### Back where it belongs

*Suitor* (sighing): "Well, since you don't want to marry me after all, perhaps you'll return my ring."

*Girl* (acidly): "If you must know, your jeweller has called for it already."

### Just wait for some more

He was a bit shy, and after she had thrown her arms around him and kissed him for bringing her a bouquet of flowers, he arose and started to leave.

"I am sorry I offended you," she said.

"Oh, I'm not offended," he replied, "I'm going for more flowers."

### What truly matters

He had proposed. She tossed her head haughtily.

"You!" came her scornful reply.

"You want to marry me?"

"Yes," murmured her lover.

"But my dear boy," she went on, "You've only known me three days."

"Oh, much longer than that really!" he said. "I've been to the bank where your father has his account, for years." □



## LOVE CONQUERS DEATH

by Mattia Principe

*Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb because she cannot resign herself to the idea that the man she loved is no more. Lo and behold, “she saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb!”*

**I**f Christ has not risen, then our faith is in vain and we are not to be believed.” Paul’s words express very eloquently the only foundation of our Christian Faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and our celebration of Easter, the feast of all feasts, and everyone’s hope of a life without end.

At the hour of Jesus’ death, there were just a few women at the foot of the cross – among them Mary Magdalene – and the disciple whom Jesus loved. These few faithful ones were those who did not believe that that the rabbi, the prophet from Nazareth whom they so dearly loved had died such an ignominious death. Death seemed to have had the last word in the story of Jesus; in that life that was meant to depict so perfectly the true face of God.

But there was still someone

who did not give up: “On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb while it was still dark” (Jn 20, 1). But who was Mary Magdalene? She was a woman with a terrible past; liberated from “seven demons” thanks to her encounter with Jesus. She consequently began a new life by instantly following Jesus as his disciple, something scandalous according to the Jewish custom. The Gospels say nothing more about this unusual follower. Tradition will identify Mary Magdalene as a prostitute, the one who washed the feet of Jesus, the “one who had her many sins forgiven her because she had loved much” (Lk.7, 47).

It was she who came back to the tomb. The fourth Gospel reveals the profound motive for her action: Mary Magdalene

went to the tomb because she could not resign herself to the idea that the man she loved so dearly had died and lo and behold, “she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb!” Her immediate reaction: “She ran and went to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple.” She spoke to them with words that could have appeared to be a hallucination, almost incredible, yet it was her intense love that caused another trip to the tomb, this time it was that of Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Even in this case it was motivated by love.

Peter, probably, despite having seen the shroud and the cloth that covered Jesus’ face, had not understood the extraordinary event, but for the beloved disciple things were different. “He went in and the other disciple who reached the tomb first saw and he believed.” We are presented here with the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus: “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, I will come to him and manifest myself to him” (Jn 14: 21). If it is true that “faith comes from hearing,” here we understand that faith is born of love; only a love for Jesus permits us to understand the depth of the Scriptures and to discern from the empty tomb that Christ is risen.

We find Mary “near the tomb” weeping and seeking Jesus. A



*The Risen Jesus tells Mary Magdalene: “Do not touch me,” ceramic of Giovanni della Robbia, XVI Century, Florence, National Museum of Bargello*

stubborn love, perhaps a mistaken quest; yet all this seems to “compel” the Risen Lord to reveal himself through a word: “Mary.” The voice that had given her life was the voice of the one who is now risen from the dead and is alive forever and Mary goes to grasp his feet and exclaims: “Rabbuni, Master!” Then she hurries to tell the disciples about the resurrection. She is “the apostle to the apostles” as the Church tradition affirms.

Mary’s joyous proclamation and the gaze of faith of the Beloved Disciple have spanned centuries; it still recounts the fact that the word which is the Good News is meant for all humanity. “God raised Jesus,” life is stronger than death, love is stronger than death! This should be the Easter Song that Christians should sing. □



# Quiet Spaces

## I DESIRE MERCY NOT SACRIFICE

*Pope Francis' Wednesday Audience, April 13, 2016*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

We have heard the Gospel account of the call of Matthew. Matthew was a "publican", namely, a tax collector on behalf of the Roman Empire, and for this reason was considered a public sinner. But Jesus calls Matthew to follow him and to become his disciple. Matthew accepts, and invites Jesus along with the disciples to have dinner at his house. Thus an argument arises between the Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus over the fact that the latter sits at the table with tax collectors and sinners. "You cannot go to these people's homes!", they said. Jesus does not stay away from them, but instead goes to their houses and sits beside them; this means that they too can become his disciples. It is likewise true that being Christian does not render us flawless. Like Matthew the tax collector, each of us trusts in the grace of the Lord regardless of our sins. We are all sinners, we have all sinned. By calling Matthew, Jesus shows sinners that he does not look at their past, at their social status, at external conventions, but rather, he opens a new future to them. I once heard a beautiful saying: "There is no saint without a past nor a sinner without a future". This is what Jesus does. There is no saint without a past nor a sinner without a future. It is enough to respond to the call with a humble and sincere heart. The Church is not a community of perfect people, but of disciples on a journey, who follow the Lord because they know they are sinners and in need of his pardon. Thus, Christian life is a school of humility which opens us to grace.

Such behaviour is not understood by those who have the arrogance to believe they are "just" and to believe they are better than others. Hubris and pride do not allow one to recognize him - or herself as in need of salvation, but rather prevent one from seeing the merciful face of God and from acting with mercy. They are a barrier. Hubris and pride are a barrier that prevents a relationship with God. Yet, this is precisely Jesus' mission: coming in search of each of us, in order to heal our wounds and to call us to follow him with love. He says so explicitly: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (v. 12). Jesus presents himself as a good physician! He proclaims the Kingdom of God, and the signs of its coming are clear: He heals people from disease, frees them from fear, from death, and from the devil. Before Jesus, no sinner is excluded — no sinner is excluded! Because the healing power of God knows no infirmity that cannot be healed; and this must give us confidence and open our heart to the Lord, that he may come and heal us.

By calling sinners to his table, he heals them, restoring to them the vocation that they believed had been lost and which the Pharisees had

forgotten: that of being guests at God's banquet. According to the prophecy of Isaiah: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things..." (25:6, 9).

When the Pharisees see only sinners among the invited, and refuse to be seated with them, Jesus to the contrary reminds them that they too are guests at God's table. Thus, sitting at the table with Jesus means being transformed and saved by him. In the Christian community the table of Jesus is twofold: there is the table of the Word and there is the table of the Eucharist (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21). These are the medicines with which the Divine Physician heals us and nourishes us. With the first — the Word — He reveals himself and invites us to a dialogue among friends. Jesus was not afraid to dialogue with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes.... No, he was not afraid: he loved everyone! His Word permeates us and, like a scalpel, operates deep in the heart so as to free us from the evil lurking in our life. At times this Word is painful because it discloses deception, reveals false excuses, lays bare hidden truths; but at the same time it illuminates and purifies, gives strength and hope; it is an invaluable tonic on our journey of faith. The Eucharist, for its part, nourishes us with the very life of Jesus, like an immensely powerful remedy and, in a mysterious way, by approaching the Eucharist we are nourished with the Body and Blood of Jesus, and by entering us, Jesus joins us to his Body!

Concluding that dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus reminds them of a word of the prophet Hosea (6:6): "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'" (Mt 9:13). Jesus also applies this prophetic phrase to human relationships: the Pharisees were very religious in form, but were not willing to sit at the table with tax collectors and sinners; they did not recognize the opportunity for mending their ways and thus for healing; they did not place mercy in the first place: although being faithful guardians of the Law, they showed that they did not know the heart of God! It is as though you were given a parcel with a gift inside and, rather than going to open the gift, you look only at the paper it is wrapped in: only appearances, the form, and not the core of the grace, of the gift that is given!

Dear brothers and sisters, all of us are invited to the table of the Lord. Let us make our own this invitation and sit beside the Lord together with his disciples. Let us learn to look with mercy and to recognize each of them as fellow guests at the table. We are all disciples who need to experience and live the comforting word of Jesus. We all need to be nourished by the mercy of God, for it is from this source that our salvation flows. Thank you! ☐

## THE MAN WHO GOT WHAT HE WANTED

From Fr. Ian Doullton's collection of stories

**T**his is the story of a man who got what he wanted. He thought he got it for nothing. Here are the facts. Read the story and see what you think.

Eddie Stanford always thought he was a pretty wise guy. He knew what he wanted and he was out to get it without any help from anybody. He used to argue with Ted, the fellow who worked with him, his night manager at a filling station and repair shop.

This was what the conversation sounded like one late night when things were slack:

"Ted...hey Ted, what's the matter, why is Henderson's wreck back in the shop again?" Ted told him that he had complained that it wasn't running right since it came back from here. Ted continued: "I told him we'd do some more work on it." Eddie was furious: "You tell him he can take that pile of junk right out of here tomorrow morning. It will take us all day to tie that bunch of bolts together and he hasn't got the money to pay for a first class job either."

Ted tried to make Eddie understand that Henderson needed that truck. Eddie shot back: "Then tell him to take it down to Vick's. Let Vick work on it all day for peanuts."

Ted too was losing patience with Eddie's hardnosed attitude: "Ok, ok... Vick doesn't mind doing a favour for a guy who's short on cash."

Eddie's policy, and he made no secret of it was that he did nothing for free. Then he said something

that made Ted sit up: "Well, if I had the setup Vick has, Ted, I could make a million."

Ted came over to hear Eddie say it again: "You're still thinking of buying that garage of his?" Vick wouldn't sell that for anything. He says, it took five years to get a place of his own."

Eddie started making fun of Vick's hardworking style. "Can you picture yourself feeling hungry or thirsty and saying, 'God, give me a cup of coffee out of the gas pumps or something else...?' Or 'God, I want a new job?' Or will you dream that you will turn around and a car drives up and some big shot says: 'You're just the man I need, come to work in the morning and I'll pay you all the dough you want?'" Eddie shook his head and went on: "No, life doesn't work out that way, Ted. Its dog eat dog and don't you forget it! The guy has to know what he wants and he has to fight for it." Ted was so sure that Vick prized his garage so much that he told Eddie that he didn't stand a chance of getting Vick's garage. There were plenty of big offers but Vick wouldn't sell. Besides Ted knew that Eddie didn't have the capital.

Thinking that Ted was making fun of Eddie, Eddie shot back: "I've got the brains and I got the ambition and someday I'll get that garage!"

The next morning as usual Eddie went home when everybody was going to work. As he walked home he saw men waiting for their buses. They had their briefcases in hand or knapsacks on their shoulders.

There were others who looked like dumb clerks according to Eddie, so he thought, with nothing in their heads but working and sleeping and playing around. As he went on, with his hands in his pockets Eddie knew he was smarter than the guys he had just seen around the corner. He knew he had ambition. It didn't take him long to get home; home, a flat like a hundred others in the same building, a sixth floor walk-up. He knocked on the door. He was hungry. He heard hurried footsteps reaching the door and then it opened. There stood Jane, bright and smart. He asked gruffly: "Breakfast ready, Jane?"

He really looked tired, sleepy and unshaved. She asked: "Did you have a hard night, honey?" Eddie never gave her a straight answer only a disgruntled comment: "It's always bad when you're making the dough for somebody else." Jane learnt his habits and his early morning grouchy comments so she told him to lie down awhile till she got his breakfast ready.

He had hardly lain down when there was a knock on the door. It was Barney; a simple hardworking trucker who lived in the same building and earned his living ferrying produce from a farm outside town to the market in the market square. "Hi Barney, what's on your mind?" Eddie tried to put on a smile.

"It's about my truck, Eddie. Only last week you fixed it. It should run fine. I paid you \$25 and now it broke down again."

"I can't guarantee work on an old machine like that."

"I don't think you put in good parts, Eddie. I think they were old

and no good when you put them in."

"Who told you that?"

"Nobody, I just figured it out in my own head. Would you like me to spread the word around that you used bad parts when you fix cars, Eddie? Would you? I could find lots of people who would agree with me..."

Eddie felt awkward that he was put on the spot. "Ok, Ok... save your breath. Bring the truck over tomorrow and I'll go over it again."

Barney was a soft spoken man but as he left, he turned and faced Eddie and said firmly: "Eddie, this time it had better run."

Jane was listening to this conversation from the dining room and she came out as soon as Barney had left. She was upset and embarrassed and she made no secret of it. "Eddie, this isn't the first time you used old parts for repairs. You can't treat people that way. You help them, they'll help you."

Eddie was already upset with Barney's threat and he turned on Jane: "Now look, before you start preaching there's something..." There was a loud sound, like an explosion. It sounded somewhere nearby. Eddie got up from the bed. Together with Jane they came to the window and he opened it to look out. The sound seemed to have come from that direction. He could see flames. It was the apartment block just two doors down. The whole top floor was burning.

"Here come on Jane, let's get out of here before there's another explosion."

There was quite a mayhem as they reached the site. Jane was

shocked: "Eddie look those people they're hurt. They're bleeding. I'm going to stay and help."

That was not Eddie's idea of coming down here. "No, no it's too dangerous. You can see the cops pushing the people back. Come on." She was determined: "You go if you want to. I'm staying."

She was there practically the entire day. By sundown she returned home exhausted and dirty. She knocked on the door: "Eddie, it's Jane..." He sounded amused: "It's about time, girl scout. You've been gone all day." She sat down on the sofa and described to Eddie what had happened; how they had to move everyone out of the building. They found homes for everyone except one or two people. Then she hesitantly pleaded: "There's two they can't find any place for...couldn't I bring them here for a couple of days, just until the authorities can find some place for them?" Eddie was shocked: "No!" Jane seemed hurt. They were neighbours and they were known to Jane and Eddie. But Eddie was firm: "I said 'no'. I've got enough trying to make a living as it is. We're not feeding anybody else."

Jane couldn't figure out what had happened to Eddie. He had changed. She was hurt. She couldn't believe that this was the same man she had married some five years earlier and she burst into tears. He simply got up and headed for the door: "Now don't start crying. I'm going to work. See you in the morning." When the door shut, Jane flopped on the bed and wept her heart out: "Oh, please God, make him see how wrong he is. Make him change

before it's too late. He's not really a bad guy...." That was all she said before she drifted off into an exhausted sleep.

Vick's garage...that was all that was on Eddie's mind and he kept after that garage. His chance finally came. The boys got Vick at a card game one night. They started passing the bottle around. Vick had all he could do to shuffle the deck when he was sober. That night he lost everything but his shirt and still he wouldn't quit. That's where Eddie used his head. He suggested that Vick still had something left to put up so he could stay in the game. Vick did just that. So, a couple of mornings later...

Eddie was all smiles as he stood in front of his new acquisition. He thought he could shuffle the workman around: "Hey, hurry up with that hammer. I want all those old signs down today. And I want some great big new signs that say 'Eddie Stanford's Garage.'" That sounded ambitious even to the carpenter who was fixing up the new signage. The worker muttered "One name's plenty." "Maybe one was good enough for Vick. This isn't his place anymore."

"You got it away from him alright."

"Hmm... Well, that just goes to show you, you can't mix business and pleasure. The man that drinks shouldn't play cards."

"Well, now that depends on who he's playing with."

"It sure does. You tangle with a smarter guy and you lose your shirt." He knew no one was listening to him speak his mind. So he

turned to the carpenter once more: "How soon do you figure you'll have this job done?"

"As fast as I can get rid of you."

Eddie didn't like that attitude: "Hey, what's the matter with you? You act like you don't want this job. What's the matter with everybody in this town? I pay better than anybody around here and I have to go outside town to get help."

"Lucky I need work as bad as I do."

Eddie trying to act smart said: "There's plenty of work for you if you just use your head. All you need is a little ambition. You know how I got this place."

"I know so does everybody else. We all like Vick." But he didn't want to head into a quarrel so he simply asked: "Oh, just how big and beautiful do you want those letters?"

That evening, the job complete, Eddie returned home mighty pleased with himself: "Jane, it's Eddie, I'm home." When Jane came out he put his hand on her shoulder: "Hi doll, put on your coat. Come and see the new paint job I had done on the garage. It looks swell." She shrugged him off and simply said: "I'm busy right now, Eddie."

"That's what you say all the time. You've never been out of this place once in all the time I've had it."

Jane simply said: "I've seen garages before..."

But not *my* garage! What's the matter with you? Like you're not even proud of me for getting my own place?"

Jane was upset: "Not that way?" Eddie was getting rattled: "What do you mean? I won it in a straight game."

Jane went on: "Vick was drunk."

Eddie defending himself said: "Sure he was. That's why he put up the garage."

"And you took it."

"It was all strictly legal. He gave the deed himself in the presence of witnesses."

"He's still out of work. He's got four children."

"Oh, that's too bad. I'm sorry for him, but what can I do? People have to look out for themselves in this world." Eddie shook his head: "And nobody else?" Jane was hurt and on the verge of tears.

"And their own family, if they've got one. You're going to get a good living out of that garage."

Jane told Eddie that she met Vick's wife everyday and she couldn't face her. Everyone in their small town began to treat Jane like an outcast. She was angry and hurt: "Oh Eddie, why did you have to make me ashamed of you?"

He was enraged: "Ashamed of me? That's the way you act after all I've tried to do for you? What's the matter with you? You even won't let me talk about the garage. Every time I try, you cut me dead with something like 'your coffee's getting cold' or 'I took your grey suit to the cleaner.' You don't even talk to me when I come home. You just sit there and stare at me."

Then it struck him: "It's living in this crazy town that's making you act like that. You know if it wasn't for the garage, I'd clear out of this place? I don't get any local trade anyway. Nobody comes to my place except tourists, a lot of strangers...the old crowd's breaking up. They don't even come to the house anymore."

**WANTED:** Continued on pg. 32

## DON BOSCO, MAGICIAN?

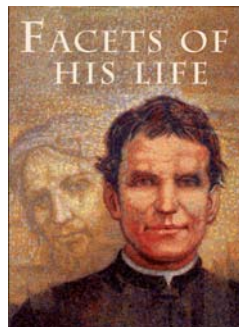
by Natale Cerrato

Scholars of the occult have recently returned to prominence with the help of the media that have touted trades like sorcery and spells, witchcraft and black and white magic. Perhaps the most mysterious city (of the time) would have to be Turin, which was the centre (it was said) of secret rituals, magic and cults.

In this context, out of curiosity we examine some “paranormal” episodes in the life of Don Bosco, which some say were even pranks.

This was not something novel. Back in April of 1874 while the saint left for Rome after having made an attempt, on behalf of the bishops, to negotiate a compromise between the Holy See and the Italian Government on the appointment of Bishops, on April 14, 1874, “*Il Fischietto*,” (n. 45, 4 April 1874, p. 1) a satirical anticlerical tabloid of Turin, believing that Don Bosco had already returned, welcomed him with mocking comments about his efforts toward conciliation, and viciously styled him a miracle-worker when it came to wresting money from pious simpletons. (EBM X, 242)

They did not want to mistake him with a certain Bartholomew Bosco a famous magician, born in Turin in 1783. He had been around the capitals of Europe receiving great acclaim. He died in Dresden in 1863, a very rich man. And “*Il Fischietto*” a dozen years later did not miss the



opportunity to make a caricature of Don Bosco, comparing him to the great illusionist who had since deceased.

But the “miraculous” was certainly present in Don Bosco’s life which was certainly similar to the mysterious traits present in other saints.

### Don Bosco’s Magic

It was accepted on good authority that Don Bosco used his conjuring tricks to entertain his friends notwithstanding the fact that he once got into serious trouble. At Chieri, a tailor named Thomas Comino with whom John Bosco stayed when he was a student, had retired but was amazed at John’s performances. Macaroni turned into bran, wine into water, money into little pieces of tin and maybe a live squawking chicken into jelly. The good Thomas was convinced that the devil had a hand in this so he spoke to Fr Luigi Bertinetti,

his neighbour who reported it to the parish priest of the Cathedral, the Canon Burzio.

John was called to an *audientium verbum*, to render an account of his actions. He reached the Canon’s house as he was praying his breviary, so he took advantage of the time to prepare himself for the interview. Then came the questioning: “They tell me that you know the thoughts of others, you can tell how much money is in a pocket, you can change white to black. Some people think you are possessed or under the influence of the devil. Tell me, how do you do it?” In response John asked him the time. The Canon put his hand into his pocket but did not find his watch. “Then can you give me five soldi?” urged the budding magician. The theologian dug into his pockets and shook them out...but could not find his purse. “Ah, you rascal! You spawn of the devil or slave of his...I am forced to denounce you.”

But John explained: “I’ll explain it all quickly. Just after I came in, you gave some alms to a beggar. You left your purse on the prie dieu. Then you went into another room, leaving your

watch on that side table. I hid them both; you thought you had them on your person, while they were really under this lamp shade.” So saying, I lifted the lampshade and recovered both objects that the devil was supposed to have taken away. The good canon had a hearty laugh. Finally he told him, “Go and tell your friends that wonderment is the result of ignorance” (cf *Memoirs of the Oratory* 99-100).

### The Miracles of Don Bosco

Don Bosco accomplished several other wonders for which the dexterity of a magician wasn’t enough.

In the month of February 1879 while he was in Marseille he encountered some serious difficulties regarding his work in that seaside town where Father Joseph Bologna was Rector of the Salesian house that had recently opened. To foil some embarrassment Providence intervened in a miraculous way to change the situation. A mother from Asti had brought her child, in a pitiable situation: feeble; with rickets; he could barely drag himself on crutches.

Don Bosco said a few words to comfort the poor lady; then he blessed the crippled boy and told him to throw aside his crutches. The boy straightened up, threw away his crutches and began to run around the room. The mother, in hysterics, grabbed his crutches and ran after her son shouting: A miracle! A miracle! A miracle!



To put it briefly, news of the miracle spread throughout the city, opening the hearts of the Marseilles to the Salesian work. It was just eight months later that Father Bologna dared to ask Don Bosco and this was the reply he received: "You see, Don Bosco felt that he was just getting nowhere in France, and so he told Our Lady, 'Come now (Là), let's get started'" (cf EBM 14,68).

That expression "Come now..." (Là in Piedmontese) is priceless in its conciseness. It sounds both like a reproach or an admonition at the same time, an exhortation or a plea, as if to say: "That's enough, let's do something." This reveals the filial trust that Don Bosco placed in Our Lady Help of Christians. He trusted her completely. Indeed he had a certain determination to obtain from God a miracle if a miracle was needed.

Don Bosco really obtained miracles like these, but in 1884 while drawing up his will, Don Bosco wrote to the Salesians:

"I earnestly recommend to all my sons that they take great care when talking or writing, never to relate or assert that Don Bosco ever obtained graces from God or performed any kind of miracle. He would commit a great error. Although God has been abundantly generous to me with his goodness, I have never claimed to know or do spiritual things. I have always experienced the beneficial influence of the prayers and Communions of our boys" (EBM 17,235).

### The Dreams and Prophecies of Don Bosco

The Good Lord wanted to guide

Don Bosco from his early years through dreams. They were truly extraordinary and they were incessantly repeated throughout his life. He could see in them his mission among youngsters, the field of his ministry, development of his work, the future of his congregation and of his followers.

He would narrate these dreams to his boys in Good Nights, leaving them the liberty to believe them or not. He himself, before he gave any credence to certain dreams, took appropriate precautions. But Fr Joseph Cafasso, his spiritual director and even Pope Pius IX encouraged him to take them seriously. So, were they dreams or visions? We are at a loss to make a choice, but one thing is certain; after they came to pass, they would be ridiculed as just the pedagogical exigencies of an educator's lively imagination and great sensitivity.

The dreams sometimes revealed the immanent death of some youngster. He would announce it without revealing names, not to sow fear, but because he didn't think it necessary.

Juvenile mortality in those days was very high. Suffice to consider that in just one year, 1854, in Turin alone 783 people between the ages of 14-25 died, i.e. 10% of the youth population. At Valdocco, from 1855 to 1870 around 76 youngsters died, that meant an average of 4 to 5 deaths out of an approximate total of 500 youngsters, one in every hundred, which was significantly lower than the town. However the presence of death in the house was normally a sad fact.

Today, as we know, talk of death is taboo. But the Oratory of Valdocco at the time of Dominic Savio never lacked joy even though they experienced the precariousness of life on earth from their early years.

Most of the predictions of Don Bosco then, were anything but funereal. More often they concerned the future success and long life of his children. To little Michael Rua who grieved at the death of his brother John, who thought his end was premature Don Bosco, who had, at that time printed a booklet on the miracle of the Most Holy Sacrament of Turin said: "In fifty years we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the ninth miracle and I will be gone. But you will be there. Just remember to reprint my book. And so it happened in 1903!

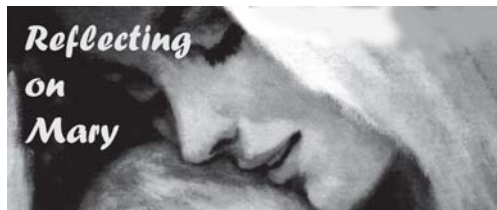
Then there were those cases, in the life of Don Bosco which concerned happenings outside Valdocco such as "the great court funerals" that he saw in a dream while the Parliament of the kingdom of Sardinia was preparing laws for the forfeiture of church property and suppression of monasteries. Don Bosco, warned by a mysterious valet of the immanent deaths in the Royal Family, decided to write to the King for a loan but feared at what was about to take place. The death of the Queen Mother Maria Teresa, of the Queen Maria Adelaide, consort of King Victor, of his brother, Duke Ferdinand of Savoy and of his son, only four years old between January and May 1855. Could it perhaps be considered a painful and inexplicable coincidence? But the letter of Don Bosco

preceded those serious bereavements of the princely family. In that case, Don Bosco did what his conscience prompted him to do while always nurturing great respect for the members of the Royal Family.

### Diabolical Harassment

Another "paranormal" phenomenon in the life of Don Bosco was diabolical harassments. God permitted the saint to be tormented by these diabolical torments as other saints were tormented too.

In 1862 the harassments intensified to the point that he spent entire nights without any sleep because he was prevented from doing so by some "pixie spirits" as he called them. Frightening voices, impetuous wind that blew cards off his table, spilling ink that stained his manuscripts, a fire that ignited itself in the hearth and spread to burn everything in his room and bed linen being pulled off by mysterious hands. When Don Bosco lit a lamp the torments ceased but they started again when he blew it off. Signs of the Cross, prayers, sprinkling holy water brought only temporary relief to the terrible harassment. In the morning Don Bosco awoke exhausted but not dismayed. He himself told those close to him what had happened and when he was asked if he was afraid: "Creepy, yes, but not frightened. Let Satan take whatever he wants, this is his time, but my time will come." And one beautiful day, or one beautiful night, if you will, they will cease (cf MB 7, 73). (*Il Tempio Di Don Bosco*, February 1991) □



## MARY, DISCIPLE OF CHRIST (1)

by Mario Galizzi

**B**lessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Luke 1.45). The first Gospel beatitude is addressed to Mary and it is attributed to her faith, her assurance and acceptance of the word of God. Because she believed whatever the Lord had said would be fulfilled in her. She could be the mother of a descendant of David, of the Christ, the Son of the Most High, because she said "Amen;" "Yes" to the word of God. Through her "yes" Mary renders possible the "yes" of the Son of God who was coming into the world, and he said: "Behold I come...to do your will, O God" (cf Hebrews 10, 7; Psalm 39, 8-9).

The Bible speaks of Abraham as the "Father of all who believe," in the Christian community this title is appropriately given to Mary: she is "the Mother of all who believe," and we may also add that Mary, because of her faith is the type of believer who is a true disciple of the Word of God.

This feature is easily

demonstrated. The disciple, in fact, is characterized by listening and accepting the word in a fertile and generous heart, a heart which has the ability to grasp and cherish the word, reflecting on it and putting it into practice, bringing forth fruit with patience and proclaiming it. This means giving Christ and the Spirit to others (cf Luke 8, 15.21; 11, 28; Acts 10: 34-48).

Mary realizes all that. Her listening to the word of God is reflexive: it immediately becomes a listening and confronting her own life with it, trying to understand her situation as a virgin and a fiancée: "How can this happen since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34) In listening, Mary strives to understand the will of God in her regard and she understands it and makes herself immediately available: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you have said" (Luke 1, 38). She says her free and decisive "yes" to the Word of God who immediately "became flesh" in her.

Mary sees and hears what the

shepherds say and the text stresses that "Mary kept all these things pondering on them in her heart" (2:19); and again: after the incident at the age of twelve in the temple and her return with Jesus to Nazareth, Luke repeats that "Mary kept all these things in her heart." (2, 51)

This is not simply making a mental note. The "pondering" (in Greek: *symballein*, to confront) means Mary did something with what she treasured in her heart. The verb could mean that Mary got in touch with her experience, putting together what she had heard and seen and recalled, trying to interpret them, to delve more deeply into the plan that God had for her and for her son and progressively adapting her life to the word of God.

Mary then appears as someone who hears the word, sensing every event that happened to Jesus, the word of God for her. Sometimes it was not very clear; indeed it even seemed incomprehensible (2:50). Even for her, as for every disciple (Luke 18:34) the path is arduous. Only other events, other

revelations of Jesus would help her understand. The resurrection of Jesus must have been for Mary a very significant step in understanding the mystery of Christ. The Council speaks of Mary "advancing on her pilgrimage of faith" (LG 58).

"Even the Mother," says one author, "goes on a pilgrimage along the solitary streets and dark valleys, trying to discover the face and the Father's will," the mystery of the Son, exactly like us.

However, it is significant to note that, after she conceived the Son of God, she makes her way to the house of Elizabeth. She goes because the angel's announcement brought to her attention that her cousin Elizabeth was in need of help. She goes, because the son she carries within her is to gift himself to others and on this journey she becomes a type of a witness to Jesus. This seems like an imperative to those who have received the word. Thus the Visitation manifests her true fidelity to the word and allows Jesus to fulfill what had been announced for John who "would

be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1, 15).

Even for a disciple, Peter, reminds Cornelius of the message of salvation: Christ acts and gives the Spirit (Acts 10, 34-48).

(to be continued)







# The Breviary of Fr Jacques

The book of daily prayer (*the breviary*) of the priest murdered in France on July 26, 2016 was added to the many relics of contemporary martyrs in the church of St Bartholomew in Rome.

The elderly Father Jacques Rame! was a gentle and humble priest. Despite his advanced age (86 years) he had not retired as chaplain of the French parish of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray (near Rouen) where he was a chaplain for many years and where he nurtured respectful, sensitive and warm relationships with everyone even the imam of the local mosque. The ferocity with which the two young extremists violently killed him on July 26, 2016 while he was celebrating Mass, greatly shocked the world.

*"All of us are meant to be contemplatives. Frequently we assume that this is reserved for some rare monastic life, lived by special people who alone have been called by God. But the truth of the matter is that each of us is meant to have that space inside where we can hear God's voice. God is available to all of us. God says, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Each of us wants and needs to give ourselves space for quiet, and then you can begin to see with the eyes of the heart."*

(Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream, a Vision of Hope for Our Time)

On Thursday September 15, 2016 Monsignor Lebrun, the bishop of Rouen, during a prayer service placed the breviary of Fr Jacques in the church of St Bartholomew all'Isola (Rome), where Pope John Paul II had set up a memorial for the martyrs of the XX and XXI century and entrusted its custody to the Community of Saint Egidio.

The breviary was added to the relics of the contemporary martyrs and it remains open to the page 'July 25', fatally marking the feast of St James (whose name the priest bore). "Hearing the encouraging words of the Pope," said the bishop, "It was too soon for my little heart that wanted to keep Father Jacques with us, for our family. I know only too well that this detachment hurts, but it takes place as a sign of fraternity and all of us have to take that path, with everyone else even our Muslim brothers." Before the summer, in the last message that he wrote to his parishioners, Fr Jacques insisted on a spirit of brotherhood. It was read out during the prayer service: "During these moments of silence may we listen to God's invitation to take care of this world, the hungry, here where we live, that we may have a warmer, more humane and fraternal world." (Michele Nicole)



# walking with the Church

## Silence, Praying for Others, Offering Masses

From St Martin's Messenger, Ireland

*Q. I am finding myself in a very difficult and puzzling situation at the moment and wonder if you could advise me. My adult son who lives with me has not spoken to me for nearly a month now and I do not know why. I have not upset him in any way. He is happy in his job where he has a lot of responsibility and is well respected. His relationship is going well and in fact he is just about to head off on holidays. I am worried that this will not be resolved but do not know what to do. I have prayed but am still at a loss.*

*A. I can see why you are in such a dilemma; the greatest weapon of all is silence because it makes one person all powerful while rendering the other completely powerless. Obviously something is bothering your son. As you note you have not done anything but it may be that inadvertently something has happened which, while it was never your intention, has affected him. When an opportunity arises you might tell him that you have noticed grave changes in his behaviour and would like to help in any way you can. You could even apologise in advance for anything you might have said or done but cannot*

atone for unless he explains what is happening. You mentioned that he has a girlfriend and I am wondering if a quiet word with her might help; sometimes another person can act as an intermediary. Also being in a relationship we can presume she knows him well. However I would only take this as a second step. Direct communication is always the best approach. Continue to pray. God sees into all our hearts and will I am sure grant you both the grace to heal this breach. We will keep you in our prayers.

*Q. For some time now I have been writing or phoning various Congregations of Nuns or priests in Religious Orders for prayers which I badly need. Am I right in doing this? Sometimes I wonder can their prayers really help me?*

*A. Yes, their prayers can really help you. One of the beliefs of our Catholic Faith expressed in the Creed is that the Church is a Communion of Saints. The faithful on earth, the souls in Purgatory and the Saints in Heaven are all part of the mystical body of Christ and being part of the one spiritual body*

whatever we do has an effect on the rest of the body. Our good actions and our prayer for others has an effect for good on those we pray for and on the other members of the Church. The prayers of the faithful here on earth can help the souls in Purgatory and also be a help to those who are still on their pilgrim journey through life. So when we ask others to pray for us we are acknowledging our belief in the Communion of saints. Daily in the Mass we pray for all others in the Church with the belief that our prayers will help them (see following question). We are all sinners, all in need of prayer, all in need of its great power. Let us pray for one another.

**Q.** *Can a Mass be offered exclusively for one person? In many churches you will hear the priest saying that this Mass is being*

*offered for someone, naming the deceased person.*

**A.** Thank you for your question. We can never claim for ourselves or our deceased relatives or friends exclusive rights in any Mass. In every Mass we pray for the Pope, for our bishop, for the whole Church and for all those who have died. We also pray particularly for the person whose name is mentioned, understanding however that the merits of Christ are infinite and benefit the whole people of God. The fact that a particular person is prayed for in the Mass does not diminish what others may receive. Should you arrange to have a relative or friend prayed for in the Mass, try to attend the Mass joining with the community in praying for that person, and uniting yourself with them also in offering prayers and petitions to God for the good of the whole Church. □

**WANTED:** *Continued from pg. 23*

Jane thought he was getting the point: "Maybe there's a reason, I've tried to tell you..."

"Haven't I got enough trouble Jane? I can't even get a man to work for me. I have to pay mechanics double to come in from the next town. I even offered Vick a job and he wouldn't take it." Jane looked up ashamed: "Oh, Eddie you didn't."

"Sure I did. I don't have any hard feelings. Well, I got what I wanted. I got the garage and it didn't cost me a thing."

Now Jane realized that he didn't see his mistake: "You're wrong, Eddie. It cost you plenty."

"Yeah, what do you mean? I

didn't pay a cent for it. Oh, Jane what are you crying about?" She couldn't take it anymore.

That isn't a very nice ending for a story. I'm very sorry I have to leave it that way. I wish we could tell you that Eddie gave Vick back his garage and was a changed man for the rest of his life but I can't because this story is true to life and true to Eddie. He got what he wanted at a price. It's the same price a lot of people pay for a pair of jeans, or some branded pair of sneakers, the latest cell-phone, or a job or somebody else's husband, or wife. Just because I "pay" for something does it mean it's worthwhile? Do you think anything's a bargain at that price? □

## THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



*The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion. Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.*

My heartfelt thanks to Our Blessed Mother for answering my prayers so miraculously. We had what could have been difficult times but Our Lord and His Blessed Mother were always there and continue to be with us sheltering us and helping in marvellous ways. I pray the devotion to our Blessed Lord and our Most Holy Mother grows throughout the world; the 3 Hail Marys and the Holy Rosary are such a powerful devotion.

**Anna D'Silva**  
My husband has a wound in the right toe for almost three months and was not healing. Yesterday the doctor advised for debridement and that if any infection was found they would have to amputate it. As he was taken to the operation theatre I kept praying the Three Hail Marys to Mother Mary and when the doctor came out he told me he had saved the toe but would have to watch for the next few days. I am very thankful to Mother Mary for answering my prayers and I continue to pray the Three Hail Marys and ask Mother Mary to heal my husband's toe and protect his toe in future without any complication so he is able to walk normally.

**Mrs Barreto, Dahisar**  
My family wants to thank Mother Mary and Jesus for all the favours and many graces granted to my family. My daughter was issueless for five years, had some miscarriages, but with Mother Mary and Jesus' grace she conceived a baby boy. We want to Thank Mother Mary and Jesus. - My wife's visa was refused for London on flimsy grounds but we resubmitted the same, but before submitting my wife placed all her documents at the feet of Mother Mary and her visa was granted in 5 working days. I recite the Three Hail Marys everyday and Mother Mary and Jesus has always been there.

**Jose M. Azavedo, London**  
We thank you Mother Mary for showering your merciful blessings upon us. We acknowledge the miraculous power of the 3 Hail Marys that granted our intentions. We also seek your blessings in the future.

**Isabella Joshi, Indore, MP**  
My sincere gratitude to Our Lady for helping diagnose the stomach pain of my first daughter and the healing from severe pneumonia my third daughter and helping our son find a nice house. **A. J Pacheco, Goa**

### LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I thank God from the bottom of my heart through Our Lord Jesus the greatest healer and Mother Mary whose intercession brought success to my eye operation and my years of poor vision was rectified.

*Rita M.P*

My sister Cynthia had a lump in the breast and after the check up, doctor advised her to get it removed. He told her to come after 3 days for the surgery. I told her to pray to Jesus our Healer. When Jesus could change water into wine, he could surely cure her of this lump. I also asked her to pray fervently with faith to Mother Mary to intercede with Jesus. In fact the whole family started praying for this healing. On the third day when my sister visited the doctor, he examined her and said that there is no lump and no need of any surgery. In fact he also stated "Your God has heard your prayers." We thank and Praise Jesus & Mother Mary for this miracle and healing.

*Mrs Nelly Carvalho, Mumbai*

Through your magazine I would like to thank our good Lord Jesus and His mother Mary for all the favours granted to us and for keeping us in good health. Thank you Jesus, thank you Mama Mary

*Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai*

Thank you mother Mary for giving a job to my son after a long struggle and keeping me in good health.

*Mrs. F. Soares, Goa*

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

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 I had a sudden stroke and almost lost my speech. I was rushed to the hospital where the doctors were surprised to see me still alive. Two of my arteries were blocked and they had to do immediate stents on me. I thank God, Jesus, Mother Mary and all my dear saints I pray to for having given me a speedy recovery. I was out of hospital on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October and I am recovering at home.

*Christopher David, Secunderabad*

The Lord is most merciful. Our devotion to our most Blessed Mother and sweet Lord Jesus has given us a new home after a struggle and a difficult problem. We pray for Blessed Mother's continued Blessings and protection on my family and our new home.

*Anna M*

Thank you Mother Mary for healing my mother and sister from a skin problem.

*S.D. Salamati*

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mary for all the favours received and for the wellbeing of my family. I pray that the Good Lord and his Mother continue to shower their blessings and graces on us.

*Helen Moniz, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary Help of Christians for good health and all the other blessings.

*George and Luisa, D'Souza*

Thank you Divine Mercy and Mother Mary Help of Christians for a normal mamography report.

*Argentina Fernandes, Mumbai*

### THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My grateful thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for success in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester Engineering Exams. I also thank Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for praying for me. Do continue to watch over my family and friend and me too.

*Aksa Mary Pramod, Mumbai*

Our sincere gratitude to the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and St Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a baby girl Natasha Joseph and for good health, peace and all the blessings gratefully received.

*Kevin and Gayathri, Jorhat*

Thank you, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted to me. Bless our family and keep us always safe.

*A Devotee*

Our sincere and fervent thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for blessing us with a granddaughter. O Mother protect her always under your mantle blue.

*Brenda and Sonny Dalby, Vishakapatnam*

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings you have showered on us and for protecting my daughter at a very difficult time in 2014.

*Mrs Leela Miranda*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, St John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the several favours granted to my family, especially my son's marriage.

*Mrs. G. D'Silva*

Mother, please accept my heartfelt gratitude as you accepted my various petitions while reciting the 3 Hail Marys. I am also grateful to St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and Fr. Maschio who saved me miraculously when he was alive.

*Mrs. V. Coutinho D'Souza*

I would like to thank Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for blessing my friends Mrs Divyashree Tendulkar and Mrs. Aparna Sawant with the gift of a child each. I am also grateful to you for the successful hernia operation of my father.

*Carol M. Rodrigues, Candolim, Goa*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

APRIL 2017

*Young People.*

*That young people may respond generously to their vocations and seriously consider offering themselves to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.*

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#### MARY WAS THERE

It was a normal Saturday, but returning home from work would have turned out to be a disaster had it not been for Our Lady's guidance and watchful eye over me. When I was returning home from work on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016 on my bike in Goa, I banged into a car that was taking a turn to go in the opposite direction. Although my bike ended up completely smashed on one side, I scraped through without any major harm other than bruises on my knee and shoulder. Had it not been for St Francis Xavier (*whose feast happens to be on the 3rd of December*) and the blessings of Mother Mary, I dread to think of the consequences the accident would have left me in a terrible state. It is with a grateful heart that I thank God almighty for keeping me safe and sound, on that fateful day.

*Evelyn Menezes*

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

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