

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

APRIL 2020

VOL.21 NO. 12

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**O God,
who have been pleased
to gladden the world
by the Resurrection
of your Son
our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant, we pray,
that through his Mother,
the Virgin Mary,
we may receive
the joys
of everlasting life.**

(From the Common of Our Lady for Easter)

From The Editor's Desk ABUNDANT LIVING

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. -Psalm 118.

A friend of mine Edward by name, was about 60 years my senior. He led a very busy life for many years before he retired in the early 1960's. By the time I met him his children were all married and had 'flown-the-nest'. Speaking to me one evening in his garden he mentioned that all the while he saw the need to take the time to maintain and grow in his relationship with those closest to him. He seemed very earnest about the issue and so it was not surprising, that he took out of his pocket something he had written earlier,... the following reflection:

"If we do not take the time for ourselves and our families, here is what will happen: We will stop wanting to. If we do not take the time to feel the things we are feeling, we will stop feeling them. It will be more convenient not to. We will be more efficient.

And inside, we will be more efficient. And inside, we will be almost dead. We will become addicted to the busyness of our lives, unable to feel at home unless we are running at top speed. And our families will make their lives without us, find their comforts elsewhere. And we will be in our offices, at our meetings, and we won't even know it happened.

God did not call you into family life and working life in order that you might become angry and sick and dead inside. God called you to abundant life. Not every day is a wonderful day. But every day belongs to you, a gift from a gracious God. Reclaim your days. Find and savour their sweetness, even if you must do so through tears. Don't let a single one pass in a blur of responsibility and work. A day is too precious a thing to waste. You never get it back.

Waste the day and feel cheated, empty, exhausted, chaotic, fruitless. Thomas Merton notes in a reflection, "The frenzy of our activism... destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.

Use the day well and feel full blessed, joyful, productive, fulfilled. "...consider that the fruits of our labour may be found in the restful and unhurried harvest of time. In time, we can taste the sweetness of peace, serenity, well-being, and delight."

One day; 24 hours; a gift from God. Each of us gets the same 24 hours each day. If we regard them with an attitude of scarcity, we'll never feel we have enough time. But when we embrace them in an attitude of abundance and gratitude, we will have all we need, and more. That's the stewardship of time. Peace.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

LOVE'S FIVE CHALLENGES

by Don Gianpaolo Dianin

We often see around us kinds of love that sparkle beautifully but they die in an instant. Of course emotions are necessary, but getting married also requires commitment and dedication

The joy of love is also nourished by the joy of the sexual encounter between a husband and a wife. Earlier we dealt with that important page of *Amoris Laetitia* wherein Pope Francis spoke of the pleasure of the spousal relationship. Sexuality and a spousal relationship are a specific aspect of conjugal love. It is a gift of God, the glue that cements the relationship, it is good food that celebrates and makes spousal love grow. It is a giving and receiving that is an integral part of that love. It proclaims God's love for his people, Jesus' love for his community and a witnessing of that love to one another, to the children in the Church and to the world (see AL 142-152).

But *Amoris Laetitia* is not naïve. It is well aware that sexual relationship and eroticism are also a slippery slope that can hurt or be deceptive. This is why the Pope reminds us of some of the risks inherent in the passionate dimension of love: sentimentality, excessiveness, spontaneity, violence and domination.

Today, sentimentality dominates love affairs – the Pope says – and becomes a strong overwhelming feeling. Love recalls words like emotions, warmth, involvement, passion, attraction, while it doesn't seem to un-

derstand terms like commitment, work, growth, effort and sacrifice. And so we see so many kinds of love born and which shine brilliantly but then they die in an instant like certain flowers that disappear at the first signs of the summer's heat or the first winter cold. "To believe that we are good simply because "we feel good" is a tremendous illusion," writes the Pope (AL 145). Behind the feeling of love there can also be a great hunger for love that brings me to use the other to fill a huge void within. Behind the feeling there might be a childish dependence on the need for pleasure. Feelings are important and necessary, but getting married means choosing the other for who s/he is as a person, for better or for worse and when I am gratified it summons me to commitment and dedication.

Excessiveness is another risk always lurking within and with it comes pleasure. The pleasure of eating can turn into bulimia and erotic pleasure can turn into an addiction towards pornography or an urgent need for autoerotic behaviour. The Pope writes: "Training in the areas of emotion and instinct is necessary, and at times this requires setting limits. Excess, lack of control or obsession with a single form of pleasure can end up

weakening and tainting that very pleasure and damaging family life (AL 148). Our passions and needs must be trained and oriented; within a loving relationship they can find their right balance which is nourished and checked by love and respect. It is not a question of renouncing moments of intense joy, but of "integrating them with other moments of generous commitment, patient hope, inevitable weariness and struggle to achieve an ideal" (AL 148).

The third risk is spontaneity which is also well-rooted in our culture. Spontaneity in a love relationship is a gift that two lovers feel and desire the same thing but often the desire of one does not coincide with that of the other and it is precisely in the

sphere of sexuality that it becomes the terrain of tensions, pretensions and impositions. A complicated life, the struggles of work, commitment to the children often lead to couples living their conjugal encounters with less frequency and this can bode badly for either one or both partners. Spontaneity does not always exist and there are times when one is asked to respect and renounce and the other to take steps to respect the desire of the other. To pretend that love is a quantifiable gift of spontaneity is naïve and to think that without spontaneity love is not genuine is false.

Violence and domination is another risk; signs of real evil in the couple's union. It begins with claims that one has become deaf



WHAT LIGHT FROM THE RISEN LORD!



Those who wish to understand Jesus must look closely at his relationship with God. He trusted God completely and his was a close and intimate awareness of God's goodness without any apprehensions. He called God, 'my Father' and lived in constant union with him. "Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place where he prayed (Mk 1, 35). "After saying goodbye to the people he went away to the hill to pray" (Mk 6, 46).

This was the core of his existence. The presence of God the Father in whose presence he felt totally loved and accepted, explains his trust, courage and the clarity of his teachings. In fact, Jesus' ministry and his preaching came out of his profound union with God. Everything flowed from this and this bond places him above all of us. The trust he had in God was truly 'awesome' - for want of a better word.

It is not that we must attribute all these qualities to Jesus or to simply follow the tradition of his people who also had an important place in his life. Jesus was given a new awareness of an intimate closeness with this God: the Creator of all reality and he is perfectly good. His God is not therefore 'anonymous' or blind, nor is he an impassive judge ready to apply the sanctions of the Law nor is he an arbitrary and unpredictable God, but a God who is absolutely good and always close to everyone. Jesus was aware of all

this being not only human like us but God's Only Begotten Son.

Now, at the centre of our Christian Faith is the action of God the Father on behalf of the crucified Jesus. A few hours before he died he prayed saying: "Father, if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however but your will be done" (Lk 22, 42); and he used his last breath to pray: "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" (Lk. 23, 46) Jesus trusted the Father as he had throughout his life, and the Father responded by raising him from the dead. The Letter to the Hebrews states: "In his life on earth Jesus made his prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to god, who could save him from death. Because he was humble and devoted, God heard him" (Heb. 5, 7).

Our Christian Faith consists in sharing the trust that Jesus had in his Father. But how can one

to the condition of the other and attentive only to themselves and their own needs and desires. "In our day, sexuality risks becoming poisoned by the mentality of "use and discard [...]. Can we really ignore or overlook the continuing forms of domination, arrogance, abuse, sexual perversion and violence that are the product of a warped understanding of sexuality?" (AL 153). This "submission" of which Paul speaks (Eph. 5, 22) that has nothing to do with servility but recalls the altruism and the quest for the good of the beloved; another thing is that domination which denies the dignity of the other. Domination hurts the loved one, denies even the dignity of those who dominate and above all distorts the communal structure of the relationship (AL 155).

In sexuality, it is important to

preserve the polarity between needs and desires. Needs are linked to the world of my drives and natural inclinations; when there is something I miss or lack I must strive to fill that void (hunger, thirst, sex). The need once satisfied very soon seeks replenishment and a balance must continually be sought. Desire certainly has at its base the experience of need, but it qualifies as a movement towards greater fulfilment and an encounter with the other. Desire is a movement, a demand, a call, a cry. To desire does not mean to possess or consume the other, but to know, in the sense of "being one with" the other. Desire then becomes tenderness and play, understood as acceptance of each other; an act that asks for a willingness to let oneself go and in this act of trust a dimension of the spirit not just the body. □

THE FINISHING TOUCH

When they were expelled from the Earthly Paradise, Adam and Eve left full of acrimony and anger; their faces were bruised, their lips curled up in pain and their hearts were full of bitterness.

They had accused, insulted and threatened each other.

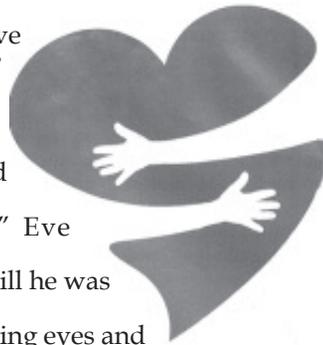
"Damn you, you're just a bum..." Eve shouted.

"It's all your fault!" Adam bellowed, till he was hoarse.

They walked with clenched fists, flashing eyes and a burden the size of a boulder weighed heavily within them. All this caused God a great sadness. He decided to add something to his Creation, something that he had not originally planned.

He passed lightly between the man and the woman and touched their hearts and their eyes. And he created tears. Adam and Eve began to cry. The boulder and the anger within them melted. A new tenderness overwhelmed them and they embraced each other.

(Bruno Ferrero, *Il segreto dei pesci rossi*, editrice LDC, Torino 2003)



trust God if he let the Crucified One fall into the darkness of anonymity? St Paul rightly states: "But if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe. More than that, we are shown to be lying about God, because we said that he raised Christ from death – but if it is true that the dead are not raised to life then he did not raise Christ. For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost. If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in the world" (1 Cor. 15, 14-19).

What God did for the Crucified Jesus is a promise of his fidelity not only to Jesus but to all of us too. Again St. Paul: "He is the firstborn Son, who was raised from death, in order that he alone might have the first place in all things" (Col 1, 18). What God did for Jesus is what he wants to accomplish for all of us, so the resurrection of the Crucified One is the promise of God who wants to be to us, and the revelation of who we are in the mind of God and of his plan.

Let us now hold on to some rays of this light.

We are not just matter. If we were only matter we could not act freely since matter obeys precise physical, chemical and biological laws. Freedom though limited (of which we have proof) is that we not just subjects, we are also spirit and soul. And the spirit does not suffer the same fate as matter.

There is in each of us the seal of God's faithful love which stays with us forever... a seal of immortality.

We are individuals. We are not identical pieces of the human species that have been mass-produced. Each of us is unique and irreplaceable. We Christians do not accept the prospect of a life beyond death by reincarnation. I loved my dad and my mum. And honestly I would be baffled if I learned that they were reincarnated as a Japanese or as a butterfly. No, the love of God is addressed to each of us; he knows our name and esteems us, seeing us as indispensable for the harmony of creation. We, ourselves individually will have life to the full in the resurrection.

We are not just individuals, we are persons. This means that our relationships with other people and ultimately with God is not optional!

Relationships are woven into our very constitution. Their very substance is indispensable. It is as if we are members of an immense body whose point of cohesion is the risen Jesus. Saint Paul goes on: "Christ is like a single body which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink... All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12, 12-13.27).

How much light and how much grace comes to us through the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ! □

A REAL HUMAN BEING!

by Anastasia Dias

It was a day I vividly remember, my first day at high school. My parents and I had recently moved to a new city. The city was huge and people seldom spoke to each other. I disliked everything about this new city and wanted to go back to the little town I had come from.

The rain that day was relentless; it depressed me even more. My parents dropped me off at school and said me goodbye. A part of me didn't want to go inside that school. I wanted to go back to my old school where I had friends.

I reluctantly walked into the school building and after asking several strangers for directions, I reached my classroom. The first person I saw there was a boy, about my age. He looked up from his pile of books, just for a second and then went back to poring over his notes.

I went and sat next to him; he looked up again and I smiled; he didn't smile back. I was undeterred; I started talking to him and introduced myself. He blankly stared at me without saying a word. I began to feel awkward I thought he was ignoring me. I had never before met a person like him, who acted indifferent to everything I was saying. I was making an effort to make new friends

but the person nearest to me almost made me give up.

I never spoke to him again after that day. Days went by and I had made new friends by now.

One day, on my way home, I was passing the football field. I knew there was an inter-school match scheduled to take place that day. You could see the players in their warm up routines. Suddenly I heard loud, piercing screams. The players were hammering someone and he was screaming in pain. On looking more closely, I noticed he was the same guy. By that time, coach intervened and they stopped hitting him.

He had been badly hurt. The players defended themselves saying that he didn't belong to their team and was standing right in the middle of the field during their practice sessions. When they asked him to move, he ignored them and refused to budge.

The boy's parents came and took him home. He was still crying from the shock. I began to wonder why he acted indifferent at times. Why couldn't he just blend in and try to be one of us?

The next few weeks flew by. There was no sign of him. I thought he had moved to another school after that incident. But, I was wrong.



THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS...

Mary Magdalene encounters Jesus

by Ian Pinto



He did come back to school. I had since learnt that his name was Andrew Brown. I was the first one to go and talk to him that day. I walked up and introduced myself, again, "Hi Andrew, I think we've met before. How are you now?" He was taken aback and nervously smiled this time. He slowly began walking away.

After that day, everything went back to as it had been before. One afternoon, Andrew suddenly came up to me and said, "Today is the inter-school football match. Could you come with me?" That was the first time I heard him speak. I noticed that he took a lot of time to form his sentences.

We went for the match half an hour before it was scheduled to begin. Andrew kept staring at the players and I tried to distract him by trying to make some conversation.

Suddenly he got up and ran onto the field; no one could stop him. He went up to the players and hugged them. "I'm sorry, I'm

sorry", he kept repeating, all teary-eyed. No one, least of all me had anticipated this since the same players had beaten the life out of him just weeks earlier. The players hugged him and took him back to his seat. This boy blew my mind away for the first time

Andrew called his mother and asked her to take him home. After reaching school, she came up to me and told me, "Andrew is autistic. He is very affectionate but he can be difficult at times. Thank you for being his friend. We want him to grow up just like one of you."

This came as a shocking revelation to me. I could now explain most of his behaviour. Now, his actions made sense to me now.

But the most important lesson I learnt was that I needed to stop judging people and instead start practising love and forgiveness, like Andrew did. I had judged him and thought of him as a weirdo. The high school players had called him all sorts of names. His classmates gossiped about the 'strange' person he was.

True Andrew Brown was different from the rest of us but the truth is that people like us don't deserve people like him. His mother wanted him to be *like one of us*. We had all wanted him to act like us but I thought he could never be like any of us, not because he was different but because he was special. None of us possessed the powers he was endowed with. He had the power to love people and forgive them; he had the power to change people's lives. And even though Andrew Brown was autistic, he was a better human being than any of us could possibly ever be. □

Mary Magdalene, for some strange reason has been imaged as a woman of ill-repute. I have been trying to figure out the connection and how I came to hold it. I'm aware that many others also hold on to this strange delusion. Come to think of it, Mary was depicted to be such a person in some of the films that were made on the life of Jesus.

The Bible doesn't say that Mary was a prostitute and a woman of ill-repute. The first time she is mentioned, it is said that seven demons were cast out of her and she, along with some other women, followed Jesus everywhere and cared for his and his disciples' needs (Lk 8:2-3). This gives a very different image of Mary. The 2018 film based on her life, *Mary Magdalene*, emphasizes on this picture of Mary and does so quite effectively.

At the Gate of Hell

Mary probably came from an affluent Jewish family. That explains her ability to support Jesus and his band of followers financially. Her domestic life however, was a tormented one. If you've ever been exposed to a demonic possession, you will know how deadly one demon can be. This poor woman had seven! Thinking of Mary in this position, I imagine her to be a nervous wreck, a tormented soul, a writing body. Despite the light and joy around her, she was enclosed in darkness and despair.

We do not have the narrated story of Mary's exorcism and healing but it definitely must have taken place in the presence and through the power of Jesus. Only that seems to explain her undying love and devotion to him. She was a broken woman, tortured by her demonic oppressors but Jesus set her free. She stood no more at the gates of Hell but was free to follow the light and love of God personified in her saviour, Jesus.

At the Cross

The Passion of Jesus was perhaps the most trying and yet also the most important event of his life on earth. He was in the public eye for barely three years and yet in that short time he had managed to ruffle plenty of feathers particularly of those in positions of power and authority. This caused him to enter into their bad books and they sought for ways to kill him (Jn 11:45-53). However, since the crowds hailed him as a holy man and a prophet they were afraid to lay hands on him (Mt 21:46). Nevertheless, they got what they wanted when one his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, a member of his inner circle, agreed to betray him for 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:14-16).

Jesus was unjustly arrested, tried and sentenced to death; not just any death, but the worse kind of death—crucifixion. When he was arrested and it seemed like the tide of public opinion had turned against him, all his disciples de-

served him (Mk 14:50). When the time came for him to be crucified only his mother, Mary, her sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, John, the apostle and Mary Magdalene remained (Jn 19:25). These were all who were left of all those who had followed Jesus; three women, two of whom were his blood relatives, and the third, a woman who loved him with all her heart. Even though Peter had told Jesus earlier, when he had predicted his passion and death that he would readily give his life in his place (Jn 13:37), it was Mary who really showed that kind of faith and love. She may never have told Jesus how much she loved him and how much she was ready to sacrifice for him but she showed it in action, by standing there at the foot of the cross with tears streaming down her face.

At the Tomb

The final time we hear about Mary Magdalene in the Gospel is at the Resurrection of Jesus (Jn 20:1-18). I don't think it is a coincidence that she is the first one to whom Jesus chose to reveal himself in his new, resurrected body. It seems like he was rewarding her for her unfailing faith in him and her wholehearted love.

The day after Jesus was buried, Mary rose early in the morning



and came to the tomb. For what is anyone's guess? She couldn't enter in surely for the stone that blocked the entrance was too heavy for her to move. She probably just came to grieve the death of her beloved Lord and Saviour. On seeing the stone rolled away, she grew alarmed and called for the other disciples. They came and saw the empty tomb "then went home again" (v. 10) but she "stood weeping outside the tomb" (v. 13). She couldn't bring herself to leave the place where Jesus was last laid. Then and there, she encountered Jesus "but she did not recognize him" (v. 14). Once he called her name, her spirit leapt for joy just like it had when he had called her out of her demonic possession. Her joy knew no bounds.

This Love

Mary, for me, is the disciple of love. She is the model of loving Jesus. She exemplifies, in her unique and feminine way, how one ought to love the Lord. There was nothing greater than the Lord for her, and she didn't hide that fact. Once she received healing, she left everything – without being told to do so – and followed Jesus. Not only that, she took it upon herself to offer whatever she had, whether financially or otherwise for the good of Jesus and his disciples. She asked for nothing in return. Just being with Jesus and basking in his love was enough for her. Thus, she stands out as a model for all of us. All of us, who profess faith in Jesus, do so proudly because we have at some level fallen in love with him. Mary Magdalene shows us what loving Jesus looks like. Can we love like Mary? □

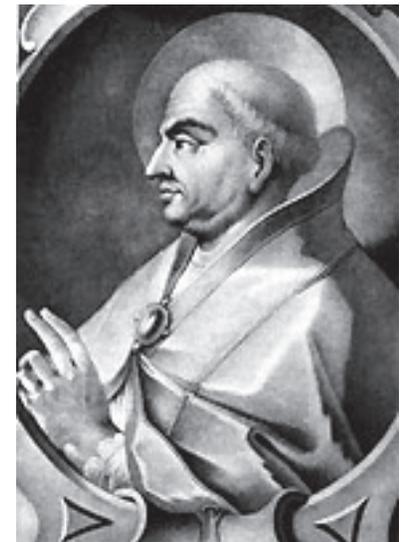
Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MARTIN I (+ 655) April 13

St. Martin was a native of Todi in Tuscany and became renowned in the clergy of Rome for his learning and sanctity. While he was a deacon of that church he was sent by Pope Theodorus as nuncio to Constantinople, where he showed his zeal against the reigning heresy of the Monothelites. Upon the death of Theodorus, after a vacancy of near three weeks, Martin was elected pope in July 649 and in October following held in the Lateran church a council of one hundred and five bishops against the Monothelites, in which he condemned the ring leaders of that sect, particularly Sergius and Pyrrhus who had been formerly bishops of Constantinople and Paul, who was then in possession of that place. "The Lord," said the Lateran fathers, "hath commanded us to shun evil and do good but not to reject the good with the evil. We are not to deny at the same time both truth and error."

The emperor Constans sent Olympius, his chamberlain with an order either to cause Martin to be massacred or to send him prisoner to the East. Olympius,



coming to Rome did not succeed in murdering the pope while he was administering communion in the church of St. Mary Major, which might be more easily done, as the pope carried communion to every one in his own place. The servant who had undertaken to execute this commission, afterwards swore that he had been struck with blindness and could not see the pope. Olympius, therefore, seeing the pope had been thus protected by

heaven, marched into Sicily, then in the hands of the Saracens. The new exarch and the chamberlain arrived at Rome with an army from Ravenna, on Saturday the 15th June, 653. The pope, who had been sick ever since October, shut himself up in the Lateran church, but sent some of his clergy to salute the exarch, who inquired where the pope was, saying, he desired to 'adore' him, which he repeated the next day. Two days later, on Monday, Calliopas accused him of having arms concealed; but the pope bade him search his palace, which he did; and no arms being found, the pope said, "Thus have calumnies been always employed against us." Half an hour later, the soldiers returned and seized the pope, who lay sick on a couch near the gate of the church, and Calliopas presented the clergy a rescript of the emperor, commanding Martin to be deposed as unworthy of being Pope. The clergy cried out, "Anathema to him who shall say that pope Martin hath changed any point of faith, and to him who perseveres not in the Catholic faith till death." Calliopas, fearing the multitude, said, "There is no other faith but yours nor have I any other." Several of the bishops said, "We will live and die with him." The Pope was led out of the church into the palace, and on the 18th June, taken thence at midnight in a boat down the Tiber to Porto, where he was put on board a vessel to be conveyed to Constantinople. After three months sailing he arrived at the isle of Naxos, where he stayed with his guards a whole year, being allowed to lodge in a house

where for a long time he was afflicted with a dysentery and a loathing of food. When the bishops and inhabitants sent him any provisions, the guards plundered them, and abused with injurious language and blows those who brought him presents, saying, "Whoever shows any kindness to this man is an enemy to the state." He was brought to Constantinople on the 17th September, in 654 and after much ill-usage, lay in a dungeon without speaking to anybody but his keepers for near three months, from the 17th September to 15th December. In one of his letters he wrote as follows: "It is now forty-seven days since I have been permitted to wash myself either in cold or warm water. I am quite wasted and chilled and have no nourishment, I want such kind of food as is necessary to support me; and have a perfect aversion and loathing to what I have. But I hope that God, who knows all things, when he shall have taken me out of this world, will bring my persecutors to repentance." On the 15th December he was delivered into the hands of the prefect of the city who said, "Take him and pull him to pieces immediately."

The executioners, laying hold of the saint, took away his sacerdotal pallium, and stripped him of all his clothes except a tunic which they left him and without a girdle, having torn it from top to the bottom, so that his naked body was exposed to sight. They put an iron collar about his neck, and dragged him in this manner from the palace through the midst of the city, a jailer being fastened to him, and an execu-

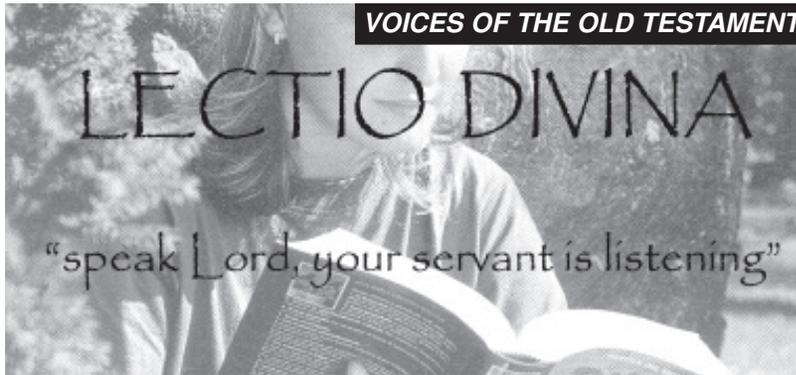
tioner carrying the sword before him to show that he was condemned to die.

Martin continued in the prison of Diomedes nearly three months, to 10th March 655, when he was ordered to be banished on 15th May. The famine was so great in that country that the pope assured his friends, in one of his letters: "Bread is talked of here, but never seen. If some relief is not sent us from Italy or Pontus, it is impossible to live." He wrote another letter in September: "We are not only separated from the rest of the world, but are even deprived of the means to live. The inhabitants of the country are all pagans and they who come hither, besides their learning the manners of the people of the country, have not even the charity, that natural compassion which is to be found among barbarians. What fear had seized all these men, which can hinder them from fulfilling the commands of God, in relieving the distressed? Have I appeared such an enemy to the whole church or to them in particular? However, I pray God, by the intercession of St. Peter, to preserve them steadfast and immovable in the orthodox faith. As to this wretched body, God will take care of it. He is at hand; why should I give myself any trouble? I hope in his mercy, he will not prolong my course." The good pope was not disappointed of his hope; for he died on 16th September in 655, having held the Holy See for six years, one month and twenty-six days. He was interred in a church of the Blessed Virgin, within a furlong from the city of Chersona: a great concourse of people gath-

ered at his tomb. His relics were afterwards carried to Rome and deposited in a church dedicated long before in honour of St. Martin of Tours. He is honoured by the Latins on 12th November, the day of the translation of his relics to Rome, and by the Greeks on the 13th of April; also on the 15th and 20th September. By the Muscovites on 14th April. His constancy and firmness appear in his letters. They are well written, with strength and wisdom and the style is great and noble, worthy of the majesty of the holy see.

The saints equally despised the goods and the evils of this life, because they had before their eyes the eternal glory with which momentary labours and suffering will be abundantly recompensed. Can we be called Christians, who, by our murmuring and impatience under the least trials, and by recoiling at the least harsh word, show ourselves to be strangers to the spirit, and enemies of the Cross of Christ? It is only by bearing the marks of his sufferings and by practicing the heroic virtues which tradition calls forth, that we can enter into the bliss which he has purchased for us by his Cross. If with the saints we look up at the joys which are to be the recompense of our patience, and consider attentively the example of Christ, we shall receive our sufferings, not only with resignation, but with joy as graces of which we are most unworthy. □

Found in Butler's Lives of Saints: and From his letters to Theophanes, and especially Anastasius in Pontificia et. ep., ad Martin.



WHO IS THE "SERVANT OF THE LORD"?

by Don Carlo Broccardo

There are four texts of the Prophet Isaiah called the "Servant Songs." They are four poetic compositions whose protagonist is a mysterious, unnamed figure known only as the "Lord's Servant." Since some of these texts refer to the suffering of the Servant (*we leave the name capitalized because it is, as it were, a kind of a proper name...*). From the earliest times Christian communities used this as a seminal reading to understand the narrations of the Passion and Death of Jesus; soon after the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord the Acts of the Apostles already referred to these texts and we can see, as if through a veil, the Passion narrative of the Gospels. In the liturgy we hear them every year; this year will listen to the **First Reading on Palm Sunday which we will examine presently.**

Do you remember this very famous passage in which the Prophet Isaiah recounts an oracle full of hope saying: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God, speak to the heart of Jerusalem and cry out that her warfare is

ended and her iniquity has been pardoned"? After a few verses he goes on to repeat the invitation: "Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem." And then he concludes mentioning what this good news is which he can't keep quiet about: "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Is 40, 1-2.9.11).

Here, the Servant of the Lord is precisely an example of a person who welcomes this invitation, who dedicates his entire life to listening attentively to the Word of God in order to bring comfort to all those he encounters. He has received two gifts: an attentive ear to listen and to learn the wisdom of God; and the tongue of a disciple 'so that he may know how to speak a word to the discouraged.' Saying the right word is not easy, first you have to listen. If you have met people in your life capable of consoling you, of knowing whether or

not to say something; they know what to say; and with just a few words or only a gesture or a facial expression they are able to soothe your pain. If you have met people like that (and I hope you have) you will be able to understand what the Servant of the Lord was like.

He was a profoundly good person, capable of spreading peace and serenity around him. Yet he had a tragic end! "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Why on earth did he do that? Why make a good man who had only words of comfort and peace for others, suffer? Your mind immediately goes to Jesus who suffered the same outrages of the Servant; but why humiliate and torture and kill such a person?

The question is profound and Isaiah's text does not even try to answer you. Rather he invites you to take another path which is a path of trust. Twice he says: "Behold the Lord God is my help" and then he adds, "He who vindicates me is near." There is only this to give strength to the Servant who is good and yet who is humiliated, who is condemned because he dares to build a better world. "The Lord is with me and he will not abandon me. For this reason I shall not be ashamed. "Therefore I have set my face like a flint," which means I will go forward with courage to face the sufferings that await me, "knowing I will not be confused." There is no other reason that leads him to continue doing good despite everything.

These are the same words that the prophet Isaiah mentioned a few chapters earlier which are in harmony with these feelings; it is God who speaks and in speaking brings



peace when he says: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel your Saviour (...) because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you. Fear not for I am with you" (Is 43,2-5).

In this vein, let us imagine also the feelings and thoughts of Jesus during the days of his Passion and Death. When his disciples and those who were close to him decided to desert him, when his fiercest enemies freely took action and everything around him fell apart Jesus found comfort in the consoling presence of God, his Father on whom he relied.

Luke has accustomed us to see Jesus withdrawing in prayer at night, to speak face to face with the Father; now it is that presence that supports him; now while he is dying he can say: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Because God had promised him: "I will be always with you, do not be afraid." □

Quiet Spaces

AS THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS

Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Tuesday, May 2, 2017

We each must enter a “dialogue,” each as a protagonist, face-to-face with Jesus. In this way, we can be overwhelmed by the “tenderness of God” who, as he did with the two disciples of Emmaus, “warms our heart” and opens our eyes. With this invitation Pope Francis strongly advised that we not close ourselves off in the “rigidity” that leads us to “close our ears and grind our teeth”, not allowing the Holy Spirit to pass.

Francis recalls, “today the first reading shows us another witness of obedience in Stephen,” the Pope explained, referring to the passage from the Acts of the Apostles (7:51 - 8:1) which recounts how he is “persecuted, accused, even with the same cruelty to which Jesus” had been subjected, “for telling the truth, for being a witness to obedience.” This, Francis said, “makes me think about the different ways of not understanding the Word of God, because these people who stoned Stephen did not understand the Word of God.”

For comparison, the Pontiff offered the example of the “disciples of Emmaus,” who “did not understand and were on the road.” So, “what does Jesus say to them? – ‘Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe.’” Francis then observed: “they were not closed, but they did not understand.” Of course, the Pope acknowledged, calling someone foolish “is not praise; but it is not as harsh as what Stephen says to these people” who end up stoning him: in fact, Stephen calls them “‘stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears’ – and saying ‘uncircumcised’ is to say ‘pagan.’”

Jesus “does not say ‘pagan’” to the disciples of Emmaus, but says “‘halfway believers.’” He says: “You believe; you did believe, but not now: you have doubt.” The disciples of Emmaus “did not understand; they were even afraid because they did not want problems, and they distanced themselves from Jerusalem: they were afraid. But, they were good.” They had “these limitations, but they were good: they were open to the truth.”

On the other hand, the Pope remarked, the people who accused Stephen and stoned him “were closed to the truth, closed; and when Stephen rebuked them with these harsh words – ‘As your fathers did, so do you’ – they were vicious at heart: their heart was closed by rage ‘and they ground their teeth against’ Stephen.” The disciples of Emmaus, for their part, had a different attitude to the rebuke: “they listened, they let Jesus’ words enter, and their hearts warmed.”

The Acts of the Apostles, the Pontiff continued, also recounts that “when Stephen says he sees Jesus in his glory,” his persecutors “stopped their ears: they did not want – did not want! – to lis-

ten.” And “this is the tragedy of closure: closing the heart; the hardened heart; hardness of heart.”

This, the Pontiff added, “makes the Church suffer so very much: closed hearts, hearts of stone, hearts that do not want to open, that do not want to hear; hearts that know only the language of condemnation.” They “know how to condemn” and “do not know how to say: ‘explain to me, why do you say this?’” Instead, the Pope stressed, they remain hardened: “they are closed; they know everything; they do not need explanations.” And, he continued, “as Stephen and even as Jesus rebuked them: ‘what did you do to the prophets? You killed them, because they told you what you did not like.’”

In other words, the Pope said, “there was no room in their heart for the Holy Spirit”. But “today’s reading tells us that Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, had understood everything: he was witness to the obedience of the Word made flesh, and the Holy Spirit does this.” And, whereas Stephen’s heart “was full” of the Holy Spirit, “an empty heart, a stubborn heart, a pagan heart does not allow the Spirit to enter, and feels self-sufficient.”

Francis recommended that we fix our gaze on “these two groups: we are the two of Emmaus, with many doubts, many sins,” and often “we are cowards and want to distance ourselves from the Cross, from trials. But let us make room to feel Jesus, who warms the heart. And let us ask for the grace to be like them.”

“Let us look at the other group,” the Pope continued, made up of those “who stopped their ears; they did not want to hear: self-sufficient, closed in the rigidity of the law.” In response, “Jesus spoke a great deal” to these men, “and said worse things than Stephen had said.” Thus, Francis said, “Jesus simply responds: ‘Look within yourselves.’” And this way, the Pontiff stated, “we see this tenderness of Jesus: the witness to obedience, the great witness Jesus, who gave his life, shows us the tenderness of God, as compared to us, to our sins, to our weaknesses.

Therefore, “let us enter this dialogue,” Francis concluded, “and let us ask for the grace that the Lord make these rigid hearts more tender”, the hearts “of those people who are closed within the law and condemn all that is outside that law: they do not know that the Word came in the flesh, that the Word is witness to obedience; they do not know that God’s tenderness can move a heart of stone and put in its place a heart of flesh.” □

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 19, 12 May 2017)

HOTEL "MAGNOLIA"

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Douilton sdb

The hotel "Magnolia" was built atop a little hillock so that from all its windows, even through the branches of the trees that surrounded it, one could see the sea. The slopes were terraced with copious flowers and shady hedges that seemed to be centuries-old.

It was open all year round and generally frequented by business executives looking for a bit of quiet time; by rich families with many children; by some elegant elderly heiresses who didn't stay long because the place offered only scant worldly entertainment.

When Helen arrived she was looked upon curiously and she caught the attention of everyone because she was young, beautiful and dressed soberly but with elegance. She was talked about when the guests met in the evenings or in the mornings at breakfast which was served *al fresco* in the shade of the pines. At first it was sympathetically, but then a tinge of animosity because they thought her a bit haughty almost bordering on proud.

Some said she was unwell, others thought she looked depressed, while others still thought she was really ill; for sure, her life must conceal a secret. Then, little by little people lost interest in her. Guests came and went and she was left alone at the hotel in her solitude.

It seemed strange that she remained. She took long solitary walks. No one dared to keep her company on the promenade or through the pine forest. No one seemed to know anything about

her. The Post Master who cycled up to the Magnolia came by in the evenings to play cards by the window. He said that the young lady had first received many letters from the same person but then, all of a sudden the correspondence ceased.

At the bottom of the hillock the quiet little village fell into winter inertia common to most seaside resorts. The locals seemed to gradually get more and more interested in the mystery that was Helen. Many wanted to make her acquaintance but feared they would be intruding as she strove to elude anyone who attempted to approach her on occasions.

The first to really make her acquaintance was the young town doctor Albert Coran who was called because she wasn't feeling too well. The sickness had not been serious but rather long drawn. As she began to convalesce the doctor turned into a friend.

It was pleasant conversing with a beautiful and intelligent young lady while sitting next to her by the fireplace in the large atrium with its marble floor covered with thick carpets. Through the large windows between the trees the grey sea could be seen pounding against the rocks.

Thus began the doctor's friendship with Helen (a friendship that already seemed to have overtones of romance) while neglecting his fiancé - a pale, blond young lady who loved him dearly and was anxiously waiting for their wedding day.

Her name was Rose; and no name could have been more appropriate. She was so frail and delicate that she actually reminded one of the little climbing roses whose petals left their scent on the slightest breeze coming up from the sea. She looked like a creature from another age due to her gentle and tender bearing.

Though she noticed Albert's distracted demeanour, she didn't have the courage to question or summon him. She thought to herself: love cannot be demanded. And she could not and would not impose herself on him.

As the days went by she began to languish being consumed with sadness.

Helen was unaware of any of this. She was only delighted in this affectionate attention she was receiving. She was beginning to think that she could put her life back together again. It had been fractured by a bitter disappointment.

In the quiet little village, days went by as the people waited for another season to begin. By now everyone was talking about Helen, Rose and the doctor. The only one oblivious to all this was Helen.

Summer finally arrived and with it all the gossip about Helen, Rose and the doctor seemed to die down as everything revolved around the new guests. It was going to be new season of swimming and the competitions that would bring back memories of the laughter and fun of last year but no, everyone's thoughts instead turned to the war in Vietnam.

By the end of November, the doctor was called back.

That evening when the doctor left, from her window Helen saw a young lady accompanying him to the station. She didn't notice anything but she raised her hand at the window to bid him goodbye he barely acknowledged her and she withdrew, lowering the curtain rather despondently.

After that evening, she continued to walk by the beach or sometimes through the pines but always alone and aloof.

Someone had indirectly told her that the girl who accompanied him to the station was the doctor's fiancée and her name was Rose. The name spun around in her mind as if to tease and torment her.

It was a tough struggle. How was it his fault that he had loved another woman? Should she give up this last hope of a life with this gentle doctor when she saw him next? The doctor felt more than ever the need for a home, the warmth of a comforting and consoling affection.

The weather was changing; it was getting humid and misty towards evening.

The hotel was quiet and Helen's steps resounded in the large deserted lobby. Her pain was becoming unbearable.

Often, in the afternoons, she



would go off for a walk along the beach.

On one of those days (when the sun was a little warmer) she walked slowly down the road along the cliff when suddenly from a bench that was hidden behind a rocky ledge she stopped, without intending to because she heard a few phrases:

"In the meanwhile poor Rose pines for this stranger, because we don't even know where he comes from."

She didn't intend to listen to those words. As she strained her neck she saw two old men sitting and smoking in the afternoon sun. They suddenly stopped short but neither of them greeted her; instead they looked glumly in her direction.

Feeling a bit embarrassed, Helen walked on, looking at the calm sea below and the rays of the setting sun dancing on the waves and lighting up the dark cliffs that descended at her feet.

The image of that simple girl came to her mind as she began walking back to the hotel. As if without warning Helen began to see things differently, she was having a new perspective. As she realised her youth was waning and she was soon growing into an adult young lady she found no use in fighting for someone's affection. Why should she begrudge that young girl who was looking anxiously at life as Helen herself had done once, a long time ago?

It was almost a kind of maternal tenderness, a need for a tender compassionate concern that began to surge within her and gradually a sense of resignation seemed to set in.

She gradually made her way to the "Magnolia". The sun was set-

ting over the sea, a gentle breeze freely played among the fallen leaves disturbing the pine needles that had fallen on the gravel beneath her feet.

Behind the large windows she could see the marble atrium with its sumptuous carpets, potted plants but deserted. It was there she had spent some of her most beautiful hours in serene conversation with the doctor; it was there that the hope that was born was now going to have to fall away.

What about him, the doctor? Men are stronger. He would soon forget her and take refuge in Rose's serene affection which would offer him the warmth of a hearth in the countryside where he was born.

Back in the atrium on the side table that served as a writing desk there was a book, still open, one she never tired of reading. She glanced at it.

"Fear those things alone that have the power to make others look evil."

She hesitated for a moment longer, her gaze lingering on the garden at sunset. She shivered in the December chill that ushered in the evening mists: "Soon," she thought, "everything will get dark." By now the figure of that young girl Rose seemed to her like a distant light. In one decisive impulsive moment she decided to laugh out loud with joy.

She rang the reception: "Please," she said, "get my cheque ready. I'm leaving in the morning."

Leaving? Where to? She herself did not yet know. One thing was certain: Albert would no longer know of her.

Very calmly, she switched on the table lamp and continued to read.

To the waitress who passed by as quietly as she could, she asked: "What time does the bus leave for Los Angeles?"

"At nine, ma'am."

"Fine, please give me a wake-up call at seven tomorrow morning."

And hotel closed once more and this time it looked really deserted. □

A MAN AND HIS DOG

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying, and that the dog walking beside him had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them. After a while, they came to a high, white stone wall along one side of the road. It looked like fine marble. At the top of the long hill, it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight. When he was standing before it, he saw a magnificent gate in the arch that looked like mother of pearl, and the street that led to the gate looked like pure gold. He and the dog walked towards the gate, and as he got closer, he saw a man at the desk to one side. When he was close enough, he called out, "Excuse me, where are we?" "This is Heaven, sir," the man answered. "Wow! Would you happen to have some water?" the man asked. "Of course, sir. Come right in and I'll have some ice water brought right up." The man gestured, and the gate began to open. "Can my friend," gesturing toward his dog, "come in too?" the traveller asked. "I'm sorry sir, but we don't accept pets." The man thought for a moment and then turned back towards the road and continued the way he had been going with his dog. After another long walk, and at the top of another long hill, he came to a dirt road which led through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed. There was no fence. As he approached the gate, he saw a man inside, leaning against a tree and reading a book. "Excuse me!" he called to the reader. "Do you have any water?" "Yeah, sure. There's a pump over there." The man pointed to a place that couldn't be seen from outside the gate. "Come on in."

"How about my friend here?" the traveller gestured to the dog. "There should be a bowl by the pump." They went through the gate, and sure enough, there was an old-fashioned hand pump with a bowl beside it. The traveller filled the bowl and took a long drink himself. Then he gave some to the dog.

When they were full, he and the dog walked back towards the man who was standing by the tree waiting for them. "What do you call this place?" the traveller asked. "This is Heaven," was the answer. "Well, that's confusing," the traveller said. "The man down the road said that was Heaven too."

"Oh, you mean the place with the gold street and pearly gates? Nope. That's Hell."

"Doesn't it make you mad for them to use your name like that?" "No. I can see how you might think so, but we're just happy that they screen out the folks who'll leave their best friends behind." *Author Unknown.*

Courtesy: St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland



FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 15

by Michele Molineris

Grigio (Continued)

Once, Grigio saved him from not one or two but from several assailants. It was late one evening after dark and Don Bosco was returning by the avenue along the Piazza Milano (now Piazza Repubblica) near Valdocco. He was barely half way when he felt he was being followed. He turned and saw a thug with a club in his hand just a few paces behind him so he set off on a run trying to reach the Oratory before the ruffian reached him. He had already reached the slope that now faces the Delfino house when in front of him he saw several others trying to block his way. Realizing that he was in danger he was wondering how he could get out of this situation, beginning with the thug who was pursuing him. He was about to have been struck by the thug when Don Bosco suddenly stopped and with the edge of his elbow he

jabbed his victim in the stomach which sent him sprawling to the ground with the legs in the air. Thanks to his gymnastics Don Bosco could save himself but the others from around the place were already nearby with sticks in their hands.

At that moment Grigio jumped into the fray and placed himself firmly next to Don Bosco barking furiously and ferociously. That sent his attackers scampering. They pleaded with Don Bosco to restrain the dog as the others left one by one, allowing the priest to make his way home. The dog wouldn't leave his side till Don Bosco reached the Oratory.

One evening Grigio created a scene at the Oratory. Don Bosco was having dinner with some clerics and priests and his mother when the dog entered the playground. Some youngsters who had never seen the dog before began to get frightened and they wanted to chase him away with sticks and stones when someone shouted: "Don't hurt

him he's Don Bosco's dog."

At these words, everyone approached the animal and began pulling his ears and patting him. They finally led him to the refectory. The unexpected visit of the beast dismayed some of Don Bosco's guests. Don Bosco simply said: "My Grigio! Let him come, don't be afraid."

The dog, having first casually glanced at the table walked around it and happily went to Don Bosco who caressed him and wanted to give him some dinner. He offered him some bread and soup but the dog didn't even sniff the offerings.

"So, what do you want?" asked Don Bosco. The dog merely blinked and wagged its tail. "If you don't want anything, be happy and be off" he said. The dear animal continued to look at Don Bosco serenely and placed its head on the table looking at Don Bosco as if he just wanted to bid him a good evening. After this the boarders accompanied the dog to the door. That evening Don Bosco had come home rather late, but this time in the carriage of the Marquis Domenico Fassati. Not having found him in the street, it seemed that the dog came around to ensure that his protégé was safe as was his usual custom (from BM., passim).

Once, some altar boys, urged by the fact that the dog refused any food decided to lock him in a room saying to themselves: "When he has fasted for half a day then we'll see if he refuses food." The following morning all of them went to free their prisoner but he was not to be found! The altar boys were very surprised because both the door and

the windows were tightly shut.

No one knows where the dog came from or what its mission was. He remained completely unknown. (D'Espiney, *Don Bosco*)

On his way to France on February 13, 1883 Don Bosco stopped at Vallecrosia to iron out some difficulties that arose with the bishop of Vengimiglia. Don Bosco lost no time in exonerating himself and his confreres from the groundless accusations of poisonous tongues adept in slandering the Salesians. Anxious to set things right in his own presence, Don Bosco hastened to take Father Durando with him to see the bishop, with whom he stayed until late evening.

A happy and unexpected meeting awaited him on his return. Having tried in vain to hire a coach, he had to be content to walk all the way home. It had rained so heavily during the day that the growing darkness and the mud made walking hazardous. With his failing sight Don Bosco could hardly see where to place his feet, when suddenly who appeared before him but an old friend, the famous dog Grigio, whom he had not seen in thirty years! The friendly animal ran over to him, wagging his tail gleefully, and then he walked forward, keeping about a foot ahead of Don Bosco, just enough to be seen in the gloom. With a slow, deliberate pace the dog led the way for him to follow, avoiding puddles so that he would not get wet. As soon as they reached the house, the dog disappeared.

Father Durando, who was



Weapons unused in a series of attempts on the life of Don Bosco. Almost all attempts were instigated by anti-Catholic sects.



The Pinardi House, seen from the rear. It was through a window to the right of the picture that an attempt was made on Don Bosco's life. At the time of the attempt, Don Bosco was teaching Catechism to his boys. This was 1848.

struggling to find his own way through the mud, maintained that he never saw anything, but Don Bosco often narrated this incident. One day, while having dinner with the Olive family, he told them about it. Mrs. Olive asked, "How could this dog outlive all others?" Don Bosco replied with a smile, "Maybe it was an offspring of Grigio." On another occasion he was asked what its appearance was like. "He was a dog," was the simple answer" (EBM., XVI, 20,21).

Among the students who had known Grigio during the years spent at the Valdocco with Don

Bosco was a certain Peter Grasso. In 1886 he wanted to sketch Don Bosco in charcoal. "When the picture was presented to Don Bosco, he smiled and exclaimed: "Here's my Grigio!"

That picture came to be exhibited every year from May 24, 1894 at the lottery that the sons of Don Bosco organized at the Oratory of Turin on the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

"In those days Father Charles Farina, that unforgettable rector of the Oratory gave me a ticket of 20 cents with which I was lucky enough to draw a picture of Don Bosco's Grigio.

"I remember that when the picture was given to me, the catechist at the time Father Stephen Trione - a fervent campaigner of Don Bosco and his works came to congratulate me and he said: You will see that Don Bosco's Grigio will bring you luck!

Fifty-eight years later I can truly say that Don Bosco and Grigio brought me the great gift of the priesthood and if there is anything good I may have done, I owe it to Don Bosco who has always been my inspiration. And Don Bosco also brings good fortune to the dear Salesian institutes through the generosity of their benefactors."

This was Father Ambrogio Trezzi's letter when he was the parish priest of Vedano Olona. He was one of the earliest pupils of the Turin Oratory and the letter was published in the "Salesian Bulletin" in 1960 when, to save the Oratory from possible confiscation he donated the painting to the Salesians who now exhibit it in the rooms of Don Bosco (B.S., 1960). □

SALESIAN SAINTS

ALBERT MARVELLI 1918 - 1946 LAY, BLESSED

Born at Ferrara on March 21, 1918 Albert was the second of six brothers. He grew up in a fervently Catholic family in which a life of piety was combined with charitable, catechetical and social activity.

When the family moved to Rimini in 1930 he joined the Salesian Oratory and the movement of Catholic Action where he took as his example Dominic Savio. As his faith matured he made a decisive choice: "My programme can be summed up in one word: Saint." He possessed a profound sense of justice and had a great ascendancy among his companions. He was a dynamic sportsman and loved tennis, volleyball, athletics, soccer, swimming and hiking in the mountains. But most of all, his passion was for cycling which also held a privileged place in his apostolate and his charitable enterprises.

After his graduation as a Mechanical Engineer on June 30, 1941 he was due to leave for military service on July 7 because Italy was at war. It was a war that Albert ardently condemned. He was discharged because three of his brothers were already at the front, then for a short time he worked at FIAT in Turin.

After the tragic events of July 25,



1943, fascism was defeated and on September 8, 1943 an armistice was declared with the Allies; Italy was once more occupied by the Germans when Albert returned to his home at Rimini. He knew what he had to do; become a volunteer. After every bombardment he was the first to rush out to help injured survivors, assisting the dying, looking for those buried in the debris or for those who were hungry and destitute; distributing food to them. He managed to collect mattresses, blankets, pots and pans for them. He went out to farmers in the countryside and shopkeepers in town from whom he bought all kinds of food. Then mounting his bicycle loaded with shopping bags he knew where to find the sick and the hungry. Sometimes he returned home without his shoes or even his bicycle; he had given these to those who were in need. During the German occupation he

saved many young people from deportation by courageously opening railway carriages sealed and prepared to depart from Santarcangelo station for the concentration camps.

He was young, just 27 years old but possessed a tremendous practical sense and competence in solving problems with courage in difficult situations. Most of all, Albert was always available. He was entrusted with the most difficult task at that time, to regulate the housing commission in which he was to allocate the housing in the city, settle disputes and requisition apartments not without inevitable resentment.

On a small notepad Albert wrote: "Serving is better than being served. Jesus served." As a lay Christian he grew up at the Salesian Oratory of Rimini where he witnessed to his Christian Faith and in particular his political and social commitments and how he intended to be of service for the common good. "With the Lord's help I would like to be an example to my companions and to defend my faith on every occasion without fearing public opinion but always keeping in mind the greater glory of God."

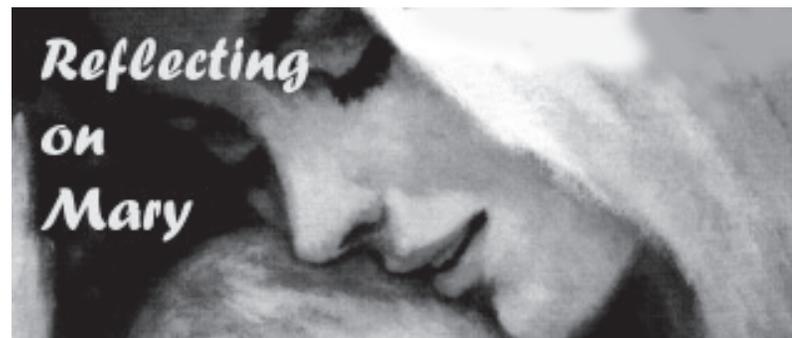
It was in a spirit of service that Albert faced civic responsibilities he was entrusted with. When political parties were re-launched in Rimini he joined the Christian Democrats convinced that his commitment to politics was meant as a service to the community.

At that time the bishop asked him to mentor the Catholic graduates of the diocese. His commitment could be summarized in two words: culture and charity. "We must not only bring culture to in-

tellectuals but to everyone." Thus he breathed new life into the local University. He opened a soup kitchen for the poor inviting them to Mass and praying with them; then he took them to a restaurant for a bowl of soup while he listened to their problems. He tirelessly worked for them and was one of the founders of the ACLI. He founded a cooperative for construction workers; it was the first "white" cooperative in a "red" Romagna.

Intimacy with the Eucharistic Jesus never made him withdraw into himself, alienating him from his commitments and the context. Indeed, when he saw the world around him besmirched with injustice and sin the Eucharist became for him a source of strength urging him to undertake the work of redemption and liberation that was humanizing the face of the earth.

On the evening of October 5, 1946 Albert was cycling to an electoral meeting (he was also an electoral candidate in the first municipal administration elections). At 8.30 pm he was hit by a military truck. He died a few hours later without regaining consciousness. He was just 28 years old. His mother Mary bereft with grief was by his side. The whole of Italy was plunged into sadness at the news of his death. In the history of the lay apostolate Albert Marvelli is seen as an authentic precursor of the Second Vatican Council when it speaks of the commitment of the laity in the Christian animation of society. He was, as Don Bosco said, a good Christian and an honest citizen committed to the Church and to society with a Salesian heart. □



SPEECHLESS SORROW (JN. 19: 25-26)

by Don Giorgio Chatrian

Sorrow needs no words. "Stand close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother. "He is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "She is your mother." From that time the disciple took her to live in his house (Jn 19, 25-27).

This is a law of life: "As the core of the fruit must be broken open so that its heart is exposed to the sun, so you must know the pain." (Kahlil Gibran).

And Mary speaks amid sobs:

"Dear Father, I no longer have tears...I am speechless...I have spent it all when I learned that Jesus had been arrested. Then I realized that his hour had arrived: the Cross.

"My face turned stone cold when I saw it on His shoulders as He made His way from the courtyard of Pilate to Calvary. I tried to reach out to caress his face streaked with blood that flowed down from his brow that had been pierced with the crown of thorns.

"They didn't let me get close to

him but our eyes met and he realized that I was there and that I had not abandoned him. Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene accompanied me while we followed him from afar on that last bit of the journey.

"Perhaps, that was why the Roman soldiers said nothing when we pushed our way to the foot of the Cross. Thank you O Father, I didn't know what to say to him. I just wanted him to know I was present and all the while the sword that Simeon spoke of was slowly piercing my heart. I felt the throbbing anguish in my breast.

"I was so close that I could hear my Son's words. Those words brought to my awareness who Jesus was: your Son and like you God. Only one such as He could say words like that, very human and very divine, capable of divinizing the very desperation of every crucifixion in history.

"His first word was one of forgiveness of his executioners. 'Father forgive them!' He asks you to forgive them. Your Son knew how to read the depths of his executioners' hearts. They didn't realize the absurd game they were sucked into by those who

wanted him dead at any cost.

"Yet he offered forgiveness to the thieves though they teased him, but one of them acknowledging his disgraceful life surrendered himself into the hands of Jesus and for that he was assured that after this tragic moment he would enter eternity with this King of love and forgiveness.

"Behold your mother...behold your son..."

"Father, it seems to me that Jesus wanted to divest himself of whatever was left on him. Neither Peter nor any of the other apostles showed up. He didn't even have a loincloth to cover his nakedness. He had given it all up for me and for the twelve of whom only John, the youngest had the courage to stand with me at the foot of the cross.

"It was at that moment that I realized he was there because Jesus gave me to him as his mother, the mother of Christ and of all Christians. If you were the one who orchestrated this exchange, Father, I thank you so much.

"Then he collapsed, hanging by his wrists that were torn once more as his lungs were squeezed in a vise like grip preventing him from breathing. That cry took up all those desperate cries throughout history...of those who would be crucified like your Son.

"His screams were the cries of so many poor, crippled, blind, sick and dumb whom you healed and brought hope to.

"Then He whispered, maybe just whimpered that He was thirsty and I saw them soak a sponge in vinegar, put it on a reed and touch it to His lips and my heart sank, aware that the end was very near.

"Your Son, O Father, summed up

the aridity of the world longing not for vinegar but for the living water He would give. Just like the psalm said: "My tongue cleaves to my palate and my throat is parched...and vinegar is offered to me."

"Like the prophets and psalmists, Jesus experienced your closeness O Father because you grant the prayers of the poor and who was poorer than the One who was hanging on the cross on Calvary?"

"It is finished... Yes, it really seemed that your Son was experiencing the accomplishment of his mission. He walked and talked and preached, and listened and loved and healed...but now he was making the greatest offering of all - his life, surrendering it all to You Father so that you could flood the world with your grace which would soon gush forth from His side...that would soon be pierced with a spear.

"Here at this supreme moment: his loud and frightened voice disturbed even the rude Roman centurion. And then he surrendered His spirit, His life back to you O Father after He had offered it for the world.

"To you, who sent him into the world through my fragile womb so many years earlier; what a thrill it is to hold Jesus in my lap after He was taken down from the cross. I had given him to you Father and the world and now He has been given to me bereft of life, but I already knew it would not end well.

"So often he tried to explain it to His friends, but they didn't understand. After having held Him tightly I handed Him over to the grave, His last womb from where He would be reborn alive and risen forever on Sunday morning after manifesting Himself to Mary of Magdala, my sister in sorrow on Calvary.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"



MOBILE, ALABAMA, USA

Mercy Sr. Mary Aidan Donaldson worked in education for almost 50 years, and that wasn't nearly half her life story.

The eldest Sister of Mercy in the world and possibly the oldest living religious died Oct. 25 last year at the age of 111 at the Convent of Mercy retirement home in Mobile, Alabama

She arrived in Mobile from her native County Down, Northern Ireland, during the Great Depression in 1929.

Mercy Sr. Carolyn Oberkirch, who lived with Donaldson for 24 years said: "What a full life she led all these years. What a good religious she was."

Mercy Sr. Marilyn Graf, who knew Donaldson for about 50 years, credited Donaldson's love of life and people as among the reasons for her longevity. She was known as the "official greeter" for

the convent during her retirement years. "She loved everybody and she loved for people to come in."

Donaldson said she "didn't know where Mobile was on the face of the earth" but, she added, "when I thought about it, I said, "Well, I did commit myself to God, and whatever he wanted was what I wanted. It was a call from God when I made up my mind."

Her first assignment was as a teacher at St. Joseph School and as a teacher, Donaldson was known to be tough but fair and the tough students fondly remembered their former teacher.

Donaldson's most famous student was singer Jimmy Buffett, who sent her birthday cards during her retirement years.

Although Donaldson lived to 111, she had hardships. Her mother died when Donaldson was an infant, and her lone brother died only five months after birth. She attended boarding school while her father worked in the railroad industry.

In 1938, Donaldson contracted tuberculosis and spent two years in a sanatorium and hospital.

"This is a lady that suffered a lot when you think she was out of commission that long," Graf said. "But she lived to 111. She had weak lungs, but she was amazing."

Archbishop Thomas Rodi will celebrate the funeral Mass for Donaldson on Nov. 4, 2019 at St. Ignatius Church in Mobile.

[**Rob Herbst** is editor of *The Catholic Week*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Mobile.] □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Scars of the Trade

Barber: "Haven't I shaved you before sir?"

Customer: "No, I've got that scar in France."

Secret of Longevity

There's a theory around that if a fellow doesn't smoke, drink, over-eat, or go with girls, he'll live a lot longer. The trouble is, we won't know for sure until somebody tries it."

Coined Humour

It is not true that banks have no sense of humour. After all, they are the ones who coined the phrase "easy payments."

Lure of the Media

A patient, lying in a hospital bed all bandaged up, was explaining to a visitor:

"So, I told my wife that when Monday-night football was on television, it would take wild horses to drag me away from the set. I still don't know where she got them."

Grooming Gusto

"Where have you been?"

"Having my hair cut."

"You know you can't have your hair cut on company time."

"Well, it grew on company time, didn't it?"

"Not all of it."

"Well, I ain't had it all cut off."

Creative Lunacy

One of the greatest marksmen of the Army was passing through a small town, and everywhere he saw evidence of the most amaz-

ing shooting. On trees, walls and fences there were numberless bull's-eyes with bullet-holes in dead centre. He asked to meet the person responsible for this wonderful marksmanship. The man turned out to be the village idiot! "This is the most remarkable shooting I have ever seen," said the Army champion. "How on earth did you do it?" "Easy as pie," said the village idiot. "I shoot first and draw the circles afterwards."

Payment in Full

The owner had just insured his ramshackle house against damages by fire.

"What would I get," he asked the agent, "if the house should burn down tonight?"

"I would say about ten years," replied the agent promptly.

Increase in Transit

"Did that crate of chickens reach you safely?" asked the farmer.

"Well, yes," replied the poulterer, but you didn't pack 'em properly, and after searching the neighbourhood I only found twelve."

"Umph, you did all right, I only sent eight."

Good Impression

When the visitor was shown into the manager's private room he remarked:

"That new clerk of yours seems a hard worker."

"Yes," replied the other, "That's his speciality."

"What, working hard?"

"No, seeming to." □

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.

This is really a miracle that happened in my life and that of my children. My marriage was a disaster, but now I

know that the Good Lord was with us and carrying our cross along with us and I had never acknowledged His presence but as I look back HE was there for us and providing for us through several genuine souls and took care of my depressions. I even suffered a nervous breakdown. The miracle that happened was my daughter's marriage, I really had nothing to give her but whatever little I had I gave and I didn't know how things would work as financially I was down but my sister-in-law and her daughters helped in everything which would not have been possible if Our Lord and Our Heavenly Mother would not be there for us. I used to blindly say the 3 Hail Marys with the invocation Mary, *My Mother keep me from mortal sin!* As I look back I feel I've never thanked my God and He does not need my thanks but I need Him so do my children, I was so lost in my problems that I could not look beyond but this miracle of my daughter's marriage was an eye opener. I'm not pious but I ask the Lord to help us to grow in faith, trust and surrender everything to HIM. *Maria Yolanda Britto Prazeres, Goa* My daughter conceived after 2 years of marriage. When she completed 2 months she had a miscarriage. The next year she conceived again but when she completed 3 months she had another miscarriage. I then started my devotion of 3 Hail Marys to Mother Mary. She conceived and delivered a beautiful baby boy. My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for all the graces and blessings received. Thank you Heavenly Father and Jesus for all the favours granted through Mother Mary. Dear Jesus and Mother Mary our family from all evils and dangers. *Mary Joanna*

Thanks to the recitation of the Three Hail Marys, by my wife, myself and my granddaughter and her husband received their visa for Turkey just the evening before the dream holiday they had planned. *A.G D'Mello, Mumbai* Thank you Sacred Heart of Jesus, Blessed Mother Mary for protecting and blessing our family. We are grateful for all the graces and favours received throughout the year. Do continue to bless us.

Rajesh, Beena and Ahaana Dias, Mangalore

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My most sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for the miraculous recovery of my husband of the most dreaded illness; during my stay with him at the hospital I constantly prayed the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Bless us and keep us safe always Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary.

Sandita Gouveia, Goa

Our sincere thanks to Our Sweet Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary for miracles that our family received - for bringing my daughter and son-in-law back together after four months. We cannot thank you enough for this miracle. Do continue to bless our family and make us grandparents. Bless our children with children. We will always remain your loving children.

Jacque and Ashton Quinless and family, Australia

Our grateful thanks to Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for helping our son pass his graduation successfully with a good percentage and also for his good health.

K.J. Pereira, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for saving us from serious injury. Please continue to bless, help and protect us. Thank you, my Mother and my Queen.

Heldt Family, Australia

I had been advised surgery for a recurring abscess. Petrified by the thought of a surgery I implored and prayed for a miracle to avoid the impending surgery. My sincere thanks to Abba Father, the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for hearing my prayers. Dear Mother, please continue to keep me under your loving tender care.

M, Rodrigues, Mumbai

We are immensely grateful to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother for the many favours bestowed on our dear parents - Avis and Beverley Wright, especially for blessing them with fifty golden years of marriage and for the precious gift of five children and eleven grandchildren. We pray that Our Lord will continue to bless them with good health and happiness in the coming years.

Rowena Wright, Children & Grandchildren, Trichy, TN

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

Thank you Mary Help of Christians and St. Anthony for helping me find a lost item out of nowhere, it was a desperate search. Please continue your blessings on me and my family.

C. Pinto, Dublin, Ireland

As my husband had severe dengue fever, ague and body pain I rushed him to the hospital on time and prayed that he get well. After six days he recovered and was discharged. I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for this favour.

Mrs. Juliana Dias, Mumbai

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



Our grateful thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of my daughter, when she conceived. Doctors predicted some complications but with the blessings of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio everything went well and my daughter safely delivered a healthy baby girl.

Roque Rodrigues and Family, Goa

Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my son a suitable partner and blessing them with the gift of a baby boy.

A Devotee

My heartfelt thanks to the Blessed Sacrament, Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for healing my mother from a highly infected Urinary tract. I am also grateful for a successful varicose vein operation.

Mrs. G. Almeida, Goa

I am sincerely grateful to Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Dominic Savio, St. Anthony and all the saints for granting me a safe delivery of a healthy baby boy in 2015. I had the scapular of St. Dominic Savio throughout my pregnancy. May they continue to protect my family always.

B. Mascarenhas, Goa

I sincerely thank Jesus, Mother Mary, dear St. Dominic Savio and all the saints, for granting a safe delivery of a healthy baby girl via c-section. Dear Lord Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio, bless and protect our daughter, her husband and their little baby LUA.

Joaquim and Rosy Martis, Mumbai

THOUGHT FOR LENT AND EASTER

There is something God-like about forgiveness. Nothing is more central to Jesus' message than forgiveness of one's enemies. Knowing that for many it might be the hardest part of his teaching, Jesus included it in the prayer he taught his disciples - The Our Father. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. As God forgives us daily for our sins and offences, so must we forgive daily those who offend us. This Lent we might ask ourselves: "Whom have we not forgiven from our hearts? Often they are the ones closest to us, such as, our parents, - living or dead - our children, our friends.

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

APRIL 2020

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We pray that those suffering from addiction may be helped and accompanied.

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;
Postal Regn. MNE/89/2018-2020
WPP License to post without prepayment
posted at Mumbai Patrika Channel Sorting Office
on 1st & 2nd of every month
Date of Publication: 1st of every month

Subs: (one copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland Rs. 200p.a;** **Airmail: Rs 500 p.a.**

MARY WAS THERE

My wife Marjorie and I never leave home without reciting the 3 Hail Marys and concluding with "Mary Help of Christians, be with us on our way". On a Friday in October 2019 early in the morning, we set out after these prayers to attend Mass at the Ursuline Convent close by. The road was deserted. Right in front of the Convent gate a man on scooter with his mouth and nose covered attacked my wife demanding her purse. There was a struggle. I too went to her help but shortly both of us fell down. In the meantime one or two passers by came running to help us. Seeing them the man scooted off. We escaped with only slight bruises and did not lose the purse either. It was only our devotion of the 3 Hail Marys that saved us from a major mishap. Thank you Mama Mary for your intercession.

Harold Mascarenhas, Bangalore

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

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

To help a poor lad to reach the priesthood, is a privilege

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