

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>Crucified Always</i>3
Needed - A Car Lift - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS...4
The Art of Staying Undeterred - Melanie D'Souza.....7
Salesian Saint: Bl Maria Romero Meneses (1902 - 1977).....11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: St Hyacinth.....12
Lectio Divina: The Quest for Salvation - Ian Pinto, sdb.....16
Quietspaces: The True Antidote to Vengeance and Resentment - Pope Francis...18
Were You There? - Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection...20
Don Bosco's Identity: Don Bosco's Sisters (17) - Fr. Elias Dias, SDB.....24
Reflecting on Mary: Mary: Living Font of Hope (II) - Mario Scudou.....28
NewsBits.....30
Walking With the Church: The Church, Practicing Catholics, Petitions- Priority.....31
In a Cheerful Mood.....15
The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys.....33
Loving Children to their Loving Mother.....34
They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco.....34
Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio.....35



*May the Assumption
of the holy Mother
of God,
lead us
to your pardon
and confirm us
in perpetual
thanksgiving.*

*From the Prayer over the offerings
of the Solemnity of the Assumption
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

From The Editor's Desk

CRUCIFIED ALWAYS

When Sheila Cassidy spoke of her persecution in South America she did it not to shock or to edify, though the experience was both shocking and deeply spiritual, but it gives you an idea of what persecution in our time can be like.

In 1975, she was working for both the public health service and the Catholic Church in Santiago, Chile. One day, a Jesuit priest asked her if she would treat a man with a bullet in his leg. This man was on the run from the secret police, and for that reason could not safely present himself at a hospital.

After she had treated him, she tried to persuade him to seek asylum in the Papal Nunciature. Somehow, the word got out, and she was arrested at gunpoint and taken to an interrogation centre. There she was tortured with electric shocks to make her reveal the name of the priests with whom she was 'involved'. She held out as long as she could, and eventually she told her captors what she knew.

So: *where was God in all this?* Was this persecution for the sake of faith and justice, or did she simply get what she deserved for 'meddling in politics'? Her experience was horrific, and she lived with the psychological scars long after, but it was also a deeply spiritual experience for her.

Even while being tortured, she had a sense of the presence of Christ, albeit as a powerless bystander. In solitary confinement, too, she initially prayed to be spared further suffering, but eventually came to realize that a far better way was to 'let go and let God.' She came to accept that whatever happened to her was somehow in the hands of God. This abandonment was a climactic moment, and brought her much consolation and peace.

She had no doubt that God was with her during those difficult days, and in some ways she felt privileged to have shared in the suffering of an oppressed people. Her time in Chile had given her an insight into the fear and anguish of the abused and the imprisoned that she would never have achieved without the experience of imprisonment, torture and solitary confinement.

It is something that we associate with the Christian martyrs of long ago: men and women thrown into the lion's den because they would not deny their beliefs, or those who died during the persecutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many recent persecutions have been of faiths other than Christianity too.

Our Holy Father Francis keeps asking us to pray for victims of persecution of every kind and he knows why, because in them he sees Jesus suffering!

The world, of course, has changed enormously but unfortunately, not for the better. Persecution, sadly, remains a constant in our world. It's time we seriously pray that all those persecuted for the Faith and for justice experience the consolation and strength of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

NEEDED - A CAR LIFT?

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

A sudden and unexpected car repair can turn anyone's budget upside down in minutes. But when one is already struggling to make both ends meet, the impact of such a catastrophe can extend well beyond one's modest means. A social worker in Minneapolis, Cathy Heying, frequently saw how such car problems could devastate her clients' health, their jobs, and even their homes. For a long time, she hoped that someone would be inspired to do something constructive about this particular problem. Till one fine day Cathy was powerfully struck as if by a thunderbolt: "Why can't I be that somebody?" Not long after she quit her full-time job and enrolled in automotive school.

Five years later, armed with a degree in auto technology, Cathy founded 'The Lift.' Her modest

non-profit garage soon began to provide steeply discounted car repairs to low-income individuals. From the start, she decided to keep her approach pretty simple: she sells parts at cost, with no profit for herself, and charges a nominal rate for labor; the going rate in her area is around \$100 an hour. The result of her initiative? Sizeable savings for every one of her customers. And for those who cannot genuinely pay in full, she will further work out payment plans. In less than a decade, Heying has provided affordable car repairs to more than 300 low-income individuals, saving them more than \$170,000 and keeping them on the road to success.

Lessons learnt from the Experiment

For those reading about this inspiring almost idealistic story, it might all look so simple. Cathy reports that she did not grow up in a mechanical minded family. The decision to change was for her a gigantic culture shift and a colossal knowledge shift as well. She had to use her brain very differently. And on at least three distinct occasions in the very first quarter, she remembers that she was really close to crying out, "I'm quitting. I cannot do this anymore!" Of course, she was not alone in her decision to stick it out. One of her instructors who later was on the board of 'The Lift,' kept repeatedly saying to

Cathy, "I know that you have a good vision here, and I'm going to help you get through this." Yet, it wasn't all smooth sailing. It was physically hard for one finds oneself in all sorts of crazy positions, digging under things, lifting tires, wrenching on things. And it could be mentally challenging and demanding too, at the best of times, and quite often really frustrating.

But it is above all an art and a science rolled into one! It can often be a very satisfying job, when a car comes in just refusing to start and you can send it out the door running in a matter of minutes. At the end of the day, you feel really good because you can look back and reminisce, 'This is what I achieved today!' From the customers point of view too, there are numerous blessings one can count. For the most part, people are ecstatic when they get the bill. And that just makes such a tangible difference in people's lives. Cathy cherishes one example: There

was a customer who came in here a few weeks ago who had been sleeping in his car. When he came to us, he had just gotten released from the hospital because he had frostbite because he didn't have a heater in his car. And so it is not just about getting people to and from work or school, even though that could be a really important part of it. It is really about protecting and respecting people's lives whenever and in whatever way possible! And for many people, having a car that works and that is safe holds the rest of the pieces together. It really allows them to remain independent, to remain self-sufficient, to meet the basic needs of their lives and to do it with dignity and confidence!

Give us our Daily Bread

There are many lessons we could learn from the example of Cathy but perhaps the most dominant is the lesson Jesus himself taught his disciples when one of them asked, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disci-



Cathy Heying



Cathy fixes a car at the Lift garage

ples." The Lord's Prayer which Jesus taught summarizes the essential attitudes of a Christian in this world. While he begins the prayer invoking God as Father, the source of all life and the good things it brings with it, the Christian reminds himself that his job in this world is to glorify the Father's name and bring about his Kingdom of love and fellowship in this world – a Christian thus displays all the good qualities the Father exercises in his dealings with his children. He blesses each one of them with numerous talents, but these are bestowed on them so that they may use them for the benefit of others, not just for their own glorification. However, using these gifts to benefit others always involves some kind of sacrifice, a losing of oneself, a blessing of the other at a definite cost to oneself. Cathy's time spent in automotive school during which she had to overcome the recurring desire to give up because the cost was overwhelming, demonstrates and confirms that this is no easy matter. Yet, it is precisely in the event of putting our noses to the grind that we glorify the Father's name. For as Jesus taught us, "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt 6:24).

Bread Broken for Others

This sacrifice that Cathy made was primarily for the benefit of others. The numerous examples given above and especially the responses of the people she helped

ed in this innovative way show how her entire life turned out to be a blessing for others, and very especially for those in need. Cathy does not use her God-given talents to take undue advantage of the poor and needy. Rather, her efforts truly result in building up a whole net-work of people blessing one another. The people who are cared for in their need by Cathy would naturally go out and treat others in the same altruistic manner in which they themselves were helped in their hour of need. And while the little efforts of Cathy may not succeed in changing the entire world and all the people in it, yet it would certainly make her little world a far better and friendlier place to live in. As the adage goes, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness!" At least the persons who come into direct contact with her (and these are not only her clients, but also some of her employees) would have found their lives being transformed for the better. Cathy will certainly have brought quite a lot of light into her world.

Truly then, can Cathy's life and example be compared to the Eucharistic Bread that Jesus gave his disciples on the night of the Last Supper when he said, 'Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you...' This is the 'daily bread' that Jesus taught us to pray for in the Lord's Prayer and which the Father graciously grants us 'each day' of our lives. He blesses us abundantly, as he does for every one of his children, but it is only the true Christian who conscientiously uses every

single blessing received largely if not purely for the benefit of others. What would our whole world be like if every single baptized Catholic lived his/her life in this fashion? Would it not be truly a heaven on earth? Would we not all experience the living presence of the Father of us all who cares for even the lilies of the field and the birds of the air – and much more every human being made in his own image and likeness? Why would not all the greed and self-centredness disappear if all of us, Christians at least, had the courage to place ourselves each day at the service of some of our needy brethren? For one thing, this approach would make Jesus feel in the bottom of his heart, that all the suffering and agony he went through to save the world from sin and death was truly worth it! "At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except

the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'" (Lk 10:21-24).

Could you make your little world a haven of peace and harmony, where true Christian fellowship triumphs over all forms of egotism and self-centredness? Of course, you can! – all you need do is to take the first bold step, trusting in the love and concern of God our common Father for all his beloved children. You can also trust in the goodwill of so many others who might not have the courage to take the first step. Yet, these same people would be ready to join someone else in their enterprise for the benefit of the needy! You might not in this way end up becoming the richest person in the neighbourhood, but you would certainly become a truly contented and happy person, one who is loved and respected by all around! And definitely one of whom the Father will say on the day of Judgement, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:34-36). □



THE ART OF STAYING UNDETERRED

by Melanie D'Souza

Undeterred. Unwavered. Unmoved. How can we stay strong without running the risk of being called *unfeeling*? How can I stay confident and focused when life's obstacles keep throwing themselves at me? Is there a mantra of some sort?

Well, kind of. It's an *art*. An art that God continues to teach us and test us on.

If you already haven't figured it out, the obstacles keep getting bigger and bigger. And the trivial ones multiply. A few years ago, you may have thought that your 12th standard Board Exams percentage meant the world to you as the nation's colleges would judge your admission based on what was hopefully a two-digit number. Today you can laugh back at your teen self while you keep yourself busy on *Monster.com* and other job-hunting websites.

But it's that simple. *God never gives us more than we can handle* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Throughout the Bible, we see the Lord's relationship with his chosen prophets, from disobedient Jonah to the exhausted Elijah all the way to his obedient Son, Jesus. The prophets were as human as

we are, and they too had several hurdles to overcome while they attempted to spread God's Word. It is God that kept urging them on and on - and so of course, it is the same God that urges us too - we must just have the strength to believe it.

Today's economy sees tons of young entrepreneurs, even twenty-somethings like some of us struggling- failing *and* succeeding in carving their niche in this world. One great idea that sells, and you have a startup that has a bumpy ride before it flourishes. Cultural demands, district regulations - a variety of obstacles come their way but these entrepreneurs succeed only when they learn to dodge them or work around them. Well, *what* makes them really stick? It's because they have learnt the art of staying undeterred *when they have a goal that still holds true for them*.

Jesus shows us how to do that. In John 6, we learn that many of his followers left him and returned to their former way of life because his teaching was too difficult for them to accept. Now we know Jesus was no businessman but he stayed undeterred and didn't

change his teaching on the Eucharist in order to make them stay with him. Instead he went on with his Mission just like we should!

So, you have a mountain that you are trying to climb at this point in life. Well, good job at even *trying* to climb it - that's the first step right there! Go ahead and keep a **mission statement** right in front of you - it's only with a goal in mind that you can tackle what is in front of you.

Since we are on the subject of goals and tackling obstacles, I cannot help but bring up the one and only **Ronaldinho Gauchó**. If you were a 90's or early 2000's kid like me, chances are you grew up watching this Brazilian football superstar glide his way across the pitch. Ronaldinho grew famous as he perfected the dribbling technique of the *Elastico* or the flip-flap, a move in which a player moves the ball towards the defensive player of the other team (their obstacle) for only a moment before guiding it away to continue to the goalpost (their goal). This should remind us to *face* the shortcomings that come our way before deciding to work

around them. Moreover, we must be grateful for the progress and success we face thereafter. Ronaldinho once said, " God gives gifts to everyone; some can write, some can dance. He gave me the skill to play football and I am making the most of it".

Another role model for adopting a steadfast attitude towards our goal could be **St. Stephen**. When I think of St. Stephen who made history as the first martyr of Christianity, images of his face that remain transfixed to God despite being stoned, come to mind. Rembrandt, the famous Dutch painter captured the Stoning of St. Stephen in his very first painting where he so beautifully depicts the 'undeterred' expression of St. Stephen. "Lord, receive my spirit!" he cries out while his angry audience continues to stone him.

A St. Stephen attitude with a Ronaldinho spirit, surely teaches to adopt the habit of trusting that God sees our way through despite the darkness of the obstacles he seems to throw our way. It's easy to think we're alone in the troubles that cloud us. But it is more satisfying to remember that most of us are in the same boat and that all obstacles can be worked around with a change in attitude and action and faith in the Spirit.

Let's help each other stay undeterred.

"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My loving kindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you (NASB). □



SALESIAN SAINTS

MARIA ROMERO MENEZES 1902 - 1977

Maria Romero was born on January 13, 1902 in Granada Nicaragua to Félix Romero Aiana and Ana Meneses Blandón, both ancient Spanish ancestry. Her father, through a rapid administrative career, came to the post of minister of the Republic. Little Maria grew up very content in her middle-class family with seven other siblings, the survivors of thirteen children of Ana Meneses. She enjoyed the tender love of her parents, and the stories and special affection of her maternal grandmother. She received her first education at a private school run by her maternal aunts, during which time she began drawing, painting and studying the violin and the piano, with excellent teachers who successfully harnessed her talents.

At the age of eight she made a three day retreat to prepare herself for her First Holy Communion after which she was enrolled at the school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who had providentially just arrived in Nicaragua only a year earlier. Sadly, she was repeatedly absent due to rheumatic fever attacks that confined her to bed. Her illness only progressively grew worse and was a serious risk to her life. The fact that she was able to accept this cross may be considered a "gift of God." A classmate, who often visited her saw that one day she



seemed to be "illuminated from within" and she heard her exclaim: "I know that the Holy Virgin will cure me." In fact, a few days later she got up and went back to school in spite of the fact that she had been confined to bed for six months.

She made rapid strides in college and took regular lessons in music and foreign languages. In addition she received comprehensive training in the Preventive System of Don Bosco which would impress her for the rest of her life. Her great spiritual progress may be attributed to her confessor and spiritual director Don Emilio Bottari, an inspired Salesian missionary who firmly guided her.

On December 8, 1915 Maria was enrolled among the *Daughters of Mary* and she experienced "one of those ineffable joys," as she confidently entrusted herself to the Holy Mother of God. She was intensely captivated by the love of

God and a short time later in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament her confessor accepted her vow of chastity. She later recalled that those dispositions "ever so strongly gripped her soul." Around this time she had her "first mystical experience." One day the teenage Maria, visibly moved, embraced her elder sister and said: "I saw Our Lady, but don't tell anyone."

Finally at the age of eighteen her dream was fulfilled. She joined the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The priest-director greeted Maria with this incisive recommendation: "There will be difficult moments and you may feel torn to pieces but remain ever faithful and steadfast in your vocation." Maria would recall those golden words during the numerous "difficult moments" that would dot her life.

Armed with such a programme she began growing in intimacy with Jesus "her King" and Mary "her Queen." Maria Romero would prepare herself for her religious consecration after her two year novitiate at Santa Tecla, El Salvador, on May 6th, 1923. From that day on she would daily renew her total surrender to God and would add to her formula: "I renew my vows in your love, with your love and for your love." It would be in 1929 that she would take her vows "in perpetuity."

After her perpetual vows, she was sent to San José in Costa Rica which would become her second home. She was asked to teach in a school for rich girls, but like Don Bosco, she was on the lookout especially for those who were "poor and abandoned."

From among her best students

she chose some *Disciples* who would work in the Oratories. They were called "las misioneritas." They went into the huts of the poor, helped clean them. They distributed food and the clothes that were collected by Sr Maria and they taught catechism. They then began to found festive oratories for the poor children. There were six of them!

Mary Help of Christians, whom she called Queen, ensured that many offerings came her way to support her works. Thanks to the volunteer work of medical specialists she succeeded in setting up a clinic with various specializations, to ensure medical and pharmaceutical help; there was also room for catechism and literacy. There was a chapel where the students could pray.

She built 'real' homes for the homeless, the so-called *ciudadela de Maria Auxiliadora*, a work that still goes on through the help of the ASAYNE - a lay association (*Asociación Ayuda a los Necesitados*). To spread the Salesian devotion to Mary Help of Christians she had a church built in the centre of San José. A lot of people helped her when they experienced through her the maternal protection of Mary Help of Christians. Her union with God caused her to be much sought out for spiritual direction. Many of her "*Escritos Espirituales*" have been printed. She died of heart failure on 7th July 1977.

The government of Costa Rica declared her an honorary citizen of the nation. Her body is in San José de Costa Rica at the great work she founded called "Casa de la Virgen" and "Obra social." She was beatified by Saint John Paul II on 14th April 2002. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST HYACINTH (AUGUST 17)

From the Life of Saint Hyacinth
“A new light has arisen for Poland.”

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. In the beginning the maker of the universe created heaven and earth and left darkness on the face of the deep. To illuminate the darkness God said: Let there be light, and there was light. With light God illumined the cosmos. Just as God brought light into the darkness of the world, so through Blessed Jacek, who was like a shining ray of sun in Poland, God routed the darkness of sinners and with the light of faith illumined the hearts of the Polish people. Now has been accomplished what Isaiah prophesied long ago: The people, that is those on the borders of Poland, have seen a great light, that is, Saint Jacek, preacher of the doctrine of light.

When the light of day dawns, illness is alleviated, people stir from sleep, birds begin to chirp, beasts leave their lairs; likewise when Saint Jacek was sent to Poland by Blessed Dominic, the Polish people were freed from their vices, aroused from their



negligence, encouraged to consider things of heaven, and set free from the power of demons. A new light seemed to arise for the Polish people, bringing joy, honor and festivity for all.

I, Brother Stanislaus, youngest lector of the Friars Preachers in Krakow, know about this light, that is, Saint Jacek. When I myself heard stories from our forebears, stories worthy of belief from those who knew Saint Jacek and lived

with him, I carefully wrote down what they said in a brief and simple style for the honor of God both Three and One, who established all the saints and adorned them with inexpressible light.

May Christ himself, the King of glory, who is the splendor of the Father and figure of his substance, through the protection of Saint Jacek, prosper my work, for with the Father and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Jacek is the common form for the name “Hyacinth”. Literally understood, “Hyacinth” is said to derive from the hyacinth flower or hyacinth stone and thus its meaning has two interpretations.

In the first place he is called “Hyacinth”, because the flower has a stalk with a crimson blossom: this suits Blessed Jacek well for he was a simple stalk in his docility of heart, a flower in his chastity, a crimson blossom in his vow of poverty and lack of material goods.

Secondly, he is called “Hyacinth” from the hyacinth stone, for he shines brilliantly in the way he handed on the teaching of the gospel, was resplendent in his holy way of life, and most steadfast in spreading the catholic faith. For these reasons his name has spread abroad.

Saint Hyacinth was born in 1185. He was born into nobility as his father was of the noble family of Odrowacz. His birth took place in the castle of Lanka at Karim, which is in Silesia. Almost from the cradle, Hyacinth seemed predisposed to virtue. God also blessed him with a splendid mind. His parents not only fostered his happy disposition, but also used

great care in selecting the teachers that would protect this innocence. In this way, he was so well grounded in his religious duties that he passed through his higher studies at Cracow, Prague, and Bologna, without tarnish to his pure soul. Upon completion of his studies at Bologna, Saint Hyacinth earned the title of Doctor of Canon Law and Divinity. Doubtless his model life had much to do in helping him to win the admiration of both his professors and fellow-students.

When he returned to Poland he was given a prebend at Sandimir. In 1220 he accompanied his uncle Ivo Konski, the Bishop of Cracow, to Rome. Here they met with Saint Dominic. At this time, Saint Hyacinth was one of the first to receive the habit of the newly established Order of Friars Preachers from Saint Dominic. Because of his spirit for prayer and his zeal for the salvation of souls, he was sent to preach and establish the Dominican Order in his native land, Poland. On the way he was able to establish a convent of his order at Friesach in Carinthia. In Poland the new preachers were favourably received and their sermons were productive of much good. Hyacinth founded communities at Sandimir, Cracow, and at Plocko on the Vistula in Moravia. He extended his missionary work through Prussia, Pomerania, and Lithuania; then crossing the Baltic Sea he preached in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. It was these apostolic travels that earned Hyacinth the title “The Apostle of the North”.

His travels and missions did not end here. He came into Lower or

Red Russia, establishing a community at Lemberg and at Haletz on the Mester; proceeded into Muscovy, and founded a convent at Dieff, and came as far as the shores of the Black Sea. Because of his evangelizing, multitudes were converted, and churches and convents were built.

However manifold were his duties, the future Friar Preacher did not permit them to interfere with his good works, dampen his spirit of prayer, or to lessen his practice of recollection. None were more punctual or exact in their recitation of the divine office by the canons. He regularly visited hospitals where the sick found him a sympathetic comforter. A friend to the poor, he distributed his income among them. He felt that money received through the Church could not be devoted to a better or more advantageous use.

Saint Hyacinth is known to have performed numerous miracles. The one miracle that has been most associated with him was the result of the Tartars siege of the city of Kiev. Hyacinth gained a child-like and tender devotion to the Mother of God from Saint Dominic. To her he attributed his success, and to her aid he looked for his salvation. When Hyacinth was at Kiev, the fierce Tartars sacked the town. Hyacinth was celebrating the Mass and did not know of the onslaught and danger until the Mass ended. Without waiting to unvest, he took the ciborium in his hands and was fleeing the church. It is recorded that as he passed by a statue of Mary he heard a voice say, "Hyacinth, my son, why dost thou leave me behind? Take me with thee and

leave me not to mine enemies." Although the statue was made of heavy alabaster, Hyacinth took it in his arms and carried it away along with the ciborium with the Holy Eucharist. It is for this miraculous moment that Saint Hyacinth is most often depicted. The story continues that Hyacinth and the community that accompanied him came to the river Dnieper. There he urged them to follow him across the river. He led the way, and they all walked dry shod across the waters of the deep river, which then protected them from the fury of the Tartars. Polish historians are in agreement on this marvelous fact, although some of the writers confuse it with a similar crossing of the Vistula which happened earlier. A circumstance, which is recorded in connection with this miracle, renders it all the more remarkable. It is said that the footprints of the saint remained on the water, even after he had crossed the river; and that, when the stream was calm, they could be seen for centuries afterwards.

Worn out by his constant labors and vast journeys, Hyacinth spent the last few months of his life in a convent he had founded at Cracow. There on the Feast of Saint Dominic in 1257, he fell sick with a fever that was to lead to his death. On the eve of the feast of the Assumption, he was warned of his coming death. In spite of his condition, he attended Mass on the Feast of the Assumption. He was anointed at the altar, and died the same day in 1257.

He was canonized in 1594 by Pope Clement VIII. The feast day of St. Hyacinth is celebrated on August 17th. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Encore, encore

A young American singer taking his bow at La Scala was flattered when the discerning Italian audience forced him to return for the fourth time. Completely winded, he finally begged off, saying it was physically impossible to sing it a fifth time. A voice boomed from the gallery: "You'll keep on singing it until you sing it right."

Not so many

Mom (hearing a crash): "More dishes, Junior?"
Junior: "No, Mom, fewer dishes."

Just right

"Look here," said the angry hardware dealer to the salesman, "you told me that those mouse traps you sold me were wonderful for mice but my customers are complaining that they haven't caught a single mouse in them!"
"Well," was the salesman's calm reply, "isn't that wonderful for the mice?"

No ear for music

An old story tells of two men who were walking along the streets of London, when the music of some wonderful chimes in a nearby cathedral floated through the air. One of the men remarked to the other, "Isn't that wonderful music?"

"I didn't hear what you said," replied the other.

"Aren't those chimes beautiful?" repeated the first speaker. But again the other man failed to

catch the words, and the first speaker said for the third time, "Isn't that lovely music?"
"It's no use," came the answer. "Those pesky bells are making so much noise I can't hear what you say."

Wait and see

The police station had been quiet most of the week. Things were so slow the detectives were playing cards to pass the time.

"What a life," grumbled one of the officers. "No fights, no thefts, no riots, no murders, no nothing."
"Rest easy, Mike," said the captain.

"Things'll break soon. You gotta have faith in human nature."

Familiar treatment

Sergeant: "Did you give the prisoner the third degree?"

Officer: "Yes, we browbeat him, badgered him, and asked him every question we could think of."

"So?"
"He dozed off and merely said, 'Yes, dear, you are perfectly right.'"

Lucky to be alive

Congressman John Allen once was pleading his case before some hostile voters, when a heavy stone was thrown at him. As he happened to stoop at that instant, the stone passed over his head.

"You see," he said to his friends who congratulated him on his narrow escape, "if I had been an upright politician, I would have been killed." □



THE QUEST FOR SALVATION

by Ian Pinto sdb

A Personal Mission

Every human being is on a quest. It's almost like we were born with this instinct for something beyond us. Many deny that there is anything beyond us but experience has proven them wrong. Viktor Frankl, the famous Jewish psychiatrist and author, puts it beautifully: Man is in Search of Meaning. For some the meaning is limited to the here and now but for the majority it lies beyond, in the vast unknown. Some peoples' quest leads them to self-glorification, others are led to a godless humanism where the human person occupies central

place and duty governs all interactions. But most people, in their quest, are led to God, in whom they find their greatest happiness, fulfillment and meaning.

The quest for God has been carried out by people in every epoch. Since every one of us is different, each of us will have a different way of approaching God and progressing in our quest. We may take inspiration from those who have walked before us or those walking alongside us; we may find similarities in our quest and in those of others but ultimately, this mission is personal and we will have to make it by ourselves. We may enlist the support, help and inspiration of others but it is we who will have to walk the path.

Salvation, according to the Jews, came only to those who professed belief in Yahweh and lived by His commandments. Over time, the Jews got so caught up with their 'exalted' status in the eyes of Yahweh that they began to look

down on others. Gradually they began to take Yahweh for granted. They began to look on salvation as a prerogative, almost as if Yahweh *had* to save them just because they were Jews - His people.

A Divine Gift

Lord, will only a few be saved? (Lk 13:23). We are not told who asked the question. This may not seem like an important detail but it could help us understand the mind and background of the person who asked the question. This would also help us understand the question better; in its context. If the person was a gentile, then his question reflects fear of being left out of God's salvific plan. If the person was a Jew, then his question would be an attempt to elicit from Jesus reassurance of salvation reserved specially for the Jews. The question, it seems to me, was posed by an honest seeker. The questioner's sincerity of heart is reflected in the response of Jesus. Jesus, in his typical style, uses an analogy to get the point across rather than simply affirming or negating the question.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate (v. 24). The narrow gate resembles



the path of difficulties, privations and arduous. Salvation is not something that just falls into your lap, as the Jews thought. You have got to make an effort to work towards it. Here, another danger lurks. We might begin to think that because we have made many sacrifices and endured many pains, trials and sufferings, we are entitled to salvation. Jesus warns against this attitude too. *For many I tell you, will try to enter and will not be strong enough* (v. 24). The narrow gate is not very easy to enter. Only those who have set their minds and hearts on God and who seek Him genuinely will walk boldly through.

Salvation is a joint effort or a partnership between God and human beings. God's grace of salvation is bestowed gratuitously on all people and awaits human cooperation to take effect. God respects our freedom and will not forcefully save us. If we are unwilling to embrace His grace then there is little He can do. God's grace is open to all: *People from east and west, north and south, will come and sit at the table in the kingdom of God* (v. 29). Are you ready to enter through the narrow gate and cooperate with God's free-flowing grace or would you rather bang at the large gate and risk rejection with 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'? ☐



THE TRUE ANTIDOTE TO VENGEANCE AND RESENTMENT

"The power of forgiveness", Pope Francis said in his homily at Mass on Friday, 1 January, "is the true antidote to the sadness caused by resentment and vengeance." On the first day of the year, the Holy Father opened the Holy Door of the Basilica of St Mary Major. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily which was delivered in Italian.

Salve, Mater Misericordiae!

With this invocation we turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Roman Basilica dedicated to her under the title of Mother of God. It is the first line of an ancient hymn which we will sing at the conclusion of this Holy Eucharist. Composed by an unknown author, it has come down to us as a heartfelt prayer spontaneously rising up from the hearts of the faithful: "Hail Mother of mercy, Mother of God, Mother of forgiveness, Mother of hope, Mother of grace and Mother full of holy gladness". In these few words we find a summary of the faith of generations of men and women who, with their eyes fixed firmly on the icon of the Blessed Virgin, have sought her intercession and consolation.

It is most fitting that on this day we invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary above all as Mother of mercy. The door we have opened is, in fact, a Door of Mercy. Those who cross its threshold are called to enter into the merciful love of the Father with complete trust and freedom from fear; they can leave this Basilica knowing – truly knowing – that Mary is ever at their side. She is the Mother of mercy, because she bore in her womb the very Face of divine mercy, Jesus, Emmanuel, the Expectation of the nations, the "Prince of Peace" (Is 9:5). The Son of God, made incarnate for our salvation, has given us his Mother, who joins us on our pilgrimage through this life, so that we may never be left alone, especially at times of trouble and uncertainty.

Mary is the Mother of God, she is the Mother of God who forgives, who bestows forgiveness, and so we can rightly call her Mother of forgiveness. This word – "forgiveness" – so misunderstood in today's world, points to the new and original fruit of Christian faith. A person unable to forgive has not yet known the fullness of love. Only one who truly loves is able to forgive and forget. At the foot of the Cross, Mary sees her Son offer himself totally, showing us what it means to love as God loves. At that moment she heard Jesus utter words which probably reflected what he had learned from her as a child: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). At that moment, Mary became for all of us the Mother of forgiveness. Following Jesus' example and by his grace, she herself could forgive those who killed her innocent Son.

For us, Mary is an icon of how the Church must offer forgiveness to those who seek it. The Mother of forgiveness teaches the Church that the forgiveness granted on Golgotha knows no limits. Neither the law with its quibbles, nor the wisdom of this world with its distinctions, can hold it back. The Church's forgiveness must be every bit as broad as that offered by Jesus on the Cross and by Mary at his feet. There is no other way. It is for this purpose that the Holy Spirit made the Apostles the effective ministers of forgiveness, so what was obtained by the death of Jesus may reach all men and women in every age (cf. Jn 20:19-23).

The Marian hymn continues: "Mother of hope and Mother of grace, Mother of holy gladness". Hope, grace and holy gladness are all sisters: they are the gift of Christ; indeed, they are so many names written on his body. The gift that Mary bestows in offering us Jesus is the forgiveness which renews life, enables us once more to do God's will and fills us with true happiness. This grace frees the heart to look to the future with the joy born of hope. This is the teaching of the Psalm: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. [...] Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (51:10,12). The power of forgiveness is the true antidote to the sadness caused by resentment and vengeance. Forgiveness leads to joy and serenity because it frees the heart from thoughts of death, whereas resentment and vengeance trouble the mind and wound the heart, robbing it of rest and peace. What horrible things are resentment and vengeance.

Let us, then, pass through the Holy Door of Mercy knowing that at our side is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Mother of God, who intercedes for us. Let us allow her to lead us to the rediscovery of the beauty of an encounter with her Son Jesus. Let us open wide the doors of our heart to the joy of forgiveness, conscious that we have been given new confidence and hope, and thus make our daily lives a humble instrument of God's love.

And with the love and affection of children, let us cry out to Our Lady as did the faithful people of God in Ephesus during the historic Council: "Holy Mother of God!" I invite you to repeat together this acclamation three times, aloud and with all your heart and with all your love: "Holy Mother of God! Holy Mother of God! Holy Mother of God!" □



WERE YOU THERE?

From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories

*"Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble, tremble,
Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?"*

You've heard this old song any number of times haven't you? But have ever thought of it as more than a song? As a sort of a question, directed just to you? Were you there, you the businessman, you the school teacher, the housewife, the college student, anybody ... everybody? Yes, you were there, you were all there. We ran through the streets of Jerusalem, we climbed the hill called Calvary. We each had a place there, and a name.

You were there Jim Barker. You, the head of your department; after that investigation, somebody had to go, anybody, even an innocent man. You could have stopped the rumours about him. You could have issued a statement that would have cleared him, but

public opinion was aroused. You knew whose fingers pointed out him to be the scapegoat. But you had influence and you had your job to think of. Yes, you were there. Two thousand years ago, you had the same excuse, Pontius Pilate...

"What should I have done? Risked my position and perhaps my life to save him? They would have reported me. It was their doing. They wanted him out of the way. Those charges against him, any judge would have laughed them out of court. I did my best to save him. I even had him scourged. I felt that would satisfy them. The rest, the crowning with thorns, the mockery, that was all the soldiers' doing, not mine. Even then he was never broken. He spoke to me as if we were equal. I knew he was innocent but they could have ruined my reputation. I did the only practical thing for a man in my position. He watched me wash my hands. I caught the strangest look in his eyes... as if he pitied me.

You were there Steve Randall, taxi driver, spending your days at the beck and call of strangers. You don't know them from Adam or Eve but you helped them find a good hotel, a good place to eat. You even pay the railroad fare of an old lady who's been robbed of her purse and you halt boys and girls in their flight from home. You were there, your name was Simon... and



August 2016



afterwards... "I came from Cyrene on business. I followed the crowd naturally I followed them to find out what was coming. Next thing I knew a Roman soldier was dragging me into the line of march ordering me to help a man who had fallen underneath the weight of a cross. I protested. I told him I was a respectable citizen and wanted to have nothing to do with the execution of criminals. He reached for his sword and, of course, I had to lift the cross. The fallen man staggered to his feet. He was covered with dust and blood. He could hardly stand, but he tried to smile as he thanked me. I carried his cross to the top of the hill. When I set it down, I saw the inscription: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!* It was a Roman joke of course, but, I knew by this time that he was a king among men. And I was proud that I had been able to help him.



August 2016

Nurse in the men's ward of a city hospital; nurse bending down over this derelict from a downtown alley, washing off the dirt and the blood. You were there. They called you, Veronica. "I was walking down the road towards the city when I saw the mob and him stumbling along beneath the cross. I had never seen him before. But some of my neighbours had told me

that he always had a gentle word for a woman. It was a good thing to hear in a day when a man had kind words for his horse than for his wife. As I drew near, I saw that his face was running with sweat and that blood from the crown of thorns had filled his eyes. My heart all but broke with pity. I slipped past the great brutes who were guarding him. I pulled the veil off my head and pushed it into his hand. For one moment he buried his face in its folds and handed it back just as the guards pulled me away. When I was out of the crowd I unfolded my veil; I

saw the impression of his face!

Soldier of the mercenary army, wiping the blood of a prisoner off your bayonet; trigger-man for a city-mob watching your bullets fell an innocent victim, you were there. In those days you killed for Rome. "It was part of the job being on execution detail. I'd rather have a good man-to-man fight any day, but nobody asked. I got orders to crucify this Nazarene and I did it. I'd seen a lot of men die on the cross but nobody like him. You could see him biting through his lips while we hammered in the nail but he never let out a sound. Just before he died he gave one shout just like a man who'd won a hard fight. When it was all over, I went off to a tavern and got dead drunk. I don't know why? I usually didn't think twice about crucifying a man. It was all in a day's work, but he was different.

Mother, bending over a bed where lies your sick child who must be watched and cannot be helped; mother, holding a telegram in shaking hands and all the blood drains from your heart as it



welled from the body of your son; you were there, just as Mary, his mother, stood beneath his cross, powerless to ease his agony; suffering his death in her own heart.

Convict, kneeling in a prison chapel; ex-convict reporting to the parole officer, asking only for a chance to start a new life; you were there, they called you Dismas...

"The way it happened was this.

There were two of us, both thieves, crucified with him. I was on his right. The other began to scream at him: "Save yourself and us." He was a fool that thief. I told him to save his breath. We deserved the punishment we were given us. But he, what had he ever done? I could hardly think because of the pain but suddenly I

knew that he was the Son of God. I begged him to remember me, a sinner. He promised me Paradise!

Mr Harry Crawford, you who end all discussions on religion with a laugh, and your favourite comment: 'When it comes to religion, I can see some point to collecting postage stamps.' You, to whom Sunday is the only day when you can sleep until noon, or get up at 4 am for a fishing trip. You were there and a city full of men like you with the same comment.

"Oh, I heard the commotion and saw the crowd. I knew they were going to crucify Jesus of Nazareth. I'd heard of him. He'd been in the city often before. But I had my shop to take care of; I couldn't afford to lose customers while I sit around listening to sermons and waiting for miracles to happen. The day they crucified him, I followed them a little way up the

hill and I was afraid I would be late for dinner and I didn't care about him one way or the other, so I went home.

Yes, we were all there in those spiritual ancestors of ours. We stood either for Christ or against him and we still do. We are still there for, the Passion continues. He suffers in all the innocent condemned, in the sick and the dying, the disgraced and the deserted; every man in need of help brings us to Calvary. We are there, and who are we? Are we Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, the soldiers, the sorrowful mother, the good thief or the man who didn't care?

*"Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble,
Were you there
when they crucified my Lord?" □*

THE STORY OF THE HYMN

This is one of those American folk hymns whose true origin is lost in the proverbial mists of time.

Though slavery was a tragic blight, rooted in both ignorant prejudice and selfish greed, it did have this positive effect: it exposed multitudes to the Christian gospel who might never have heard it otherwise. Most slaves in America could not read or write, but they listened and learned, and many came to personal faith. The lyrics were simple and repetitious, allowing all of those present to join in. Then, when the song ended, the speaker would return to his message.

The slaves could readily identify with the suffering Israelites in bondage in Egypt, described in the book of Exodus. In the record of the New Testament, the slaves could relate in a powerful way with the sufferings of Christ. His abuse at the hands of both the Jews and the Romans seemed to echo their own mistreatment. And though their songs often spoke of suffering and death, the resurrection of Christ and the gospel of grace infused them with a ray of hope. □

DON BOSCO'S SISTERS

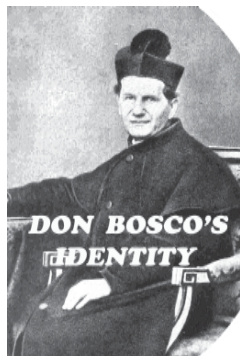
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by Fr. Elias Dias

Don Bosco dreamt that he had seen in Piazza Vittorio in Turin, a great number of girls who were playing and making a din, they seemed completely left to their own devices. As soon as they noticed him, they approached him begging him to take care of them. There was a special group of older girls who seemed not to be interested in the games of the others and who, with an even more suppliant air, said to him, "As you see no one takes care of us." At that point a Noble lady appeared on the scene. Her face was resplendent and she repeated over and over again. "Take care of them, they are my daughters."

Many years before the Institute was actually founded, Don Bosco had foreseen that he would start the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In 1863, when Caroline Provera expressed a desire to become a sister, Don Bosco said "If you can wait a little while, Don Bosco will have Salesian Sisters, just as he has Salesian clerics and priests."

Don Cerruti in his testimony for the beatification of Don Bosco affirmed that one day in an audience with Pope Pius IX, the Pope said to him "So far you have thought about boys. Why don't you think about doing for needy girls what you are doing for boys?" Don Bosco felt that he had to first organize well his work for the boys before thinking about the girls, particularly since he was concerned about founding a reli-



gious association under the name of Mary Help of Christians. Don Bosco was grateful to Our Mother and he wanted to raise an eloquent monument of filial gratitude in her honour.

The impact of Industrial Revolution in and around Turin had profoundly affected the structure of society, particularly family life. Girls in poor families were now expected to contribute to the family budget by wages they earned in the factories. Threatened and yet attracted by a life that promised them greater freedom and independence, or at least a means of escaping the misery of the home, the girls were exposed to risk of moral and emotional compromise. Several Christian philanthropists had been drawn to the plight not only of the poor and abandoned boys but also of neglected girls, subjected even more than their brothers to manipulation and exploitation by society.

At the time of Don Bosco there were many actively apostolic women like the Marchioness Barolo, who established the Refuge for poor girls. But Sister Marie-Louise Clarac, a Daughter of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, who later left the congregation and started her own Institute was really noted for her commendable work among the girls.

Sr. Clarac opened the House of Mercy in Turin. She knew Don Bosco as an apostle of the young. She considered him a saint and consulted him about situations that presented some moral or spiritual difficulties and her plans about the poor and abandoned girls. Don Bosco suggested that she open an Oratory for girls at Corso Vittorio Emmanuelle II to counteract the Waldensian influence. Don Bosco had a good rapport with Sr. Clarac.

Don Bosco understood the complexity and the situation of her work. He certainly did not wish her work to disappear and rejoiced over the good she was doing.

It is at this point that Don Bosco might have been interested in Sr. Clarac's work. However as the ex-Sister of Charity, she was quite a firm and dedicated woman, not one who easily changed her mind once it was made up. She was dedicated to working for the ordinary and poor people, some of her works went beyond those specific to Don Bosco. Therefore instead of thinking that Don Bosco would use Sr. Clarac to found a women congregation for his apostolate, it is more correct to say the work of Sr. Clarac stimulated Don Bosco to respond to the call to work for poor, abandoned and needy girls of Turin.

Enlightened from on high in his dreams about taking care of girls, Don Bosco was gradually developing the idea of founding an Institute of sisters. He questioned Fr. Lemoyne on the subject on the evening of June 24, 1866: "Yes, this too will be done! We shall have nuns but not yet, a little later." In fact, in a dream of 1862, he told Marchioness Barolo "Didn't Our Lord come into this world to redeem both boys and girls? Then I must take care that His Blood be not uselessly shed for either group."

How admirable was the divine plan by which God in his Providence brought Don Bosco and Don Pestarino together. In 1862 Don Bosco attended a clerical conference organized by Bishop Modesto Contratto of Acqui. There he met Don Dominic Pestarino who told him all about his Sodality of Daughters of Mary Immaculate at Mornese. A few months later Don Pestarino visited the Oratory of Don Bosco and was very impressed and decided to remain with Don Bosco. Don Bosco advised him to take care of the Sodality at Mornese.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Italy was going through the effects of National Unification. Don Pestarino, from the little village Mornese, in the diocese of Acqui, was forced by revolutionaries to leave the seminary. When he returned to his village he began to work zealously, taking particular care of young people.

With his help, a certain girl named Angela Maccagno started the Pious Union of Mary Immaculate for girls who did not want to marry and who desired to live like consecrated religious but remaining in their own families.

Under Don Pestarino she learnt to live a holy life. After surviving a serious attack of typhoid in 1860, she recovered but was too weak to work in the vineyard. She learnt to be a seamstress so that she could be useful to the family.

One day while passing through Borgo Alto she saw in a vision a large edifice and many poor girls playing without any help. She wanted to help them. She shared her desire with her friend Petronilla Mazzearello. They gathered young girls and taught them stitching. First they began in a small room, then they moved near the Church of St. Sylvester. They started an Oratory and kept four boarders and taught them catechism.

On October 7, 1864 Don Bosco visited Mornese with his boys. The town folk gave him a rousing welcome. Don Bosco stayed there for five days and spoke to the members of the Sodality. He was moved by the kindness and spirit at Mornese.

On June 23, 1871 Don Bosco consulted the Holy Father about the foundation. In his next visit the Holy Father advised him to follow the rule of the Vincentians. Having the approval of the Holy Father, Don Bosco began to work on the project. The Constitution was based on the constitutions of several existing female Institutes.

Towards the end of 1871 Don Bosco gave Don Pestarino a plan and Constitutions for the future novices and asked them to elect a leader. In 1871 Don Bosco was sick at Varazze. Don Pestarino went to see him, Don Bosco asked him to organize the group.

On January 29, 1872, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, Twenty-seven Daughters of Mary Imma-

culate gathered together and Don Pestarino, their spiritual Director, explained the idea of Don Bosco to found a religious congregation. He also invited them to elect a Superior. On the first ballot Mary Mazzearello received 21 out of 27 votes. Immediately the pious humble maiden begged to be excused since she did not feel up to the task. Petronilla Mazzearello received 19 votes to be Mother Vicar. The other members of the Council were also elected.

Don Bosco asked Don Pestarino to prepare the Daughters for their investiture and profession. August 5, 1872 was a great day for the new congregation. Monsignor Sciandra of Aquis celebrated the Mass, blessed the habits and gave them to the candidates in the presence of Don Bosco. After the profession Don Bosco told them hence forth they will be called Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as a living monument of Mary Help of Christians.

At thirty-four years of age, intelligent though she was, Mary Mazzearello had received no formal schooling. Her experience of society was limited to that of her village and she had no direct knowledge of the physical, moral and spiritual deprivation of the hordes of girls and young women in the towns and cities. Financially, too, she had nothing to offer except her spiritual depth and zeal for good. Mary Mazzearello was opposite of the cultured, experienced Sr. Marie-Louise-Angelique. Don Bosco's choice of her was providential.

On February 18, 1873 Don Bosco went to Rome. The Holy Father gave the sisters advice to keep uniformity in food, in dress

and in mission. In case of necessity the Superior could make exceptions.

The year 1874 was very important to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians because the Congregation was approved on April 3, 1874. It was from this time onwards that Don Bosco succeeded in grafting the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to the Salesian Society and began to call them "Our sisters."

Thus in the manuscript constitutions given by Don Bosco to the FMA in 1871 we read "The Institute of the Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians is directly dependent on the superior General of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, whom they call the Major Superior. Should the latter judge fit, he may be represented by a priest whom he will delegate, bearing the title of Director of the Sisters". The FMA Institute was juridically dependent for a time on the Salesian Society and this was by the will of the Founder.

The first article of the Constitution of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, expresses the double fact of a dependence and creative originality. Don Bosco was truly the founder of the feminine branch of his Salesian family. Nevertheless he was not the founder of it in exactly the same sense that he was founder of the Salesians. A woman, a co-founder, had been prepared for the work by God and collaborated with him in this foundation. Don Bosco can be considered the founder in the theological and canonical sense of that word.



Mary Mazzearello at her first profession

However, we must recognize that Don Bosco did not undergo and could not have undergone the experience of living out a feminine form of Salesian Spirit. In the charismatic meaning of the word Mary Mazzearello was the foundress of the institute. It was she who first had this living, together with her companions: it is in her that it first assumed practical consistency with its characteristic and its spirit, the famous "spirit of Mornese."

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are always collaborators of Salesian Congregation and live as a part of Don Bosco's congregation. Mother Mazzearello told her sisters "Don Bosco and the Salesians really consider us part of their family. None of our works would last and succeed were it not for Don Bosco and his sons. Heaven help us if we should be blinded by pride and think we can do without them! We would become a shoot cut off the vine, nothing more. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians is a vibrant branch and close collaborator in the Salesian family. □



MARY: LIVING FONT OF HOPE (II)

by Mario Scudù (TA/ID)

Recall those famous words and promises that true lovers make: "I love you" or "I'll love you forever." Being told this is like receiving a dynamic charge, making one capable facing the future. It's a kind of mortgage on our future enabling you escape the existential anonymity of daily banality. The future, by virtue of that promise has psychologically ascertained for us that life is no longer indefinite, uncertain, without a goal or confused, but accurate, guaranteed and enhanced. That promise of love becomes a regenerating force that restructures the past that we have left behind especially because we will wait for someone. We are less fearful of our future because someone has promised us his love. And this seems to be a sufficient guarantee to face struggles despite everything. It was so for Abraham, it was so for Mary. It should be so for us.

The Faith and Hope of Mary: Like Abraham but much more

St Augustine wrote that "it is only hope that makes us specifically Christian." We must never forget that. And it is also true that

"*homo viator, spe erectus*" which is, that one who has the courage to stand up (*erectus*) and walk (*viator*) on the hard path to God, which is our condition, can do so because he is sustained by hope (*spe*) for a goal or an object to be achieved. For him it is a desired good and a guarantee of his future happiness. In theological terms, God becomes an absolute good, which leads (in his time) to absolute and eternal bliss.

But how is hope defined? Cicero wrote that hope is "*expectatio boni, expectatio mali*," and St. Thomas, reiterated this saying that it is the tension of the soul "between acquiring a difficult good or fearing a difficult evil to avoid." So in general, it is an expectation, an existential tension towards the future, seen as a good (bringing security and happiness) for us, for me.

On whom or on what did Mary of Nazareth place her hope? Culturally and religiously Mary was a daughter of Israel. Her spiritual life was based on the words and acts of God throughout history, but above all

on the promise of the Messiah of the people (for all humankind, according to Isaiah). There was no doubt that Mary's hope after her momentous Annunciation experience would always be based on God's word and on the Son that was growing in her womb and the fact that her belief was crucial for Israel: the people of the promise: "You will conceive a son, you are to name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there He will end." Crucial words for the destiny of humankind and a promise that would mould in a full and definitive manner, Mary's existence.

Mary the first "Christian"

From the Annunciation onwards she lived only and completely for her Child who was her God. Every action, even the simplest and most obvious was lived for that Son, the gift of God certainly but also the fruit of her body too. It was certain that every word, action, decision, plan and suffering was related to Jesus. She was self-defined and would always and only remain "the handmaid of the Lord" and therefore only and always in "relation to Him" throughout her life. We may say that Mary became the "first Christian, for if she is not a Christian, who could ever be a Christian?" (Card. A. Ballastrero)

In some small way, Paul, in all his letters dwells on hope as a basic theme, anchoring it to the risen Christ, the source and guarantee of hope for the believer. He sees



Jesus Christ the one in whom are fulfilled all the promises of God and who has become the definitive "yes" of God to man (2 Cor. 1:20). Then he exclaims "Christ Jesus is our hope!" (1 Tim 1, 1) And to the Christians in Colossae he wrote: "Only stand firm, upon the foundation of your faith, and be steadfast in hope." (Col 1:23). For Mary of Nazareth, the Gospel that is the Good News of God to the world was her Son. She trusted Jesus completely (*at Cana, for instance*) and she placed all her hope for salvation in him. She, like Abraham and more than Abraham (*who did not witness the death of his son Isaac*) always hoped even when Jesus was dying on the cross. She waited for the fulfillment of the promises through her Son who died abandoned as an apparent failure; but she firmly believed that he was always the Son of God, and God. She was not willing to accept that the promises of salvation would not be fulfilled. She would never be deluded by Him, ever. "In this faith, which even in the darkness of Holy Saturday bore the certitude of hope, she made her way towards Easter morning" (Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 50). And so her hope was rewarded with the vision of the Risen One. □

NEWSBITS

ON BOARD THE PAPAL PLANE

On Friday 12th February 2016, Pope Francis proved anew that there was something about him that inspired even the most seasoned journalists to drop their professional cool and ask him for blessings, give him cookies, and even shine his shoes.

The pontiff was on board an Alitalia flight carrying him and the Vatican press corps from Rome to Havana, Cuba, where he met the Russian Orthodox patriarch that afternoon, and then on to Mexico City for the start of a five-day trip.

As Francis made his way around the press compartment, even normally cynical journalists seemed to melt.

Rosa Flores from CNN, for instance, gave Francis a set of letters written by Mexican immigrants from Chicago. The pope welcomed the gift, saying: "I really enjoy reading letters from children!"

Anne Thompson of NBC presented the pontiff with a gift that might have been of more immediate use during his long 12-hour flight — a basket of homemade cookies.

Valentina Alazraki, dean of the Mexican journalists covering the Vatican, gave him a Mariachi hat which had been presented to her during Pope Francis' trip to Cuba last September.

A Mexican family with a long tradition in the hat industry, she



explained, had traveled to the island nation to give it to him last September. When they didn't succeed, they asked her to deliver it instead, and on Friday, she did.

This was the third hat Alazraki has given to a pope. She presented the previous two to St. John Paul II, one during his 1979 trip to Mexico, the first trip of his papacy and her first time on board the papal plane, and another in 1999.

When Benedict XVI visited the country of tequila and mariachis in 2012, Alazraki said, she didn't give him a hat because it had already been arranged for him to get one in Guanajato.

"He wore it for protection from the sun," Alazraki told Francis.

Although empty-handed, another journalist asked Francis, "When will you take us to Russia?" to which Francis answered: "Russia and China, I carry them here," touching his heart.

"Pray for it!"

The pope has shared his wish to visit both countries several times.

If he manages to go to either nation, he'd be the first pope since the beginning of the modern era to do so. (*Inés San Martín - AP*) □



walking with the Church

The Church, Practising Catholics, Petitions-Priority

From St Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. In recent years the Catholic Church has hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons. There are those who would like to see the Church not making any public statements on moral or social issues, until they get their own house in order. Surely that cannot be the case. The mission of the Church is to preach the gospel at all times. John

A. Thank you for your letter John, of which the above question is a brief résumé. As you rightly conclude, that cannot be the case. If we generalise the principle of first putting one's own house in order, then any group, be it teachers, doctors, plumbers, parents, politicians which has a sinner in its midst has forfeited the right to make public comment. The Church is made up of saints and sinners. We are all imperfect people in an imperfect world. Christ knew that from the very beginning. The apostles he chose to spread the gospel were weak and imperfect, sinners all in one way or another. Peter, the man he chose to be head of his Church, denied him three times. But he still told Peter and the others to go out and preach the gospel. Living the Christian life is not easy. It is a constant struggle. But the failure of individuals to live up fully to what they preach does not preclude

them from preaching. If they were to stop preaching the message of Christ then the wonderful message of the gospel and the hope of salvation it gives to the world would never be heard. We are the Church and Christ founded his Church to preach the Good News of our salvation, and it must continue to do so until that day when the Lord returns at the end of time.

Q. My next door neighbour believes in God and was baptised into the Catholic Church but for some years now no longer goes to Mass. She told me recently that we can meet God anywhere and that there is no need to go to Mass or to any religious service. Is she correct in her thinking?

A. She is right in saying that she can meet God anywhere, that God is not confined to a church. But there is more to Christianity than meeting God in nature or in the various events of our life.

When Christianity was just starting after the death and resurrection of Christ the Christians who believed in him and who wished to live by his word used to come together to hear the word of God, to celebrate the mysteries of Christ's life, death and resurrection, to worship God together - they gathered as a group in a

building which gradually acquired the name of church. They came together to listen to the word of God and to share the things that distinguished them as Christians. At a time of persecution they found strength in worshipping and being together to share their problems and their common faith.

We who are followers of Christ today also need to come together, to hear the word of God, to share our beliefs, to pray for the needs and problems of the community and of the individuals among us.

In other words, as followers of Christ, we do not make the journey to God alone. In coming to worship and pray together we are encouraged by the witness and faith of others - we are strengthened by their beliefs - it helps us to persevere in following Christ despite the ridicule and opposition we get at times for practicing what we believe. Remember Christ's own words of his very special presence - 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of you.'

Q. In the favours published in the magazine some people express their thanks first to Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and then to the Sacred Heart and Mary Help of Christians. Are they putting Don Bosco and Dominic Savio and Mary Help of Christians before Jesus?

A. To answer that let me first quote something I read in an introduction to a book of Patron Saints.

From the earliest times of the Church, people have always prayed to the saints and asked the saints to intercede for them - to put in a word for them with God. Just as here on earth we pray for one another, so we

can also ask the saints to pray for us. They are in God's presence, nearer to God than our friends and neighbours here on earth. It is only natural that we ask their help for anything important to us. Their prayers for us are more powerful than the prayers of anyone here on earth because they are already in the presence of God.

I believe our readers understand that and do not intend giving the saint priority over the Lord, no matter how they word their thanks. People do not express themselves as theologians, nor indeed do they have the words to do so, but I believe that they know and believe in their hearts that every blessing or help they receive comes first and foremost from the Lord. He is the giver of all good things, our supreme lover, our supreme benefactor. Don Bosco and Dominic Savio intercede for us with the Lord for all who ask them to pray for them.

Q. A friend recently told me that Christ had brothers and sisters because the Gospels in different places speak of them. I believe that Jesus was the only son of Mary but I would like to understand what the Gospels mean when they speak of the "brothers and sisters of the Lord."

A. Thank you for writing. Without going into it too deeply, the simple answer to the above question is that neither Hebrew or Aramaic (the language spoken by Christ and his disciples) had a special word for 'cousin'. Speakers of these languages used the word 'brother' for cousin. From reading the gospels it is evident that the writers considered Jesus to be the only son (child) of Mary. They used the term 'brothers' and sisters to describe the cousins of Jesus. □

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 and sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for all the graces and favours received through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys and protecting my son from every danger and sickness.

I. A. Udipi
Through the devotion of the 3 Hail Marys my son successfully completed his contract with the company.

C. Pereira, Mumbai
I am very grateful to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and our loving Mother Mary for a successful hernia operation and many other favours received.

Louisa D'Souza, Mysore
Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for all the blessings bestowed on our family.

Dominic and Mignone, Joshua and Jade Crasto
Thank you dear Mother Mary, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys my sister has been healed.

Mrs. M. Crasto
Through the powerful intercession of Mother Mary and praying the 3 Hail Marys I received healing from an imbalance while walking.

Sonia Saldanha, Mumbai
Thank you Jesus and our Blessed Mother Mary for helping my nephew Gary to pass his MBBS examination and for the many blessings and favours, spiritual and temporal you have interceded for our family.

Hyacinth Rodrigues, Australia
Thank you Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for all the blessings I have received throughout the Christmas Season.

M. Dodd, Pune
A few months back my mother-in-law started getting high fever. The temperature would not come down. I turned to Mother Mary for help and started reciting the 3 Hail Marys. She was already so frail. I was praying that it wouldn't be anything serious. It turned out to be a major stomach infection which took her weeks to recover. Thank you Mother Mary for taking care of my mother when she got very sick and always protecting us.

Zarina
Praise, honour and thanksgiving to Our Lady Help of Christians. I prayed this prayer asking our Mother, Our Lady Help of Christians to bring back peace to our family. My mother heard my prayer and now our family has come back and made peace with one another.

Mrs Ellerina Peters, Chennai

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My thanks to Jesus and Mary for blessing me with kind in-laws and especially my mother-in-law who has always directed her family to helping us these 13 years with loving kindness. We have 3 sons and my in-laws have always been there for us. May the Lord bless them with good health. *Julie Lobo & fly, Seawoods, Navi Mumbai*
This is a special thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for blessing my daughter with a beautiful baby girl after nine years of marriage and also for my son's marriage. Thank you also for the many favours received. Continue to keep showering your grace and blessings on my family. *A Devotee, Mumbai*
Thank you dear Mother Mary for granting favours to my family.

Clara Saldanha, Mumbai

My heartfelt thanks to the Most Holy Trinity and Our Lady for all the graces received.

Glenn D'Souza, Mumbai

My grateful thanks and gratitude to Jesus and Mother Mary for the 2 successful operations of my daughter without any complications or problems. Please continue to bless her and keep her in your care. *Devotee, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady for all the graces received.

F. A., A Devotee

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

Great thanks to Jesus, Mary, Joseph and all the angels and saints for miraculously retrieving my husband's lost ring and for restoring good health to my daughter and grand daughter.

Dulcian D'souza, Kolhapur

I am sincerely grateful to Our Lady for the many graces and favours that have been granted through her intercession down these years. Please continue to keep our family and all our intentions under your powerful intercession and protection.

Mrs. E D'Souza, Bangalore

Thank you Mother Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for success in my son's SSC examinations.

Sonia Lobo, Goa

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for the safe delivery of a baby boy, Aden and for good health, peace, and for all the blessings received.

Clatin and Jack D'Souza, Goa

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary and all the Saints for blessing my daughter with a safe and normal delivery of a baby boy and for miraculously saving this baby after falling from the table unscratched. Please continue to shower your blessings on her family.

Angela, Mumbai

Grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St John Bosco and Dominic Savio for protection from grievous injuries during the two falls I had recently.

G.J.D.

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere gratitude to Mother Mary and St Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery and for the gift of a healthy baby girl. also for other favours received through your intercession.

Anselm and Evelyn Pereira, Mumbai
Mother Mary and St Dominic Savio with gratitude we say 'Thank You' for all the times you have blessed us with good health and happiness. Thank you for letting us have the wedding of our son Brendan and Valancia in God with our family and friends.

Tony and Jennifer Aguiar, Perth, Western Australia

Thank you dear St Dominic Savio for the gift of a beautiful baby girl 'Janis' to my son Jonas and daughter-in-law Preeti on 29th September 2015. Take care of my family.

Mrs Maggie Rodrigues

Thank you most blessed Trinity, Mary Help of Christians, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for protecting me and my baby during my pregnancy and for a safe delivery of a healthy baby.

Nilisha D'Costa, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary and St Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a healthy baby boy after 2 years. Despite the many problems during my pregnancy I delivered a healthy baby boy. I had worn the St Dominic Savio scapular and recited the prayer of an expectant mother everyday during my pregnancy.

Felician Dantes, Kalyan

Dear Mary Help of Christians, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio my thanks for all the favours received through your intercession especially for the happy marriage of my daughter Andrea with Cashion.

Mr Reginald and Mrs Maria D'Souza, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to St Dominic Savio for the gift of my dear Son. I am sorry for this delay in acknowledging this grace. *Myrtle Madeira, Goa*

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MARY WAS THERE

Belated and heartfelt thanks to the Blessed Trinity and Mother Mary for the successful laminectomy surgery performed on my husband.

Mother Mary, please continue to intercede for him as he is recovering and protect him from all dangers. We all are eternally grateful to the Blessed Trinity and our Blessed Mother.

Goretti Silveira, Goa

On 28th December 2015 my son had severe abdominal pains. I was afraid it would be something very serious. I prayed to Our Lady and had a CT scan done. It confirmed that he only had appendicitis and the surgery was done. I thank Mother Mary for always being with us through these years.

M.D. Mascarenhas, Pune

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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