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*Glorious things
are spoken of you,
O Mary,
who today
was exalted above
the choirs
of Angels
into
eternal triumph
with Christ.*

*The Entrance Antiphon
for the Solemnity of
the Assumption of Our Lady*

From The Editor's Desk

RESTING

It isn't my habit to 'lust' – for want of a better word – for what's happening around me, but I've heard that those of us who do are likely to use a hashtag #_ in a search box to look for the news. People who connect to friends or keep up with the news are likely to creatively have their needs met via various social media platforms. I thought that radio and TV transformed societies, but the effect of the internet is far greater than both those technologies combined.

In trying to study these new trends in digital communication I have realised that it is the individual who decides what to let the world know. This is what is changing the shape of media discourse generally. Much of what was traditionally thought of as news was relevant to everyone but interesting to very few. Even literally 'skimming' through the news it is hard to figure out how it affects me personally. In the age of social media, we might still hear about more universal news, but it is surrounded by updates tailored to our personal interests. For instance, it has even figured out that I have keen interest in Pope Francis and alerts me whenever he hits the headlines.

While this is very convenient, there are drawbacks there because those who post the news take it upon themselves to filter out the more truthful accounts (according to them) from the less truthful. As we increasingly get our news from these social networks, we run the risk of being influenced by suspect sources. This is 'fake news.'

But – I believe – a major problem that these networks pose is spiritual. They are entertaining, in a way that is addictive and so turn out to be a source of constant 'noise' generated by all this news.

In such a climate will the ancient wisdom of Sabbath become relevant again? It is perhaps the Commandment we keep the least carefully, even though scientists increasingly extol the physical, psychological and social benefits of rest. When we are distracted and harried by the sea of news and updates, a day of rest, not just from work, but from the toil of keeping up with all the information might make a difference in our lives.

In our society, we often think of rest as reward – something we give ourselves after we have completed our tasks. After the forty hours of Monday to Friday, we think we have earned the weekend rest. But in the Scriptures we notice this is turned on its head. The Jewish people made Sabbath the first day of the week. Rest was not the last thing to do at the end of all the more important work. It was the first thing to do, the essential basis out of which good work could be done. If we turned our thinking about rest on its head, and put the ceaseless demands of the world aside for twenty-four hours, who knows how differently we would view the rest of the week? Social media trains us to want – lust – to always be in *the know*. God's grace comforts us to 'be still and *know* that he is God'. Maybe it is time to popularise #resting.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

by Gianpaolo Dianin

Marriage is a pair of two imperfect beings deciding to unite their lives in order to love and support each other so as to help them become better persons. Love doesn't shut its eyes, it opens them even more.

Love coexists with imperfection. It "bears all things" and can hold its peace before the limitations of the loved one." These words of Pope Francis summarize well numbers 111-113 of *Amoris Letitiae* as it reflects on the last verses of the hymn of charity (1 Cor. 13) when Paul says "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things."

First of all, it affects "everything," emphasizing the incredible but not naïve power of love that is capable of coping with all kinds of adversity and ready to

face any threat. Let us try to explain the profound meaning of Paul's statement as he reflects on conjugal love.

In the marriage bond the two spouses "welcome" each other in the totality of their persons. They welcome their present state to being involved in each other's lives but they also welcome the past of each other which was revealed to them during the time of their engagement and the future - full of unknowns, but which is also nurtured by their promise to be loyal to one another in joy and in pain. The rite



of marriage highlights this choice well.

No one is perfect and couples getting married know well that each of them is a collection of beautiful and attractive traits but also fraught with limitations and weaknesses. Marriage is a bonding of two imperfect beings who decide to unite their lives in order to love, support and help each other to become better persons. In Christian terms we may say that the other has been entrusted to me by God so that I may seek his/her good and his/her fulfilment.

When Paul says that love "bears all things" that doesn't mean that love turns a blind eye to the problem areas of the other, it means that your loved one is larger than his/her faults, limitations, defects or imperfections. Love is not blind; love also sees what the other is unable to see because they live together. They see the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful but they don't stop there, they are able to see this in the context of the larger picture of the other.

Two imperfect people came together to love, to choose life and to take care of one another. Francis writes: "Love does not have to be perfect for us to value it. The other person loves me as best they can, with all their limits, but the fact that love is imperfect does not mean that it is untrue or unreal; it is real, albeit limited and earthly" (113). This awareness is so important, especially today in a context of a strong idealization of the love bond. Lovers seem sometimes a

bit fascinated by a real fever of love, a sort of "delirium of loving omnipotence" in the sense that they demand perfect love which means living in total sincerity, availability and patience. Sometimes a partner asks for what it's only fair to ask God for. But the other is not God only a poor human being who is limited, earthly, who lives in a way that s/he can with his/her inevitable ambivalences and fragility.

In the light of this awareness we can better focus on Paul's "bears all things." I can bear everything because I know you are not as perfect as I think you are. I can bear everything because you are bigger than your faults and limitations. Excusing means always looking for excuses for what you did and trusting and believing that you didn't do it on purpose. Those who truly love can say, "I'm sorry you forgot that thing; but I understand you're so tired these days." This is love; it doesn't deny the mistake but always wants to save the one loved.

Marriage is also a commitment not to judge, not to speak ill of the other, not to hurt the other with one's tongue or comments, pointed jokes or sarcasm. Just because we know each other so well, if we really want to hurt the other we know exactly where to plant the knife. And it is really painful when this happens in the presence of others as if wanting to increase the humiliation. "Being willing to speak ill of another person is a way of asserting ourselves, venting resentment and envy without concern for the harm we do" (112)

The Pope also recalls the value of silence; "bearing all things" can also mean keeping silence about the negative. This doesn't mean keeping it all in; that could be dangerous because it accumulates anger and bitterness and

then there's bound to be an explosion. It's all about finding the right time to correct the other, knowing that in the context of love to correct is always to share one's own fragility. □

STAYING TOGETHER

BEFORE STARTING A FIRE

by Maria Chiara Bregolin

As I write this, I find myself in a state of heightened anger. I've just had a quarrel with a colleague at work. Being responsible for allocating schedules and tasks of quite a few, I happen to incur misunderstandings and some 'gripes.'

But in this case, as I will recount, it was quite different.

It all began with a request for a change of shift which, taken in insolation seems to have a good chance being 'feasible...'

Unfortunately, more than a request, I experienced it as a personal attack because it had already come to the notice of the higher-ups in the company and they began questioning my work ethic and leadership skills.

I got so angry, that for a few minutes I had a strong urge for revenge. I admit that I realized how bad that was. I had thought of some of the worst shifts for this colleague in the coming weeks; to make it really 'difficult' for her.

Fortunately, I did not take any decision at that time. I gave myself half a day to reflect on the request and see what could be done (let's say, I didn't berate the colleague, so much for my self-control, but at least I refrained from stoking the fire.)

In my head there were hypoth-

eses of conspiracy that even the FBI couldn't have put there. While driving home from work I imagined having to deploy all my energy to resist launching the attack, the details of my reaction were already in place. I could use my authority to respond to the temptation by annihilating my adversary.

Can you imagine? I thought of the words of St. Paul: charity "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things." Like the sea when the surf is especially high those words resurfaced in my head insistently. My anger subsided and my mind became a bit more lucid.

And I believed that I had to share with you my small-mindedness, my pettiness, which you might say unites us all, so as to tell you that this 'Love' that Christ pours into our hearts through the Holy Spirit can be declined not only at home with the children and with one's spouse but in the several situations that act as a corollary to family life; even with colleagues!

This love that bears all things and believes all things makes me give this colleague the benefit of the doubt: maybe it was not an attack on me but a need that I was

not able to listen to. St. Paul is telling me that I can give credit to the good in people in the hope that they will do what they think is right and so that I can excuse them if they sometimes hurt me and overstep their limits.

But today these words also speak of the 'Love' that we deserve to give to ourselves. In the eyes of our Creator we are more precious than any treasure and yet we are not quite so loving, accommodating and considerate to ourselves. We struggle to forgive ourselves, we brood over our mistakes and more often than not, we

suffer badly.

I want to be a person like this: always able to give hope, to forgive, to be able to appreciate and to know how to empathize; me first, my family and then others. Because this love wants the good of all, obstinately, even those who do not love us and this can bring about miracles.

The road to this objective, albeit long overdue, will surely be fun and it begins with me: with a whatsapp apology and an appointment to clarify the reasons for the "shift change" request... and I'm already smiling a little! □

THE FORGOTTEN PICTURE

by Flor McCarthy

In a certain art gallery a small picture was hanging in the hallway, close to the main door. However, most visitors passed by with scarcely a glance in its direction, as they hurried on to the paintings which made the museum a mecca for art lovers. The curator of the museum was very disappointed. He thought very highly of the little painting. So he decided to carry out a small experiment.

One night he took the picture and hung it in a very crooked manner. And what happened? Next day one out of every two visitors stopped to look at it.

The following night the curator decided to take his experiment a step further. He removed the painting altogether, leaving only the empty frame hanging there. And what happened? Everybody without exception stopped before the empty frame. And several went to the curator and asked, "What happened to the lovely little painting that used to hang there?" Some people (children, for ex-

ample) may have to do something desperate to be noticed and to get attention. Others may have to die before they are missed and their contribution is recognised. Everyone comes out of the woodwork to praise them now that they are gone. We never appreciate the value of another person's service until we need it ourselves.

One day in Jerusalem Jesus was sitting on the steps in front of the Temple. A collection box was standing near by. Along came a poor widow and put a small offering into the box. Nobody paid any attention to her except Jesus. He noticed her offering and praised it. It's nice to know that even such a small deed of love does not escape his attention.

How good are we at recognising what others do and affirming them? Sadly, the truth may be that we are so preoccupied with ourselves that we don't notice, and don't care.

Prayer: Lord, give us eyes to see as you saw, and a heart to respond as you respond to the goodness of others. □

LOOKING AHEAD...THE DAILY CHOICE

by Annalisa Arrigoni

I've been living in Brazil for the past five years, working in our mission among an extraordinary group of people. Among the many things that I'm learning from the people is their ability to look ahead without allowing my problems to stop me. Yes, the Brazilians are a people of great faith who know how to read the past recognizing the faithful presence of God and so know how to look to the future with hope and courage. This reminds me of an expression very dear to us sisters: "For all that's been, thanks and for all that will be 'yes'" (Dag Hammarskjöld).

That quote holds one of the great secrets of life: **to look forward – with hope and courage – while learning to look back with faith and gratitude.** Haven't you already noticed that when you walk you've got to put one foot forward while one is at the back? And both "look ahead" ... interesting? Yet, "looking ahead" is not something automatic! It is a choice that you're called upon to make every day. And it is a choice that has many alternatives, for instance:

• **Looking "back":** You can choose to spend your busy life worrying about what happened in the past; the possible mistakes



you've made, your missed opportunities, dreams that haven't come true, the many "but's" "if's" while everyone's lives are full. To you Jesus repeats what he once told a young man who wanted to follow him: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then turns back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:57-62). He would invite you to trust that your whole history, however scarred by difficulty, is the history of salvation which he himself wrote "straight on our crooked lines."

• **Looking "around":** You can choose to spend your life looking for someone to tell you what to do; waiting for word from someone affirming you and telling you how wonderful and loved you are, and



you think that will solve the problems you think you face, that will save you from difficulties and remove the obstacles that always spring up on your path. To you too Jesus would say what he said one day to the paralyzed man lying at the pool of Bethesda, to the question of Jesus: "Do you want to get well?" He replied: "I have no one to put me into the pool..." To him Jesus said: "Stand up, take up your mat and go home" (Jn. 5:1-9). And to you too he would invite you to encounter his presence in yourself, the fount of life and the ability to overcome even your own limitations and weaknesses, without using your friends as "crutches."

• **Looking "up":** You can choose to spend your life waiting for a miracle that will change the direction of your life; waiting for the Lord's clear and evident sign that will make your doubts vanish and free you from the need to look further and maybe avoid any further mistakes. To you Jesus repeats what he said to the apostles: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21-29). And he will invite you to go with him to seek out the path, accepting even the mistakes you may make while teaching you to be humble and wise.

• **Looking "down" or "shutting your eyes":** You can choose to spend your life not feeling 'up to it,' preferring not to take responsibility, which means, not chasing your dreams;

not letting yourself be provoked by reality or doing the minimum. To you Jesus repeats what he said to Peter on the Lake of Genneseret: "Put out into the deep" (Lk 5: 1-11) and he invites you to take risks to reach high ideals. I am listening to a beautiful Brazilian song which says: through the cries that come from people His voice is calling you to be an instrument of His love to many.

But what is the choice that Jesus Himself has made and which He proposes to you today?

LOOK AHEAD!

Choose to spend your life letting yourself be challenged and provoked by what happens every day; learning to listen to your heart - where the Lord sows the seed of His word every day. And looking ahead of you, you'll find that you are walking behind Jesus the Master who repeats to you, as he stares into your eyes with love: "Come, follow me!" (Mk 10:17-31).

ANOTHER STEP ON THE WAY

Stop for a moment and reflect: How do you see life? Do you recognize yourself in one of the ways described above? If so, take the Bible and allow yourself to be questioned by the passage of the corresponding Gospel.

What attitude do you need to be able to "look ahead"? Ask the Holy Spirit to feed you with them.

Looking "ahead" are there some realities that you perceive are calling out to you? □



SALESIAN SAINTS

JOSEPH CALASANZ and his 31 companions

On July 17, 1936, the civil war in Spain broke out (1936-1939) between the pro-fascist nationalists and the communist republicans. From the first days of the war a real religious persecution against the Church was initiated. Churches were burned down, monasteries and convents destroyed, the bodies of the dead and relics desecrated; no religious ceremonies were permitted and several bishops, priests, religious and laity died for their faith.

In 1964, after consulting the Spanish episcopate, Pope Saint Paul VI decided to suspend the process of the beatification of all the martyrs of the civil war above all to avoid political exploitation. On the other hand, in 1983 Pope Saint John Paul II, considering the time ripe, reintroduced the processes in the various dioceses which were completed in a short time. On the occasion of the celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000, John Paul II urged that a catalogue of Christian martyrs of the twentieth century be prepared. Spain also collaborated with the re-elaboration of the lists sent in from the different dioceses for the ecumenical celebration that would take place at the Coliseum in March 2000. However, even at



that time, Monsignor Vicente Carcel Ortí, a priest and historian began to speak of the figure exceeding 10,000 Spanish martyrs who were put to death during this period. The data could be broken down as follows: twelve bishops, an apostolic administrator, about seven thousand priests and about three thousand lay people most of whom were members of the Catholic Action. The executions were carried out in towns and villages far from the front lines where the fighting was taking place, often without a trial or merely a show-trial.

Within this immense tragedy which devastated the nation and the Spanish Church, there was also a small but very painful tragedy of the sons and daughters of Don Bosco. In a nation and in a martyred church, 95 members of the Salesian Family are recognized as martyrs and beatified.

JOSEPH CALASANZ MARQUÉS, PRIEST AND THREE CONFRERES, MARTYRS

As for their identity: 16 were priests; 7 lay brothers; 6 clerics; 2 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; 1 lay collaborator. The year of their death: 30 were killed in 1936 and 2 in 1938.

The Valencia Group: 11 martyrs

Dawn of July 21, 1936: The Salesian house of Valencia, after having come under incessant gunfire throughout the night is invaded by the militia. The retreat is in progress, preached by the provincial Fr. Joseph Calasanz, one of the first Salesians in Spain who met Don Bosco in Sarrià in 1886. A Salesian who survived depposed under oath: "The militiamen who burst in found all of us Salesians lined up along the central staircase. They pointed their rifles at us and a moment later one of them came up and scolded his comrades: 'Why didn't you shoot? Didn't we agree that we kill everyone? [...] Father Calasanz gave us the absolution.' From there they were transferred to prison where they remained until 29th of the same month when they were unexpectedly released. It was from that moment that various stories emerged about how they reached the supreme hour of their martyrdom.

The House of Valencia Joseph Calasanz Marqués, priest

He was the head of the group of martyrs because he was then the provincial superior of the Salesian Province of Tarragonense which included 14 houses and 249 confreres.

He was born at Azanuy (in the province of Huesca) into a peasant family on November 23, 1872. He was baptized that same day. He received the sacrament of Confirmation on June 7, 1874 when he became an orphan and was taken care of by his sister who was a 'maid' to the Fontcuberta family. It was this family that supported the boy and encouraged him to enter the Salesian College at Sarrià in 1884 where he had the good fortune to meet St. John Bosco in 1886. It was an encounter that would make a great impression on him.

He entered the Salesian Congregation as a novice on September 10, 1889 and received the cassock from Blessed Philip Rinaldi. He made his perpetual profession in September 1890 and was ordained a priest on December 21, 1895. He was the first Salesian to become a priest. After having exercised his priestly ministry for 20 years in Spain, in 1916 he was sent to Cuba with the task of organizing the Salesian houses in the West Indies. After six years he was appointed provincial for Peru and Bolivia. In 1925 he was recalled to Spain and appointed provincial of the province of Tarragonense: an office he held until his death.

Father Joseph Calasanz embodied in himself to an eminent degree the Salesian spirit, a spirit

of gentleness for which he was immensely loved by everyone. His way of governing was a blend of firmness and paternalism which made him like "another Don Bosco." He possessed a very kind heart and was extremely delicate in his dealings with others.

He was preaching the spiritual retreat to the confreres of Valencia when he was arrested and imprisoned with the whole community on the night between 20 and 21 July 1936. A week later everyone was released. After giving everyone whatever was necessary he urged them to trust in Prov-

dence. On July 29, 1936 he was stopped and taken to the headquarters of the Revolutionary Committee with two other confreres. In his suitcase the militia found his cassock. "They are priests," they exclaimed, "And we must kill them." In fact when he was asked if he was a priest, he replied: "Yes, I am a Salesian priest." The detainees were reportedly forced onto a truck and taken to the prison in Valencia.

On the journey, one of the militiamen who had a gun simply levelled it at him and shot him at point-blank range. Father Calasanz whispered: "My God!" and fell lifeless in a pool of blood. □

We are unable at this time to put down the biographies of each of the martyrs but here are their names and the houses to which they belonged

Anthony María Martín Hernández, Priest

Recaredo de los Ríos Fabregat, Priest

Julian Rodríguez Sánchez, Priest

Joseph Giménez López, Priest

August García Calvo, Lay Brother

John Martorell Soria, Priest

James Buch Canal, Lay Brother

Peter Mesonero Rodríguez, Cleric

House of Alcoy

Joseph Otín Aquilué, Priest

Alvaro Sanjuán Canet, Priest

Group of Barcelona, 21 Martyrs

House of Sarriá

Francis Bandrés Sánchez, Priest

Sergio Cid Pazo, Priest

Joseph Batalla Parramó, Priest

Joseph R Bentanachs, Lay Brother

Gil Rodicio Rodicio, Lay Brother

Angelo Ramos, Lay Brother

Philip Hernández Martínez, Cleric

Zachary Abadia Buesa, Cleric

James Ortiz Alzueta, Lay Brother

Xavier Bordas Piferrer, Cleric

Felix Vivel Trabal, Cleric

Michael Domingo Cendrá, Cleric

House of Tibidabo

Joseph Caselles Moncho, Priest

Joseph Castell Camps, Priest

House of Via Rocafor

Joseph Bonet Nadal, Priest

James Bonet Nadal, Priest

House of Sant Vicenç dels Horts

Alexander Planas Saurí,

Lay Collaborator

Eliseus García García, Lay Brother

House of Girona

Julius Junyer Padern, Priest

Daughters of Mary Help of

Christians of the College of

Barcelona, Sarriá

Maria Carmen Moreno Benítez

Maria Amparo Carbonell Muñoz

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. CLARE OF ASSISI (1194-1253) FOLLOWING THE POOR CHRIST (AUGUST 9)

by Mario Scudu

In March 1999 Pope John Paul II decided to initiate the process of the beatification of Mother Teresa of Kolkata not even two years after her death. It came as a great surprise. Why such a hurry? Someone must have thought. The Church already has so many women and men saints: let some time elapse (in any case the Church processes by definition, are very long drawn).

This "holy haste" of John Paul II is understandable considering he knew her so well and admired her very much.

Still 'worse' was the case of Clare of Assisi. She died in 1253 and just two years later she was proclaimed a saint by Pope Alexander IV and proposed to the whole Church for veneration.

Clare was born in Assisi in 1194, not only because she was from the same town as St. Francis but her life was greatly influenced by him. But let's not think she was completely overshadowed by Francis. She too had a



strong personality and she demonstrated it by carrying out her decision to consecrate herself to Christ despite many obstacles.

Clare possessed all the ingredients to live a happy and luxurious life. She was beautiful and

came from a well-to-do noble family. She could aspire to marry well but she would have none of this.

At the age of 18 she fled her home to fulfil her dream of consecrating herself to Christ. Was it a sudden decision, the result of thoughtless adolescent haste or early spiritual enlightenment? No, she knew well what she was doing.

Her mother Ortolana, a good and god-fearing woman had brought her daughter up well in the faith. But the deciding example was the choice that Francis had made to sell all he possessed in order to follow the poor Christ. Clare endorsed this gesture of her compatriot and waited for the right moment to imitate him. I remember a very brief conversation between the two in the famous film by F. Zeffirelli, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*. After the radical decision to follow Christ he told her: "People did not understand me. Now everyone thinks I've gone mad." And Clare replies: "For me you were crazy then, not now."

On Palm Sunday in the year 1212 Clare fled her home and went to the Portiuncula, to Francis and his friends. Probably she too had recently sold her property, and left her family which was why she faced much hostility from her relatives.

Francis welcomed her and after having cut her hair and dressing her in a habit, to symbolize her new state of life, he led her to a Benedictine monastery. Here her relatives made another

attempt to bring her home by force. Clare resisted and a short time later she was joined by some of her friends and by her sister Agnes who also fled from home. Later another sister Beatrice arrived and finally, a few years later, her mother. Everyone was fascinated by the preaching and the example of Francis and his friars and the courageous decision of Clare.

The little community was now in a safe place, close to the church of San Damiano in Assisi. That was why they were called Damianiites by the people, Poor Ladies by Francis and later Clarists. Clare and her friends did not "flee from the world," they were never far from the daily difficulties of the people. They wanted to live secluded lives, yes, but supported by their work, they immersed themselves in prayer for themselves and remained at the service of the Church interceding before God for the salvation of all.

The safe and stable establishment at San Damiano became for Clare the beginning of the second stage of her life. After the period of "conversio ad Deum," a turning to God, the second stage began: that of "conversatio cum Deo," that is, the stage of "dialogue with God" through the religious life.

Following Christ the Poor

The spirit of Francis reigned in San Damiano, but it was Clare who gave her community its decisive identity. She courageously

'resisted' the pressures of Pope Gregory IX who insisted that she possess some property by proposing a dispensation from the vow of poverty. She herself decisively told him: "Holy Father, with no covenant never! I would wish to be dispensed from following Christ forever."

Clare's Christ was the poor one; to be followed totally even as she herself wrote to Agnes of Prague that "we don't have a bronze body neither are we as strong as granite." Eventually the Pope gave her the "privilege of poverty." This came two years after the death of the great Francis.

Clare had great trust and devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist. Confined to her bed for many years due to an illness, she spent her time doing fine embroidery with fine craftsmanship to adorn the altars of churches in and around Assisi.

Clare stops the Saracens

A famous episode from that time is narrated by a witness regarding the rout of the Saracens from the monastery. When the invaders arrived they called Clare. She went to the door of the refectory and had the box containing the Eucharist brought. She bowed in worship and wept saying: "Lord, look on these your servants, because I cannot take

care of them." There was a very gentle voice that said: "I will protect you." Then Clare implored that same grace for the city and the gentle voice replied: "The city will suffer many perils but it will be protected." The Saracens left.

Clare died on August 11, 1253 after nineteen years of illness, two days later her rule was approved. The Pope and senior members of the Papal Curia attended her funeral as a sign of their great esteem and admiration.

Two years later her name was already entered in the register of the saints with the papal bull: "Clara claris praeclaris meritis." In it she is defined as an enamoured and unyielding follower of poverty." Poverty for the sake of the gospel is therefore the first and determining virtue for a canonization.

One final note: Few know that in 1958 Pope Pius XII proclaimed her 'Patron of Television.' This is to recall the miracle in which she was involved. It was Christmas Eve, and being sick in bed, she could not attend the evocative liturgy of that Holy Night. However, she miraculously followed the celebration that took place a great distance as if she were present. The next day she told her sisters that she had seen everything live!□

"We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become."

"Love that cannot suffer is not worthy of that name."
"Love Him totally, who gave Himself totally for your love."
(St. Clare of Assisi)



POSSESSION AND GRACE:

The Gerasene Story in our Times
by Ian Pinto, sdb

Facing our Demons

"They arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. No sooner did Jesus leave the boat than he was met by a man with evil spirits, who had come from the tombs. He lived among the tombs" (Mk 5:1-3).

It is natural for us to conceive of a person with demons to behave in abnormal and scary ways. Films and serials have repeatedly shown us such scenes. While demonic possession is indeed a horrifying event and experience for everyone who witnesses it, there are also other subtle forms of possession. Once again, films and serials have shown us plenty of such cases but we might have not been aware of it since they never label it so.

The fact of life is that we all have our demons. Let me clarify, what I mean by demons is not necessarily evil spirits. I'm not suggesting that all of us are going around possessed by evil spirits; I'm thinking of demons as our personal shortcomings, failures, addictions, inabilities, sufferings,

fears and sins. No one can deny the fact that all these 'demons' are part and parcel of life. While on the one hand, these demons shape our lives and make us the people we are, on the other hand, they prevent us from fully trusting in God and embracing the gifts of grace He offers to us.

When Jesus asked the demon its name it declared, "Legion is my name, for we are many" (Mk 5:9). Thinking of ourselves and our demons, I suppose we too would have to admit that the similar demon possesses us—Legion, for our demons are many too. They torment us night and day and force us away from ourselves, others and God. The demoniac of the Gospel lived among the tombs. Obviously, the cemetery is no place for a person to live and yet that is where the demons constrained the person to. Our demons love to wallow in self-pity, pride, jealousy, anger, hatred, lust and disregard for God. All these are the tombs where they constrain us. The demoniac couldn't

leave the cemetery for the demons wouldn't allow him. Our demons behave in the same way. They won't let us go very easily. They bind us, and prey on our weakness: "Night and day he stayed among the tombs on the hillsides, and was continually screaming, and beating himself with stones" (Mk 5:5).

Breaking our Chains

On our own, we cannot free ourselves from their torment but Jesus certainly can! It's interesting that the first person Jesus encountered after crossing the lake was a demoniac. It wasn't like Jesus sought him out, it was he who "saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell at his feet" (Mk 5:6). From what the media has taught us, the demons are mortally afraid of God and anything religious, but how come here the demons lead the man to Jesus? It's because they recognized him as the Son of God and paid homage to him. St. Paul wrote that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10-11). Even the demons are able to recognize their Lord and Saviour, why can't we?

Of course, the demons have chosen not to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and thus have condemned themselves to live in the agony that results from separation with God. We still have an option. Would we like to choose Jesus and thus ensure our eternal happiness or would we want to reject him and face eternal damnation? Our demons recognize the power of Jesus but they will not allow us to accept his healing. We

see in the Gospel how the demon pleaded with Jesus not to force it to leave the person: "For God's sake, I beg you, do not torment me!" (Mk 5:7). In a like manner, our demons too will try various stunts to cling on to us. Are we willing to let them go once and for all? I'm talking about giving up our addictions to alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, pornography etc., our fears, anxieties, anger, hatred, lust, jealousy, pride, our inadequacies, failures, rejections, setbacks and so on.

When you come to think about it you begin to realize the magnitude of the question. It's not simply giving up an idea, it's making a radical change of lifestyle. Say for an alcoholic father, it means not wasting his income on drinks which leads him to abuse his wife and kids or spend time away from them but rather to spend that same money in a more constructive way and spend more time with his family, thereby creating a safe and secure environment. For a woman given to jealousy and gossip, it means becoming conscious of the feelings of jealousy and channelizing them in constructive ways, thus avoiding the temptation to gossip. For a young teen experimenting with pornography, it means seeking adequate help from concerned individuals to overcome the problem.

You see how it is; it's easier said than done. These lifestyle changes take a lot of time, effort, support and prayer. Each of us can achieve them. The grace of God is always ready to assist and fill us. We need to show willingness to receive it and cooperate with it. The chains of possession will not fall away unless and until we break them with the power of God's grace. □

Quiet Spaces

MARY ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN

Pope Francis homily at Castel Gandolfo on 15 August 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

At the end of its Constitution on the Church, the Second Vatican Council left us a very beautiful meditation on Mary Most Holy. Let me just recall the words referring to the mystery we celebrate today: "The Immaculate Virgin preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things" (no. 59). Then towards the end, there is: "The Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and the beginning of the church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise, she shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come" (no. 68). In the light of this most beautiful image of our Mother, we are able to see the message of the biblical readings that we have just heard. We can focus on three key words: struggle, resurrection, hope.

The passage from Revelation presents the vision of the struggle between the woman and the dragon. The figure of the woman, representing the Church, is, on the one hand, glorious and triumphant and yet, on the other, still in travail. And the Church is like that: if in heaven she is already associated in some way with the glory of her Lord, in history she continually lives through the trials and challenges which the conflict between God and the evil one, the perennial enemy, brings. And in the struggle which the disciples must confront - all of us, all the disciples of Jesus, we must face this struggle - Mary does not leave them alone: the Mother of Christ and of the Church is always with us. She walks with us always, she is with us. And in a way, Mary shares this dual condition. She has of course already entered, once and for all, into heavenly glory. But this does not mean that she is distant or detached from us; rather Mary accompanies us, struggles with us, sustains Christians in their fight against the forces of evil. Pray with Mary, especially the Rosary - but listen carefully: the Rosary. Do you pray the Rosary every day? But I'm not sure you do [the people shout "Yes!"]... Really? Well, prayer with Mary, especially the Rosary, has this "suffering" dimension, that is of struggle, a sustaining prayer in the battle against the evil one and his accomplices. The Rosary also sustains us in the battle.

The second reading speaks to us of *resurrection*. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, insists that being Christian means believing that Christ is truly risen from the dead. Our whole faith is based upon this fundamental truth which is not an idea but an event.

Even the mystery of Mary's Assumption body and soul is fully inscribed in the resurrection of Christ. The Mother's humanity is "attracted" by the Son in his own passage from death to life. Once and for all, Jesus entered into eternal life with all the humanity he had drawn from Mary; and she, the Mother, who followed him faithfully throughout her life, followed him with her heart, and entered with him into eternal life which we also call heaven, paradise, the Father's house.

Mary also experienced the *martyrdom* of the Cross: the martyrdom of her heart, the martyrdom of her soul. She lived her Son's Passion to the depths of her soul. She was fully united to him in his death, and so she was given the gift of resurrection. Christ is the first fruits from the dead and Mary is the first of the redeemed, the first of "those who are in Christ". She is our Mother, but we can also say that she is our representative, our sister, our eldest sister, she is the first of the redeemed, who has arrived in heaven.

The Gospel suggests to us the third word: *hope*. Hope is the virtue of those who, experiencing conflict - the struggle between life and death, good and evil - believe in the resurrection of Christ, in the victory of love. We heard the Song of Mary, the Magnificat: it is the song of hope, it is the song of the People of God walking through history. It is the song many saints, men and women, some famous, and very many others unknown to us but known to God: mums, dads, catechists, missionaries, priests, sisters, young people, even children and grandparents; these have faced the struggle of life while carrying in their heart the hope of the little and the humble. Mary says: "My soul glorifies the Lord" - today, the Church too sings this in every part of the world. This song is particularly strong in places where the Body of Christ is suffering the Passion. For us Christians, wherever the Cross is, there is hope, always. If there is no hope, we are not Christian. That is why I like to say: do not allow yourselves to be robbed of hope. May we not be robbed of hope, because this strength is a grace, a gift from God which carries us forward with our eyes fixed on heaven. And Mary is always there, near those communities, our brothers and sisters, she accompanies them, suffers with them, and sings the Magnificat of hope with them.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, with all our heart let us too unite ourselves to this song of patience and victory, of struggle and joy, that unites the triumphant Church with the pilgrim one, earth with heaven, and that joins our lives to the eternity towards which we journey. Amen. © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

SONATA IN 'A' MINOR

Pierluigi Menato - translated by Ian Doulton sdb

The last chord died away beneath the nervous fingers of Stephen More and there he remained, motionless, his eyes fixed on the keys. A cold sweat beaded his forehead bordered with black, wavy hair, unusually handsome. Absolutely, that music was his; it had sprung from his mind and heart as a happy inspiration. The "Sonata in A minor" composed with feverish enthusiasm; it had truly been a beautiful work, original, without a hint of the familiar. And since he was a formidable self-critic, never satisfied with himself; he was always meticulous to the point of intolerable exaggeration.

Finally, a wave of calm seemed to appear on the melancholy face of the poor artist, a little feverish, perhaps tired after the long rendition. Of course, he could have chosen a more reliable and lucrative profession; taking a degree in accounting or architecture perhaps. That would have earned him a lot more and much quicker... But the arts, that luminous octopus had grabbed him with its many beautiful tentacles and he didn't have the energy to extricate himself from its grasp. Music sang in his soul from the time he was a child. With his tiny inexperienced stubby but eager fingers he searched the piano keys for the notes of a lullaby that he loved so much.

And neither his father nor his mother tried to discourage him. Did he want to become a music maestro? Well he should also fol-

low his vocation: he was an only child and could not be denied the path he most loved... they weren't really well off, but he wouldn't die. His father Anthony worked at a manufacturing firm and even stayed overtime. Barbara, his mother took on embroidery jobs to bring in a little extra so Stephen would be able to attend the music conservatory.

In fact, he graduated with a brilliant score and immediately found work with a few students eager to learn the piano. He also put his hand to composing which was fuelled by the inspiration that blossomed like a mysterious flower in his soul.

"The Sonata in 'A' minor." Three movements: three states of the soul, three songs of uncontrolled passion... Once again when he began playing felt himself moaning passionately like a cry that came from his aching heart. His eyes were closed, his forehead held high as he penetrated all the harmony with such sweetness and yet so profound. His tutor, who was very fond of him, not only praised him but took him that very night to the home of Sir Bernard Rattling, a rich industrialist known to patronize the arts and artists too. Only that for the peer the harp or the tympani sounded the same and so the judge in these matters was his daughter Anna, a casual, freckled and talkative girl who eagerly prompted her dad: "This painter is wonderful; that singer is worthless; or that actress should be encouraged."

The magnanimous gentleman bought the paintings of the talented painter and shut the doors to the singer who was good-forthing and sent baskets of flowers to the actress who was encouraged when he bought whole rows of seats at the theatre, giving them away to friends who would applaud this sixteen year old diva...

The appointment that evening at the house of Sir Bernard; if Stephen More succeeded, he wouldn't need to give piano tutorials and his mother and father wouldn't have to work so hard.



The young man rose from the piano, his hands still trembling a little because his music had taken hold of his very soul making him weep like a child sometimes for joy and sometimes for loss. He went looking for his mother. He found her in the kitchen carefully ironing the laundry. Seeing him she smiled: "I heard you from here, you know? The more you play your music the more I enjoy it...and everyone will enjoy it."

The young man hugged her: "God willing, mum!" he replied firmly. "If it goes well at the Rattling house I'll become as famous as Dorsey..."

"But Dorsey is worthless!" his mother laughed, "His paintings are so boring!"

"It's true, but they liked the young man and he's made it big. And there's no house in town that doesn't have one of Dorsey's paintings..."

"...and there won't be a piano that doesn't sing the "Sonata in A minor" by Stephen More."

They both laughed, looking at each other with moist eyes. Hope and fear made them look pale. Then the lady said: "You should get yourself something nice to wear... I've made this silk shirt and a matching kerchief...very high street..."

Sir Rattling was a huge, fat man with a ruddy complexion who received his guests clutching their hands rather tight so they might have screamed in pain. According to him, gripping his guests' hands tight was his obvious way of expressing his cordiality. But the guests happily allowed their fingers to be crippled in view of the several advantages that accrued therefrom: unforgettable refreshments, exotic cigars and some probable favour whispered in a low voice and granted with formidable boldness: "Of course, be sure, leave it to me!" Even a deaf man a mile away would have heard him.

Anna, dressed all in lemon yel-

low with an amber necklace that reached her waist acted like the perfect hostess in the opulent hall, while her mother, a tiny, insignificant woman stood in the corner of the room dressed all in black as if she were afraid of being noticed...

When Stephen More entered with his tutor maestro Julian Phipps, Anna immediately took the guests under her wing and announced: "This evening maestro More will give us the pleasure of hearing his own composition..."

She said this with an air of confidence that her father did not mind but maestro Julian who knew his pupil, smirked a bit.

"They will hear him, they will hear him," he said rather cynically, "He's truly an artist..."

Sir Bernard Ratting stepped forward and grabbed the young man's hand and squeezed it almost brutally, shouting, "Bravo,

bravo! I'm so very happy!" He didn't even realize it and so it was that his daughter gave him an admonishing stare at which he stiffened ever so slightly and squinted a bit...not knowing how to proceed. But Anna played her part very deftly.

"If you don't mind maestro, you may begin," almost pushing him towards the shiny grand piano while Julian Phipps with a furious frown raised his eyebrows and thought:

"And yes, just as well the hassle is over...if I had brought in a film actor he would have hugged me immediately..."

He almost regretted bringing Stephen More with him. He admired the young man very much and appreciated his musical talent... and knowing his financial limitations he wanted him to pursue further qualifications that would open a way to something better... And to get this, it was inevitable that he bring him

to the house of the famous Sir Bernard Ratting...all the little ladies who were wandering through the rich and brightly lit rooms around little Anna and within the city's planetary system would turn to the young teacher to learn music by Chopin, Beethoven and Berlioz...because the young maestro looked so handsome.

Stephen More, a little hesitant, sat down at the piano and after having turned his gaze on the gathering of people ... refined and cultured waiting to listen to him. Gentlemen all dressed up, ladies in light chiffon, men solemnly dressed in dark suits with white kerchiefs sticking out of their breast pockets - all perhaps sitting meekly, as if playing a role out of compunction for Lord Ratting and out of deference for their host tonight.

"The Sonata in A minor" was performed with what seemed like a gold ribbon beneath the agile and quivering fingers of the young maestro; a cascade of clear notes, passionate yet simple and so profound that it made people quiver with emotion. Stephen More who performed it for the first time on that magnificent grand piano, a superb instrument which was so different from the modest instrument he possessed, it seemed infinitely more beautiful and his own. Playing and sighing as if every phrase were a teardrop filled with joy and sorrow. Little by little his cheeks began to shine...truly, his music was really beautiful, very sensitive and expressive...it was impossible not to like it, and he couldn't say

"something."

He could not see the audience; only his mother and father coming home and relaxing after his long hours of work; a little sense of contentment that seemed to settle on that humble home where so many sacrifices were made...and the bright vision that made his lips rise in an imperceptible smile.

He played with force and gently like he had never played before. But already the little ladies seemed to have boredom written large across their painted faces and Sir Ratting kept looking down at his shoes muttering from time to time, just putting on airs, "Bravo! Wonderful...what a nice phrase..." but he understood nothing.

Among all the guests only a little brunette, modestly dressed followed the recital with visible interest following "The Sonata in A Minor" that was unraveling with such passion and hope. At the end of the adagio, her serene eyes held almost suspicious glow... And she never took her eyes off Stephen More's face which seemed to look inspired. When the last notes of the sonata faded out, as everyone agreed like the last moments of a farewell to a lifetime, she looked at the pale hands of the young maestro, she went down on her knees...

Little miss Anna stood up and came to him: "Very well, maestro," she said coolly, "but now you must play something more cheerful...haven't you composed some dance music?" □



FOIRETTI OF DON BOSCO - 6

by Michele Molineris

A strong Constitution (Contd)

But the story of the "strong manner" does not end there. A few years ago a certain Joseph Gasca, a gentleman from Turin and a boy from the Salesian Oratory of "Edoardo Agnelli" came to Becchi to narrate this kind of intervention by Don Bosco. Gasca had been invited by Don Bosco, who had appeared to him in a dream, to drink without fear, because that apparent blunder was linked to his healing. In fact, he drank it and was instantly healed. He came to thank his "doctor" because the other had abandoned him to his fate. What he then reported in 1951 appeared in the "Salesian Bulletin".

In 1951, Signor Gasca Giuseppe of Turin, a Salesian Past Pupil had three severe attacks of bronchial pneumonia. He was given the recommended antibiotics: penicillin, streptomycin and auromycin but to no avail. All hope was abandoned. On February 5, seeing that his end was near, a Salesian from the "Agnelli" Oratory administered the anointing of the sick and all they could do was wait for the inevitable.

On 6 February, around noon, the patient with a fever at over 41 degrees is dozing; but after a short time he wakes up and tells the assistant nun that he dreamed that while he was on a pilgrimage to the Becchi, Don Bosco, met behind the parish church of Buttiglieri, had said to

him: *-Se 't veuli beivi ne buta 'd barbera;* if you want to be healed you have to drink a bottle of barbera.

The nursing sister and the wife of the sick man believing that he was delirious hesitated but since he was insistent they gave him two glasses of wine but did not dare to go further since the patient had only taken just a little water with ice for the last several days and was already showing the first symptoms of slipping into a coma.

At that moment a Philippino priest, a friend of the family, who came to visit the sick man, became aware of the situation and seeing the pressing insistence of the patient urged them to grant his wish just to please him.

Signor Gasca admits that shortly after he had emptied the bottle, his body shuddered and he felt a new lease of life. Prof. Robino the doctor was called and he witnessed the rapid improvement and the total healing (*Salesian Bulletin, April 1951*).

19. The wedding, the death and...resurrection (1840)

In 1840 Don Bosco as a subdeacon went to Bardella with his pastor to be subdeacon at the church services in honour of the Patron Saint. A wedding banquet had also been scheduled on that occasion and was attended by the pastor and the chairman of the festivities. John held true to his resolution and returned home. At the end of the banquet which, as usual, was rather gay and noisy, the chairman of the

festivities invited the pastor to his own home, and both left. Suddenly the bride reeled over, struck by a heart attack. Consternation replaced the general merrymaking. All treatment proved useless and the woman was pronounced dead. Two days later [as was prescribed by law], her body was placed inside a coffin and taken to the church. A Requiem Mass was sung and the funeral procession set out on foot for the nearby cemetery. As they approached its gates, one of the pallbearers remarked to the pastor: "It sounds as though the dead woman were beating against the sides of the coffin."

"When you'll be dead, you won't be able to do that," the priest answered. Everyone laughed, thinking it had been a trick of the imagination. The coffin was laid in the centre of St. Rocco's chapel and the final exequies were sung. Then everybody left except the undertaker and his attendants. As the coffin was about to be lowered into the grave, the undertaker heard distinctly some knocks from inside the coffin. Terrified, he seized a crowbar to pry the coffin open, but suddenly he stayed his hand, paralyzed at the thought that it was against the law to open a coffin without authorization. So he ran to the village and told the mayor; the mayor called the doctor and all three hurried to the cemetery.

When the coffin was opened, the doctor found that the woman's body was still warm and that her pulse was still beating. He then made an incision in her veins and blood flowed

freely. He had her brought back to the village right away but the unfortunate woman never regained consciousness and died a few hours later. John who had heard about it had gone back, was a witness to this event. Whenever he talked about it, he would conclude his account by reminding his hearers that truly in this world "Even in laughter the heart may be sad and the end of joy may be sorrow" (Prov. 14, 13). (EBM 1,371-372)

20. The Power of Prayer (1840)

On the eve of his final exams for his admission to Orders, the cleric Bosco came to know what treatise he would have to take for his examination even though he had not seen it, he believed it was not part of the curriculum. This news embarrassed him a little. Then instead of being disturbed he remembered these words of St. Aloysius Gonzaga: "You see clearly that it is not about encouraging my laziness, but avoiding the hassles that may arise out of an involuntary forgetfulness."

After this he went to bed and the following morning he presented himself to the examining committee in front of whom, for a long time, he answered all their questions and objections with considerable precision.

Meanwhile, between answers his face constantly bore a smile which he tried hard to conceal. One of the examiners noticed this and asked him the reason for his smile.

"I am smiling" replied the cleric, "Because so far they have

done nothing but question me about a treatise that I had involuntarily omitted to study, so much so that the pages of my book have not even been cut open.

So saying, he took from his pocket the still brand new volume and presented it to the examiner. Then he narrated word for word all that had happened not even omitting the quote of St. Aloysius and he concluded by apologizing to the committee.

Instead of reprimanding him, the examiner amiably said:

- My dear, I offer you only our best wishes at what has just transpired. Continue to pray with this confidence in the holy vocation you are about to enter. And if at this time you have performed so well, it will be a day of great joy for the Church when she numbers you among her ministers. You will do great things for souls. The excellent priest certainly did not believe it was true (*D'Espiney, Don Bosco*, 128).

21. You will live to ninety (1840)

A few months before the end of the scholastic year, young George Moglia arrived at the seminary on an errand from his father, who wished John to be the godfather of the Moglia's newborn son. The godmother was to have been the Moglia's own daughter, but she had refused because was bashful to appear in church alongside of a seminarian. She finally submitted to her father's stern insistence. John accepted, but when he arrived at the church he

heard from Mr. Moglia who the godmother was to be, he said: "That's not necessary. I brought the godmother with me from Chieri."

"So I may excuse my daughter then?" asked Moglia.

"Indeed, you may." The daughter, who had come there most unwillingly, swiftly disappeared from the scene.

"And who will be the godmother?" Moglia asked.

"Our Lady and the Church," John exclaimed, "and that's more than enough!" The newborn baby was named John.

After the baptismal ceremony and a little party, before leaving, John went to pay his respects to the lady of the house, Mrs. Dorothy. She complained of always feeling exhausted and expressed concern over never again recovering her former strength. "Keep up your spirits," John said to her, "and don't worry. You'll live to be ninety."

As a matter of fact, she did recover and trusted John's promise so firmly that a few times later on, even when she fell seriously ill, she refused to take the prescribed medicines, declaring: "Don Bosco told me I shall live to be ninety!" In fact, she survived Don Bosco himself, and died at the age of 91. After Don Bosco's death she recommended herself daily to his intercession, firmly convinced that in Heaven he would listen to her prayers. (EBM 1, 359-360)

22. Don Bosco...the rider (1841)

Don Bosco learned to ride as a young man by riding the horse of his parish priest Fr. Dassano.



Right from his youth John was very practical, and had good business sense. During the holidays, in exchange for the Latin lessons which the parish priest of Castelnuovo gave him, John would look after the priest's horse. Here is the stable in the priest's yard, where John would groom the horse.

He worked him hard and firmly, but he also rode him and when he became a priest he already knew how to ride with a saddle and without one. It was as if he had reached his ordination with a riding degree. He had to immediately put this skill to the test. It was already in October (perhaps the 24th) of 1841 a few months after his ordination that he had to mount a horse that would take him to Lavriano, a fair distance from Castelnuovo. He had to preach a sermon on the feast day of St. Benignus. In order to reach there on time he would have to ride there on horseback but before that he had

to celebrate Mass for the parishioners. He had already covered half the distance trotting and galloping when he reached the valley of Casal Borgone, between Cinzano and Bersano.

It was autumn and the maize fields were facing the road in them were flocks of birds. The sound of a stone was enough to disturb them and make them take flight like a cloud. Think of what could have happened with the sound of a horse running downhill being prodded by someone racing against time not to miss an appointment. Those birds all shot up from a nearby maize field like thieves caught with their hands in the bag, and darted with a huge rustling sound that shattered the profound silence. The horse believing that it was the object of an ambush quickly lost control. The young priest John Bosco trying to stay in the saddle realized that the straps were slipping and when they suddenly dislodged, the horse hurled him into the air and he fell head first on a heap of crushed stones. They had been piled up there in preparation for the 'asphalting' the road before winter. The rains, the passers-by and especially wagons would level them down but for now there were just two deep furrows like the railway tracks.

The piles were placed there by the municipality at regular intervals waiting to be spread out. It was on one of these piles that John Bosco struck his head and he was unable to move. The horse trotted down on its way with its saddle askew, manifesting its protest and disappointment.

Fortunately the scene did not escape some peasants who saw it all from a nearby farmhouse and to John's great good fortune they did not hesitate to run down the road to see the disaster and who the unfortunate victim was. The head of the expedition was called John Cafasso. He lived at the farmstead called the "Brina." He requested a family member to set out on the trail of the unbridled horse and he himself, like a Good Samaritan, took care of the injured unfortunate and sent for the doctor.

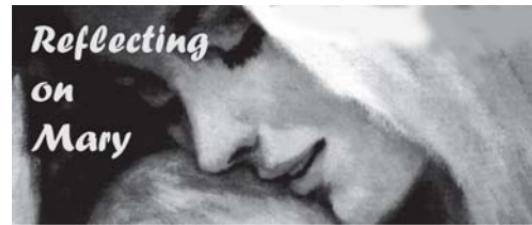
But why such concern for a stranger? Because a similar, if not identical situation occurred to Cafasso while he was returning from the fair in Asti as he crossed the valley of Morialdo. At that time a young cleric had come down from his little house at Becchi and saved him from a similar situation, at precisely such a time as this. It could have been fatal for both man and beast. That cleric wouldn't hear words of thanks but dismissed him with the prospect that he would one day be in need of the same solicitude. That day had come and with tears of gratitude he had reaped his reward.

Don Bosco had willingly accepted to go to Lavriano also because "that was the hometown of his friend and colleague Father John Grassino." This was what Don Bosco wrote in his *Memoirs*. At that time he was probably staying at the house of his brother Dominic and would have been happy to welcome John Bosco. Fate did not favour him at that time, but it was more benign later when Don Bosco needed him at the Oratory of the Guardian An-

gels at Vanchiglia where he appointed him as Rector after Father Viola and before Father Murialdo.

Later, at Valdocco he helped Don Bosco with the discipline and administration of the house and usually took his place for a few years (1849-1852) when the saint had been called away by visits or preaching assignments. We find this in a letter that Don Bosco wrote to Count Pio Galleani d'Agliano in 1857. He mentioned that Father John Grassino was rector of the Collegio asylum and was a "zealous priest of impeccable conduct." Still later he went as assistant pastor to Cavallermaggiore and that's where Don Bosco suggested that he be the rector of the seminary at Giavenero.

In fact, the curia of Turin had decided to entrust the seminary to Don Bosco at any cost so that it might be repopulated with seminarians rather than have it taken away by the municipality under the pretext that it was under-utilized. Father Grassino at first reluctantly accepted it fearing that he would be a disaster, but when, thanks to Don Bosco, who gave him the staff he needed and the students from Turin, he saw himself on the crest of a wave. When he thought he could go it alone, he began to ignore the directives that came from Valdocco. That decision proved fatal because he was forced to resign not favourably, while the college was once more repopulated. In 1873 when Don Bosco wrote his *Memoirs* at the orders of Pius IX, Father Grassino was parish priest of Scalenghe (*c.f. M.B., II, 19*). □



1 - DO NOT BE AFRAID TO BE AFRAID

by don Giorgio Chatrian

After the angel's greeting Mary was troubled and wondered what this greeting could mean" (Lk 1, 29).

At the announcement of the Angel, Mary said: "How is this possible since I have no husband?" (Lk 1, 34)

Won't you be disturbed, shocked or even frightened when stranger greets you? However, there's no shock if no one asks us (or someone else) questions on the meaning of life, or whether God is dead. Would that be a problem?

More concretely, today, who questions us about who we are? Where do you come from? Where are you going?

Then, there are questions about affectivity... questions not about how we discover and experience and live a journey of ever deepening relationships, but about how we play around with our bodies and Mary teaches us to believe without being afraid of the doubts that bombard our minds with "whys" of life.

On the contrary, it is only by asking ourselves profound questions that we will be able to find answers

in Christ the Truth. She, Mary precedes us and accompanies us on this journey.

I was not afraid of those who came around visiting and greeted me: my mother Anna had taught me always to respond to a greeting: that was hospitality alright. And then a stranger with a calm reassuring face came in. But from the way he greeted me, calling me "full of grace" and then adding that the Lord was with me, I put my hands to my temples, closing my eyes tight and shaking my head. I wondered what sense those words made.

I recognize that you, Father, have been with me so often, in my thoughts and in the heart of this girl. I discovered in all that I saw around me the things that made life so wonderful that it made me sing and live for you.

You have taught me Lord, but I had never heard this before now: being called "full of grace;" that definitely affected me because I wanted to understand, to grasp the deep meaning of those words. The angel told me that I would

soon become the mother of a child, how was this going to be possible? I had already committed myself to marry Joseph, the carpenter who had a shop down the street and who sang while he worked. At home, I hummed the tunes he liked while preparing my trousseau and waiting for the day they would accompany me in a big wedding procession to his house to be his wife forever. And I dreamed and dreamed because there was still so much time still left before that big day.

Was I to have a child right now? No, it was not possible. Lord, I loved my husband so much and I would let nothing hurt our journey of love. Would it have to be someone else's child? The possibility never even occurred to me. I must admit that in the whirlwind of these thoughts I felt a hot flash on my face...I was certainly turning red.

But when I began to realize that my son seemed to have all the features of the son foretold in Isaiah; born of a virgin, just like I am, my heart worked up a storm!

Was it possible that the impossible secret dream of every young Jewess would take place in me? All of us young girls loved speaking about the promised Messiah. Would the Son of God Most High, descendant of David to grow in my womb, feed at my breast and call me mommy? Was I to watch him grow up and - according to the words of the prophets - hear him preach, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, set prisoners free and overcome the powers of darkness?

Lord, this seemed too much for me. I remember that I bowed my head, wrung my hands; I could not

bridle my thoughts. I had always tried to follow the law, to acknowledge your gifts with prayer and by sharing them with others through the little ways in which I served them as best I could.

That day I desired to follow your plans but I was so confused and my heart was about to burst.

So you, O Father, you made me understand that your ways were not my ways and your paths were not the ones I preferred, the quiet and safe paths to travel sometimes, between two walls which reflected the warmth of the sun on my face or the refreshing shade of trees. You chose a direct route, a path that would immediately link heaven with our land.

The Holy Spirit would cover me with its shadow and behold the dream would become a reality! You also left me a concrete sign of how you work: Elizabeth, my cousin who has been sterile forever, she was expecting a child and she was already in her sixth month!

Before her, other sterile women also gave birth: Sarah, the mother of Jacob, Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

Truly, nothing is impossible for you, my Lord.

Even a virgin, even I can conceive: you and only you can make this possible, the God of life and history! And after me, other virgins will demonstrate with all their strength or rather, your strength, and face martyrdom fearlessly and they remained faithful to your Son: Cecilia, Lucy, Agnes, during the Roman persecutions, Maria Goretti at the beginning of the last century. Thank you O Father! □

NEWSBITS

VATICAN CITY



In a continent marked by "blessings and atrocious injustices," the Catholic Church has the responsibility and mandate to "proclaim a God of justice," ordering the mission of the Church under the Magisterium of Pope Francis, as new president of the Federation of Bishops' Conferences of Asia (FABC), Charles Maung Bo reflects on the role and mission of the Church in the "continent of continents".

Your Eminence, what is the current condition of the Catholic Church in Asia?

"The Church is at the crossroads of history: in a cultural climate that challenges Christ's message with ideologies and technologies, the Asian Churches seek their own way to proclaim the Gospel. Catholics in Asia are altogether about 143 million, or 3.2% of the global population of the continent, which amounts to about 4.4 billion people. I firmly believe that we are living in the millennium of Asia. In the Synodal Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia, John Paul II recalls that in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, in the second it touched the Americas and Africa, while in the third millennium a great har-

vest of faith will flourish in this vast and vital continent. This is an indispensable vocation for us."

Are there particular traits that define the way of evangelization in Asia?

"Asia is a continent that shows blessings and atrocious injustices. Our God is a God of justice. I believe that the mission of the Church in Asia should be refocused on the theme of justice. In particular, it can be noted that a substantial part of Catholics in many Asian countries are indigenous peoples. From the coasts of southern China to the central areas of India, there is an enormous geographical area where the indigenous people have lived for centuries in harmony with nature, until the market economy has created turbulence and hardship.

How do you see the future of the Church in Asia?

"I see it full of challenges that we always put in the hands of God, fully aware that every challenge is an opportunity, a kairos, that is, a favorable moment to proclaim the Gospel. At a deeper level, a promising future can be seen in the values and virtues of compassion, goodness and justice present in the great religious traditions and cultures of Asia. Today our journey continues, with the desire that Christ the Lord truly becomes the way, the truth and the life, for the Catholic communities scattered in Asia."

La Stampa - Paolo Affatato

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Sense of Direction

An impatient dowager fumed because the hotel elevator did not arrive immediately when she pushed the button.
"Where have you been?" She snapped at the operator.
Came the sensible reply: "Where can you go in an elevator?"

Written Off

"Does the club you belong to have any death benefits?"
"It certainly does, when you die you don't have to pay any more dues."

Matter of Cuisine

"Shall I boil the missionary?" asked the cannibal cook. The cannibal chief was horrified. "Boil him!" he exclaimed. "Don't be silly; that's a friar."

Proper Place

"Why is it important not to lose your head in an attack?" asked the sergeant. And the recruit answered: "Because it would leave no place to put your helmet."

Material Choice

"And see this bear on the floor," said the garrulous explorer. "I shot it in Alaska. It was a case of me or him."

"Well," yawned the weary listener, "the bear certainly makes a better rug."

Quite a Bargain

The lads at the corner store were exchanging stories about their experiences with the opposite

sex. "Aw," sniffed one, "Girls are a dime a dozen."
"Gee," sighed a younger lad who had remained silent until now, "and all this time we've been buying jelly beans."

Dead Right

Mistress: "Did your husband get hurt badly when he was hit by the car?"

Liza: "Yassum, he suffered from conclusion of the brain."

Mistress: "You mean, concussion of the brain, don't you, Liza?"

Liza: "No'm, I mean conclusion - he's dead!"

Timely Truth

The prospective tenant was being particular as the owner showed him an available apartment.

"Does the water always come through the roof like that?" he inquired.

"No," replied the landlord, "only when it rains."

Eager Assistance

A blushing young woman handed the telegraph clerk a telegram containing only a name, address and one word, "Yes."

Wishing to be helpful, the clerk said: "You know, you can send ten words for the same price."

"I know I can," replied the young woman, "But I don't think I'd look too eager, if I said it ten times?" □

MONSIGNOR O'FLAHERTY

The Vatican Pimpernel

John Gallagher

Hugh O'Flaherty was born in 1898 in Killamey, Co. Keny and following his education at his parish school he studied for the priesthood at the seminary in the town. He was sent to Rome to study and it was there in 1925 he was ordained. Father O'Flaherty stayed on in Rome where he was appointed to the diplomatic office for the Holy See in the Vatican. Postings to Egypt, Haiti and Czechoslovakia followed. Shortly before the start of World War II, now Monsignor O'Flaherty, he returned to the Vatican to serve as a senior member of staff in the diplomatic service.

During the years of World War II when Rome was occupied by German forces Monsignor O'Flaherty played a major role in helping escaped British prisoners-of-war, Italian resistance fighters and Jews being hunted down by German military personnel. He organised safe houses which included farms and convents, arranged for conducted escape routes to freedom resulting in over 4,000 refugees and escapees achieving liberty as a result of the monsignor's actions. The Germans were swift in discovering Monsignor O'Flaherty's involvement in the rescue operation but because the Vatican State was neutral territory they were unable to arrest him. Often he could be seen speaking to escape agents on the stairs of St. Peter's Basilica but the German SS were powerless to intervene. However when O'Flaherty the monsignor left the safety of the Vatican as he often did, they still could not capture him. This was simply due to the fact that he skilfully disguised himself as a city worker such as a postman, railway porter or road sweeper. It was no wonder he was given the title of the Pimpernel of the Vatican.

The SS could assassinate him

Colonel Kappler head of the German SS in Rome was informed by his intelligence staff that Monsignor O'Flaherty was indeed the Pimpernel. He pursued this information by making a point of meeting with the monsignor at every opportunity during various official business meetings held in the Vatican and on every occasion pointed out that the SS would arrest him should he ever leave the protection of the Vatican. It was common knowledge that the SS would assassinate him at the first opportunity. Undaunted Monsignor O'Flaherty carried on with his clandestine activities to the fury of Kappler. When the Allies took control of Rome in June 1944, Colonel Kappler was imprisoned and two years later he was tried as a war criminal by an Italian military tribunal who sentenced him to life imprisonment.



Mons. O'Flaherty

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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 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 sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary, through the recitation of the three Hail Marys I received many blessings. Thank you for curing my daughter and please continue to bless us. *Sandra, Goa*

Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Joseph, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for granting my granddaughter her OCI in the UK. *Fila Dias*

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My grateful thanks to dearest Mother Mary for her motherly protection over my life and for the many favours obtained for me through her powerful intercession with her Son, Jesus. *Iris Rodrigicks, Mumbai*
Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for my mom's successful heart operation. *Carol R.*

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for an admission to a suitable college for fine arts and for success in my exams. *Wenona Fernandes, Mumbai*

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints for granting us 40 years of married life and also for the many favours received. *Victor and Afra Fonseca*

Thank you Most Holy Trinity and Mother Mary for giving our daughter Leanne a safe, healthy and normal delivery of a healthy baby boy. *Mr. & Mrs. Brian D'Souza, Mira Road*

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

Thank you dear Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints for the gift of a healthy baby boy to Justin and Annie after 8 years of marriage and also for the numerous favours received through their intercession. *Sara Peter*

APOSTLESHP OF PRAYER

AUGUST 2019

Evangelization: That families, through their life of prayer and love, become ever more clearly "schools of true human growth."

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio, St. Joseph of Cupertino and all the saints for all the blessings over the years and for granting me success in my CA Final examinations. I will ever be grateful and do continue to bless and protect us always. *Vanessa, Udupi*
My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my daughter secure a good job with a good company and also for all the favours received. Continue to shower your blessings on my family. *Natty Correia*

I am happy to say that a skin infection on my ankle was healed after a long time as I prayed to St. Dominic Savio. Thank you dear saint. *Iris Rodrigicks, Mumbai*
Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my daughter a suitable life partner and for all the blessings received.

A Devotee

Our sincere thanks to Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Dominic Savio and all the saints for the safe and normal delivery of a healthy baby girl to our family. *Rajesh and Joan D'Souza, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a grandchild after six years of my child's marriage. *Mr. & Mrs. D'Souza*

continued from pg.33
tenced him to life imprisonment. Kappler was found guilty of atrocities and arranging for the deportation of over ten thousand Jews to concentration camps. During Kappler's detention he was visited most weeks by Monsignor O'Flaherty. In 1959 Kappler converted to Catholicism. Almost twenty years later, suffering from terminal cancer, Kappler was hospitalised at a Rome clinic. His wife visited him daily and in 1977 with the help of some sympathetic guards she managed to have him smuggled out of the clinic and back to Soltau, Germany. The Italian government demanded his return to Rome but the German authorities refused due to his rapidly declining health. Kappler died in 1978 aged seventy.



At the end of World War II Monsignor O'Flaherty was acclaimed for his courage and the respect he showed to all regardless of their creed or nationality. He received the CBE, one of Britain's top awards, the US Medal of Freedom and Italy's Medal of Honour along with a lifetime pension which incidentally he declined. In 1960 ill-health forced him to retire to Cahirciveen where he stayed with his sister. He died in 1963 and was buried in the Cemetery of the Daniel O'Connell Memorial Church in Cahirciveen. In his memory a grove of trees was planted in the Killarney National Park as also one was planted in his honour in Yad Vashem, Jerusalem by the Israeli government. The Vaticano Pimpernel is forever remembered. □

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MARY WAS THERE

A very big thank you to Jesus and the Blessed Mary, Mother of Jesus. It was January 13th 2019 and we were travelling from Ernakulam to Guruvayoor with our newly-wedded son and daughter-in-law. We were in a hurry to reach our destination. My husband tried to overtake a bus which suddenly halted at a bus-stop. In the meanwhile another car came from the opposite direction and there was a head-on collision but Mary was by our side and all of us escaped un-hurt with just a few bruises. All along the journey I was holding the rosary in my hand and I am sure my mother would never let me down. 'Jesus held us in his arms and protected us from a huge disaster.' Praise and thanks to you Jesus and our Blessed Mother Mary.

Daisy Peter, Ernakulam

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