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*Blessed are you,  
 O Virgin Mary,  
 who bore  
 the Creator  
 of all things.  
 You became  
 the Mother  
 of your Maker,  
 and you remain  
 for ever  
 a Virgin.*

**From The Editor's Desk**

WHAT HAPPY PEOPLE DON'T DO

I was talking to a 15-year-old youngster who was very unhappy. He came from good home, with a loving family. But he kept saying: "It's just not fair, my friends get to go to shows and movies, and my parents are just way too strict! They should see all the things my friend's parents let them do. My life is so unfair." I have to admit, I found myself a little put-off. I wanted to snap him back to reality, and remind him of all the things he had been blessed with. My main focus was to help him shift his perspective, and try to offer him alternatives from living a miserable life.

If I'm honest, I often see my own self in that 15-year-old. Of course, not in the same way, but often times I feel an unhappiness begin to creep into my life when I let my guard down: a slight covetous look at my friend's new gizmo, a little comparing my social circle to his and then I find unhappiness beginning to creep in.

But as I've learned over the years, these thoughts aren't just insignificant, they're dangerous. They can take over my mind, and transform the state of my heart within moments, bringing me to a place of unhappiness, and discontentment.

The truth is, happy people aren't happy *because* they were born that way. Happy people are happy because they have *chosen to live* in a way that keeps their mind and heart aligned to what God's wants. Here's what I've found that happy people don't do.

They don't complain about the crummy weather or a drawn out conversation with annoying neighbours (*your feelings will follow your words*). I've made it a point to count my blessings each and every single day.

Then, they don't compare themselves to other people. If they do, they're in for an emotional rollercoaster of emotions, sometimes measuring up and feeling high and at other times not measuring up and feeling oh, so awful. I'm beginning to be oh so thankful that God declares me valuable enough to call me his '*beloved*.'

Finally, happy people don't compete. It's easy to fall into that trap, whether it's regarding finance, talents, families or whatever. Though it's healthy to strive for the best, I remind myself that it's less about winning and more about living a worthwhile life, which is a life that exudes love, grace, and the mercy of Jesus. A life that isn't focused on being better than others, but rather, blessing them.

So whether we're 14, or 104- the secret to living a happy life is saying no to complaining, comparing, and competing, and choosing to keep our heart and mind grounded in nothing less than Christ. "*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things*" (Philippians 4:8).

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## A LOVE THAT CONSTANTLY GROWS

by Don Giampaolo Dianin

*We grow in love and love really makes us grow.  
We must never assume that we have already understood everything,  
and there is no possibility of growing anymore*

**W**e think it is common understanding that we think that the journey of love reaches its peak when the two lovers are united in the bond of marriage; ushering in an inexorable downhill journey that often has the traits of habitude, repetitiveness and even of boredom.

How many times have we not heard that “marriage is the grave of love”? These are clichés that nevertheless conceal a depth of truth in the sense that this can happen and indeed...often happens.

The risk and the temptation that lies behind every lifestyle choice is to think that we have arrived; and we can now live on the benefits. This

applies not only to spouses, but also applies to priests and religious. We have worked and struggled, and we are committed to building our relationship and now that we have arrived, we can sit down and relax. So, it is not creativity that has sustained us during the years of the engagement, the ability to surprise the other with great tenderness and care. By now, if we can say that the prey has been conquered, we can sit and relax! There are couples who refuse marriage precisely because they fear this risk and they would like that sense of uncertainty that will force them never to take anything for granted, but always keep the freshness of the early days.



Pope Francis speaks of love as a “process of constant growth” (*Amoris Laetitia* n. 134) that does not have a goal but only stages that are points of arrival and departure. We can love as that path that opens before us when we reach the top of a mountain, then as we continue our journey beyond the horizon, other mountain ranges appear and we continue to walk on. The Apostle John writes that “God is love”, so we can say: “God is love” therefore God is the goal, to love as he knows how to love. But life will not be enough to cross all those mountain ranges.

The Pope cites the very clear words of St. Thomas: “Charity, by its very nature, has no limit to its increase, for it is a participation in that infinite charity which is the Holy Spirit.” But even on a personal level we cannot set limits because the more we love the more the ability to love grows; the more we train ourselves to love, the more we can set new goals.

There are two protagonists of this growth in love: the two spouses and the grace of God. There is a commitment of the spouses themselves and there is the gift of God. Between these two players there is a circularity because the gift nourishes the commitment and makes it available to accommodate the gift more and more. Paul sums up the journey well: “May the Lord make you grow and overflow in love between yourselves and towards all” (1 Thess. 3:12). Precise words that show how love is inexhaustible also because it does not only increase the bond between the two spouses but opens them up to others. The strength and fruitfulness of love is inexhaustible. And if the

certainty of the gift of God is beyond question, our part is more problematic, always at risk of human frailty.

When I happen to talk to young people in love, I like to describe falling in love as a real revolution that knows how to bring out of each other newer and newer potentials. When a soft-spoken youngster falls in love, he becomes capable of speaking up and telling stories of himself. A rather frigid young girl manages to invent many gestures of tenderness. And I tell young lovers: “Write down in a book, all the beautiful things you are living through. When, after years of marriage, the other should tell you that s/he is like this, s/he has his own character, take out that book and remind her/him that in the past s/he was capable of real magic.”

But the most beautiful experience is to be told by a couple married for years that compared to their early years. Today they are much more convinced of the choice they made and that today their love is far stronger than it was in the beginning. We grow in love and love makes us grow. But we must not stop growing; never thinking that we already know everything. We cannot conclude that there is nowhere higher we can go.

Behind all this there is the delicate hand of God who, on the wedding day not only listened to the couple exchanging their covenant of love. “God brings to completion the work he has begun” and we believe that He knows how to open ever new horizons to the love of the spouses even when he allows small or large difficulties to put a strain on the spousal bond. □

AN ART TO BE LEARNED

by Maria Chiara Bregolin Tezzon

**L**ove: An art to be learned. It requires patience, perseverance and effort. True, it usually starts from a passion.

But then it requires effort and wisdom to evolve. So said the German philosopher Erich Fromm (1900 - 1980) in his famous book *The Art of Loving*.

Spousal love, to endure, requires the ability of both people to love themselves first and then love the other; seeking above his/her good. The spousal-art must be applied. Their work-of-art requires time and care. It is the hard work of a craftsman, says Pope Francis. Daily.

Everyone was able to experience their own love story phases to which they have been subject: from falling in love, to becoming a couple till the disillusionment. If from disillusionment we can emerge more united and consciously in love like the first love, a new beginning takes place. A different kind of intensity. That love becomes stronger than death.

The dynamism of love is much more appreciated in couples in their later years. In their manner of speaking and their experiences, their stages, their difficulties, the goals they have achieved and the objectives that are yet to be pursued. "A love that fails to grow is at risk" (AL 134).

"...to come to the sober realization that married life is a process of growth in which each spouse is God's means of helping the other mature... Each marriage is a kind of "salvation history,"

which from fragile beginnings - thanks to God's gift and a creative generous response on our part - grows over time - into something precious and enduring. Might we say that the greatest mission of two people in love is to help one another become, respectively, more a man and more a woman? ... Love makes each wait for the other with the patience of a craftsman, a patience which comes from God" (AL 221).

To promise each other an infinite and eternal love... which of us will ever be able to do that if we are not supported by the Visionary Lover of life and humanity who created us!

Our love story is a work of art; unique and not replicable. We have a special Assessor, a Critic who supports our work and invites us to make it fruitful. It is up to us to dedicate our best efforts, because, in carrying out this work of creativity and imperfect perfection, we can learn to love the other as we love ourselves.

"Who can tell whether one happy moment of love or the joy of breathing or walking on a bright morning and smelling the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and effort which life implies" (Erich Fromm)? □



Don Bosco's Madonna

MARY:  
IN SOLIDARITY WITH MAN ON THE MOVE

by Simone Marini

*The Assumption of Mary is the brightest point from which to reread the history of humankind*

**I**t is perhaps surprising that the Gospel passage proposed to the Christian community on the feast of the Assumption is the episode of the Visitation. The liturgy of the Assumption celebrates Mary's Passover, her entrance into the resurrected life, to share in the glory of her Son. The Visitation, on the other hand, presents to us the episode of the woman of Nazareth visiting the country home of her cousin Elizabeth who is pregnant. Are the Assumption and the Visitation two distinct mysteries?

Actually, they are not! The Visitation which is Mary's sharing in simple human life is the most appropriate precursor to her Passover. When speaking of the Assumption we should not assume that Mary is somehow now in the boundless heavens. The Assumption reminds us of the very real possibility of a different kind of presence of Mary in the life of people. "In fact, the episode of the Visitation uses verbs of presence: "Mary sets out on a journey..." "She enters the house and greets Elizabeth... where she stayed with her for about three months."

Her encounter with God in the mystery of the Annunciation does not incline the Woman of Nazareth to spend time contemplating on her privileged status. The entire biblical adventure of Mary is the story of a journey which will constantly trace the path of Jesus and of humankind.

This Mother never fails to be present at the crossroads of human crises.

The verbs used have an incisive efficacy: At Cana, Mary 'was' there; on Calvary 'she stood' there; in the upper room she 'was' there together with the apostles in prayer as they waited for Pentecost. Mary's visit was a visit of the bearer of the greatest gift of all in her womb: the Son of God as he takes on human features. "And Luke concludes with another verb of presence; "and Mary stayed with her." Her stay is full of gestures, silences and services. Her staying does not deny the Assumption; it is its truest meaning. Mary is in solidarity with humankind on its way to 'the New Heavens.'

The Assumption is the brightest and most daring point from which to reread history. And Mary gives us her message in the Magnificat, the Song of the Church for all time; the hymn of hope; the narrative of world history. "On the distant horizons of history, there is the "promise" of God to our fathers, his initiative of invincible mercy. The "promise" designs the parable of hope which arouses Israel's expectation, becoming a covenant with Abraham. And Mary recognizes that God has kept his word." But how? Here's the second great act of the mercy of our Saviour God: the 'choice' of the poor. Those who are high-

lighted therein are the humble, the least and the forgotten of the world. In short, the story changes the roles and intensifies the struggle between good and evil; on one side stand the powerful, the secure and the rich; on the other, the humble and the hungry, and with them Mary, the first among the poor.

But only at the Assumption do we have the total verification of the Magnificat. In Mary all the meek of the earth will reread the story of the fulfilment of Salvation and only in the last chapter does history become totally bright; only in the future will everyone find its real meaning.

A few years ago, a beautiful wooden statue of the Virgin was presented to a community in war-torn Burundi. In her hands, she

held a globe. The people were presented with the statue during Mass. After the celebration, there seemed to be a ripple of disappointment among the congregation and the missionaries were surprised. In fact, the people were expecting a child in Mary's arms, not a globe. Mary is Mother.

Yes, two wrongs can be done to Mary: to take from her hands her Son Jesus and us, her children."

In the middle of August, numerous Marian shrines become places where devotees flock. But real devotion does not consist in lighting a candle at the altar of a Woman who is distant from life.

Mary "visits" us and "stays with us" to help us come back to the Gospel. Her only desire is that her children let themselves be embraced by her Son. □

### MARY, HOPE FULFILLED

Mary represents the figure of humanity: In her Assumption we contemplate the hope that is fulfilled, the arrival at our true homeland, which is the final and blessed outcome of our faith. Mary is that great sign of God: In her God's decision for humankind is manifested to us; it is a decision "more powerful than any experience of evil or sin, more powerful than all the enmity that marks the history of man" (St. John Paul II).

But as we contemplate the Virgin Mary's moment of arrival, with her, we are called to live in time with an awareness that prepares us for, and anticipates that goal. "We live in penultimate times because we believe in the latter," Bonhoeffer wrote. Here we are then, singing with Mary about the shocking novelty of a new reality: the plan of a story according to the designs of God.

This future is on its way and, because it is guaranteed by the overwhelming love of God, this future is meditated on in the past. There is no longer place for the proud, the powerful or the rich. The reign of the humble, the hungry and the poor of God is beginning. It is the triumph of gratuitousness: it is the song of Mercy that is fully expressed by Mary and which extends from generation to generation making all things new.

The *Magnificat* of Mary is the Magna Carta of that kingdom that she has reached. Through her, on this day, the hope proclaimed by Isaiah is repeated to us: "Here, I am doing a new thing: right now it is sprouting, do you not realize it?" (Isaiah 43, 19) □

## THE MEASURE OF A MAN

by Anastasia Dias

This is the true story of my friend Aaron as narrated by him,

'As a little boy, I was very dominating. I loved to boss over the other kids in my class. At first, bullying them meant grabbing their lunchboxes or making them finish my homework. Growing older, a violent streak in my nature developed.

Now, I began to engage in fist-fights over the smallest of things. And my victims were most often the boys who were physically weaker than me.

When I was in my junior year, a new boy joined school. His name was Ryan Parker. One glance at him made me certain that he would be my next victim.

My first impression of Ryan had been right. I gave him homework I had to do for the next 2 weeks. He earnestly completed all my notes and followed everything that I told him to do.

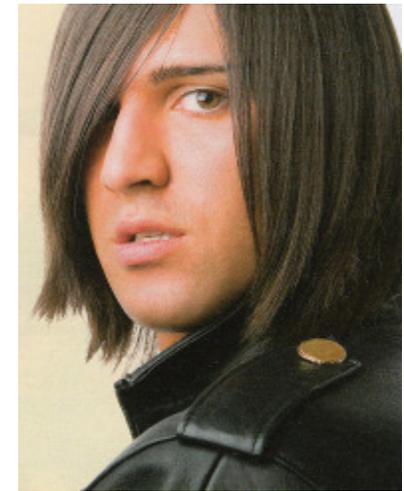
Months passed, and for the first time, I began to feel like I had made a friend. This feeling was strange, since people in school never really liked me, given my aggressive behaviour. I liked Ryan Parker. He was a kind-hearted and empathetic person; the person I knew I could never be.

We were given an important project in the last week of school. As usual, Ryan was supposed to do it for me. I was absolutely care-free.

When the day of submission finally came, I wasn't really bothered because I knew Ryan would submit my project along with his.

Surprisingly, Ryan didn't turn up for school on that day. I thought he might be sick and was sure he would come the next day. But Ryan didn't come to school for a full week.

I lost the marks which I never



You Are Peter

## SIMON PETER MEETS JESUS

by Ian Pinto, sdb

deserved anyway. Ryan came back the following week. Seeing him made my blood boil, he hadn't submitted my project and I had lost my marks, which meant I would definitely fail in the subject since I had failed nearly all the written tests.

Ryan came nearer to me. And without thinking, I landed a full punch on his face. His glasses fell off his face and his nose started to bleed. I landed few more punches, on his stomach and ears. He was bleeding profusely.

Ryan was rushed to the hospital and I was called by the school counsellor's office. I had been suspended for a week and I had to attend anger-management sessions during that time.

After that day, Ryan never returned to school. I couldn't care less. There was something about his departure that made me study and complete my work on time. I had stopped bullying the other children. My anger was in control, thanks to the anger-management techniques I had learnt.

Years passed, I graduated high school and then college. I started working as a stock trader. I invested my money in various stocks. By the age of 30, I was a millionaire.

Until one day, when the market crashed and I lost all the money I had invested. I was bankrupt. This was a real punch in my face.

Along with bankruptcy, I was hit by depression. I was clueless about everything that went on in my life. Almost a year later, I decided to try again.

This time, I applied to a multinational company. I was called for the interview. The panel of interviewers asked me various questions related to my knowledge of the

field, my last job and reasons for leaving.

After my interview, I was told that the CEO of the company wanted to meet me. The results weren't out and I felt a queasy feeling in my stomach.

As I nervously entered the CEO's office, I saw a familiar face which broke into a wide grin after seeing me. He looked the same after all these years - it was Ryan. I couldn't believe my eyes; but I was certain of one thing - I would never get this job.

Ryan asked me to sit down. Before he could begin, I apologised for everything I had put him through. I told him that I was desperate for a job. I had been unemployed for more than a year and had been living off my parent's money. I explained that I didn't deserve to sit in front of him because of the horrendous things I had done to him.

Ryan stopped me and said, "You know Aaron, the day I didn't submit our assignments was the day my little brother had died of a tumour. We didn't have the money to take him to hospital. After what happened at school, my mother took me out and put me in another school. Based on the past, I would never want to employ you. However, Aaron, I have learnt to forgive people because it makes life easier that way. And looking at your interview results and the state you are in, I really think you deserve it."

Tears welled up in my eyes as I got up and embraced Ryan. My first impression of him had been spot-on. Ryan Parker was kind, empathetic and a far better human being than I could ever be. □

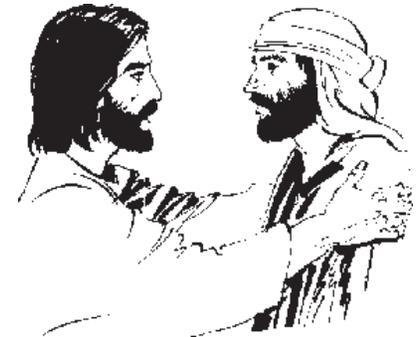
Simon Peter is arguably one of the most popular apostles of Jesus. From the time they first met, Peter was destined to do great things for Jesus and his cause. Jesus also showed some sort of special attention to Peter. Peter was always named among the special group of apostles that formed Jesus' innermost circle. Along with the sons of Zebedee, James and John, Peter is always beside Jesus, even during events that nobody else witnessed like the Transfiguration, for example (Mk 9:2-9).

Not only was Peter a close friend of Jesus, he was also in some way, a leader among the apostles. We are not able to perceive this very clearly during the lifetime of Jesus but it comes across very strongly after Jesus ascends to heaven. In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see how Peter takes the lead in inviting the apostles to choose another member to replace Judas. Thus we have Matthias added to their number (1:15-26). After they had received the Holy Spirit, Peter addresses the crowd on behalf of the apostles (2:14 onwards).

### The Naming

The Gospels record different callings of Simon Peter. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus is walking by the Lake of Galilee when he sees Simon and his brother, Andrew fishing, and he calls out to them (Mt 4:18-20, Mk 1:16-18). In Luke, Jesus helps Simon capture

a good amount of fish after which he calls him (5:1-11); and in John, Simon's brother Andrew, invites him to meet the Lord (1:40-42). One might wonder why there are so many accounts of the same event. There is nothing contradictory here. The Bible is not meant to be read as a history text but as an account of faith and experience. So, it doesn't really matter why there are three versions of the



call of Peter as much as it matters that Simon Peter *was called* by Jesus.

All the Gospels tell us that Simon was a fisherman before he met Jesus. He was responsible and was pretty good at his work. In fact, it was while he was working that Jesus called him. He never called him as he lay idle or because he saw him wasting his time. He called a busy man; a man who was immersed in his work. But Jesus didn't just call Simon; he gave him a special name: Peter and a special responsibility: to be the rock (*Cephas*) on which he

would later build his church (Jn 1:42, Mt 16:18).

At Baptism, all of us receive a name. That name becomes our identity telling others who we are. In naming Simon, Peter, Jesus bestowed on him a new identity, one that could be recognized by everyone, everywhere. Anyone who heard the name Peter, would know what it meant and what it stood for. Jesus didn't just claim Simon for himself, he shared with him something that was precious and personal to him – his divine life. Jesus shares this with us as well, on the day of our baptism and more fully on the day we are confirmed in the Catholic faith.

### The Testing

Just because Peter was specially chosen by Jesus didn't mean he had it easy from then on. In fact, he had to face some of the toughest challenges. Time and again he was tested by the Lord. When he reprimanded Jesus for prophesying about his own death, his faith was tested as Jesus challenged him back saying that he would deny him three times. When he told Jesus that he was ready to die for him, Jesus retorted that he would behave like a coward when the time came. After the resurrection when Jesus appeared to his disciples as they were fishing and they sat down together for breakfast, Jesus asked Peter, before an audience, whether he truly loved him. This he asked not once or twice but three times (Jn 21:15-17). The Gospel tells us that Peter was saddened but I'm sure he was more than just sad. He must have truly felt broken. He had just gotten over the guilt of denying Jesus and the shock of seeing his tomb

empty. Now, Jesus grills him on the steadfastness of his love!

Peter didn't have it easy, not when Jesus was alive and neither after he ascended. His life had turned into one long, fateful mountain climb. Jesus had told him, "When you were young, you put on your belt and walked where you liked. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will put a belt around you, and lead you where you do not wish to go" (Jn 21:18). With these words he didn't just reveal to him the kind of death he would have, but also the life of struggle he would have to lead because of his love for Jesus.

### The Commissioning

Jesus called Simon, gave him a name, tested his faith and resolve and finally commissioned him to carry out a critical task: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven" (Mt 16:19). Peter was given the important job of sharing the Gospel with all people. The binding and loosing that Jesus talks about is the message and power of the Gospel to redeem and save. Thus, Peter is commissioned to carry out this work (of course, the other apostles are too). He is called, blessed and sent out to be a blessing. We experience a similar sequence in our lives beginning from our baptism. We too are called, named and given the task of being missionaries of God's word to others. Like Peter, let us take our work seriously so that the Kingdom of God may be established on earth. □

## Witnesses in & for Our Times



### ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL (1572-1641)

#### WIFE, MOTHER, WIDOW, RELIGIOUS, SAINT

by Mario Scudu

Many "legends" that social media propose to us are ephemeral, flashy, artificial and transitory rather than substantial lights; lights that don't let you see far enough because they aren't strong enough.

For the Church on the other hand, who proposes her best daughters and sons (the saints) it has a very important purpose. It is, as it were, telling everyone: let yourself be illuminated by these lights, walk in their light, following and imitating them because they are not transient or ephemeral but lasting and substantial and the path they point to, is safe. Why? Very simple, all the saints are lights that have drawn their light from Christ the Light of the World "the Sun that never sets."

They let themselves be illuminated, warmed and guided by the Light that comes from the Gospel, which are words that "will not pass away" because they are the eternal words of life, because they are the words of Christ, the light and the truth. In the lives of the saints, the light of Christ, his life



and death, filters down to us. This is also seen in the life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

#### A widow and Mother of four

Jane Frances Frémiot was born in Dijon, France on January 23, 1572, into a noble Burgundian family. She was soon to lose her mother but she found in her father a sure point of reference, both for her education and her growth in

faith. Today we speak of a “fatherless society,” families with absent, distracted, weak or unmotivated fathers. That was not the case for Jane. She admitted that she had been a “crazy young girl,” with the usual light-headedness that came with her age but her father watched over her with his strong character and firmness but always wise and thoughtful because of his noble blood but also with sincere piety and faith, all bound together.

She could not help but suffer its strong, beneficial and lasting influence. At school, Jane developed a strong faith and a great love for the poor. She had now turned into a young woman who could not go unnoticed because of the prestige and fame of her father. Initially, she gracefully but resolutely turned down some marriage proposals until one day she accepted ‘with spontaneous joy’ the person proposed by her father: he was Christopher II, Baron de Chantal.

He was 20 when he married Jane on December 29, 1592. It was a “happy marriage.” The new baroness gave herself body and soul to the administration of the house infusing intelligence and efficiency into her new role. The de Chantal estate flourished once more and the Baron never regretted the trust accorded to him by his wife. The couple were truly “one heart and one soul,” and they always went forward by mutual agreement, esteem, trust and love. There were six children born from that union of which two died at birth. The pain of this loss affected the other four who always felt wanted and welcomed as “gifts of God.”

An important detail: when the baron was not at the castle, she

took off her noble and elegant clothes and devoted herself to practices of piety. From this prayer she drew strength to always be gentle, peaceful and friendly to everyone including the servants, friends and guests who visited the castle. Love for the poor, taught to her by her father, was always one of her priorities. Not only did she give them what they needed but often she served them herself.

During the famine of 1600, Jane, regardless of rumours and only encouraged by her husband, she opened the doors of the castle and turned it into a ‘hospital’ to accommodate mothers and children in need, offering them food from her table. She grew in faith and charity which was fuelled by her attendance at daily Mass and frequent confession. After a few years, this very strong faith was put to the test with a series of deaths in the family.

### Meeting Francis de Sales

In the meantime, she felt the strong call and attraction to consecrate herself to the Lord in the religious life while at the same time she continued with her duties as a mother of the family, confident that the Lord would make himself “alive” to her. An important detail: even in these years she always had the comfort and advice of her father. So she had to live with her children in the castle of her father-in-law de Chantal, even though she knew that there she was a ‘servant mistress’ and it would make her suffer. But for the love of her children, she even made that sacrifice.

A turning point came in 1604. The bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales came to Dijon to preach. She

went to church in dark but very elegant clothes because of which the bishop deduced that she was looking for a husband. It was nothing so outrageous. She was only 32 years old after all. At that time Jane was looking for a spiritual director who understood her well, and she found one. But she could not put herself under his direction immediately but promised to write to him.

Between them, there began such a correspondence that it became famous in the history of the Church. The two became friends in depth and holiness. The foundation of both was the same God whom they wanted to serve and love. Francis especially recommended to her humility which is at the basis of all sanctity and work of God and at the same time great courage and patience. He freed her from scruples and from exaggerated piety and restored to her a sense of serenity by teaching her a peaceful and stimulating spirituality that was simple and at the same time demanding, comprising above all of the love of God and trust in him. A very important detail: it was a spirituality that was not at all in conflict with her duties as the mother of a family.

### The Order of the Visitation

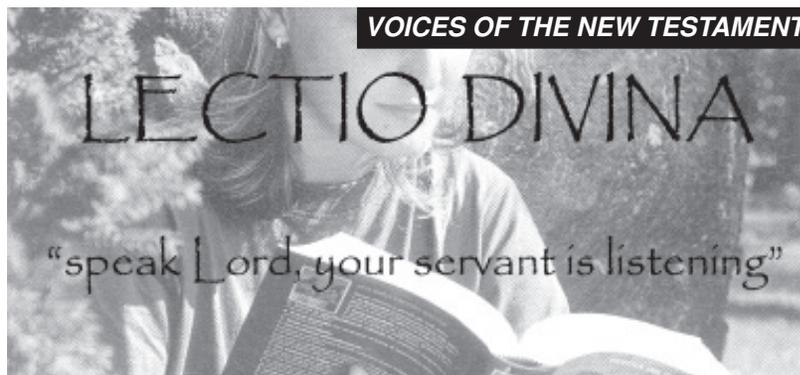
In 1610 came a huge decision: Having arranged her affairs and her children (to whom she left everything by a deed) together with two friends, she created Annecy’s “Retreat of the Visitation,” and three years later she started the first important convent with the name ‘the Visitation.’ All during this process, Francis de Sales was present as its co-founder, the co-

founder of the Visitation Order. It was an Order that had to respond to the needs of the time, which was dedicated to prayer and at the same time to assisting the sick; a bold and revolutionary purpose.

Francis de Sales died in 1622 and Mother Chantal went on to start numerous foundations throughout France, become a “spiritual mother and teacher,” with a great reputation and popularity in France of King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu. She also profited from the valuable advice of another great saint of the time: St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Daughters of Charity, who would obtain for her the “privilege” of leaving the monasteries to help the sick. She was the spiritual mother of her Order but at the same time, she did not forget to be a natural mother of her earthly children. She continued to follow them, loving them tenderly even suffering their sufferings.

By now her most fervent desire was to ensure that the founding spirit and doctrine of Francis de Sales pervade all her convents. He had recommended – above all the duty to do everything out of love, to put love into every action and to live in brotherly love. All these things were also lived in great fidelity by Mother Chantal right up to her death that came on December 13, 1641. She breathed her last but not before pronouncing the holy name of Jesus several times.

In heaven, many people who had preceded her waited for this unparalleled daughter, a sister, who was their mother, bride, friend or spiritual mother. She was buried in Annecy near Francis de Sales, her spiritual director and a great friend. □



## AN INVALUABLE ASSET

by Carlo Broccardo

*Speaking of fields and hidden treasures, in reality Jesus tells us something about the Kingdom of Heaven: whoever receives the grace to discover it will be willing to give up everything so that it does not slip through his fingers.*

One of the specific characteristics of the Gospel of Matthew, that we are following (alternating with John) during this liturgical year, is the very large space devoted to the teachings of Jesus. Apart from instructions scattered here and there, we are given five great discourses of the Master, each well-articulated in style and specific in content.

For some Sundays in July, we will hear the so-called “parable-sermons” which take up much of Chapter 13 of Matthew and consists of seven parables of Jesus.

We have chosen two of the shorter ones (from the liturgy of 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2020) so we have the time to read them slowly and go into every detail.

The first parable is very straightforward: a labourer plowing a field for someone else (we know that’s the case, because later he buys the field). There he dis-

covers a treasure. This is not far-fetched indeed. In ancient times the only sure way to hide one’s treasures in times of war or political uncertainty was to bury them (wrapped in cloth or better yet, inside an amphora or a pot); once the calamity was over it would be enough to dig up the field and recover the hidden assets. However, it could be possible that the person concerned died and/or forgot about the treasure or at least the place where it was buried and so it was lost.

Jesus says: “Imagine a man who, when plowing a field of someone discovers a forgotten treasure. What do you think he will do? Isn’t it obvious? He goes away, full of joy and sells all his possessions to buy that field.” The treasure was so important for the man, that the prospect of being able to hold it in his hands fills him with such joy that he renounces all his possessions.

Parables are short stories invented by Jesus to communicate something to his listeners, to convey to them a ‘message.’ Now that we understand the parable, we ask ourselves: How can we apply it to reality? Why does Jesus tell this story? The starting point comes to us from the first words: “The kingdom of Heaven is like ...” In fact, when speaking of fields and hidden treasures, Jesus is telling us something about the Kingdom of God, that it is greater than everything else. Those who are fortunate enough to find it, are willing to give up everything in order not to lose it.

The second story too is not very difficult to imagine: a merchant goes looking for fine pearls; probably he’s a jeweler, or at least someone who’s been in the precious stones’ trade for some time. It’s a profession that requires constant travel in search of rare and valuable pieces. On finding a pearl whose value is priceless in his eyes, our merchant sells everything he has and buys it. Again, as with the above parable, it is not difficult to understand the message: the Kingdom of Heaven is an invaluable asset; those who find it – after a long search – give up everything so as not to lose it.

The two parables are very similar; some details do not coincide, but the underlying dynamic is the same: the treasure and the pearl are extremely precious that whoever finds them is willing to do anything to possess them! So it is with the Kingdom of Heaven: someone might discover it by chance (like the farmer), or someone might find it after a long search; but all those who find it

don’t renounce everything in order to possess it. The Kingdom of Heaven is priceless, and its value surpasses everything.

To conclude there remains only one question: What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

The expression “Kingdom of Heaven” or “Kingdom of God” is an abstract term for speaking of a very concrete reality: God does not abandon us, but takes care of us like a wise and caring king (in ancient times this was the most widespread form of government). He sees the needs of his children and works for them. God does not abandon us, he does not forget us; the Old Testament repeats it over and over again. Let us recall the words of Isaiah: “Zion said: ‘the Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.’ Does a woman forget the child of her womb? Even if she forgets, I will never forget you.” (Is. 49, 14-15). His name is “here I am” (cf Is 52, 6).

This image of God is of one who is there, one who is present in our life. In the Gospel of Matthew it takes on the face of Jesus, the “Emmanuel” which means, ‘God with us’” (Mt 1, 23). Jesus is the Kingdom of God, it is he who by his words and actions makes the presence of God visible and concrete: he heals the sick, drives out demons, announces peace and joy. “Even today, like the Good Samaritan, he is close to every man wounded in body and spirit and pours on his wounds the oil of consolation and the wine of hope” (from the Liturgy, preface n. VIII). Whoever meets such a person in life, would he not give up everything so as not to lose him again? □

# Quiet Spaces

## WHEN GOD VISITS

Pope Francis meditation at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Tuesday September 16, 2014

**W**ith his witness, a Christian must show others the same attitudes with which God visits his people: closeness, compassion, the capacity to restore hope. Pope Francis affirmed this during Mass at Santa Marta.

“God has visited his people” is an expression which is “repeated in the Scripture,” the Pontiff noted. He immediately referred to the narrative in the Gospel of Luke, which tells of the resurrection of the widow’s son in Nain (7:11-17). They are words, he stated, which have “special meaning,” different from that of such expressions as “God has spoken to his people” or “God has given the Commandments to his people” or even “God has sent a prophet to his people.”

In the statement “God has visited his people,” the Pope said, “there is something extra, something new.” This phrase can be found in the Scripture; it is written, for example, “God visited [Naomi] in her old age and made her a grandmother.” And likewise, the Pontiff added, Scripture “tells of Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin: God visited her and made her a mother.”

So “when God visits his people, it means that he is present in a special way.” And, Francis highlighted, recalling the event in Nain, “in this Gospel passage, where it describes the resurrection of the young man, the son of the widowed mother, the people speak these words: ‘God has visited us.’”

Why use this exact expression? Is it only because Jesus “performed a miracle?” the Pontiff asked. In reality, there is “more.” In fact the key issue is to understand “how God visits.”

The Bishop of Rome indicated that God visits “first of all with his presence, with his closeness.” In the passage from the day’s liturgy “it is written that Jesus went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.” In essence, “he was close to the people: a close God who is able to understand the heart of the people, the heart of his people.” Then, Luke recounts, “he sees that procession and he draws near.” Thus “God visits his people,” he is “in the midst of his people he draws near.” Hence, “closeness is God’s way.”

Additionally, the Pope observed,

“there is an expression repeated many times in the Bible: ‘The Lord was moved by great compassion.’ And it is that ‘same compassion which, the Gospel says, he had when he saw so many people like sheep without a shepherd.’ So it is a fact that ‘when God visits his people he is close to them, he draws near and feels compassion: he is moved.’ He is ‘deeply moved, as he was in front of Lazarus’ tomb.’ He is moved like the father in the parable, when he sees the prodigal son return home.



Closeness and compassion: this is how the Lord visits his people,” Francis remarked. And “when we want to proclaim the Gospel, to spread the Word of Jesus, this is the way.” However, “the other way is that of the teachers, the preachers of that time: the doctors of the law, the scribes, the Pharisees.” Characters “far removed from the people,” who “spoke well, taught the law well.” But they were also “distant.” And their way “was not a visit from the Lord: it was something else.” Such that “the people did not feel this as a grace, because it lacked closeness, it lacked compassion and suffering with the people.”

Adding to “closeness” and “compassion,” the Pope proposed “another word which is characteristic of the Lord’s visit to his people,” Luke writes: “And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.” Thus “when God visits his people, he restores hope to the people. Always!”

In this regard, Francis pointed out that “one can preach the Word of God brilliantly” and “there have been many great preachers: but if these preachers do not manage to sow hope, their preaching is useless. It is in vain.”

This very image proposed by the Gospel of Luke, the Pope said, can bring a full understanding to “what is meant by God’s visit to his people.” We understand “by seeing Jesus in the midst of that great crowd; by seeing Jesus draw close to that funeral procession and the crying mother, and he tells her ‘Do not weep,’ and perhaps he caresses her; by seeing Jesus give the mother back her son, alive.” In this way, the Pontiff concluded, we can “ask for the grace that our Christian witness may be the bearer of God’s visit to his people, that is, of closeness which sows hope.” (by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 38, 19 September 2014) □



## THE SPRIGHTLY OLD ADVOCATE

*Pierluigi Menato - translated by Ian Doulton sdb*

When the police inspector brought them the news, Clare and Francesca, the two married daughters of the old advocate, had only one thought in mind: to hide the truth from their father; to prevent that noble gentleman from succumbing to the terrible blow and die of pain and shame. So, before going into his room they quickly dried their tears and forced a smile on their faces.

"You know dad?" began the elder girl leaning over the old man lying there with his persistent bronchitis, "Paul had to leave for France at the order of his boss. It seems that that sister-concern there dealing in chemical products wasn't doing well. He was not able to come over to say goodbye. Maybe there was really serious trouble. He took the first plane out. But he will call us as soon as he reaches and he's promised to come back soon."

The advocate, Count Peter de Mason, barely smiled. He barely nodded his head and they refrained from accusing him of being selfish and an egoist, thinking only of himself and his ailments and disinterested about anything that didn't pertain to his precious health and comfort. But they were immensely relieved that he did not ask for any further painful explanations.

The collapse was detected. Paul who had perhaps gambled at the Casino appropriated quite a sum of money belonging to the company and fled that day when

his employer had discovered the shortfall. If the advocate, now in his eighties, had known about this, his status as a person of some standing would have caused him to die of a broken heart.

Things went back to normal. The newspapers were cleverly concealed by the daughters. And when they popped in to see him, they only spoke of happy things and business was always booming; a few telegrams, sent by concerned friends came to reassure the old man and there were affectionate greetings signed by his son. After a few weeks, life resumed its normal rhythm.

So, that was that but with some slight variations. The coming of Spring seemed to bring the old man back to life and that fake cheerfulness with which he was surrounded and which he believed, exhilarated and rejuvenated him. In his elegant silver-grey suit, he began once more, to take his walks through the countryside.

He was cheerful, whistling as he came home with an appetite like a wolf and, what was worse, he even shaved and carefully groomed himself like a young executive. At home he gave his contribution of the usual • 30 a day to those who served him and for the first time he refused to order wine saying that, after all, what would the others think, they would be certainly be alarmed.

The old man was thrilled: he

was having a rollicking time, down at the village, at the Boar's Head Inn there was always good wine. He became stingy because he had resumed the life he had lived when he was young; always strolling here and there, spending entire days out of the house; having lunch with holidaymakers, and surely, all these involved expenses for gifts, bouquets of flowers, carriage rides and who knows how many other things.

Truth be told, his two daughters and their husbands would never have dreamed of making friends with holidaymakers scattered all around the countryside, living like cheap lords in their rented villas once a year. But when they came to know that the old man did not ramble around making friends but spent afternoons and sometimes entire days at the De Monte house, the residence of a young slimy lawyer who had rented an old country house and whose mother, for several years was a good friend of the old man, they were seriously worried.

Was it possible that a gentleman in his eighties, who as a young man had been able to renounce marriage to this cheap woman, inferior to him, now felt the desire to spend whole days with her, someone his own age?

What could an old man who had already given everything to his daughters do? And he had no regrets. Lonely as he was, with a son almost estranged from him and from whom he received increasingly rare letters and wire messages, one would never know. Perhaps, people are smart



and maybe they have some savings that could be donated to others or left as a bequest in their wills. If there was a sudden affection for a young man who knew how to be affectionate like a son and for a woman – an old friendship – they could keep him good company, the old with the old. So, the daughters began to wonder if it would not be appropriate to forbid their father from nursing such friendships.

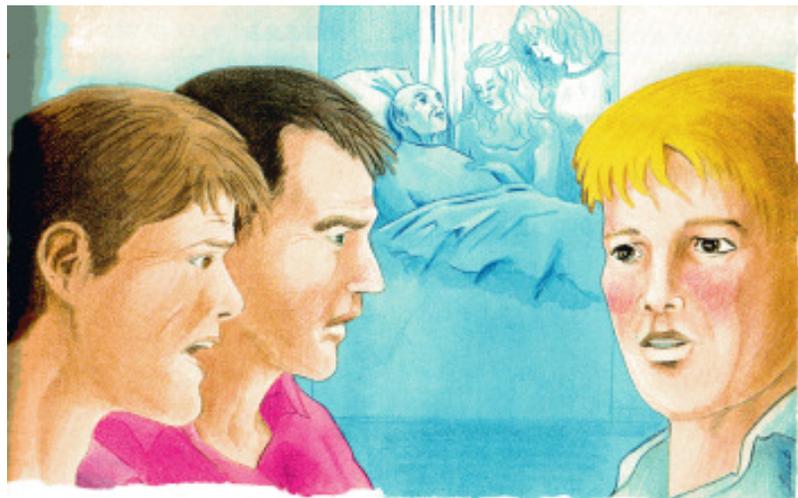
But the advocate, by now, had become "a sprightly old man," all neat and tidy. He was always out till late in the evening even donning some bright and flow-

ery ties. But his health was deteriorating and this of course was the result of his reckless life. An eighty-year-old man cannot get up with impunity at eight in the morning to bid goodbye to the young lawyer, his friend, as he took off for the city. And then go to the latter's home to keep his paralytic mother company, perhaps eating rich food when he should actually be on a diet; then give up his afternoon nap because no one napped there and then in the chill and mist of the evening pad his way home.

It took more than simply humming in a low voice and dressing up like a dandy... He remembered the years when they spent hours playing pool in the house of that lawyer who often brought home his friends from the city and they were daring fiends and they must have always exhausted the old man. Now who could assure his daughters that the old man didn't play hard? He was always peniless and for a while he wanted

to give them only 450 euros a month because he said he was almost always invited out for dinner so he didn't have to pay the earlier amount.

This was bound to happen, after several months of this kind of life, the old man fell ill and was a victim to pneumonia which came to him one midnight after he returned home in the rain one evening. It was so serious that they had to call the priest to administer him the Last Sacraments. He called for everyone to him and after making his Confession he asked for the ungrateful Paul and when they reminded him, he shook his head and berated him for keeping his distance. But when the young lawyer so brazenly presented himself to ask for news of the advocate's health, his relatives went for him with abuses and insults, holding him responsible for exploiting an old man and endangering his life, even if he had pitied the poor boy who had fed his mind with the



dangerous fantasy of youthful-ness rediscovered.

"But that's not how things were," the young man stuttered, his face blushing with embarrassment. "I did not invite him to my house to play or party. I did not allow him to nurse my sick mother. He came to me one day to ask me to employ him because he told me that his salary was spent on other things and he did not want to ask his daughters or sons-in-law out of pride. He added, that they no longer earned anything. He was of tremendous help to me in preparing the defences that made me famous. He was my young student apprentice, and if it was true that I gave him a fee and lunch, it was also true that he often did not want to accept it. It was

also true that he worked from morning up to late in the evening! I have told you all this because you insult me, otherwise I would have kept silent!"

They heard the old advocate sigh and when his eyes were already veiled in agony he remembered Paul once more and he began to smile.

"Tell him to come back," he said, "tell him to come back to his former position. Month after month, I have been paying back his debt and the director has pardoned him..."

Then he added, with his eyes closed:

"Thank you for kindly hiding everything from me...but a father has eyes that can see..." □

#### SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS

A store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read 'Puppies for Sale.' These signs had a weird way of attracting children. And sure enough, a little boy appeared at the sign.

"How much are you going to sell those puppies for?" he asked. The store owner replied "Anywhere from • 70 - • 90." The little boy reached into his pocket and pulled out some change. "I have •5, can I have a look at them?"

The store owner smiled and whistled and out of the kennel came Lady, who ran down the aisle of his store followed by five teeny, tiny balls of fur. One puppy was lagging considerably behind.

Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy and said "What's wrong with that little dog?" The store owner explained that when the puppy was born, the vet had said that the puppy had no hip socket and would limp for the rest of its life. The little boy got really excited and said "That's the puppy I want to buy!"

The store owner replied "No, you don't want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I'll give him to you." The little boy got quite upset. He looked straight into the store owner's eyes, pointing his finger and said, "I don't want you to give him to me. That little dog is worth every bit as much as the other dogs and I'll pay the full price. In fact, I'll give you •5 now and •5 every month until I have him paid for."

The store owner countered, "You really don't want to buy this puppy. He is never going to be able to run, jump and play like other puppies!"

To this the little boy reached down and rolled up his trouser leg to reveal a badly twisted, left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the store owner and said softly, "Well, I don't run so well myself, and the little puppy will need someone who understands."

*We are all weak and imperfect. We need and have an understanding and loving God.* □

## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 19

by Michele Molineris

### 52. By the dentist instead of the pupil (1854)

In the early years of the Oratory, whenever a youngster would get a splitting headache, earache, or toothache the suffering boy Don Bosco would send the lad to the chapel for a visit and he would be instantly relieved by earnest prayer. A few years later, however, he realized that this practice prevented him from attending to his duties. Since his presence was indispensable for the proper handling of important matters and the smooth running of the Oratory, he resolved to pray no longer for such a purpose. "I was foolish!" he told his boys, and he played down his selflessness as much as he could. But they knew from first-hand experience how much their good father loved them, and it was in vain that he tried to convince them that such heroic acts of charity were simply the result of foolishness.

One day he saw a boy tormented by an agonizing toothache that was causing him excruciating pain. Don Bosco comforted him: "Don't worry. I shall ask God to give me a share of your pain."

The boy replied that he did not want to see Don Bosco suffer, but his loving superior kept his word.

Immediately after supper that evening, Don Bosco began to suffer the torment of a toothache. The pain continued to increase and finally became so intense that he had to call his mother and beg her: "Please stay with me! I'm afraid I'll jump out that window."

"This pain is driving me out of my mind." Nevertheless - as was his

habit - he did not regret his sacrifice or ask God to free him from that torment; he selflessly accepted the consequences of his generosity.

His good mother was quite upset and did not know what to do or what to give him to alleviate the pain. Don Bosco passed part of the night in torment, but finally, when he could bear it no longer, he sent for [Joseph] Buzzetti to take him to a dentist. As they hurried along, they saw a door with a shingle reading: "Dr. Camusso, Dentist of the Royal House." When they knocked, a young man answered and told them that Dr. Camusso was already in bed.

"Please call him," Don Bosco said. "Ask him if he can pull this tooth out, for I am in terrible pain."

"Come right in," the young man replied. "My father is a good dentist, and in no time at all he'll make you feel better."

The dentist came down and examined Don Bosco's teeth; they were all perfectly sound, although the gums were badly inflamed.

"This is puzzling," the dentist remarked. "There is only one way to find the trouble. I'll have to take a chance and extract one tooth."

This was no easy matter, since all the teeth were perfectly sound and firmly embedded. But in his condition, Don Bosco was ready to have them all pulled out if necessary to get some relief. He sat down and the tooth was deftly extracted with a single yank. The

dentist did it as gently as he could, but Don Bosco fainted and smelling salts were needed to revive him.

By the time Don Bosco had returned home, the pain had subsided, and in a short while it ceased completely. The boy's toothache also had vanished.

We are convinced that Don Bosco was rewarded for this generosity in cases such as this with the gift of healing - a power that he possessed for the rest of his life.

### 53. And he Wasn't Even Seventeen (1854)

It was early March 1854 when Don Bosco told us the following dream. - I found myself among you, when a gentleman came to the Oratory and he said to me: - I want to see your boys; tidy them up. - I looked in amazement at the man who treated me so familiarly and spoke to me so confidently. I took him to visit the Oratory.

When we came down, you, as if at an agreed sign, were all sorted out beneath the porticoes. I looked closely at you and yes, he was pleased with your demeanour. In the mean time I saw over one of you a very white circle as bright as the moon.

- Oh! I said, what is this I see?

To which the gentleman calmly replied: - Can't you see? It is a moon which means a month...

- But I see written the number 23.

- It means that the youngster still has 23 months to live.

- And then?

- And then he must die.

- How do you know?

- Listen to the warning I am giving you: watch over him carefully up to the end of his life and don't worry about the rest.

I did not know the gentleman who told me that and who he was and that troubled me and I woke up. I watched that youngster well and I was able to better identify him because of the brightly shining moonlight on his face."

The effect of this story was indescribable; we all feared having the



moon shine on our foreheads and tried the best we could to follow God's promptings.

And so the months went by and the memory of the dream faded with time, and now almost no one thought about it... We might have forgotten the voice of God, but Don Bosco showed that he hadn't forgotten. One day in 1855 he called the cleric John Cagliero and told him to go to assist in another dormitory. He seemed a bit reluctant saying that it was less convenient and did not want to cause any discomfort to others. I'd like to stay where I am. I am sorry to upset you. But Don Bosco insisted and the cleric acceded.

In fact, according to Gurgo, who was in that dormitory, when he saw the new assistant, he became disdainful and started getting troublesome.

The cleric only said: Don Bosco sent me here and that's enough for me.

If you prevent me being here, I won't teach you music anymore!

The one who spoke like this was our music teacher and at the time it was well-worth being his pupil and Mons. Cagliero would do him honour. His talent for music was uncontested: already during that year he had often been called to give concerts in Turin, and he appeared to be a very skilled artiste on the piano and more so on the organ and he was not even 17!

He had won the post of the Kapellmeister of Biella through a competition but he did not want to accept it, because he coveted a position either at Vercelli or Novara which was more prestigious. He had already made an impressive name for himself in Turin and would achieve promising and stunning success...and he was close to death!

Don Bosco kept him always in his sights so he wouldn't get too far. In order not to be too far away, to keep watch over him more closely, he appointed Cagliero to be his guardian angel.

If that evening, he seemed a little reluctant, he remained sulky for a few days but later quietly adapted to the new arrangement. Here and there the old dream was mentioned and each time there was a certain apprehension fear in all of us.

Health at the Oratory had never been better: everyone seemed to be flourishing; no one ever thought that we were so close to death. It would be the first time that it entered the house... We almost thought that Don Bosco was playing a joke on us.

At the beginning of December, Gurgo falls sick, a true colossus of health, very attractive personality and with an unspeakable desire for

life and fame. The sickness to its course; the doctor treated him with kindness and competence. He was soon out of danger and was getting ready to go home. He was seen out on the balcony sunning himself during the last days of the Christmas Novena

Everything seemed to be ready for a great feast. His father had come to take him home and we wished him well on his recovery.

I will go home - he said - and I will soon get well. When I return, I will try and make up for lost time.

In the morning, while we thought he was getting ready to leave for home, we suddenly heard shouting: Quick, poor Gurgo is dying! Hurry, call his father!

A moment later, the same infirmarian came back saying: - It's too late, he's dead.

It was like lightning flashing through the dormitories; the boys prayed fervently midst their tears for their deceased companion.

It was already Christmas Eve, and that visit was like a powerful wake-up call for several consciences. - Much the Lord loves us! - I remember someone tell me some years later, recalling that significant event: - Maybe I'll never go to Communion again.

Everyone, absolutely everyone approached the sacraments and with greater fervour than on the occasion of the monthly retreat. Don Bosco then spoke of him during the Mass and immediately afterwards, said a few words. That morning he could say nothing more for, nothing but emotional sobs came from him: My dear sons, let us pray for him, I assure you that now he needs our prayers. (*Francesia, Vita di Don Bosco*, 203). □

## SALESIAN SAINTS

### STEFAN SANDOR

#### Salesian Coadjutor, Martyr, Blessed 1914-1953

**S**tefan Sándor was a victim of the strong anti-religious repression of the Hungarian communist regime, particularly cruel and bloody from 1946 to 1963.

He was born in Szolnok, Hungary on October 26, 1914 to Stefan and Maria Fekete, the first of three brothers. His father was an employee of the State Railways while his mother was a housewife. Both of them passed on to their children their profound faith. Stefan studied in the city and obtained a diploma as a metallurgical technician. He received his Confirmation fervently and committed himself to imitate his patron saint and Saint Peter. He served daily Mass and received Holy Communion at his parish church that was administered by the Franciscans.

Reading the *Salesian Bulletin*, he came to know about Don Bosco. He immediately felt attracted to the Salesian charism. While speaking to his spiritual director he expressed his desire to enter the Salesian Congregation; he even told his parents about this desire. Initially, they did not approve of this desire but Stefan managed to convince them and in 1936 he was accepted at the *Clarisseum*, a Salesian house in Budapest where he spent two years in the aspirantate. He attended courses



in print technology at the Don Bosco Printing School. After this he began his novitiate but had to interrupt it because of military service.

In 1939 he made his first profession as a Salesian brother, on September 8, 1940. He was appointed to the *Clarisseum* where he was actively engaged in teaching the boys professional courses. He was also responsible for assisting the oratory which he animated with enthusiasm and competence. He was also a promoter of Young Catholic Workers. In 1942 he was called to the front on the Don River in Russia for which he earned a silver medal for military valour. For him, the trenches was his festive oratory and he animated his companions in true Salesian style always encouraging the young conscripts.

At the end of the Second World War he was engaged in the material and moral reconstruction of

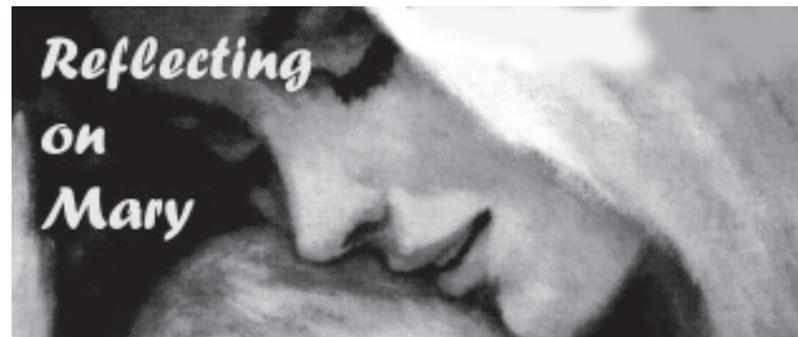
society, dedicating himself in particular to the poorest youngsters, whom he gathered to teach them a trade. On July 24, 1946 he made his perpetual profession as a Salesian brother while in 1948 he earned the title of Master-Printer. At the end of their studies, his boys were hired as the best printers in the capital and the country at large.

In 1949, when Hungary came under Matyas Rakosi, all church property and Catholic schools were confiscated and religious persecution began. Suddenly all the religious found themselves with nothing: no home, no work, no community. Many were forced into the status of illegal immigrants and so had to adapt themselves to any kind of work: garbage collectors, farmers, labourers, porters, servants... The anti-religious and above all anti-Catholic tendency of the regime was immediately evident. This led, in 1950 to the total suppression of almost all religious orders and congregations.

Even Stefan had to "disappear," leaving his printing house but in the face of the possibility of escaping abroad, he decided to stay at home to save the Hungarian youth. He had to flee quickly and stay hidden for a few months. Later, under another name, he managed to get hired in a detergent factory in the capital, but he fearlessly and clandestinely continued his apostolate although knowing it was a strictly prohibited activity. He met regularly with his alumni and some of their friends, taking care of their spiritual needs and educational problems. In July 1952 he was arrested and was never seen again by his

confreres. According to the systems he was tried for some time and subjected to inhuman interrogations, ferocious torture and typical brainwashing, until he fully recognized himself in the absurd and false accusations made against him which concerned: participation in plots against the democratic order, high treason activities against the state and other crimes; all these called for the death penalty. An official document certifies the trial and the death sentence carried out by hanging on June 8, 1953. Stefan remained a witness of Christ to the very end. They often beat him, his fellow prisoners testified, and they said that even after he had been notified of his death sentence, he radiated peace and tried to sustain the faith of the others.

From the reconstruction of his biographical profile, Stefan Sándor emerges as someone who has had a profound and real journey of faith which began in his childhood and continued throughout his youth, and was strengthened by his Salesian religious profession and consolidated in his exemplary life as a Salesian brother. We note in particular a genuine vocation to the consecrated life, animated by the spirit of Don Bosco, expressed by his intense and fervent zeal for souls, especially those of youth. Even during his most trying periods, such as, during his military service and the experience of war, he remained unaffected with his moral and religious behaviour as a young Salesian brother intact. It was on that basis that Stefan Sándor suffered martyrdom without second thoughts or any hesitation. □



## ANXIOUSLY SEARCHING FOR JESUS

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

In the story of Jesus' birth, Luke records this tender gesture of Mary: "And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger" (Lk, 2, 7). It was a simple gesture that expressed all her maternal tenderness and her respect for the child that is the Son of God and her son too. In keeping with the customs of the time, narrow bands of cloth were used to protect the child's spine from possible damage, to help it grow straight. When the angel announced the good news of the birth of the child to the shepherds, he would give them this as a sign: "You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:13). Twenty centuries have gone by and to this day this sign of his mother's love is depicted in all our Christmas presentations. In Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were involved in this mystery that was hidden for ages in the mind of God and that was now unfolding before their eyes. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Mary and Joseph were the first witnesses of this birth which took place

in poor and humble conditions, the first step in a kind of 'annihilation' (Phil 2, 5...) that the Son of God freely chose this for the salvation of humankind. And this child was entrusted to their care. When the life of the child was threatened by Herod, Mary and Joseph courageously fled into Egypt facing challenging dangers and fatigue, the discomforts of migration and exile, facing uncertainty and the great unknown.

### A link with the Paschal Mystery

The tender love, the delicate care, the caring protection of this mother was expressed right from the moment of his birth and it would accompany the child through every phase of his life. The long period of his 'hidden' life in Nazareth dur-



ing which he prepared himself for his messianic mission was summarized by Luke in a few words. He recounts just one episode in the life of the adolescent Jesus: it was at the Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. This narration is framed by two verses that underline the idea of Jesus' growth: "The child grew and became strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God was upon him" (Lk 2:40). "Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and humanity" (Lk 2:42). In the Jewish tradition the age of twelve represents the beginning of maturity in every human being. This was the turning point in the growth of Jesus. His journey to the holy city on the occasion of the Passover marked that stage in his life and anticipated another journey that he would make to Jerusalem which would culminate in his Passover.

The episode also marked the growth of the mother. For three days Mary and Joseph believed they had lost him and they searched "anxiously" for him. They found him in Jerusalem, in the temple, in the midst of the doctors of the law with whom he was in discussion, revealing to them the true face of God who is love and mercy. The whole episode really has allusions to the Paschal Mystery. It is similar to the three days after the death of Jesus when the grieving and confused disciples would be told not to look for the master among the dead: he is alive, risen and exalted to the glory of the Father.

#### **Mary and the: Father's business**

When she found Jesus in the temple Mary asked him the question that most naturally rose out of her motherly heart: "Son why have

you done this to us? Behold your father and I have been anxiously looking for you" (Lk 2, 48). In Mary's "why" you find the summation of humanity's 'why' which surrounds the mystery of the cross and the anguish of so many people who are struggling to find God. To his mother's question Jesus has two questions in response: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk 2, 49) As he grew in age and wisdom and above all in the awareness of his mission he had a "compulsion" concerning the plans of the Father. Then there is this verse that catches the eye of the reader of this Lucan story: "But they (Mary and Joseph) did not understand his words," God's plan transcends all human understanding: "thus even his Mother to whom had been revealed most completely the mystery of his divine sonship, lived in intimacy with this mystery only through faith!" says John Paul II (*Redemptoris Mater* 17). Standing beside her son and living in intimate union with him, together with the sweet and singular joy, Mary also experiences the mental darkness and struggles of her heart as she gradually advances on her "pilgrimage of faith." Day by day Mary begins to gradually accept Jesus' identity; this child that she wrapped in swaddling clothes at his birth was not only her child. She gradually grew in the awareness that she was also a repository of the mystery of God. She knew this from the moment of the angel's message to her. Now things were getting more real and alive and at the same time much more difficult and unfathomable. Around her Son, Mary also "must" be about the Father's business. □

## **NEWSBITS**

**VATICAN CITY** — One of the six members of Pope Francis' advisory Council of Cardinals has acknowledged a bias among the members of the Catholic Church's all-male hierarchy against giving women more leadership roles, saying he and his peers must "shed this prejudice."

In an NCR interview, Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias called himself a "convert" to the cause of women seeking more opportunities for responsibility in the global institution.

Mentioning women throughout the world "who are doing so much" for the church, the cardinal said women "want an apostolate, want to work for evangelization, want to give leadership in the church parish community."

"We have not applied our mind to it," said Gracias, adding: "I admit there's been a prejudice against giving them greater responsibility, and we must shed this prejudice."

"Responsibility, they have," he said. "But there's no recognition for the responsibility they have. They are really doing so much. But I think there should be recognition, which is their right."

Gracias, the archbishop of Mumbai, was speaking in a half-hour interview Feb. 21 at the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta. It followed the Feb. 17-19 meeting of the Council of Cardinals, which is primarily helping Francis reorganize the Vatican's sprawling bureaucracy.

Gracias spoke most candidly about the role of women in the 1.3-billion-member church. He said he began to change his mind on the issue of women's leadership in



February 2019, when he took part in a global summit called by Francis for presidents of bishops' conferences on clergy sexual abuse.

The cardinal said the women who addressed the gathering "brought up some new aspects, new insights into the whole."

"Honestly, all the male speakers, I knew," he said. "I had heard it all before, read it before. What the women said was new to me."

"I am now an advocate for women's rights in the church," said Gracias. "I empathize with why women are asking for greater rights."

Gracias said he knows from discussions with the pontiff that Francis is "very keen that women have a greater role in the church, in decision-making."

"His mind is open," the cardinal said of the pope's disposition on the issue. "But there are pressures. He has to carry everybody with him."

"There are people who do not want any change," said Gracias. "There are people who want overnight changes. But he's got to carry everybody with him."

Joshua J. McElwee is NCR Vatican correspondent. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Fatal Courtesy

Two Parisians, Francois and Louis, got to arguing about a lady. One word led to a thousand others, and they finally agreed to settle the matter by a pistol duel in the park.

At 7:00 on the appointed morning Francois was on hand with his pistol, his second and his physician. A few minutes later, a messenger arrived with a note from Louis, "Dear Francois," it read, "If I am late, don't wait. Go ahead and shoot."

## Helped to the Teeth

As the speaker of the evening sat down, he coughed. His upper denture fell to the floor and broke. A guest at his side realized the man's plight, dug into his pocket and came up with a set. The speaker-to-be tried them, but they were too big. The helpful guest supplied another set. They were too small. The third set fit.

The speaker got along perfectly with the borrowed teeth, and as he sat down, returned them with thanks.

"By the way," he said, "are you a dentist?"

"No, an undertaker."

## The Nut Behind the Wheel

"How's your wife getting along with her driving?"

"She took a turn for the worse last week."

## The Good Samaritan

A Sunday School teacher was telling her class the story of the

Good Samaritan, in which a man was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. She described the situation in vivid detail so her students would catch the drama. Then, she asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?" A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, "I think I'd throw up."

## The Story of Elijah

The Sunday School teacher was carefully explaining the story of Elijah the Prophet and the false prophets of Baal. She explained how Elijah built the altar, put wood upon it, cut the steer in pieces and laid it upon the altar. And then, Elijah commanded the people of God to fill four barrels of water and pour it over the altar. he had them to do this four times. "Now," said the teacher, "Can anyone in the class tell me why the Lord would have Elijah pour water over the steer on the altar?" A little girl in the back of the room started waving her hand, "I know, I know," she said, "to make the gravy."

## Lot's Wife

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Johnny interrupted, "My mummy looked back once while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!" □

## 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.

Very, very grateful and humble thanks for the numerous favours received over many years through the faithful recitation of the **3 Hail Marys**. Whenever I was in trouble I would recite them and **Mother Mary** answered me. A

very special thanks for giving me a home, a shelter of my own and not just one, but two Mothers. **Mary** continue to keep your blessings over my family and intercede with **Jesus** for us.

Many thanks to **Mother Mary**, through the recitation of the "**Three Hail Marys**, I have received many, many favours, some miraculous, especially the healing of my severe vertigo, my son's marriage and many others. **Mother Mary**, please continue to intercede for me and my family in future also.

Thank you **Jesus** and **Mother Mary** for granting me favours through the recitation of the "**Three Hail Marys**." **Mother Mary**, continue to bless my home and family.

Heartfelt gratitude for so many favours granted to our family through the recitation of the **Three Hail Marys**. **Mother Mary**, help us always to pray to you and your **Son Jesus**.

### LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My sincere thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of **Jesus** and the Immaculate Heart of **Mary** for your mercy and love.

A *Devotee*  
My belated thanks to **Our Lord Jesus** and **Mother Mary** for healing my sister and restoring her to good health and giving her a good place to stay; for healing my husband of his illness and restoring his health and for many other favours received. Praise and thank you **Jesus** and **Mother Mary**.

*SCN*  
My sincere thanks to our **Mother Mary** who blessed my wife and revealed all tests negative. I will always continue to pray to **Mary Help of Christians**.

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER AUGUST 2019

#### The Maritime World

*We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.*

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

Thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Anthony for the gift of a job and various other favours received.

*Melissa Fernandes, Mumbai*

Grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Theresa of Calcutta for favours received.

*Pinto*

I must relate the long awaited change in our family. My daughter kept aloof from the family for many years. Today, she shares with us love, reconciliation and devoted service. I am grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for this favour.

*Maria Olivia Filomena Pinto e Gonsalves, Recife, Brazil*

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and all the saints for favours granted.

*Mrs. Mabel Lobo*

**THANKS TO DEAR  
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



My grateful thanks to Mother Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for granting me the gift of baby Mireya to my daughter and son-in-law and also for the gift of baba Aziel to my son and daughter-in-law. Continue to protect and shower your abundant blessings on us and keep us in your loving care.

*M. D'Costa, Goa*

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery and gift of a healthy baby girl to my daughter, Sharon.

*Philomena Rodrigues, Mumbai*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio and all the angels and saints for all the blessings and graces bestowed on our family. Thank you in a special way for the success in securing a PR in Canada for my son. Continue to shower your blessings on us and keep us in your care.

*P. Mendes*

My grateful and sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the numerous blessings bestowed on my family and especially my granddaughter and grandson. Please continue to bless them with good health and protect them from all evil always.

*A Devotee*

Thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my son with a good partner in life, her name is Ashu Xavier from Dubai. Do bless them with children and good health and happiness always.

*Beatrice Joy, Kerala*

**THE QUILT WITH HOLES**

**I** knelt along with other souls on Judgment day as I faced my Maker.

Before each of us laid our lives like the squares of a quilt in many piles; an angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into the tapestry that was our life. But as my angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labelled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I was faced with in everyday life. I saw hardships that I endured, which were the largest holes of all.

I glanced around me. Nobody else had such squares. Other than a tiny hole here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich colour and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened.

My angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air.

Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth.

The others rose; each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been. My angel looked upon me and nodded for me to rise.

My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness and wealth, and false accusations that took from me my world, as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit, only to somehow muster the

strength to pick up and begin again. I spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance in my life. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully, each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me.

And now, I had to face the truth. My life was what it was, and I had to accept it for what it was.

I rose and slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with wide eyes.

Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image, the face of Christ.

Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, *'Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you.'*

May all our quilts be threadbare and worn, allowing Christ to shine through! God determines who walks into your life...it's up to you to decide who you let walk away, who you let stay and who you refuse to let go.

I need this back. If you'll do this for me, I'll do it for you. When there is nothing left but God that is when you find out that God is all you need. *Roy Lessin* □

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### **MARY WAS THERE**

On the morning of May 1, 2019, my wife fainted. She recovered after some time. I phoned my daughter and she came to us in the evening after her office work. Over the next few days and weeks, after consultation with doctors, various tests were done with the necessary medication. The tests revealed a small clot. After some time and with the help of physiotherapy, she is now well and walks about on her own. She (and we) were afraid she would be bedridden!!! We pray the Rosary daily and also recite the 3 Hail Marys. Jesus and Mother Mary have saved my wife and worked a miracle. We are ever grateful to them for their mercy and the grace of a recovery.

*A Devotee, Chennai*

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

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

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