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

**From The Editor's Desk**

*THE JOURNEY*

When the hobbit Bilbo Baggins is in the middle of a particularly difficult time he comments: 'You know you are having an adventure if, in the middle of it, you wish you were home by the fire.' The homespun wisdom of the hobbit sums up the strange pull in human nature - we want to go roaming but we also want the security of home.

From the earliest days of humanity, the hunting-gathering tribes have been in conflict with the settled farmers. The nomads had the advantages of freedom, exploration and discovery but had to live with insecurity, uncertainty and fear. On the other hand, the settlers enjoyed a more secure life, but had to put up with boredom, dull routine and fear of the outside world.

A journey or quest became the way for settled folk to reach out in exploration. Throughout the history of literature, from Ulysses and Lancelot to Bilbo Baggins and his hobbit friends, settlers sometimes had to set off on a quest or crusade to find treasure, conquer evil or discover meaning for their lives. Within most religious traditions, the journey or quest took the form of a pilgrimage.

It reminds the traveller of the tension between settled-security and adventure, and that the spiritual life is a constant journey. It should also be a journey towards the unknown regions of the heart.

The Jews say of their ancestor Abraham, 'My father was a wandering Aramean.' Their traditional phrase shows how important it is to the story of salvation that the heroes of faith are also nomadic people. The story of pilgrimage begins when Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden. From then on the human race will forever be restless - in search of their final home and the harmony which their sin destroyed...and so on, (as they say) until the end of time.

So, when I feel settled into a secure job or home, it is easy to want the excitement of travel, and when we are going through a time of insecurity it is natural to look for the settled place. But if we can see our circumstances with sacramental eyes, we become aware that the two extremes of settled-security and travel are within us always.

Though we may seem settled in our homes, jobs and material security, underneath life is still fragile and we are always moving on. Likewise, if we are going through a time of insecurity, by keeping faith we will see that 'underneath are the everlasting arms' and that in Christ we have a solid rock on which to rest.

A pilgrimage therefore, to be worth its name - ought to have a bit of adventure. So too, every life of faith needs its element of risk. Someone has said, 'It doesn't matter if religion is a crutch, just so long as it isn't a cushion.' So, pilgrims down through the Scriptures remind us to keep moving on in faith. Like the Hebrews in the desert we are never to put our tent stakes down too deep. Jesus' homelessness reminds us that God's people are always a pilgrim people - forever called to keep travelling forward in hope to God's promised land.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## IT'S A STORY OF PASSION

by Don Giampaolo Dianin

*The Apostolic Exhortation - "Amoris Laetitia - The Joy of Love" highlights a completely new way - the covenant that unites the Church and the family in everyday life*

**P**ope Francis' post-synodal Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia* (AL), not only confirms the Church's long-standing interest in marriage and the family, but also shapes a new alliance between the Church and the family.

The theologian Pierangelo

Sequeri has commented on this insight in enlightening words, speaking of an intense and passionate bond: "The theme of the Church's concern" here he appears to be definitively clear, "is not a metaphysical ideal that does not know the fatigue and uncertainties of history in which the family is sought and built, can



*"The joy of love lived in the family is also the jubilation of the Church" (Amoris Laetitia 1) and this is not just a "declaration," but the celebration of a connection, of a "being together" of Church and family, of their full and mutual complicity for what concerns the Kingdom of God.*

be lost and can find itself again. Taking charge of the family, its life and its vicissitudes, making the alliance between Church and family evident, is not a gesture of condescension. It is a story of passion, not just compassion." (*Osservatore Romano*, 13 April 2016). And Bishop Paglia said: "Marriage is indissoluble, but the Church's bond with the sons and daughters of God is even more so." (*Avvenire*, 10 April 2016).

The alliance between the Church and the family is reformulated by rethinking the priorities, taking care of the style, starting from reality, and indicating a goal that must drive people to walk, supported by the loving care of the Christian community.

We also find a new awareness that leads the Church to look at the family with a more realistic gaze, especially when dealing with the sacrament of marriage. We know that the reference to the bond between Christ and the Church is a cornerstone of the theology of marriage. The spouses, united in the sacrament, are the sign that refers to the bond of love between Christ and his Church; they are its revelation, memorial and fulfilment, as St John Paul II has repeatedly reminded us. Pope Francis takes up this analogy with balance and marked distinction: "There is no need to lay upon two limited persons the tremendous burden of having to reproduce perfectly the union existing between Christ and his Church for, marriage as a sign entails "a dynamic

process...., one which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God" (AL 122).

It seems to us that this is a change of perspective: not the deduction of spousal action from an ideal dropped from above, which could frighten the spouses, but a starting point from below to walk along the whole of life making that gift of God grow, which at the beginning has only the traits of a seed to be cultivated. There is no denying the profound meaning of the sacrament, but Pope Francis makes it more "liveable" if one can say so; even those who feel their fragility, the difficulty of loving each other and the weight of many small conflicts can rejoice because being a sign of the love of Jesus is a journey and a path that never ends.

Pope Francis speaks of marriage with realism and gives us a gradualness that does not lower the ideal and is not afraid to recall the horizon that lies before the spouses: "These and similar signs show that it is in the very nature of conjugal love to be definitive" (AL 123). It is precisely "an inevitable mixture of enjoyment and struggles, tensions and repose, pain and relief, satisfactions and longings, annoyances and pleasures" (AL 126) that marriage is.

Therefore, the covenant between marriage and the Church is not theoretical, but concrete and possible in everyday life, where the gift of God can grow and become a mature plant. □



**CELEBRATING OUR FUTURE WITH MARY**

*By Chino Biscontin*

*We, children of Mary and the Church, will enter into that glory which we now contemplate in her whom God willed as the Mother of Love. This feast is a foretaste of our future*

**A**s I write this, the media are reporting the painful case of a young woman, abandoned at birth and adopted, who through a television programme was searching for her 'natural, biological' mother. In response, she received an anonymous letter which, among other things, said: 'Luisa, I did not choose to call you that. I didn't even choose to have you, for me you are just the most painful wound I had when I was 18. I was a girl, younger than you are now. I dreamt of everything and hoped for everything, but not the violence I suffered and of which you are the symbol. And I am reminded of the painful memory of a person I met who had just received such a rejection. Between sobs she kept repeating: 'I will never be able to see my mum!'

**The feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven (15 August) assures us that we, will see her.** Jesus on the cross, stripped of everything and soon of his life, gave us the treasure that remained to him, his Mother, who stood there, pierced by the sword prophesied by old Simeon.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII pronounced these solemn words: "Therefore, after having raised supplicating pleas to God once more, and having invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, to the

glory of Almighty God, who has poured out his special benevolence on the Virgin Mary to the honour of his Son, the immortal King of the ages and victor over sin and death, to the greater glory of his august Mother and to the joy and exultation of the whole Church, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and of Ourselves, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a dogma revealed by God that the immaculate and ever-virgin Mother of God, Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed into heavenly glory body and soul."

What makes the event of Mary's Assumption unique, after the glorification of the risen Jesus, is that her body did not know corruption in the tomb. It was with that very body that Mary was assumed into heavenly glory. Thus, in the encounter which, through God's mercy, we shall experience in heaven, our eyes will see, transfigured in glory, Mary as she was seen by those who encountered her in her earthly life.

There is a touching aspect of tenderness in the concern of God, and of the Risen Lord, in wanting to safeguard that very body. The Word of God had received his humanity there "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4), in all things

similar to us but without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Similar to us also is the affective relationship of a mother, which is fundamental for a child who has come into the world to perceive its entry into life as entirely good and to welcome it with joyful trust.

In this sense, this feast also represents God's honouring of motherhood, of women who are mothers. They have offered intimate collaboration with the Creator when it came to bringing forth a new human being, as we read in the Book of Psalms: "It is you who formed my being and knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:16); "It is you who took me from the womb, who entrusted me to my mother's breast. At my birth, I was handed over to you; from my mother's womb you are my God" (Ps 22:10-11).

Many years ago, I was visiting a monastery in Savoy, accompanied by a French brother. After some waiting, a door, made solemn by its antiquity, opened. With gentle firmness a monk tried to make it clear to a woman who wanted to enter that this was against the Rule. The woman, with the tone of voice of one who is not only displeased, but also scandalised, replied: "And your Rule prevents

me from entering when I have been consecrated six times?" With my eyes I asked my confrere what she meant. He whispered: "Here we say this, when one has been a mother." I thought this was popular religiosity, but if listened to, it could correct a venerable Rule, but still a rule written by *men*. □

Mary, the Pope says, acknowledges that she is small and exalts the "great things" that the Lord has done for her. She is grateful for the gift of life, she is a virgin yet she becomes pregnant, and Elizabeth, too, who was elderly, is expecting a child. The Pope said, "the Lord works wonders with those who are lowly ..., who give ample space to God in their life", for which Mary praises God. (August 15, 2020)



*Peter Paul Rubens, The Assumption of the Virgin, ca 1616-18 oil on wood, Museum Kunstpalast, Dusseldorf*

## GOOD IN THE EYES OF GOD

by Anastasia Dias

I saw him sitting on the last bench, every single day. I noticed him; looking out of the window or staring blankly at the blackboard. At first, the boys bullied him a lot. But, when they understood that he didn't react or seem to care, they stopped. The girls stared at him as he walked by, whispering about how strange and lonely he was. After a few days, they stopped too. We just got used to him - the lonely boy in our class. No one thought that he would ever amount to anything.

One day, the Principal of our school stepped inside our classroom and grabbed him by the collar. We were all very surprised; since we knew that he would never do anything that deserved punishment. In the days that followed, I never saw him again. There were rumours going around that he hadn't paid his school fees. So, the Principal expelled him from school. No one knew if that was true or not. Within a few months, he was all but forgotten.

Days, weeks, months and years passed. I had just graduated from college and was sitting at a library close to where I lived. I came across a popular magazine. On the front cover, I saw a familiar face - piercing eyes, light brown hair and a

wide smile. I had seen that face before, I was sure. His name was written in bold letters on the cover of the magazine. One glance at it and I knew he was the same boy who was thrown out of school because his single mother didn't have the money to pay his fees. The lonely boy had transformed into a powerful man.

This boy was the founder of a multimillion-dollar company. I let this sink in. I remember teachers and students saying, 'What good can come out of an expulsion.' No one had ever thought much of him, I recalled, just like the shepherd boy. You might have heard the shepherd boy's story. If you haven't, let's reimagine it together.

In a land plagued with constant invasions, there lived a king. He was struggling with depression and crippling anxiety. He called the best of doctors but to no avail. No doctor could help him get out of it. One day, someone recommended the shepherd boy to him. The shepherd boy lived in a small village, the youngest of eight brothers.

When the wisest man in the land went to visit the shepherd boy, his father brought out his seven sons. His older sons were all tall, well-built, strong and handsome. The wise man examined each one of

them and declared that none of them were chosen. The wise man asked their father, 'Are these all your sons?' The father replied that he had one more, the youngest son. He was in the fields, grazing the sheep. After all, could any good thing come out of a lonely shepherd boy's life? Certainly, no one expected him to cure the king of his depression, using his melodious harp. No one expected him to defeat the mightiest enemy in the land with a few stones. Surely, the father never thought his youngest son, David, would one day become king over all the land. Against all odds, the lonely shepherd boy was transformed into one of the greatest rulers and he's remembered even today, as King David.

Hundreds of years later, in a small town, there lived a young man, of the house of David. You would think that his royal bloodline made him a very wealthy person. On the contrary, he was a car-

penter. He didn't enjoy the trade because he knew he was gifted differently. So, he left home to go out into the city. He was very wise and had mastered all the Jewish Scriptures. People flocked around him to hear what he had to say. They loved him because he loved the outcast, giving them hope. This made the Jewish high priests jealous. This man wasn't qualified to preach, they thought to themselves. Yet, people gathered to listen to his message of love, forgiveness and peace. The high priests devised a plan to get rid of him. They eventually crucified him. However, they didn't know that crucifying him wouldn't put a stop to his ever-increasing followers and the propagation of his message.

What good could the death of an innocent carpenter do? The high priests wouldn't have dreamed that two thousand years after His death, He would continue to be a crowd-favourite. They wouldn't know that he continues to transform the lives of billions of people who faithfully follow him.

Nowadays, when people tell me that they're sad or hurting or in pain, I smile. They question me, 'What good can come out of our misery?' I don't say anything because I know that sooner or later, they will get an answer to this question. One day, they will witness their misery turn into joy, or joy will move past them because they're too busy dwelling on past suffering.

The next time you think that life isn't good, think of that young boy, or think of David. Or simply think of Him. You will know life for what it truly is and, you will experience the joy and goodness that life brings with it. □





## JUAN CARLOS QUIRARTE

*Till recently, rector of the Salesian Work in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico*

*"We are a group that has been working on the northern border for 30 years, committing ourselves to almost the entire border area of both countries, in places of extreme poverty and marginalisation. And a presence that we consider "ethical and at the same time capable of provoking specific and targeted preventive actions".*

### What, would you say, is your calling card?

I am Juan Carlos Quirarte, a Mexican Salesian from the MEG province (Mexico-Guadalajara). I have been a member of the Congregation since 1994 and a priest since 2003. I have completed graduate and post-graduate studies and a doctorate in Social Anthropology. I am about to finish my tenure as rector of the Salesian work in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. I have been working here for seven years. I am forty-three years old and I am happy to be a Salesian. I feel I still have a lot of energy to offer in the service of society.

### Why did you decide to be a Salesian?

Within the Catholic faith, I think that if I had not become a Salesian, I would not have chosen any other religious congregation, let alone become a priest. My encounter with the Salesian world made me aware of my Catholic Christian dimension. I would not have become a priest if I had not embraced the Salesian charism.

I felt I wanted to become a Salesian because I found an affinity with the style of the Congregation: happy, creative,

dynamic, lively, extroverted and willing to take on important challenges with great optimism. I discovered that in the Salesian world I could not only continue to be myself, but that those very characteristics of mine took on a much richer and fuller meaning: to give my best so that as many youngsters as possible could in turn reach their full potential.

### How do you find the Salesian work in Ciudad Juárez?

Ciudad Juárez is a city located in the northern part of Mexico, almost in the middle of the border between the United States and Mexico. Along this great border line, which stretches for about 3600 km, are a concentration of various Mexican cities affected by a considerable variety of migratory flows, in which a particular way of life has gradually formed between two radically different worlds in terms of economy and living habits.

In particular, Ciudad Juárez has been shaped by the various

types of influences coming from both sides of the border throughout its history: the prohibition law prohibiting the sale of alcohol in the United States; the "bracero" agreement concerning the regulation of the work of Mexican workers in the United States and; more recently, the establishment of transnational manufacturing companies (there are currently more than 300), accompanied by disproportionate growth in terms of urban planning and services. Ciudad Juárez is also a city in the desert, experiencing extreme climates, with temperatures reaching 40° C and dropping as low as 10° C.

Living in the city, for those who are marginalised and poor, is complicated. In recent years, in particular due to the systemic and symbolic violence that already existed (lack of facilities and services, together with the presence of common lifestyles and languages that denote radical differences and inequalities), the violence carried out in the context of drug trafficking has been highlighted in greater measure, the main victims of which are often teenagers and young adults, who are particularly at risk of being recruited for drug-dealing and are more likely to become drug users.

The Salesian work in Ciudad Juárez is active in this environment with three large oratories open throughout the day, an office aimed at implementing projects and services for young people in high-risk neighbourhoods and in juvenile prisons. We also follow minors in situations of conflict with the law.

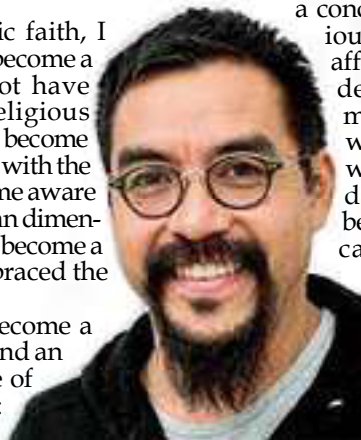
The Ciudad Juárez oratories have prepared themselves to meet the

needs of the context in which they operate, to respond to the challenges that arise and to adapt to the languages of young people: extreme sports, cinema, bars, entrepreneurship, associations and engagement in public policies, etc. One of the most important activities of the Salesian work in this city is networking with other civil society organisations, including businesses and governmental bodies, to try to reduce violence and increase prevention through joint efforts.

### What are your greatest satisfactions?

The greatest joy is to see that in our oratories, in the streets and neighbourhoods where we work, the participation of young people and their families in the activities we propose, is constantly increasing. We are particularly happy to see that we have consolidated well-defined projects of social and pastoral intervention, which we carry out in an articulated manner in the three oratories, in such a way as to determine the actions with the greatest possible impact, with tangible results and which allow us to better evaluate in which areas it is most appropriate to direct our attention in order to continue growing.

We are pleased to see that our oratories are environments where many young people understand that living means commitment, and therefore volunteering is a fundamental aspect of our work. We have over 300 volunteers who, with love and affinity with the Salesian charism, put their time and talents at the service of others. It is a resilient society, which tries to emerge from unfavourable conditions and, despite the difficulties, is able to smile.



It is also a joy to see how many young people, when they come into contact with the work of the Salesians, manage to find alternatives and opportunities to break out of a spiral of violence, to find a different direction and a different way of living. At times it seems that destiny points some young people towards an almost definitive path towards delinquency or marginalisation, but suddenly these same young people not only move towards their personal fulfilment, but above all become agents of human promotion.

### Impressions about Salesians in this area

The society of Ciudad Juárez has great respect and admiration for the Salesian work, recognising its work, sharing it and various institutions offer their support; government officials, businessmen and even members of the University support it.

The local Church has been very open over the past twenty-seven years, since the first Salesians arrived. We are seen as intrepid,

creative, willing to be with young people who need attention the most, capable of hard work. Perhaps one of the most recognised and appreciated aspects in the city is our commitment to working with people and environments that others would not dare to approach.

### The future of the Congregation in Mexico

We Salesians who live in Mexico find ourselves in a situation where subjective, symbolic and systemic violence particularly affect our young people, and for this reason we are beginning to direct many of our actions in the various works and areas of service to help minors in situations of conflict with the law.

The theme of social reintegration is part of our short-term programmes. We intend to share models that lead to a process of authentic accompaniment for young people, so that they can emerge from a spiral of violence and find the necessary and sufficient conditions for a dignified life as good and honest citizens.

We are a province that has been working on the northern border for thirty years, committing ourselves to almost the entire border area of both countries, in places of extreme poverty and marginalisation. It is a presence that we consider prophetic and at the same time capable of provoking specific and targeted preventive actions. □



# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## ST. JOSEPH CALASANZ (AUGUST 25)

by Ian Pinto, sdb

**D**on Bosco is known the world over for being an educator of the poor. In his name there are so many educational and other institutions that offer young people an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to earn a living and make a life. But Don Bosco wasn't the only the person to do such work and he definitely wasn't the first.

The saint of this month was a saint like Don Bosco in as much as he devoted his life to educating the poor but he lived nearly 250 years before Don Bosco! Joseph Calasanz was born in 1557 at the castle of Calasanz near Peralta De La Sal in the Kingdom of Aragon in Spain on September 11. He was the youngest of eight children born to Pedro de Calasanz y de Mur and Maria Gaston y de Sala.

Despite the number of children, the Calasanz family was never wanting. Their wealth assured that they had a comfortable life and that they were able to educate their children. The turning point in Joseph's life came when in 1569, he was sent for classical studies to a college in Estadilla that was run by the friars of the



Trinitarian Order. He was at the crucial phase of teenage when he went there. As teenagers do, he dreamt of a future for himself; a future where he would do much and gain much but the motivation wasn't to make money - Joseph at the tender age of 14, decided that he would become a priest! Sadly, his parents didn't support his decision. They had pinned their hopes on his becoming a successful gentleman who would take over the family estate and provide



for them in their old age. But Joseph had other plans. His parents' disapproval did not deter him from what he was convinced was God's will for him.

### VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Once he had completed his elementary education, Joseph began studying to become a priest. To this end, he took up the study of philosophy and law at the University of Lleida and graduated with honours. Thereafter, he began a study of theology at the University of Valencia.

He was a good student and a good learner all his life. As a young boy, he became fascinated with knowledge. As he grew, he began to realize that education opens up a person to the world just as it opens up doors in the world to a person. Education is that instrument which enables a person to make sense of the things they see around him. In a plant one is introduced to the world of plants and how they function, one can appreciate the beauty and the significance of that plant while admiring the creative genius of God in designing it in that way.

It's likely that Joseph's love for knowledge led him to discover his vocation. The example of the friars at his school might only have been the catalyst to spur him to pursue a vocation to the priesthood. It seems this way because Joseph's life was dedicated to imparting education and the inspiration as well as the driving force behind his mission was his vocation.

In 1582, Joseph fell seriously sick. It was probably the stress of his father's insistence coupled with the loss of his mother and brother that brought him to death's door. The doctors couldn't

treat his illness and he grew progressively worse. At one moment, he supposedly said to his father, "Father, if you want me to be well, please, allow me to be a priest." Seeing the sorry state of his son and being seriously worried about his wellbeing, his father gave him his blessing. Joseph's health suddenly began to improve and he was able to complete his theological studies. He was ordained in Sanahuja on 17 December 1583 at the age of 25 by the Bishop of Urgel, Rev. Hugo Ambrosio de Moncada.

As a priest, Joseph's erudition was acknowledged and he was appointed by the Bishop of Albarracin as a theological expert, confessor, synodal examiner and procurator. When the Bishop was transferred to a new diocese at Lleida, Calasanz went with him. It was while he was here that he came up with his first concrete intervention: a foundation that distributed food to the poor.

Joseph returned to his hometown when his father was dying. While he was there, the Bishop of Urgel appointed him as vicar general for the district of Tremp. Joseph didn't serve there for long. His heart was not at peace. He relinquished most of his family inheritance, resigned his post and set out for Rome. On his way there, he stopped at Barcelona to engage in some higher studies. He completed a Doctorate in Theology and Canon Law before resuming his journey.

Biographers say that Joseph's plan in going to Rome was to pursue a career in academics. To this end, his erudition and recent qualification would serve as undeniable proof of his capacities. But things didn't work out as he wan-

ted. His ambition had brought him to Rome but God hadn't opened any doors for him. Joseph began to think that God didn't want him to be a great academician. He didn't allow himself to get frustrated; instead of idling away his time, waiting for an opportunity to come knocking, he volunteered at several Christian associations that were dedicated to works of mercy among the pilgrims, care for the sick, visiting of prisoners, looking after the poor and teaching children. He immersed himself in these apostolic activities and soon put behind him the idea of becoming an academic success. His happiness was in the education for the poor.

### THE PIARISTS ARE BORN

One day in 1597, he visited the parish of Trastevere which was situated in a poor neighbourhood of Rome. In the sacristy, he found the parish priest combining catechism lessons with regular education for the poor. They were taught free of charge. This struck Joseph. Something within him was triggered and he felt that it wasn't enough to provide religious education to the young especially the poor but that they also needed the opportunity to get qualified so that they can improve their situation.

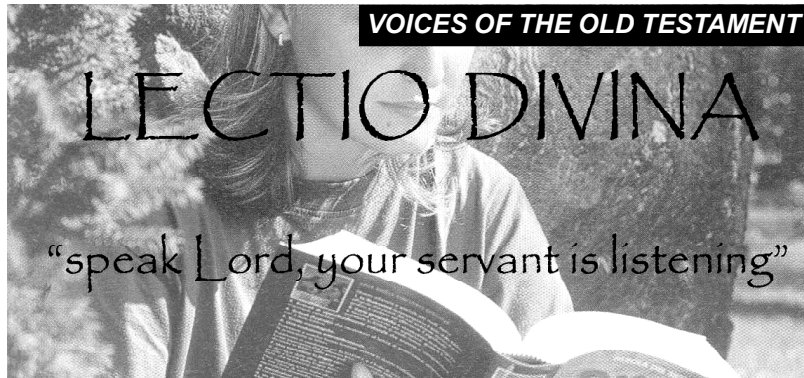
There was born the idea to found a congregation that would be dedicated to educating the poor for free. Of course, it wasn't till much later, 1617 to be precise, that this congregation which was called the Pauline Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools or Piarists was canonically instituted.

They were known to be the

pioneers of free public schooling in Europe! Joseph beautifully combined his love for education with a strong love for God. His method of education was strongly influenced by the Gospel and consequently built on the foundation of love. He firmly believed that "if from the very earliest years, a child is instructed in both religion and letters, it can be reasonably hoped that his life will be happy." Joseph wanted his congregation to be fully dedicated to the education of the poor and hence, in addition to the three recognized evangelical counsels or vows that all religious are supposed to make: Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, he added a fourth - total and lifelong dedication to the education of youth.

Joseph's commitment to the education of the poor challenged the strong class system that existed in European society. Hence, he faced plenty of challenges. But he was not deterred. He knew he was doing God's will. Hadn't Jesus himself said, "*Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of heaven belongs*"? (Mt 19:14)

The holiness of Joseph Calasanz was borne witness to by his students, confreres and fellow teachers. He was canonized by Pope Clement XIII in 1767. In 1948, Pope Pius XII declared him the *Universal Patron of all Christian popular schools in the world*. His heart and tongue are preserved incorrupt in the Piarist motherhouse in Rome. It is as if, God wished to prove that Joseph had a heart that really loved God and the poor and a tongue that was the instrument that shared that love with all. □



## TRUE WISDOM

by Carlo Broccardo

*It is the fruit of daily work, of the effort of those who, day after day, try to understand what steps they need to take; it is the fruit of the trials and errors of those who, little by little, build the house of their lives.*

We have been reading the Old Testament since December 2013. One passage per month, taking our cue from the Sunday liturgy, we are approaching this immense world: there are 46 books in all, that is, thousands of pages. We will never manage to read it all, but I would like us to be able to touch all 46 books that make up the Old Testament at least once. We have not yet read anything, for example, of the book of Proverbs. Even though we don't have this reading for Sunday this year, let us seize the opportunity to pick up our Bibles and dip into these verses from the book of Proverbs for Sunday 15 August (if it was not the Solemnity of the Assumption. - Pr. 9, 1-6)

Proverbs is a curious book. It is a collection of proverbs, in other words, "short, well-constructed sayings or sentences, sometimes seasoned with wit, easy to memorise, summarising experience or observation" (Marcello Milani). Page after page, the book of Proverbs offers us little reflections on all aspects of life, from family to business, passing through all the virtues or vices; for each thing a useful suggestion, often (though not always) said in the form of a maxim or

arising experience or observation" (Marcello Milani). Page after page, the book of Proverbs offers us little reflections on all aspects of life, from family to business, passing through all the virtues or vices; for each thing a useful suggestion, often (though not always) said in the form of a maxim or



proverb.

At the end of the first part of the book, the author has inserted a break in which he summarises all the advice he has given so far; he presents wisdom and folly by imagining them as two women preparing a banquet and inviting men to sit at the table. The passage that we would have heard in the Sunday liturgy stops halfway through, describing only wisdom (Pr. 9:16); here we take the liberty of extending it a little to take a look at its rival, folly (Pr 9:1318). Indeed, looking at them side by side, we will immediately notice the differences and will more easily understand what true wisdom is, according to the book of Proverbs.

Wisdom, to begin with, prepares everything well. She does seven things: she builds her house, she carves her pillars, she kills her cattle, she prepares her wine, she sets her table, she sends her handmaidens to call her guests, she personally invites the foolhardy (i.e. all those who need to learn from her). Seven in the Bible is a number that signifies fullness, perfection; Wisdom has done all things well: she dwells in a house with seven pillars and performs seven deeds. Folly, on the other hand, is content to sit outside at the door of the house and wait for something to happen, for someone to pass by; she is restless: frets a lot, but in fact does not move a finger.

Wisdom is industrious; note the repetition of the adjective "his"/"her": everything she does or offers is the fruit of her labour. Folly, on the other hand, has nothing of her own to offer; she invites people to drink stealthy waters

and eat bread taken in secret: she has not taken the trouble to prepare her wine to drink, her food to eat.

Wisdom goes in search of those who need her: she is like a noble woman who "has sent her handmaidens to proclaim on the highest parts of the city: "Let the ignorant come here." Folly, on the other hand, waits; like a prostitute outside the door of her house, waiting to lure a client (as was the case in the ancient world); or like a dangerous animal lurking, waiting to attack an unsuspecting passer-by.

I am thinking of young people who are wondering about their future; I am thinking of the many who are uncertain and those who are not starting out on the journey because they are not sure they will be able to complete it. But I am also thinking of us adults, who amidst a thousand doubts try to make the right choices for our families and our communities; of us who sometimes have to make decisions even if we do not have everything clear. Do not trust those who offer you shortcuts, says the book of Proverbs; do not believe those who always have the solution in their pockets. True wisdom is the fruit of daily work, of the effort of those who day after day try to understand what steps to take; it is the fruit of the attempts (sometimes even mistakes) of those who little by little build the house of their lives. "Those who do not make decisions let life pass them by," said Cardinal Martini in his *Night Conversations in Jerusalem*; "those who have courage risk making mistakes. But the most important thing is that only the bold change the world and make it a better place." □



# Quiet Spaces

## A MATTER OF STYLE

*Pope Francis' meditation at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Thursday September 9, 2016*

**E**vangelization is carried out first through witness and then with words, being careful to avoid falling into the temptation of reducing ourselves to officials who stroll around and proselytize. In his homily during the Mass at Santa Marta on Friday morning, Pope Francis relaunched St Paul's "style" of evangelization, his "becoming all things to all men" without seeking personal merit. The Pope also referred to the example of St Peter Claver, a Jesuit missionary who worked among slaves.

Referring to the first reading in the day's liturgy (1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-27) the Pope said: "We too can reflect today upon what it means to evangelize," he said, "because we Christians are called to evangelize, to convey the Gospel, which means bearing witness to Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, you should certainly not boast "of going to evangelize: I am going to do this, I am going to do that," as if evangelizing was like "taking a stroll." This would be "reducing evangelization to a task: I have this task." And "I am speaking about things that happen in parishes around the world," the Pope said, "when a parish priest always has his door closed."

It can also happen, Pope Francis continued, that you meet "lay people who say: 'I teach this catechism class, I do this, this and this...' In doing so, they reduce "what they call evangelization to a task." Perhaps they even boast, saying: "I perform this task, I am a catechist official, I am an official of this, of this or that."

This is precisely "reducing the Gospel to a task or even a source of pride: 'I go and evangelize and I have brought many people to Church.'" In this way, he said, "even proselytizing is boasting." However, "evangelization is not proselytism." It is more: evangelization is never "taking a stroll; reducing the Gospel to a task; proselytizing."

St Paul emphatically repeats what evangelization means, the Pope explained: preaching the Gospel "is not boasting. It is a necessity imposed upon me." Repeating the Apostle's clear words, the Pontiff said: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!"

A reprimand – "Woe to you!" – that reaches those Catholics who think: "I go to Mass, I do this and then nothing more." However, Pope Francis cautioned, "if you say that you are Catholic, that you have been baptized, that you have been confirmed, you must go further, to convey the name of Jesus: this is an obligation!"

Paul's precise indications, the Pope continued, lead us to question what our "style of evangelization" should be. In short, "how can I be sure that I am not taking a stroll, that I am neither proselytizing

nor reducing evangelization to a task? How can I understand what the right style is?"

In practice, Pope Francis explained, it means conducting yourself as if "you are accompanying a child, for example: when we want a child to learn how to speak, the parents do not merely say: 'Speak, read this and speak!'" Rather, they first teach the child how to say "Mommy and Daddy." In doing so, the Pope continued, they "become like children so that the child may grow."

Therefore, the Pope stressed again, "we must do the same with our brother: to go to the situation he is in and if he is sick, to draw near, not to bombard him with arguments; to be near, to assist him, to help him." Therefore, to answer the question about the style one should use to proclaim the Gospel, Pope Francis replied that evangelization is done precisely "with this attitude of mercy: to be all things to all men," with the certainty that "it is the testimony that brings forth the Word."

From this perspective, the Pope also wanted to share a personal confidence: "When I was in Poland, in Krakow, I was having lunch with young people at World Youth Day, and a young man asked me: "Father, what should I say to a friend who is good – he is so good! – but who is an atheist, he does not believe: what should I say to him so that he will believe?" "This," Pope Francis continued, "is a good question, as we all know people who are separated from the Church: what should we tell them?" On that occasion, he recalled, his answer to the young man's question was: "Look, the last thing you need to do is to say something! Begin to act and he will see what you are doing and ask you; and when he asks you, you tell him."

In short, the Pope affirmed, "to evangelize is to give this testimony: I live this way, because I believe in Jesus Christ; I awaken within you the curiosity to ask, 'why do you do these things?'" And the Christian response should be: "Because I believe in Jesus Christ and I preach Jesus Christ and not only with the Word – you must proclaim Him with the Word – but above all with your life." Therefore becoming all things to everyone, evangelizing "where you are, in the state of mind you are in, and the state of growth you have reached."

This is what it means "to evangelize and this is also done freely," the Pope explained. Paul writes: "What then is my reward? Proclaiming the Gospel freely. Why freely? Because we have freely received the Gospel. Grace, salvation, can neither be bought nor sold". Grace is free! "And freely we must give it". We see "this gratuity, this testimony of proclaiming Jesus Christ", the Pope said, "in many men, women, religious, consecrated persons, priests and bishops, who become all things to everyone, freely." □

## THE GIFT OF MORNING

Pierluigi Menato - translated by Ian Douulton sdb

Joe loved Miss Anne. For a fortnight now, this beautiful, slim girl with blond hair, big blue eyes and a heart-shaped mouth had come to illuminate the dark offices of the Anselm Rupert company, as secretary to the director, and for a fortnight now, he, the poor twenty-year-old messenger boy, had been adoring this dream creature with the anxiety and ardour of a first, very sincere love.

In truth, among the disappointed employees and envious colleagues there were whispers that Anne had a crush on the director, but Joe, who had grown up in a strict and healthy country environment, could not believe that this beautiful creature, so fresh, naive and smiling, would fall for a false and dishonest story. Joe did not yet know that naivete and inexperience often go hand in hand with curiosity and the anxiety of life, and that beauty loves to shine in a golden frame.

However, Joe was seriously thinking of marrying Anne. He would take her away from that spoil environment, they would live in the country, on his father's farm, and they would be so happy.

But how was he

to propose to her? In front of Anne, Joe was shy like all lovers are. However, love found its way once again.

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One evening, just before the offices closed, Joe handed Anne a book that was well wrapped in pink paper. With an exclamation of pleasure, the girl opened the package and with a slight grimace of disappointment read the title of the book: *The Gift of Morning*. She leafed through it and set it aside on the desk.

"You must read it, Miss."

"But of course, Joe, I'll read it."

"But... this evening, this very evening..."

Anne looked at him surprised.

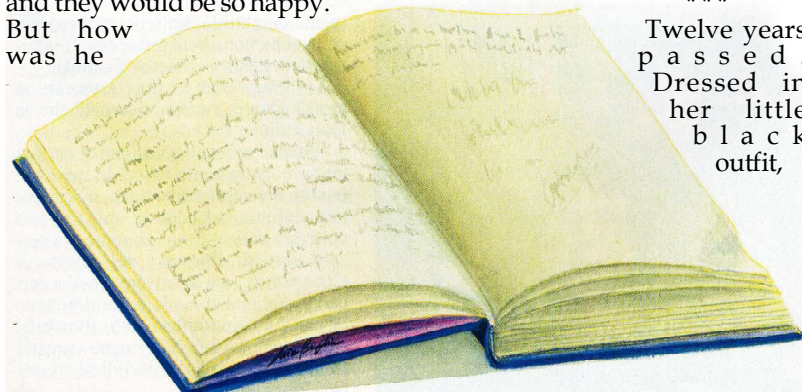
"All right, tonight, if I have time."

She didn't have the time. Just then the director called her. And the beautiful swallow locked herself in the golden cage of her illusions...

With desperate regret, a few days later Joe picked up the book she had forgotten on her desk.

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Twelve years  
p a s s e d .  
Dressed in  
her little  
b l a c k  
outfit,



her blond and straight hair, here and there streaked in silver, her lips, no longer heart-shaped, but thin and pale, her gaunt face, Anne waited with other hopeful companions for hours on end in the anterooms of offices searching for a modest job that would give her a living. She had known disillusionment, abandonment, the abrupt passage from the wealth that was not her own, to sad misery, and had clung to the only salvation that remained to her, her work.

That morning, too, she waited in the lobby of Zino Compressors among a dozen or so girls who chattered softly.

"Are there many of them?" Came the voice of the boss over the intercom.

"About ten, sir." The secretary replied.

"Send me the CVs first."

Andy quickly scanned the handwritten sheets. A signature suddenly drew his attention. The line between his eyebrows darkened and his face seemed to become more serious.

"Let this young lady in first."

At the slight creak of the door opening, he took off his glasses, finished sorting through some papers, then looked up quickly at the figure in the rather old-fashioned black suit.

"Can you come over right away, miss?"

"Certainly, sir?"

"The salary, will it be what we agreed on?"

"Yes, sir."

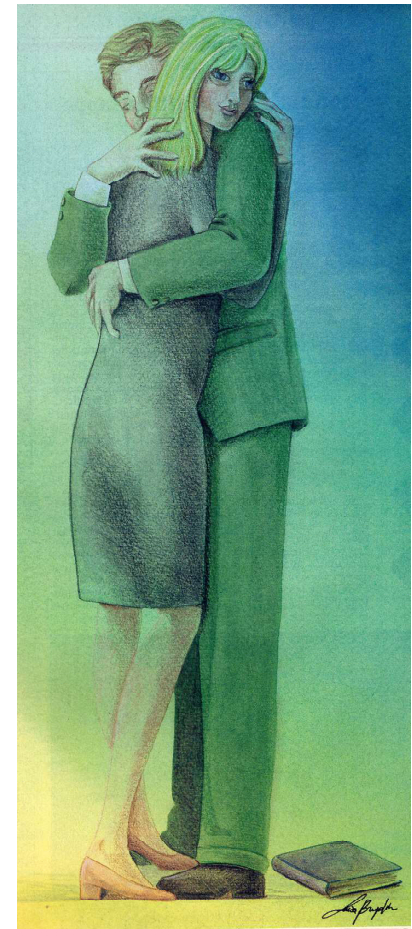
He rang his secretary.

"Raul, you may send away those who are waiting. I have made my choice. The lady will start at once."

The secretary sent the chattering bunch away.

"This is your desk. For now, I would like you to tidy up my library. The books must be catalogued. Start with this one."

Confused but happy about her unexpected good fortune, Anne immediately set to work. The first book. The title had to be written: *The Gift of Morning*. Strange! That title was not new to her. She leafed through it. The pages were yellowing, one was marked in a corner. A dedication. The ink had faded with time. Anne read it and her





previously pale face turned hot with embarrassment. Her name! The sudden, sudden, painful and sweet memory held her in a grip of anguish.

She reread those humble and distant words; that offer of sincere and now vanished love, she lingered in the vision of a little house of her own, she read the name: Joseph Andy! The errand boy of old... That book in that office? She turned quickly. It was him! A single person. Trembling, the book clutched over her heart pounding loudly, Anne took a few steps. Joseph Andy looked up at her, took off his glasses, smiled.

It was him! Anne felt herself at a loss. Something infinitely sweet

and infinitely sad urged her not to flee from that call of love, which had reached her now that she was no more than a tired and worn-out creature, and in vain she tried to hold back the big and bitter tears. "Anne, little Anne... That book was for you, it has waited so long for you, but you see? I knew one day you would read it."

"But I..." "I know, Anne, I know it all, but you can always start life over..."

"Oh, forgive me!" sobbed the lady, as Joe's arms held her at last in a peaceful embrace. The closed book had slipped to the floor, but The Gift of Morning had not been in vain, it repeated its sweet offer of love. □

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### THE PERFUME

The Hindus tell a strange tale. The legend of the roe-buck of the mountains.

Many years ago, there was a roe-buck that constantly smelled the scent of musk in its nostrils. He climbed the green slopes of the mountains and felt wonderful and was captivated by the extremely sweet perfume. He darted through the forest and the scent of the perfume was in the air all around him. The roe-buck couldn't understand where this captivating scent came from.

It was like the melody of a flute that could not be resisted. So, the roe-buck ran from forest to forest in search of the source of that extraordinary and disturbing perfume.

That quest became his obsession. The poor animal did not care for either food or drink, sleep or anything else. He did not know where the lure of the perfume came from but it compelled him to search the ravines, forests and hills until, tired, exhausted and totally distraught he haphazardly slipped off a rock and was mortally injured in a fall. His wounds were painful and deep. The roe-buck licked his bleeding chest and, at that moment discovered the most incredible thing. The perfume, that perfume that had so captivated him, was right there, attached to his body, in a special "sack" containing musk that all roe-buck of his species have. The poor animal took a deep breath, but it was too late...

*"Late have I loved you, O beauty, so ancient yet so new, too late have I loved you. You were within me, but I was without and without beauty and I was yearning towards those beauties that you made and which, without you, could not exist. You are always within me, but I was not with you."* (St. Augustine)

(From: The Rose is Important - by Bruno Ferrero, sdb)

## GO OUT...LOOK AT THE SKY?

by Germano Bertin

Looking up sometimes, you're speechless. Astonishment, a sigh, a sense of surprise...silence. The most effective words are often those that aren't said, those read in gestures, written in signs, delivered in symbols, where we learn to write what is not evident, to the point of making what is not immediately readable, sayable, writable, bounce back into the daily flow of days.

To the point of making everything a "sacrament," that is, a mundane sign that delivers a message that is "other," not ordinary, but which speaks more than what is audible, that goes beyond what appears to be attainable, which satiates more than hunger and thirst for life.

We can never get used to beauty, to what is great, to what we experience as gratifying, to what is good.

One wants more, would like more and still more.

Time is too short when it is full of meaning, harmonies, understandings that nourish the heart and mind, while looking for wide and enveloping spaces to rest and find new energy to start again after each new dawn, the daughter of a sunset that generated the night.

And, in the night, savouring the unique and different names of the thousands of stars that crowd incredible nights, surprised at high altitudes, or caressed in the irresistible rustle of the lapping of the waves on a friendly beach.

Breathe deeply, and that is enough. And in that silence, everything comes back.

In the darkness of the night, shrouded in silence, every star has a name, the name that has been entrusted to each one so that it may

guard the secret of stories, faces and dreams, that only boundless spaces can contain.

The night is full of voices that illuminate, and lights that speak or better, whisper words that time and silence know best how to make resound, until they bring light to the soul that seeks, that asks that questions and begs to be heard, paid attention to, welcomed and acknowledged.

Like a book that has never been finished, it is the night and the stars that inhabit its most remote rooms, but not alien to those who hold the key to its access.

"Can you hear me?" - sings Barbra Streisand in the film 'Yentl,' in a poignant dialogue with the father she seeks among the stars, together with her God - "Can you see me? Can you find me in the night? Can you help me not to be afraid?" Looking at the heavens, I seem to see a million eyes. Who are you? Where are you now... and yesterday?"

The starry sky is a mirror that dresses the long summer nights we're used to inhabiting and observing. A mirror that gives back to the questioning onlooker the story of those glances, those stories, those hearts that crowd our own heart.

*"...look at the stars often. When you feel pain in your soul, look at the stars,"* wrote the Russian philosopher Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) in a letter to his children, *"or at the blue of the sky. When you feel sad, or when an inner storm overwhelms you, go outside and stand face to face with the sky. Your soul will then be soothed. Don't be sad...be joyful and courageous."* □

## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 21

by Michele Molineris

### 104. Don Bosco's Humility (1861)

"On 4 May 1861, Fr Ruffino wrote; a gentleman came to speak to Don Bosco, asking that a youngster be accepted into the house. In his conversation he made it clear that he believed that the Oratory had been founded by an illustrious bishop, to whom Turin naturally owed gratitude for such a good deed. Then he concluded that he had come to recommend his protégé to Don Bosco, hoping that he would have the necessary faculties to accept youngsters.

Don Bosco listened to him serenely, in no way tried to deceive him and left him with that conviction. So, he treated the matter as if he really had to depend on and report to his superior. And that person left satisfied, admiring the welcome he received from Don Bosco.

Not everyone's self-respect would have allowed him to remain silent in such circumstances; but in Don Bosco we have seen countless examples of such virtue. And it was not possible for it to be otherwise in a priest constantly preoccupied with the thought of death and eternity. As he went to sleep each night, he always prayed Psalm 50 - the *Miserere* (cf. *E.B.M., VI, 531ff.*).

### 105. The multiplication of the hosts (1861)

On the evening of 10 June 1861, after the prayers, Don Bosco stopped to talk to a group of Salesians. Having first spoken about visions

he said: "Regarding the Sacred Host I have never been favoured with perceptible signs or apparitions; except for the multiplication of the sacred species. That was a truly beautiful and surprising event!"

"Is this fact really certain?" asked someone.

"Yes, certainly. One morning, since I was the only priest in the house, as was the custom in those days (1854), I celebrated Mass for the community. Afterwards I began to distribute the Holy Communion to the youngsters. I had in my pyx a few particles, perhaps 10 or 12. At first, as there were only a few of them present, I did not think of breaking them; but when the first ones had communicated, others came, and then others, so that three or four times there was a succession of young people at the altar rails. There must have been at least fifty communions. I wanted to return to the altar after the first ones had approached the altar, to break the remaining particles; but as I suddenly thought I saw the same quantity in the pyx, I continued to distribute communion. So, I continued, without noticing that the number of particles was diminishing. When I reached at the last one to receive communion, to my extreme surprise I found myself with only one particle in the pyx and with this I received communion. And he repeated: "Without knowing how, I had seen those hosts multiplying."

Fr John Bonetti, at this point in his account, wrote: "Don Bosco's last words show two things: 1<sup>st</sup> that the fact of the multiplication of the consecrated hosts was certainly a fact; 2<sup>nd</sup> that from the account of this which he repeated

at other times to his confidants, and from certain expressions of his, we must also deduce that he had received, apart from this, other favours of this kind, which remained unknown" (*M.B., VI, 970*).

### 106. Public Confession (1861)

Fr. Belmonte in 1861 witnessed the following fact. The young Michael Riccardino di Giovanni and Teresa Riccardino of Romano Canavese, aged 13, who had entered the Oratory four months earlier, had never wanted to go to confession.

When, going down the stairs, he saw Don Bosco coming up, he immediately turned back and, running down the corridor, jumped down another staircase. Not once was Don Bosco able to meet him, although he did everything he could to talk to him, even putting good companions at his side to guide him.

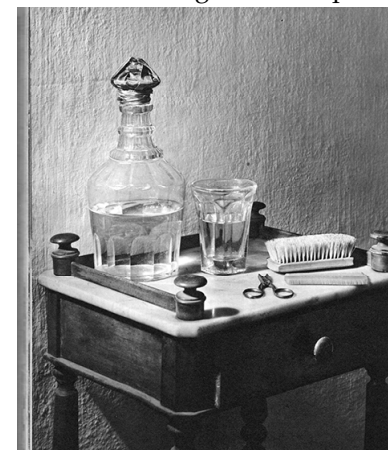
But on Christmas Eve, Riccardino felt rather severely and physically sick and during the night, while he was delirious, he began to shout that he had demons around his bed, that they were seizing him and dragging him away. His frightening cries could be heard all over the house. Then, in an ever-deepening terror, he began to recount something most abominable.

The assistant, cleric Joseph Bongiovanni, ordered all the youngsters in the dormitory, who had been awakened by these cries, to cover their ears. In the morning the fever had calmed down a little, but Riccardino, having learned what revelations he had made that night in delirium, as sick as he was, fled home and was never seen again, nor was he heard from again (cf. *EBM., VI, 630*).

### 107. Devilish Vexations (1862)

Between 1862 and 1864, Don Bosco was persistently visited by the devil, who sometimes managed to make him spend entire nights without sleep. The immediate consequence of these visits was his diminished resistance to work and a weakness that eventually undermined his whole physique, even though it was constitutionally very healthy. And this was precisely one of the aims of the enemy of good in improvising his nocturnal tirades: to tire him out in the fight against sin, evil and error and, in our case, to make him desist from the intention of strengthening Catholic schools which he had opened in competition with the Waldensian ones in the vicinity of Porta Nuova.

He would set fire to the stove, smash the firewood, pull the blankets from him until he was totally uncovered and, if he tried to put them back on, he would return to the assault with more exasperating obstinacy. Sometimes Don Bosco would light the lamp and



Don Bosco's bedside table  
at the time of his death

then the harassment would cease momentarily, to resume as soon as the flame had ceased to illuminate the room. Sometimes he was startled by a loud cry or the door of the room would suddenly open and a monster of repugnant features would appear, and moreover, threatening to pounce on him.

On 12 February 1862, he had just gone to bed when he felt himself shaking so violently that he thought he had lost at least the integrity of his spine. He did not want to disturb anyone and tried to go to sleep, sinking his shoulders into the mattress. It wasn't long before he felt an unbearable weight on his stomach, from which he tried to free himself with a very strong fist, without however meeting anyone in his path.

Alarmed at the situation that had arisen and hoping to get to the bottom of it, Fr Angelo Savio decided, after much hesitation, to spend a night in the saint's antechamber. He had never done that! Around midnight he was awakened (if he had managed to get to sleep at all) by such a violent noise that he beat a retreat, without waiting for confirmation of what had happened. The same happened to others. Only late then next afternoon did he manage to recover from the fright caused by the tremors. A few days later Don Bosco was barely asleep when he felt his forehead caressed by the barbs of a brush which, among other things, had absolutely no fragrance of roses; on the contrary, everything made one suspect that it was the stinking entrails of some not exactly farmyard animal.

For all these reasons, and for others that prudence advised him

to keep quiet about, he decided to ask the bishop of Ivrea, his good friend, for hospitality for some time. He went to Ivrea and was a very welcome guest in the bishop's palace. For the first few days, things went well, but on the very night when he thought he had made the evil spirit lose its tracks, he was visited in his room by a monster so horrible and so out of the ordinary that he let loose a cry so powerful that it caused alarm throughout the bishop's palace. When he was rescued, he excused himself by saying that it was only the uncontrolled effect of a dream.

Yet he never wanted to resign himself to asking the Lord to free him from these obsessions, because he suspected (and, in the respite he had at Ivrea, he was persuaded) that, if he did not torment him, the devil would wreak much more havoc among the youngsters of the Oratory. This he confided one day to the cleric Provera, whom he advised to pray for that intention. And he stayed in that putrid company for two long years. Those were the years in which he crystallized the idea of erecting right there his beautiful shrine to the Virgin Help of Christians. So, one evening in 1865, just after the defeat of that intruder, he told a group of young people who were gathered around him, about the terrible nights that had just ceased to haunt him.

"I'm not afraid of the devil," one boy interrupted.

"Don't say that!" Don Bosco replied with surprising vehemence. "You have no idea what power the devil can wield if God would let him."

"Sure!... If he came my way, I'd grab him by the neck and let him

have it!" insisted the boy, with the naive presumption that came from the chorus of admiration that his confidence had aroused in the group.

"Don't be silly! You'd die of fright the moment you saw him!"

"But I'd make the Sign of the Cross." "That would help for a moment." "Then how did you get rid of him?"

"I found a way of scaring him for a long time to come."

"What was that? The sign of the Cross?" "How about holy water?" "Even that is not enough sometimes." "So, what was your remedy?" "It was..." He stopped and declined to go on further, merely concluding, "This is certain: I would not wish anyone to experience the frightful things I went through. We should all pray to God not to allow our enemy to play such tricks on us."

Certainly, Don Bosco had remembered well the warning of Our Lord, who said that certain demons can only be driven out by prayer and fasting, and he afflicted his body with mortifications. So much so that, in those days, he was seen to reduce his already meagre meals and to prolong his vigil and prayer indefinitely. In this way he had conquered and had found in the night's rest that relief which enabled him to attend during the day to the many occupations to which his immense zeal had subjected him without too much wear and tear on his poor body. (*EBM., VII, 45 ff*).

#### **108. At Lanzo and Chieri at the same time (1862)**

Though he looked alert and cheerful as usual, Don Bosco did not feel at all well during these

days [of July 1852].

On 15 July 1862, Don Bosco left for St. Ignatius above Lanzo where he stayed for the time of the Spiritual Exercises. Here several things happened that are worth recalling.

At the beginning of July, Don Bosco had said that an Oratory boy would die during that month. In fact, on Friday, July 18, while Don Bosco was still at St. Ignatius', eighteen-year-old Bernard Casalegno of Chieri died a saintly death at home. That very day Don Bosco told some Oratory boys who were with him at the retreat house that he had been at Casalegno's bedside at his last moments. Though we knew nothing of this back at the Oratory, Don Bosco had already written to Father Alasonatti of Casalegno's death and asked that prayers be said for him. After Don Bosco's return with Fr Bonetti, he questioned the boys who had been on retreat with him and learned that he had told them of that death but a short while after it occurred. Though it was humanly impossible for Don Bosco to know of it because Chieri is more than twenty-one miles away, we should not be surprised; God, in his goodness, has granted such experiences to our saints. It is all the more probable when we consider how much Casalegno longed to see Don Bosco again before dying and how much he meant to Don Bosco.

We will add that the youth's father, Chevalier Joseph Casalegno, declared to Fr Bartholomew Gaido that Don Bosco, while far away, had publicly announced his son's death at the very moment in which he expired. (*EBM., VII, 133-134*).





## MARY, CONCERNED FOR COMMUNION

by Sr. Antonia Colombo, FMA

**L**ove moves one to service. Mary is a mother who is solicitous in promoting the growth of the life of Jesus in us. She is a collaborator who stimulates resources, making them converge towards the service of communion and joy, as the episode of the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee demonstrates (cf. Jn 2:1-12). The icon of Cana appears in the mysteries of light, which enrich the Rosary.

At Cana the manifestation of Jesus takes place, courtesy of his mother. But there is also the manifestation of Mary: "Do whatever he tells you." This is the only word of Mary addresses to us that the Gospels report. It is therefore almost a spiritual testament. The power of this word is born in Mary from personal experience. In her, believing and obeying are constant attitudes of life. She became a mother because she believed the word of the angel. An expert in trusting the Word, she can now help others to do the same.

The episode of the wedding celebrated at Cana gives me the opportunity to underline some dimensions that I consider fundamental to the life of every Christian.

### Discernment.

With an intelligent heart, Mary sees the needs of the couple before they express their discomfort. Mary's vision is that of a glance that can immediately focus on what is there before her and what is lacking at the table of the bride and groom: "They have no more wine," she says to Jesus. The contemplative spirit, which characterizes Mary's whole life, enables her to penetrate, to discern, that is to say, to create a synthesis by remembering, comparing elements, events, intuitions, experiences.

Discernment highlights the mystical dimension of each of our lives. It requires a willingness to allow ourselves to be converted by the Spirit in order to be enabled by him to make a credible reading of



reality, allowing us to make coherent evangelical choices.

In the face of today's complexity, what credible witness can we offer and what spaces are open to us for the mission of evangelizing by educating? We need, like Mary, to turn to Jesus with an imploring and trusting face to indicate the lack of wine.

### Coordination for communion.

Mary does not directly provide for the lack of wine; she simply highlights it with a discreet and essential intercession. She asks nothing: she hands herself over totally to Jesus with the trust and hope that flow from her prayerful silence. Faced with her Son's enigmatic reply, she does not try to understand at all costs, but is certain that he will intervene in some way. At the school of Jesus, Mary learned to trust in God's will. Jesus *is* the way; Mary *shows* the way. She knows the way from personal experience, which is why she can help others to follow it by getting them involved. She coordinates. Everyone must contribute to the feast of life by pooling their services: filling the jars, taking them to the steward. Jesus will take care of the transformation of the water into wine.

Everyone in the church community has something to offer and to integrate with the diverse contribution of different vocations. Where Mary is, there is communion, making the most of resources and helping to coordinate them to generate hope.

### Service to life and joy.

The empty amphorae set aside are reminded of their function as bearers of water, of a vocation of

service. Every vocation is always, mysteriously, a vocation to take part in a personal way, even a costly and painful one, in the ministry of salvation. A vocation is always, in fact, a call to serve and culminates in the discovery of the new name, thought up by God for each person, in which his or her true identity is enclosed. But it is necessary to overcome the temptations of individualism, to discover service as a manifestation of freedom and a horizon for interpersonal relationships inspired by reciprocity, to nourish the hope of a new world in which an authentic culture of life as vocation has its place.

In Mary's school we understand true humanism and the importance of genuine relationships for the harmonious development of people, even in situations at risk.

The ecclesial community is called to prolong Mary's maternal mission, to be a collaborator among the younger generations in a time of great educational emergency. We will be able to do this if we renew our passion for God and for humanity; if we dare to propose to young people the ideal of communion, which helps to overcome prejudice, mistrust and estrangement; it frees and strengthens resources, making them available for a service to life and joy.

At Cana there was the mother of Jesus. And the miracle took place. Let us ask that today too she may sit with us at table, that she may be present in our communities, at the places of the mission. Then the miracle of the water changed into wine will be renewed: the miracle of communion and solidarity, paths that build new relationships for a world filled with hope and peace. □



**MY VOCATION STORY**

**I MET CHRIST IN THE POOREST OF CHILDREN**

by Fr Roshan Gonsalves, SDB

*“A sense of mission to a man’s soul is as sustaining as food is to the body.”*

**T**he above quote by W.R. Forrester somewhat summarizes my simple Vocation story. As a young boy, I used to accompany my parents to the city and seeing those street children in tattered dirty clothes begging would always melt my heart. As a child, that desire to work for these children, had already been enkindled in me.

Born in a Godfearing family where Sundays and novena masses were so obligatory that sometimes it would cost me my meal if I missed any of them. We are four in the family: my younger sister and me, together with our parents. Being the only son, I received the love and attention of everyone. My dad was a strict disciplinarian and my mom, on the other hand, the most compassionate person I have ever seen. Her outgoing personality to help others is something that still inspires me so much.

The first taste of Religious life I received came through the Canosian nuns who were present in our village. During my First Holy Communion catechism classes I grew very fond of them; their love, joy and community life made a deep impression on me. Later on a Capuchin priest who had come to preach a mission in our parish made an impact on me to the extent that I decided that ‘if ever became a



priest, I would become only missionary priest.’ Even for the local elocution competition my topic was: ‘If I become a priest,’ which was well appreciated by all and I got nicknamed ‘Father’ (priest). When I was in Junior college, one of my friends, who was already in Don Bosco Lonavla introduced me to Fr. Franco Pinto SDB whose friendly and jovial nature at our first meeting itself, made me realize that he was a youth-friendly priest. Within a few months of this meeting, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a birthday card and Vocation camp invitation from him. I decided to join Don Bosco Lonavla, the cradle of almost all the Salesian vocations of the Salesian Province of Mumbai.

In Lonavla, the Salesian spirit

and presence were impressive. The turning point in my life was to come to know Don Bosco closely through sermons, goodnight talks, conferences and books. I fell in love with Don Bosco and his work which was my childhood dream. Through all the ups and downs, breaking and molding I grew more and more in love with Salesian way of life to follow Jesus more closely.

Being aware of my vocation story

Fr. Michael Fernandes, then provincial, sent me to Shelter Don Bosco, a home for street children, after which I was sent to Dominic Savio, Andheri, a home for orphan and semi-orphan children. I am deeply grateful for these wonderful experiences in these places which in turn helped me to grow, appreciate and cherish this precious Salesian vocation that God had gifted me. □

**Love is ...**

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach, when feeling out of sight for the ends of being and ideal Grace. I love thee to the level of everyday's most quiet need, by sun and candle-light. I love thee freely . . . ; I love thee purely . . . I love thee with the passion put to use in my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose with my lost saints, – I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose, shall but love thee better after death.*

With these words, the poet Elizabeth Barrett gives eloquent expression to her love for her future husband, Robert Browning. Many men and women down the years have made these words their own when they struggled to find a way to communicate their deepest feelings to their beloved. But there are older words that compel even greater admiration and awe, for they convey an even greater love: God’s love for God’s beloved humankind. “How do I love thee?” God asks. I love thee as my own beloved son and daughter. I love thee with all my sacred heart. I love thee fully, and as God, I choose to love thee in life, and beyond death and forever.

**The triumph of the Cross** is a triumph of love, and we share in the mighty triumph. Once a little girl asked her father, “Dad, do you love me?” “Of course, I love you!” “How much do you love me?” He opened his arms, stretched them out as far as he could, and said, “I love you that much.” “There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends.” We hold on to these memorable words of Jesus for dear life. We believe we are the friends he died for. The glorious mystery of Easter is that Jesus, stretched out his hands on the cross as wide as he could, and declared in his dying, “I love you this much.” □



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**VATICAN CITY** — As Pope Francis presided over the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, on Good Friday this year, the preacher of the papal household called on bishops and all Catholics to examine their consciences for ways they may be harming the unity of the Catholic Church.

Francis presided over the liturgy April 2 at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica, but as is customary, the preacher of the papal household, *Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa*, gave the homily as the pope and more than two dozen cardinals listened.

*"Fraternity among Catholics is wounded,"* the cardinal said. *"Divisions between churches have torn Christ's tunic to shreds, and worse still, each shredded strip has been cut up into even smaller snippets."*

With only about 150 people present because of COVID-19 restrictions, Cantalamessa clarified that he was speaking *"of the human element of it, because no one will ever be able to tear the true tunic of Christ, his mystical body animated by the Holy Spirit. In God's eyes, the church is 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic' and will remain so until the end of the world."*

God's protection of the Catholic Church, he said, "does not excuse our divisions," but makes them even more worthy of condemnation and should inspire greater efforts to heal the divisions.

*"The most common cause of the bitter divisions among Catholics,"* the 86-year-old cardinal said, *"is not dogma, nor is it the sacraments and ministries — none of the things that by God's singular grace we fully*

*and universally preserve."*

Instead, he said, "the divisions that polarize Catholics stem from political options that grow into ideologies taking priority over religious and ecclesial considerations and leading to complete abandonment of the value and the duty of obedience in the church."

*"This is sin in its primal meaning,"* said Cantalamessa, who was appointed preacher of the papal household in 1980 by St. John Paul II and has served in the role since.

When support for political candidates, parties or policies are given priority over building up the kingdom of God and the unity of his body, the church, it is time for "a serious examination of conscience" and conversion, he said.

*"Fomenting division is the work par excellence of the one whose name is 'diabolos' that is, the divider, the enemy who sows weeds, as Jesus referred to him in the parable" in Matthew's Gospel.*

Catholic bishops and priests "need to be the first to make a serious examination of conscience," the cardinal said.

The Catholic Church is called to be a force for the unity of all Christians, he said, and so Catholics must pray and work for the peace and unity Jesus willed for his disciples.

The liturgy began with Francis, assisted by two monsignors, prostrating himself on the floor of the basilica before the altar.

Just a few hours after the evening liturgy, the pope presided over the Stations of the Cross in St. Peter's Square. □

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

### Preacher's Best Years

A preacher, who shall we say was "humour impaired," attended a conference to help encourage and better equip pastors for their ministry.

Among the speakers were many well known and dynamic speakers. One such boldly approached the pulpit and, gathering the entire crowd's attention said, "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of a woman that wasn't my wife!" The crowd was shocked! He followed up by saying, "And that woman was my mother!"

The crowd burst into laughter and delivered the rest of his talk, which went over quite well.

The next week, the pastor decided he'd give this humour a try, and use that joke in his sermon. As he surely approached the pulpit that sunny Sunday, he tried to re-hear the joke in his head. It suddenly seemed a bit foggy to him.

Getting to the microphone he said loudly, "The greatest years of my life were spent in the arms of another woman that was not my wife!"

The congregation inhaled half the air in the room.

After standing there for almost ten seconds in the stunned silence, trying to recall the second half of the joke, the pastor finally blurted out, "... and I can't remember who she was!"

### Suitor Approval

A good friend of mine warned me that, as my three daughters became old enough to date, I'd disapprove of every young man who took them

out.

But when the time came, I was pleased that my friend's prediction was wrong. Each boy was pleasant and well-mannered.

Talking to my daughter Joanna one day, I said that I liked all the young men she and her sisters brought home.

"You know Dad," she replied, "We don't show you everybody."

### Boarding Drill

At the airport for a business trip, I settled down to wait for the boarding announcement at Gate 35. Then I heard the voice on the public address system saying, "We apologize for the inconvenience, but Delta Flight 570, will board from Gate 41."

So my family picked up our luggage and carried it over to Gate 41. Not even ten minutes later the public address voice told us that Flight 570 would in fact be boarding from Gate 35.

So, again, we gathered our carry-on luggage and returned to the original gate. Just as we were settling down, the public address voice spoke again: "Thank you for participating in Delta's physical fitness programme."

### Suitor Approval

Mr. Gable had a leak in the roof over his dining table, so he called a repairman to take a look at it. "When did you first notice the leak? the repairman inquired.

Mr. Gable scowled. "Last night when it took me two hours to finish my soup." □

## **THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**

*by John Harris OP*

**A** young couple came to see me once because they were discussing getting married. They wanted to marry but the girl had a disabled brother and she was afraid that if she got married, she also would have a child with the same disability as her brother. She spoke lovingly of how her mother cared for him, how she had seen her mother give so much of herself in caring for him. But she said she could never see herself living such a life if one of her children were so disabled.

She also said that she felt terrible for feeling like this. She told me she had spoken about this with an older sister who was shocked by her reaction to their brother. Her sister reminded her of how much love and unity their brother brought to them as a family. This only made the younger girl feel worse. But she knew that until she had worked this out within herself, she could not marry.

I asked her if she had ever spoken with her mother. She said she was afraid to be honest with her mother in case her mother would treat her as her older sister had done and also, she was afraid she might hurt her mother. I finally prevailed on her to approach

her mother.

After a week or so the couple came back to me; this time with definite plans to marry. The girl had spoken with her mother and rather than her mother being annoyed with her she understood and they had spoken openly about the situation.

Her mother had told her that the first time she had seen her brother she was very distressed. In those days there was nothing to tell the mother-to-be how well or unwell her child might be. You discovered it when the baby was born. Her mother told her that she had cried all that first night after the birth.

### **Lord, why did this happen?**

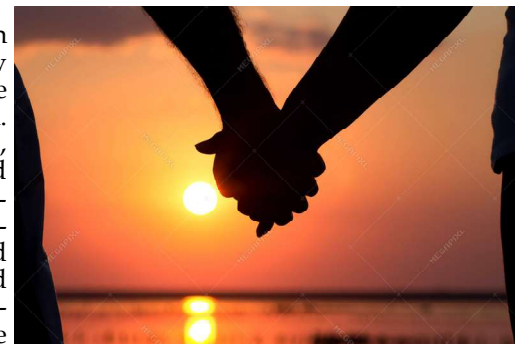
Initially she had asked God why this had happened but eventually she asked God for the grace to help her not only to accept her little child but to love him.



And God had given her this grace and now she was able to say she thanked God for her son. It wasn't always easy, but then she reminded the girl that it wasn't always easy to be her mother either. She shared with her that each child presents their own challenges to a parent. She said in many ways her brother had caused her the least of her worries. But that she loved them all personally.

Why have I told you this long story? But for the fact that it speaks to me in the strongest terms of the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. Because it may be at times easy to have some picture in your mind of God the Father. All of us can picture Jesus from the Gospels. But it can be difficult to have a picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a dove or a flame of fire. It is very hard to relate to, or to have a relationship with such images.

We believe that the true God is the God of love. He is a community of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Within this communion of love the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. He is love. We know that the mark of



the Christian is our ability to love, but we also know that it is not easy to measure up to this mark of Christian love. We are not expected to measure up to it by ourselves because we are given the grace, the gift of the Holy Spirit, to help us. The Holy Spirit is the presence of love in our lives. That is why the gifts of the Holy Spirit are so important. We cannot live as Christians without them.

The mother of the child in the story may not have realised it, but she was able to accept her son and love him because she had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave her a share in his love for her son to aid what was lacking in her love. When Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit, he is giving us the power to love and live as he loves and lives. □

### **POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK**

**AUGUST 2021**

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*Let us pray for the Church, that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.*



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Date of Publication: 1<sup>st</sup> of every month

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

### **ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY**

The life of the Mother of Christ had now come to an end on earth. In her had the law to be fulfilled of which the Apostle Paul proclaimed in his letter to the Corinthians: the law of death overcome by Christ's resurrection. In fact, "Christ was raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who died... and as all die in Adam, so all shall receive life in Christ. But each in his own order" (1 Cor 15:20). In this order Mary was the first. Who, in fact, "belongs to Christ" more than she? And so, it was that at the moment when the law of death was fulfilled in her, vanquished by the resurrection of her Son, "there sprang up again" from Mary's heart the "canticle," which was a canticle of salvation and grace: "the canticle of the assumption into heaven." (*Pope, St. John Paul II*)

**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.

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