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*Just as your Only Begotten Son  
was presented on this day  
in the Temple  
in the substance of our flesh,  
so, by your grace,  
we may be presented to you  
with minds made pure.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
your Son.*

## From The Editor's Desk TODAY, A MEANINGFUL DAY

Our age seems to be an age of meetings and discussions, of comment and criticism. There is no shortage of advisers on how and when the harvest should be reaped but few seem ready to cut the hay. With so much talk and advice in the air, it is easy to become confused or dispirited. This is as true in spiritual matters as in material affairs. Our Lord once said to his apostles: "You know these things, blessed shall you be if you do them."

When are we going to respond to the high calling of our Christian vocation? Tomorrow, next year, when we have more time, when our parish council comes up with their new plan, when we have the harvest gathered and our holidays over?

If we make an effort to begin each morning with a moment of prayer we will help ourselves to live our Christianity rather than talk about it. Such a prayer should focus our attention on the present moment. It should help us to be both single-minded and clear-headed, two qualities very important in our modern world of multiple choices and muddled thinking.

Our Morning Prayer ought to help us to be clear headed because it puts before us simply a clear vision of our Christian purpose in life. We are called **i)** to give glory to God our Father, **ii)** to live our lives in union with Christ his Son, bringing his light and redemptive grace to all things and to all men, **iii)** to work for the betterment of humanity and for the development of the wonderful world given to us. When we make an effort to sincerely spend some time in prayer each morning we become aware of what we should be trying to do with our lives.

This simple spiritual exercise also helps us to be single-minded. It directs our energies to the achievement of our Christian purpose in what we are doing at the present moment. It emphasizes that we don't have to make further plans or await the result of investigations in progress. We begin immediately. We start today. The time is now!

We take our lives at this moment, our family life, our friendships, our work, our pleasures and relaxations, our sufferings and anxieties and breathe into them the spirit of Christ and already we are transforming the world.

We try to do our work as Christ would do it. We try to accept our sufferings as he accepted his. We relish the good and beautiful things in life as he enjoyed the things that made him happy, relaxed and joyful.

When we offer ourselves to and with Christ in the Mass we are really living our Christian vocation. For it is "through him, with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit that all honour and glory is given to God our Almighty Father," as we just try to live every moment of every day in His presence.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## MAKING MARRIAGE WORK

by Jeanette Brimmer

**M**arriage is a journey and just as a hiker leans on a sturdy staff to avoid tumbling when the road is suddenly riddled with obstacles such as tangled weeds, fallen tree trunks and rocky hills, we must lean on God's shoulder to ease us through the sometimes treacherous path of matrimony. Fortunately God has equipped us with a sense of humour, patience perseverance and several other gifts to seize when we are tempted to lose hope. Humour has played a fairly large part in our marriage during particularly difficult times.

On our anniversary one year, my husband announced, "We have been married twenty nine years so we have just one more year left until our divorce!" We were celebrating our anniversary with a romantic, candlelight dinner. "Well, we must make the most of it," I replied while raising my glass for a toast.

"This is to our last happy year together."

You might ask how we could joke about such a serious subject but Jim and I were just doing what comes naturally to us... using humour to deal with an unpleasant topic. In the past few weeks we had learned that several couples we knew casually, and who had been married thirty years, were getting divor-

ced. Jim and I were grateful that our marriage was growing stronger and our love for each other had grown deeper as the years passed by. Since we did not personally know the unhappy couples we could only surmise that their marriages had been on shaky turf before they had finally crumbled.

God has blessed us with a sense of humour to help us cope with both the trivial and anxious aspects of married life. Seeing life's funny side serves as a calmer in our relationship. When our children were little we joked that for several years we felt as familiar with the children's ward at the nearby hospital as we did at home. Our second baby had to be operated on when he was only six weeks old for pyloric stenosis, a condition in which the valve between the stomach and small intestine had become thick with muscle tissue and was blocking liquids necessary for his survival. To our dismay our third child was operated on for

the same condition when he was about eight weeks old. Also our eldest child developed asthma when he was a toddler and as he grew, we often had to take him to the emergency department when a lung infection left him gasping for air. Another son needed his tonsils out and another had to stay in the hospital to treat an infection. The nurses on the ward became so used to seeing us that their greeting would be "Are you back again?" whenever another medical incident occurred. Laughter was often our much needed link to sanity during those trying times.

Because we had four children under five and a half years, the level of noise and frenetic antics of our little ones could severely test our patience. Jim and I had a minor disagreement after spending a hectic hour settling them in bed. They were hyper because they had just come home from the fair. "Well, that's it!" I exclaimed with a twinkle in my eye "It's time for a divorce. And you get the kids." "No you can have the kids!" Jim shot back. "No, no. You deserve them!" I answered and we continued our game until we collapsed in uproarious laughter. Since then, whenever we got carried away with an argument one of us would resort to the 'game' which often eased the uneasy atmosphere. Of course the children were out of ear shot when we played!

Tragedy struck a couple's marriage when Ted's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. When she suffered severe hair



loss due to chemotherapy treatments her husband went with her to a specialty store to buy a wig. She playfully tried on several wild styles, transforming herself into comical characters like a flashy school teacher or a glamorous social climber until she finally found a wig that suited her. She could have been sullen and sad (and I wouldn't blame her) but she chose to laugh instead and invited her husband to join in. As psychoanalyst Martin Grotjahn wrote in his book *'Beyond Laughter'* "To have a sense of humour is to have an understanding of human suffering."

I have often provided comic relief for Jim and my children by some of my short comings such as being absent minded. Years ago while deep in thought, I made a tuna casserole which would have been yummy if I had just remembered to add the





tuna! It was even more embarrassing because the tuna dinner was for a sick friend. For weeks after, the friend teased me about that casserole. Jim usually chuckles when he hears about my latest mishap. He's also used to finding 'mated' socks that don't match and once caught me pouring milk into the instant coffee jar because I was talking too much and not paying enough attention to what I was doing.

Marriage can certainly be a stressful experience at times, but when we become uptight about our relationship, our sense of humor wanes. We all need to lighten up and spy the funny side of life and refuse taking ourselves too seriously. Jim and I have been married now for forty-six years and we continue to laugh at ourselves and life. He accepts daydreaming, my pathetic sense of direction, and my problem at not being well-organized. I accept his almost obsessive worrying about money, slurping his soup and other irritating traits. But we do find joy in life with God's help. In fact last night, before going to the store Jim asked me if I had some spare change. He retrieved

my stuffed purse from the kitchen and dumped its contents onto the table. These included a variety of wilted weed specimens that I had collected at a nearby park that afternoon. I had intended on identifying them as soon I got home. Now they were too dry to even resemble weeds! As my husband eyed the drooping contents sprinkled over my wallet, car keys, and other paraphernalia including two colored pencils, a stone and an old ticket stub, he rolled his eyes and sighed "That's my scatterbrained wife!

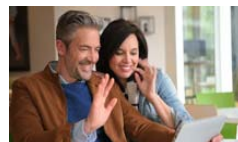
Besides using humour in a Christian marriage we would be wise to do favours without expecting a payback from our spouses and complimenting them now and then about their special qualities such as thoughtfulness and their ability to be patient with the children. My husband often brings me home a surprise such as a healthy snack or some flowers. After my son died we both supported each other by listening to each other, comforting each other when we cried and allowing each other private space to deal with our grief. I don't mind when Jim plays cards with friends to relax and he is glad that I joined a sewing group. Our grief has actually brought us closer in spirit.

Keeping personal problems confidential is important except when we are confiding in a therapist. Other people may misconstrue what we say and when we talk about our spouse's

less than perfect traits we are also being disloyal to them. We are each responsible for making the marriage work and there will be times when one spouse will have to compromise while the other may be dealing with certain issues. A marriage can never be fifty-fifty. When I was depressed Jim helped out with the children and sometimes made dinner to help me out. And when Jim had several operations over the years I was there to care for him. And we both let each other know how much this meant to us!

Living within your means is a suggestion that every married couple can take seriously to prevent serious problems in the marriage. One couple we heard about cannot save any money because they spend it on frivolous things, forgetting that the bills must be paid first. Their parents have helped them out several times but that has not helped them to save their money wisely and to give a good example about saving to their children. When their parents are gone they will have to take money-management seriously or they will not be able to manage their retirement. Living within your means is a tired term but it's the wisest thing to do. When our children were young we had to cut down on many items and used second-hand pieces of furniture that relatives donated us. Our home was not fancy but it was warm and cozy and the children had enough to eat.

A Christian marriage allows



us to lean on God when times are going well or when we are dealing with seemingly insurmountable problems. We can pray together with our children and make sure they learn about God and the Bible so that they will rely on God's help as they get older. By taking them to church and reinforcing God's love for them they will be better able to deal with a world that increasingly mocks moral values.

A young man who had married recently asked an elderly couple if they were still happy. "Oh yes!" They answered in unison. The young man asked them what was one thing they did that helped them stay together; the old man answered "We go out to a show and afterwards have a glass of wine with dinner at a special restaurant before walking home under an evening sky." "Oh that's sounds like a nice idea," remarked the young man. Do you do it often?" "Oh yes, the wife piped in. We have been going every week for years. He goes on Mondays and I go on Wednesdays!"

Yes. I firmly believe that a sense of humor like this couple has can really cement a marriage! Along with Divine assistance of course!□

## AGE IS A NUMBER!

by Melanie D'Souza

**A**ge is a number, I'd say to anyone who was scandalised upon hearing about my relationship with an older gentleman of a millennial. While I got ready for my school-end Board Exams, he was gearing up for a life after college! Yet, there was some **resonance** - that made me realise that age isn't a factor that should segregate us from sharing the finer experiences of life.

Although this relationship was romantic at the time, it made me realise that life's lessons are better understood when you allow yourself to *grow* with them. What better way to get ahead of your challenges when you have a companion across the ages? Several of us already have this relationship - be it your little cousins, older siblings, your doting grandparents, your mentor at work or church. It's different, isn't it? Some of us may not know what this is like yet, but I urge you to try it out - *develop a friendship with someone significantly younger or older to you*. You will be surprised with what you could learn.

Jesus shows us how it's done. When he was just a boy, he was found engaged in philosophical discussion with the elders at the Temple (Luke 2:22-40 KJV). And when he was finally in ministry,

he made sure to interact with the little children and bless them as he knew they were like wet cement - whatever fell on them would make an impression (Matt 19: 12-15). Nothing better than an inter-generational community to understand and absorb the Word of God together. After all, God created us to be families, beyond our blood relatives. Although, honestly? It isn't always easy to fit in seamlessly with people of a different age group. Moral attitudes and social priorities can differ! Moreover, while we retreat to our comfort zones of age, we can often find ourselves thinking, "Am I at my *best age* yet?"

### What's the Prime of your life?

Too often do we get caught up with our milestones as life progresses - I am guilty of that too. When I was eight, I couldn't wait to be eighteen! By the time I was eighteen and in college, I couldn't wait to join the indefinite work life and have a family of my own. But now I know too well that once I hit the indefinite work life, I will long for retirement. What a life! This has made me realise that although our biological peak of life could be the 20-30s range, it is us who ultimately decide what the prime of our



lives is! Have we made the best of our God-given talents to achieve all that we dream of? Have we been helpful and compassionate to our friends, colleagues and loved ones beyond their needs and ours? All of our attitudes and actions frame the way we live our lives, which consequently heighten the *prime* of our lives!

### A Young Church

The Church has been one to grow. It is an *old* Church, rich in heritage that sees Catholic traditions across various cultures thrive through the ages. We see it in our parish bulletins and feast celebrations too. The Catholic culture game is strong indeed! But the Church is *also young*. Year after year, young Catholics get Confirmed, stand up for human rights, travel to enjoy *World Youth Day* and bond over some good old football!

It is during *this youth of our faith* when we begin to engage with the Church - be it through the various ministries of the Mass (lectoring, choir, collection, altar serving and

so on) or the activities of the parish (catechism, Catholic charities, marian devotion, prayer societies, pro-life outreach, etc.). This is wonderful, you think. However, it has recently come to attention that more often than not, young Catholics revisit the faith only to *agree to disagree*, thus posing a unique challenge for the Church.

Before viewing it as restrictive, **take ownership of your faith**. Attempt to study Catholic doctrine, understand concepts of the Catechism, before you find yourself following an old wives' tale or dismissing aspects of the faith as antiquated. This is exactly what helps us keep the Catholic traditions alive - when we are well aware of *why* we believe, what we believe. That being said, let **reciprocal mentoring** do its work. The Church is a community of believers where *the old and young can always learn from each other*. It's not about just those morning Masses with your grandparents or those family rosaries; it's knowing that we are part of the same Church family despite the generation gap.

Last year, a Dutch retirement home, Humanitas, instituted free housing for university students who took good care of their elderly neighbours. This turned out to be a great success! Capitalising on the common denominator of social isolation or loneliness between millennials and the ageing helped the young and old alike realise that they were more same than different.

Our Church needs us now, more than ever to unite across the ages. So let us dismiss age as a barrier to our new friendships, and more importantly the spiritual growth in our community. □



## SALESIAN SAINTS

### ENRICO SAIZ APARICIO AND 62 COMPANIONS MARTYRS

**T**otal number and their identities: 22 priests, 18 lay brothers, 16 clerics, 3 aspirants, 3 cooperators and one lay collaborator

**Madrid Group: 41 Martyrs**  
Upper Carabanchel (Madrid)

**Enrico Saiz Aparicio, Priest**

He was born at Ubierna (Burgos) on December 10, 1889 was baptized on the following day. The militia came to know he was a priest on October 2, 1936 and was shot dead at ten that evening.

**Felix Gonzalez Tejedor, Priest**

On August 24, 1936 he was denounced for being a priest and shot that night.

**John Codera Marqués, lay brother** He was arrested and shot on September 25 1936.

**Virgil Edreira Mosquera, cleric**

He was arrested on September 29, 1936 together and shot.

**Paul Garcia Sánchez, lay brother.** He was arrested and shot in the middle of December 1936.

**Carmel John Pérez Rodríguez, subdeacon** He had come to the house for his holidays. He was arrested and shot on October 1,

February 1937



1936.

**Teodulo González Fernández, cleric** At a surprise raid in July 1936 he was arrested and shot on September 8, 1936.

**Thomas Gil de la Cal, aspirant** He was arrested in September 1936 and shot together with Giovanni Cordera Marqués.

**Frederick Cobo Sanz, aspirant** Thinking he was a religious and he was shot that same day at Punta de Hierro.

**Igino de Mata Díez, aspirant** On July 20, the college was attacked he was definitely arrested and shot as a religious on October 1, 1936.

**The House of Atocha (Madrid)**

**Giusto Juanes Santos, cleric** At one of the frequent executions he was shot together with some Augustinian priests who gave all the martyrs a general absolution.

**Vittoriano Fernández Reinoso, cleric.** The following year 1936,

Don Bosco's Madonna

the college was burnt and the Salesians arrested. he was shot on July 23, 1936

**Emilio Arce Díez, lay brother** He was one of the first victims of the revolution. In fact he was recognized as a religious and shot on July 23, 1936 and he shouted "Long live Christ the king!" before he died.

**Raymond Eirin Mayo, lay brother:** When the college was invaded he escaped and hid in a hospital as an infirmarian. On December 15, 1936 he was arrested and he never returned.

**Matthew Garolera Masferrer, lay brother:** When the college was occupied by the militia he was arrested but later released. He was asked to throw down his rosary and step on it. He refused and was shot on October 1, 1936.

**Anasthasius Garzon Gonzalez, lay brother:** During the revolution he was recognized as a religious and after a period of detention he was shot on November 28, 1936.

**Francis Joseph de Arroyave, lay brother:** He was imprisoned with some confreres on July 19, 1936. During his incarceration he led the practices of piety and continued that till he was shot on November 9, 1936.

**John de Mata Díez, lay collaborator:** He escaped in hiding till October 1, 1936 and was shot because they thought he was a religious together with his cousin the cleric Carmelo Rodrigues.

**The House of Estrecho (Madrid)**

From here three priests were shot around 1937, they were Fr Pio Conde Conde, Fr Sabino Hernandez Laso and Fr

February 1937

Salvatore Fernandez Perez. Lay brother Nicola de la Torre Merino was imprisoned and shot at the beginning of August 1936.

**The House of Paseo de Extremadura (Madrid)** Fr Germano Martin Martin and Fr Joseph Villanova Tormo were shot between August and September; three clerics Stephen Sanz, Francesco Ederera Mosquera and Emmanuel Martin Perez were also shot towards the end of 1936 and lay brother Valentino Arribas were shot on November 28, 1936 at Maracuellos de Jarama.

**The House of Mary Help of Christians at Salamanca** lost two clerics and a lay brother: **Peter Mellique** and **Emmanuel Miguez** were the clerics and Dionysius Barajuan was the lay brother.

**The House of Mohernando 2** priests, 4 clerics and 3 lay brothers.

**The House of Mary Help of Christians, Santander** lost a priest and a lay brother.

**The region of Seville had 21 martyrs:**

**The house of Ronda** lost 6 priests and two clerics.

**The house of Moron** a priest and a lay brother

**The house of Malaga** lost 5 priests and 3 coadjutors.

**The following Salesian Cooperators were also martyred:** Anthony Blanco, a priest, Bartholomew Marquez a layman and Teresa Redondo a lay lady. □

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Don Bosco's Madonna



# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## BL. ROSALIE RENDU (FEB 4) (1786 - 1856)

In Paris, during the Revolution of 1848, an officer led his soldiers to charge a barricade, but, carried away by his fervour, he found himself alone on the other side. He then rushed into the open door of a house of the Sisters of Charity. The rebels followed him in. Fearlessly, the Superior, Sister Rosalie, made her way towards them. "We don't kill people here!" Gun barrels were already aimed at the victim. Sister Rosalie knelt down. "I have consecrated fifty years of my life to you. For all that I have been able to endure for you, for your women and for your children, give me this man's life!" The group drew back, then withdrew altogether. The officer was saved. "Madame," he asked, "who are you?" "Oh nothing...a Daughter of Charity."

Jeanne-Marie Rendu, the future Sister Rosalie, was born on September 9, 1786, in Confort, France, not far from Geneva. Her family was rather well off, but the father died before Jeanne-Marie turned ten. In 1789 the French Revolution broke out. News of the events



circulated to the most remote hamlets. In spite of the law that punished with death priests who remained faithful to the Pope, and those who helped them to escape or hide, Jeanne-Marie's mother opened her home to them. Everybody in the village knew, but they kept her secret.

### Pierre isn't Pierre!

As the days went by, Jeanne -

Marie, who was not aware of the situation, she asked many questions. A newcomer, Pierre, particularly intrigued her because of the special deference shown him. One night, the mystery was cleared up - awakened by strange noises in the house, Jeanne-Marie saw "Pierre" in vestments, celebrating Mass in her mother's presence. Sometime later, during a dispute with her mother, the child declared, "Watch out, or I'll reveal that Pierre isn't Pierre!" Madame Rendu, pale, revealed to her daughter that "Pierre" was the bishop of Annecy.

The parish priest, disguised as a shepherd, traveled through the region carrying out his ministry in secret. He taught Jeanne-Marie the catechism. One night, in the back of a cellar, he gave her, her First Communion. Jeanne-Marie was a gracious, lively, mischievous young girl, always moving, with a spiritual look, and features that might be described as delicate, impish, capricious and determined. Jeanne-Marie felt drawn to serving the poor and so she obtained permission to spend some time at the hospital and gained some experience in devotion to the sick.

The young girl planned to join the community of the Daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul in Paris.

She asked her mother's permission to join the convent. When she arrived in Paris, at the end of May 1802, she went straight to the novitiate of the Daughters of Charity, and met Father Emery, the director of Saint-Sulpice seminary and a friend of the family. This famous priest appraised the young girl and confirmed her

in her vocation. Quite often afterwards, he would visit her and converse with her about his own matters.

A very sensitive girl with a delicate constitution, Jeanne-Marie suffered a great deal during her early days in the novitiate. She fell ill. She was sent to another house in the Congregation, on Rue des Francs - Bourgeois-Saint-Marcel. As soon as she arrived in this environment, Jeanne-Marie regained her health and was able to show what she was capable of. She ended her novitiate there to the great satisfaction of all the Sisters who asked the Superior General to leave her with them.

The district where Sister Rosalie performed her charitable work was at that time one of the poorest in Paris. Sister Rosalie worked in harmony with the Department of Welfare established by the Napoleonic government. She provided it with exact records in exchange for coal and food vouchers.

### Worth more than it seems

Touched by her compassion and patience, the poor got into the habit of speaking to the Sister. No matter what need they made known to her, she made herself their servant and elevated souls to the supernatural realities, prayer and the reception of the sacraments. Among the poor she helped, drunkenness was common, and those who gave themselves over to it were not always kind to the Sisters. To one of the Sisters who repeated to her a heated word that crossed the boundaries of decency, Sister Rosalie replied, "But my poor

Sister, a person who is hungry has many other things in her head than to follow the rules of politeness. These poor people are worth more than it seems."

In the freezing slums there were many sick people. Sister Rosalie approached these poor ones in their stinking rags, tended their wounds, cared for them and also comforted their souls. Sometimes she found despair, people dying, and prepared them for death. Every morning, Sister gained strength in the Eucharist and meditation, drawing her charity from the highest and purest source—the Sacred Heart of JESUS.

#### Prepare for the great crossing

For the young girls in apprenticeship, Sister Rosalie created Sunday youth clubs, and for those who were going into professional life, the Our Lady of Good Counsel society, in which Sunday meetings were replaced by visits to the poor. Sister Rosalie also turned her attentions to the elderly. As all the elderly could not be admitted to hospitals, she opened a free shelter. Those who had lived the worst were redeemed by an edifying end.

In 1848, another revolution broke out. But after those bloody days, General Cavaignac, assigned by the government to restore order, came to congratulate the Sister on her courage. Sister, always very modest, remembered a little five-year-old girl whose father, a poor and decent worker who had been lured into the disturbance, was to be shot. She called to the child: "Here is a man," she told her,

"who can give you your daddy back. Go ask him for him." Shaking all over, the child asked on her knees for her father's reprieve. The general hesitated. "Give him back to me," the little girl begged, "and I will love you so much, sir!" Won over, the officer granted the pardon.

#### A boundary stone to set down burdens

"A Daughter of Charity," she often repeated to them, "is like a boundary stone on which all those who are weary are entitled to set down their burden."

She nevertheless did not allow herself to be discouraged by adversity. Afraid of death, she often asked for readings on trust in God. During the night of February 4, 1856, she came down with congestion of the lungs. A priest administered Extreme Unction to her the 6th, and the 7th, Sister Rosalie passed calmly into eternal rest.

During her beatification on November 9, 2003, the Pope Saint John Paul II said, "In an era troubled by social conflicts, Rosalie Rendu joyfully became a servant to the poorest, restoring dignity to each one... Her charity was inventive. Where did she draw the strength to carry out so many things? From her intense prayer life and the continuous praying of the Rosary, which she never abandoned.

Her secret was simple: to see the face of Christ in every man and woman."

Let us ask Blessed Sister Rosalie to guide us in our prayer life and to teach us to show God's mercy towards all the suffering people Providence places on our path. □

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

#### Quite a Scream

*Aspiring Vocalist:* "Professor, do you think I will ever be able to do anything with my voice?"

*Perspiring Teacher:* "Well, it might come in handy in case of fire or shipwreck."

#### Putting on Airs

The prosperous, pompous businessman was staying at a small country hotel, and as he entered the breakfast room in the morning, the only other visitor rose from his seat.

"Sit down, sit down! It's alright, it's alright," boomed the great man condescendingly.

"Why?" asked the other, surprised. "Can't I get the marmalade from the next table?"

#### Quick Recovery

This letter exemplifies the power of the press.

*"Dear Editor: Thursday I lost a gold watch which I valued very highly. Immediately I inserted an ad in your lost-and-found column and waited. Yesterday I went home and found the watch in the pocket of another suit. Thank you, I wish your paper every success."*

#### Not anymore

*"Isn't that a popular song he's singing."*

*"It was; before he sang it."*

#### Correctly stated

The manager of a hotel, on finding that a guest had departed without paying his bill,

wrote to him: *My dear Mr Smythe, will you please send the amount of your bill, and oblige."*

To this Mr. Smythe wrote politely: *My dear Manager, the amount of my bill is a hundred and ten dollars. Yours respectfully.*

#### Putting it across gently

A customer sat down at a table in a smart restaurant and tied a napkin around his neck. The scandalized manager called a waiter and instructed him, "Try to make him understand as tactfully as possible, that that's not done."

Said the thoughtful waiter to the customer: "Pardom me sir, shave or haircut?"

#### Disappeared

*Artist:* "That, sir, is a cow grazing,

*Visitor:* "Where is the grass?"

*Artist:* "The cow has eaten it."

*Visitor:* "But where is the cow?"

*Artist:* "You don't suppose she'd be foolish enough to stay there after she'd eaten all the grass, do you?"

#### Truly Wonderful

*Friend:* "So, you were asked for an opinion of that amateur's playing. What do you think of it?"

*Master Musician:* "He plays in the true spirit of Christian charity."

*Friend:* "What do you mean?"

*Master Musician:* "'His right hand does not know what his left hand is doing.' □



## THE JOY OF HAVING GOD-WITH-US

by Carlo Broccardo

**O**f all the books of the Bible, the book of Leviticus is certainly not a favourite and probably not even well-known today... But the liturgy proposes it to us so let us take up the challenge to encounter this little-loved text.

This book is called “Leviticus” because, in fact, it is a great collection of laws and regulations, many of which relate to worship and as it was in Ancient Israel this was entrusted to the tribe of Levi – which explains the name ‘Leviticus.’

Having said that, the question remains: why should we read such an “outdated book today? There is an infinite list of cultic and moral rules that no longer apply to us. Since the first Century AD, it has become clear, thanks to the Letters of St. Paul to the Galatians and Romans, that we Christians are not obliged to follow all the precepts contained in Leviticus. So, why must it be read?

Today’s passage gives us the answer, more than that it gives us two answers and both very beautiful. The first is: that it contains

God’s words to Moses and through him to all the people: “Be holy, for I the Lord, your God am holy.”

According to the order, the first book of the Bible is Genesis which tells us of the beginnings: Creation and the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob up to Joseph welcoming his father and brothers in Egypt. Then comes the book of Exodus, which tells us of the Israelites’ daring escape from Egyptian slavery; the seven plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea and how the people of Israel travelled and spent forty years in the desert. The journey into the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land is told in the second half of the book of Exodus and then in the Book of Numbers and Deuteronomy which are the fourth and fifth books of the Bible). Between the books of Exodus and Numbers is the book of Leviticus, the third book of the Bible which occupies a significant place. At the end of the book of Exodus in fact, it says that God came to live permanently among his people. (cf. Ex 40: 34-35). Here’s what happens: God, who liberated

Israel from Egypt does not abandon them anymore, God remains forever in the midst of his people, asking them to build a sanctuary where he can “live.”

They multiplied the rules and regulations to be observed because our lives should be fitting for the divine presence. God explains this in very simple words: all of us, if we have a dinner guest, a guest who is a dear friend, whom we greatly care for, we make sure to prepare an appropriate welcome. We cook the food he likes; open the best wine; we open our hearts to listen to his words. It’s the same with God; he is in our midst – says Leviticus – so we cannot live “normally,” indifferent to his presence.

Several rules and laws written in the book of Leviticus are actually outdated because they were ascribed to a certain historical period. Today, in the Church, we have other laws, other rules (fewer, to be honest, some old rules are still with us today...) But they remind us of the meaning of the commandments, to live in a manner in keeping with the faith we profess, to live like believers, as children of God. The rules and regulations serve to give us some guidelines, rendering us more God-like. “Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.” Jesus says the same in the Gospel of this Sunday. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Let us now, although very quickly, look at the second reason why it is still well-worth reading Leviticus. This is contained in the second part of today’s reading: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart,

but you shall reason with your neighbour, lest you bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Lord.” (Lev. 19, 17-18)

Many of the rules and norms contained in Leviticus are outdated; but not all! The above, for example, is of great relevance. Maybe today, all of us believers need to put these words into practice!

I really like the last sentence of today’s reading: “I am the Lord.” It is a sentence which contains the entire story from creation to the liberation from Egypt. He (God) might be saying: I know that these norms call for some effort; but I’m asking you (because) I am the Lord. Of course, it’s hard to follow the rules and laws of the Church, they require sacrifice and today, especially for our youngsters, they may also be embarrassing. But – back to the earlier example: it’s like having a dear friend home with us. The effort of the preparation is amply rewarded by the joy of being together. □





## THERE IS NO HUMILITY WITHOUT HUMILIATION

*Pope Francis at Mass at Domus Sanctae Marthae on February 1, 2016*

There can be neither humility nor holiness without walking the path of humiliation. Francis spoke of this truth as he recalled the story of David during Mass at Santa Marta that morning.

"In the First Reading, the story of King David continues", the Pope began, referring to the Second Book of Samuel (15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13). The story, he explained, "began when Samuel went to the house of [David's] father, and David was anointed king", even though he was still a boy. Then "he grew up, he had his problems, but he was always a man respectful of the king who did not like him." In fact the king "knew that he would be his successor." And "in the end David managed to unite the kingdom of Israel: everyone together with him." However, "he was feeling insecure and his zeal for the house of the Lord began to weaken."

At that moment—we heard the other day—David was one step away from becoming corrupt", Francis continued. Thus "the holy King David, a sinner but a saint, became corrupt." But then "the Prophet Nathan, sent by God" helped him "understand what a bad thing he had done, an evil thing: because a corrupt person doesn't realize it. It takes a special grace to change the heart of a corrupt person." Thus, "David, who still had a noble heart", recognized his sin, "he recognized his fault." What did Nathan say to him? These were his words: "The Lord has forgiven your sin, but the corruption you have sown will grow. You killed an innocent man to hide adultery. The sword shall never depart from your house". Thus, the Pope explained, "God forgives sin, David converts but the wounds of corruption are difficult to heal. We see this in so many parts of the world."

This is the point in David's story, Francis affirmed, that "we arrive at in today's passage: David's son battles against his father. He wants power: his son is already corrupt." But "what does David do? With the nobility that he had won back after his sin—and also the penance he had done to save the son who had died, the child of adultery—he rejoins his own: 'Let us flee the city lest Absalom—his son—should overtake us, then visit disaster upon us and put the city to the sword', as was customary in those times."

The Pontiff recalled that "God castigates David harshly: 'The sword shall never depart from your house.'" But, Francis continued, "he defends the house and flees, he leaves." Is he perhaps "a coward? No, he is a father." And "he allows the ark to return", he does not "use God to defend himself." In other words, David "leaves in order to save his people: this is the path of holiness that David begins to follow, after the moment in which he became corrupt."

The passage, the Pope continued, presents David weeping as he climbs the steep Mount of Olives. "His head was covered", a sign of

mourning, and he was walking barefoot. He was doing penance. "And all those who were with him also had their heads covered and they were weeping as they went: weeping and penance." Scripture also tells us that "some, who did not like him, began to follow and curse him." Among them was Shimei, who called him "murderer," reminding him of "the crime he had committed against Uriah the Hittite in order to cover up his adultery," Abishai, one of the people closest to David, "wanted to defend him" and wanted to take off Shimei's head in order to silence him. But David goes "a step further: 'If he is cursing it is because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David!'" He then "says to his servants: 'My own son, who came forth from my loins, is seeking my life,'" He is referring to his son Absalom. This is why he turns again to his servants saying: "Let this Benjaminite curse, for the Lord has told him to."

The question, Francis explained, is that "David can see the signs: it is the moment of his humiliation, it is the moment in which he is paying for his fault." Therefore, he says: "Perhaps the Lord will look upon my affliction and make it up to me with benefits for the curses he is uttering this day." Basically, "he entrusts himself to the Lord's hands: this is David's path, from the moment of corruption to this entrustment to the hands of the Lord. This is holiness. This is humility."

The Pope continued. "I think", he said, "that each one of us, should someone say something bad about us", would react by saying "No, I didn't do it, this isn't true, no!" In fact, we "immediately try to say that it isn't true". Or else "we do as Shimei did: we say something even worse in response". But humility, Francis stated, "can reach a heart only through humiliation: there is no humility without humiliation". And, he said, "if you are not able to bear some humiliation in your life, you are not humble. That's how it is: I would say it's that mathematical, it's that simple!"

For this reason, the Pope continued, "the only path to humility is humiliation". Therefore, "David's goal, which is holiness, is reached through humiliation". Also, "the goal of holiness that God gives to his children, gives to the Church, comes through the humiliation of his Son who lets himself be cursed, who lets himself be borne on the Cross, unjustly". Francis clarified that "this Son of God who humbles himself, is the path of holiness: with his attitude, David prophesies the humiliation of Jesus".

Before ending his homily Francis asked of "the Lord, for each of us, for all the Church, the grace of humility, but also the grace of understanding that it is impossible to be humble without humiliation". □

## SHADOW OF MERCY

*From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories*

Johnny Miller is standing on the Northwest corner of Fifth and Main streets. Tonight he's reached the lowest point in his twenty-one years of life. He's hungry, he's dirty, he has four cents in his pocket and in this whole city he hasn't one friend. He hesitates on the corner looking East on Fifth where the street stumbles down past all-night movies halls, third-rate bars, and fifty-cent-a-night hotels. He turns and looks West, Fifth Street climbs a hill and there, spangled on either side with lights that finally blaze together and soar into the tower of brilliance that is the Palace Hotel.

Johnny Miller thinks how a year and a half ago he was living in the Palace Hotel, and before that he had his own room in his father's house in Millersburg; the largest house there, because his family had built up the town. Johnny Miller thinks now of his family; his mother, his brother Tom and especially of his father. He remembers his father and the last time Johnny saw him...

I

Hubert Miller was sitting in his study and distractedly looking out of the window when he hears the door open. "Ah, Johnny when you finished college I was going to make you a partner in the firm, just like your brother Tom." Johnny shot back a bit on edge: "And I told you I want to get away from here, dad, I want to be on my own. Here everybody expects me to be like you or like Tom!"

Looking helpless Hubert tried to reason with Johnny: "I don't want to hold you back, son but you

haven't had any training or experience." The youngster seemed to be adamant; his mind made up. He decided that there was nothing for him in Millersburg. He was stubborn alright.

Hubert tried to tell him that his mother would be devastated by his decision but Johnny only looked straight at his father and said: "I'm sorry dad, but I've got my own life to lead." There seemed to be nothing more to say though the father knew it would be tough for a youngster who knew precious little of the world. He was resigned and said: "Well, I guess nothing I've said has changed you. Alright, I'll give you a share of the estate, set up a bank account for you in the city."

So it was settled and Johnny seemed to feel victorious and excited. Just then Tom his brother dashed in with a bundle of papers in hand: "Dad, are you busy now?" "Yes, Tom, I am" said Hubert rather preoccupied. Tom looked at Johnny and with a smile said: "Tom, I'm going into business for myself in the city. Dad's giving me my share of the estate." There was a stunned silence in the room. Then with a sigh Tom said sharply: "So, finally you wore him down...going in to business. You could put all you know about business on a toothpick and still have room left over." Then raising his finger he warned: "When you come crawling back here, don't expect any sympathy from me," and he strode out, slamming the door in disgust. Shaking his head Johnny whined: "He's always been against me."

Hubert didn't look up; he just picked up the phone and spoke to Alistair Bromley, the bank manager to work out the details of the transfer of funds to Johnny's account. Johnny in the meantime paced up and down, impatient and excited at the same time. His excitement was interrupted by his father's final words: "Now, Johnny, do you realise that if you get in a mess in the city there wouldn't be anybody to pull you out? You could crack up your whole life." The youngster was determined, so all he could say to his father's dismal warning was: "I'll show Tom...I'll show everybody."

### II

Johnny Miller looks up at the tower of the Palace Hotel where he stayed at his first night in town and for too long after that. Down the block from the hotel is the Shadowland Bar where he met Ted Wilcox the afternoon of the second day. It was a fairly decent place but the smell of stale beer and cigarette smoke hung in the air. Johnny seemed excited as he spoke to Ted: "I was afraid it was going to be kind of hard getting acquainted." A friendly fellow and ready to strike up a conversation with his clients he added: "Well, it generally is Johnny, but I'm funny. The minute I see a fellow I know whether I'm going to like him or not. The minute I saw you I said to myself: 'Now, there's a guy who's got a lot on the ball. He's going places.' Johnny felt good and encouraged. He wanted to get started. Things seemed to look bright. Ted went on: "Yeah, that's the toughest part. Things in town are a little slow now. There are a few good

deals like the one Stanley Fergusson has. I'm afraid that's closed tight now. I shouldn't have even mentioned it." Having felt that he had said too much, Johnny looked up, curious at this last comment: "Why not?" Ted was forced to reply: "Stanley doesn't want the word to get around or everybody would want to buy into this. It's an electronics deal, red hot right now." That sounded right up Johnny's street. He would be interested in electronics. He'd heard there was money to be made in electronics.

Wanting to help the youngster Ted said: "Tell you what I'll do, I'll call up Fergusson to see if he's free tonight. We could meet him at the Manhattan Club; it's a real nice place. We could talk. Now there just might be a chance...if we move fast." The meeting took place and the following morning Johnny was at the Shadowland and Ted was excited: "Johnny, Fergusson liked you. You know? You're in! The only callouses you'll get will be from clipping coupons." Johnny couldn't believe his luck. Things were already beginning to look up.

Looking back on last night Ted shook his head in amazement: "It was kind of hard talking business with a floor-show going on. I forgot you didn't know the Manhattan was a night club." Johnny smiled a little curious smile: "Who was that girl we met? She was awfully nice." Ted said it was Rosalie who was engaged to some wealthy fellow adding: "He's out of town right now. Everybody who knows Rosalie hopes she'll break it off. That fellow's strictly a jerk." Then with a twinkle in his eye he said in a kind of whisper:

"And if Rosalie got interested in some really nice guy..."

### III

On the corner of Fifth and Main Johnny Miller fingers the four cents in his pocket and looks at his world of a year ago. Three blocks from the Palace Hotel are the Coronado Apartments where Rosalie lived when she became Johnny Miller's girl in the days when he had money and was having a good time. That's how the money went, paying bills for Rosalie and having fun while he waited for Fergusson to start the coupons rolling in. The youngster had so much fun, there wasn't time to look for a job or move to a less expensive hotel or worry about the stack of IOUs from the gang of good fellows who were always running into streaks of hard luck.

Then Johnny Miller remembers the nightmare that began for him as he rattled the locked door of Stanley Fergusson's office reading and not believing the sign that said: "CLOSED." The nightmare continued with Rosalie's frantic phone calls for more cheques. Ted sorrowfully shaking of the head at Johnny's mention of Fergusson added: "It just goes to show you, you can't trust anybody. Even if the police do find him, he won't produce your money, Johnny."

Now panic was setting in. "But I've been depending on that deal of Fergusson's. This couldn't have happened at a worse time." He was totally down and out and he went to Ted at the counter and whispered: "Ted, I've got a favour to ask of you. It's not really for me, it's for Rosalie." Ted was shocked! Then Johnny added: "I was waiting for that deal of Fergusson

to pay off. That would have covered everything." Sadly Ted admitted: "Johnny, I'd do anything in the world to help if I hadn't just paid an installment on my furniture. They were backing up a van to haul it away if I hadn't paid all this money..."

### IV

Johnny Miller remembers the pawn shop half way down the hill from the Palace Hotel, the pawn shop that gave him Rosalie's money and the hotel bill and left him with the suit on his back and the shoes on his feet. He had enough change left for a drink at the Shadowland bar where he heard Ted speak his name but he only listened unseen: "Well, fellas, it looks like Johnny Miller's on the tab. As Rosalie said, he lived it up for a year and the time was worth something. There's one like him born every minute."

The night was cold and Johnny shivered in his coat. On the corner of Fifth and Main, a man nearby is enjoying an idle smoke. He turns flips three-quarters of the butt which rolls almost to Johnny Miller's feet. He glances about to see if anyone's watching. Then just as he steps into the street he hears the screech of tires as he barely avoids being hit by a car, but avoiding it he gets bumped on his side and falls by the pavement.

Some passersby come to see what had happened. A stranger, an elderly gentleman with a suit a bit worse for wear crouched by his side: "That car hit this man...hey mister, you hurt...?" He asked. Not to create a scene Johnny tries to get up: "No, it just brushed me." A burly fellow coming out of the nearby drugstore shouted: "Oh just a Skid Row bum scrounging

for butts. I saw the whole thing. He stepped out right in front of that car, just for a cigarette..."

The kindly stranger tries to assist Johnny: "C'mon, kid. Try to get onto the sidewalk. How about a cup of coffee? You look pretty shaken up." Johnny looked offended: "No, thanks, I'm not looking for handouts." The elderly man added immediately: "And I'm not offering any handouts. I want some coffee and I don't like drinking by myself. Will you join me?" Hesitating and looking into the gentleman's grey eyes beneath his bushy eyebrows, Johnny agreed: "Ok, thanks." The two walked to the little place at the corner of the street; found a table near the door and sat down: "two coffees, black." He shouts to the man at the counter. Then turning to Johnny he adds quietly: "Well, you're down on your luck, aren't you?" Johnny had to admit: "Yeah."

The old man seemed to know something about the situation: "You can't get a job because you haven't any decent clothes and you can't get clothes without money and you're too proud to take charity, right?" Johnny was now beginning to think out loud: "I guess when I ran low I ought to have taken any job." "You waited ...and now you're flat," said the stranger. Just then the coffee arrived: "Here's our coffee...nothing like a cup of coffee on a chilly night eh? You're from out of town?" He said with a toothy grin. Johnny said he was from out of town and he did have a family. The man suggested: "Well, don't be a fool, go on home." That was what Johnny didn't want to hear: "I couldn't...I'll think of something." There was something

about the stranger that fascinated Johnny. He had a way of shocking him very gently: "No, no, you won't think of nothing. You'll go East on Fifth, you'll land in the gutter. You'll end up telling lies to old ladies at church doors to get the price of a pint of wine." "How do you know so much about it?" Johnny asked: "Ha, ha... experience, five years of experience. That's why I keep on a look out for fellows who take a chance to come back. I'm glad to help you with the train fare home."

Still too proud Johnny curtly added: "No, if I wanted to go, I'd do it by myself." The stranger stood up ready to leave. He put some change on the plate and added: "Now, you take it from one who knows and you think it over. I have to go now but I'll buy you another coffee."

Johnny Miller sat alone at the café table, he sipped the coffee the stranger had bought him and he tried to think: "Go home, that's easy for him to say...he doesn't know what'd be like; going home a failure. I couldn't face dad after what I said. I couldn't have him see me this way. But what else can I do? The man was right. I'll end up on Skid Row. I ought to face it. I ought to take my medicine. Maybe they wouldn't want me. Dad shouldn't even want me. But he's the only one who might. Maybe dad could forgive me... but Tom...I couldn't face Tom. I just couldn't take what he'd say. If I could just tell dad I was sorry, that he was right and I'm sorry. But Tom and the other people they'd laugh at me. No, I can't face it, they'd laugh. Oh, God, God...please!" Tears begin to roll

*Continued on pg. 30 MERCY*

## DON BOSCO'S MOTHER

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by Fr. Elias Dias

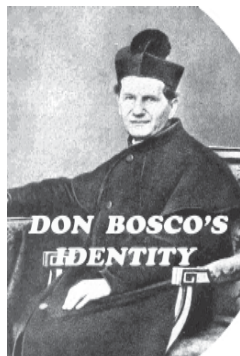
**T**here is no doubt that Don Bosco's mother was a fundamental influence the faith education of the young Johnny Bosco. Margaret was born on April 1, 1788, at Capriglio, a small municipality, located less than 2 miles east of the hamlet of Becchi. She was the sixth of ten children born to Melchior Mark Occhiena and Domenica Bassone, who were small scale farmers. As a peasant girl, she never learned to read or write, but she possessed uncommon wisdom, prudence and faith in God.

In 1812 at the age of 24, Margaret married Francis Bosco, a sharecropper on the Biglione farm. His first wife had died, leaving him with a seven-year-old son Anthony. Margaret's first son, Joseph, was born in 1813 and John, her second, on 16 August 1815. Francis died on May 11, 1817, when John was just 21 months old.

After Francis Bosco's death the family settled at the little house of Becchi. The family comprised Margaret Bosco (29 years of age), her invalid mother-in law Margaret Zucca (65 years old) and the Bosco boys – her stepson Anthony, and her own sons Joseph Louis and John Melchior (9, 4, and 2 years old respectively).

The financial situation of the family headed by Margaret must have deteriorated considerably.

Margaret received a very attractive proposal of remarriage. She declined: "God gave me a hus-



band and took him away from me. On his deathbed he entrusted three children to me, and I would be a heartless mother if I abandoned them when they need me most."

Margaret was a strong Christian woman, a woman of character and fully devoted to her children and to the service of God and neighbour. Margaret was aware of the powerful influence of Christian education on her sons. She taught them catechism and God's presence in their lives. "God sees you," is what she inculcated in her sons, the trust in Divine Providence. She showed them the importance of piety and devotion to the Virgin Mary. She prepared John for his first Communion and continued to assist him until he could manage on his own.

John modelled himself on his mother. He imbibed the most important virtues: trust in God, love of prayers, generosity, pati-

ence, and fearlessness, zeal for souls; prudence and generosity.

Margaret was never one to raise her voice when chiding her children, or to lose her temper when correcting them, or make decisions in a fit of anger. She was calm and affable with gentle disposition.

Margaret's charity was proverbial. She never turned down a reasonable request for help. People seemed to think she possessed an unlimited store of goods. Neighbours used to come to ask for coal, water, wood, or other useful and necessary things. Her courtesy and genuine warmth made her hospitality so heart warming. She offered whatever she could to alleviate their hunger and thirst.

In the house she respected the different personalities of the three boys while giving them a sound Christian upbringing. Don Bosco later recounted how his mother prepared him for his First Communion. Because of her training he could add, "I am sure that on that great day God really took possession of my soul." She taught the boys to honour their elders and to willingly help the needy. She often said, "Do everything out of love and to please the Lord."

John Bosco related his first dream at the age of nine to his family. All had their opinions but Margaret thought perhaps God was calling her son to be a priest. Margaret noticed John's extraordinary qualities. She wondered whether he might become a priest, and he did confide to her that such was his hope, so that he could work for young people.

When the way toward the priesthood opened for John



through his schooling at Chieri, one great obstacle remained. He faced a crisis in 1834 when he finished his high school. He had to decide about his future. He knew that he was poor and could not put further financial burden on his mother. Her parish priest, counselled Margaret to persuade John to become a diocesan priest saying, "If John becomes a parish priest, you'll be able to live at the rectory too."

Instead, Margaret advised her son: "The pastor urged me to make you change your mind because I might need your help in the future. But I want to tell you that in this matter I am not to be considered, because God comes first. Remember that I was born poor, I have lived poor and want to die poor." Don Bosco even 50 years later remembered the decisive tone of his mother's words.

On October 25, 1835 John don-

ned the clerical habit. Before he went off to the seminary, his mother told him. "John, my son, now you are wearing the clerical habit, mine is the happiness of a mother whose son has been fortunate. For heaven's sake, never dishonour this cassock! Rather, lay it aside. I would sooner have a poor peasant for a son than an unworthy priest. When you were born, I consecrated you to the Blessed Virgin; when you began your studies, I told you to be devoted to our heavenly Mother, now I ask you to be hers entirely. Choose your friends among those who love her. And if you will become a priest, spread devotion to her." John was deeply moved and treasured her wise words in all his life.

John was ordained on June 5, 1841. On this solemn occasion, when he celebrated Mass at Castelmuvio, in the evening she said to him, "You are now a priest, and you celebrate Mass. You are therefore closer to Jesus. But remember that to begin to say Mass is to begin to suffer. From now on you must think only of saving souls; never worry about me."

In barely four years Don Bosco exhausted himself and seriously fell ill in July 1846. When he had recovered a little bit, he went to his mother's home at Becchi for some rest. He was desperate to return to Turin but there was a delicate problem: a young priest of 31, he had recently moved to a shady section of Turin. He wanted to take his mother with him. He hesitated to ask her at age 58, to give up her peaceful life in the country and move to a city. Finally one evening, he put before her his dilemma. She understood the

need, and immediately answered, "If you think such a course is pleasing to the Lord I'm ready to go with you." On November 3, 1846 she left the home she loved and went to Turin with her son.

Margaret sacrificed everything and gave herself entirely to her son's apostolate. She did not come to Valdocco to seek comforts but to give comforts to poor and abandoned boys.

One evening in May, shortly after supper, while a heavy rain was falling, a boy of about fifteen came to the door. He was drenched from head to foot and asked for some food and lodging for night. Mamma Margaret with her motherly love welcomed him to the kitchen. She was moved by the plight of the boy began to cry and Don Bosco was deeply stirred. At the same time Don Bosco, a few days before, had a bad experience when the boys ran away with all sheets. The boy assured him that he was honest and wanted to be with him. After supper Mamma made his bed and before going to bed she gave him a short talk which we call today the "Good Night talk".

Young Joseph Brosio was a helper of Don Bosco at Convitto. The boys asked him to teach them drills and other military manoeuvres. One day in 1850, the tiny army of boys staged a mocked battle between two platoons for the amusement of the audience. The result was the complete devastation of the precious vegetable garden of Mamma Margaret. Mamma justly complained to Don Bosco saying "Look John! See what they have done! They have ruined my whole vegetable garden. Please let me return to Becchi and

end my life in peace." Mamma, quite discouraged, came to Don Bosco because of the childish pranks of the boys. Don Bosco consoled her by pointing to the crucifix. Mamma gazed at the crucifix and tears rolled down her cheeks. Soon her distress changed to calm. No further complaint ever came from her.

In May of 1854 a disastrous outbreak of cholera hit Turin. Don Bosco and his boys went out of their way to help the cholera victims. To prevent themselves for disease besides spiritual means the boys would take along a small flask of vinegar, a dose of camphor or some similar preventive and on returning they disinfected themselves. Whenever the boys noticed any such need, they would inform the goodhearted Mamma Margaret, who would compassionately search through the wardrobe and somehow provide what was needed.

At the age 66 Mamma Margaret found herself more than a mother to these unfortunate children. Everyone loved her and thought the world of her. Her vir-tuous life was an inspiration to anyone who knew her."

In November of 1856 Margaret was stricken with pneumonia. Despite the best of cares, the sickness grew more serious. Realizing how ill she was, she gave Don Bosco confidential advice. "Others will take my place, but our Blessed Lady will always be the one in charge. Tell the boys that I've worked for them with a mother's commitment. Ask them to pray for me."

Her last evening arrived. Overcome by sorrow, Don Bosco prolonged his vigil by her bedside

until very late in the night. At one point Margaret said to him, "Go now, my dear son, I cannot bear to see you so distressed (...) but we shall enjoy true happiness in heaven. Go to your room and pray for me."

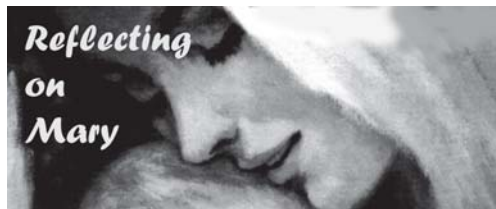
It was November 25, 1856 at three in the morning, Mamma Margaret the valiant and compassionate Mamma of the Oratory went to her heavenly abode. That morning Don Bosco celebrated Holy Mass for her soul, in the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation. After his Mass he knelt down in front of the statue of our Blessed Mother and said."

The great number of boys in the funeral procession to the parish church gave the appearance of a triumphal parade. But it was a pauper's funeral, and Margaret was buried in a common grave without even a tombstone.

Don Bosco saw her several times in his dreams and his impression remained indelible in his mind.

Loved as she was by both Salesians and young people, there arose immediately after her death the common conviction: she was a saint! But the cause of the beatification and Canonization of Mamma Margaret was introduced only on 8 September 1994. After the Diocesan Process at Turin in 1996 the "*Positio*" (i.e. the documentation of her reputation for holiness and the heroic of her life and values) was officially consigned to the Congregation of the Cause of the Saints on 25 January 2000. The Holy See's Congregation for the Causes of the Saints is now reviewing her life and virtues. Pope Benedict XVI himself has said that her holiness is evident. □





## THE LESSON OF LOURDES

by Sergio Pellini

**W**ith gratitude and joy we remember the wonderful event that took place on February 11, 1858 at the grotto of Massabielle. They are recounted in the simple and touching words of St. Bernadette.

"... A Lady in white, young and more beautiful than I have ever seen, came to the opening of the cave above the bush. She just looked at me and greeted me with a slight tilt of her head and she smiled. Without knowing what I was doing I began to pray. I reached into my pocket and I took out the rosary which I always recited on my knees. Only at the end she said: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*" with me after which she disappeared in a flash of light."

The Lady in white appeared another seventeen times to the fortunate little girl.

The apparitions of Lourdes made famous by some very sensational miracles have made Lourdes the city of Our Lady from where she dispenses her maternal goodness.

Lourdes is not just a seat of

sensational miracles and a garden of the finest Christian virtues it is also the city of the Most Holy Eucharist the source of life to which Mary directs everyone. It is still a celestial school of precious and timely teachings at which the Mother of God is our teacher and our mother.

At Lourdes, Mary accomplishes many miracles to revive and revitalize the faith without which it is impossible to please God. The greatest miracle however, is the serene and joyful conformity to the Will of God that Mary most Holy intercedes for all especially for the sick.

While reviving our faith she sustains our hope in the eternal good things of which the apparitions of Lourdes are a wise reminder.

At Lourdes everyone loves one another as brothers and sisters of their common Mother, with a particular outpouring of love for the sick.

At Lourdes, through Bernadette, the Madonna teaches us to live in the style of the Beatitudes. Bernadette, in her daily life was poor among the poor, and she

was poor in heart; she was hungry, hungry for material bread, and continually hungering for God in her heart. She was humble, not with a false modesty, but truly humble, like the "handmaid of the Lord."

Bernadette wept as perhaps few others in the world have, bitter tears. To a friend she once confided: "I weep when I see the Lady weep." Bernadette remained true to her mission, enduring persecution, threats and slander by the mediocre people who accompanied her along the journey, like Christ on his way to Calvary.

What happened to Bernadette is what happens to us today. Mary takes us by the hand and leads us to Jesus, sustaining us in times of difficulty, succoring us in our distress, helping us to persevere in the fight against evil as she did from the time of her conception so we too have to fight everyday as we repeat: "Today Mary crushed the head of the ancient serpent!"

Beyond the heavens and in history the divine promise against the evil serpent has been written: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. She will crush your head."

Love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary and for the Heart of Jesus should grow in our contrite hearts, so that, as she presents us at the final judgment,

the Lord will assure us as he says: "I heard my mother speak well about you."

Let's frankly admit it: Our world needs conversion. Consciences have been obscured as at the time of the first sin, no longer distinguishing good from evil. Many no longer know what sin is and no longer dare to know if this awareness could affect their freedom.

It remains difficult to convince the modern world of the misery of its sin and the salvation that God continually offers them through reconciliation realized by the Redemption. Yet, the Sinless Virgin reminds us here of this primordial need for conversion. She tells us what she told Bernadette: "Pray for sinners, come and wash, to purify yourselves and start a new life! Repent and believe in the Gospel." She gives us a new mandate in the very first words of Jesus in the Gospel.

Let us ask Mary to strengthen our resolve to repent. □



The statue of Bernadette, the fortunate little child who saw "the beautiful Lady all surrounded by light" at the grotto of Massabielle

*Continued from pg.23* **MERCY**  
down his cheeks and he whimpers quietly but that catches the eye of the manager. "Eh knock it off punk...enough crying in my place." Johnny looked up into the face of the man: "Look, I'm not drunk..." Pulling his chair the manager adds: "C'mon, get out of here." As Johnny stands up the table tilted and the cup slides to the floor spilling the coffee. "Uh, now look what you did...coffee all over my clean floor." The manager was convinced: "Not drunk? You can't even stand up you wimp? Here take this rag and mop up that mess. Go on, get down there and clean it up!" The manager screamed.

Johnny Miller on his knees wipes the floor. People look down at him, some with pity, others with a sneer. Johnny Miller feels something inside him break; it crumbles, a shattered wall of pride. He got up when he had finished. The bar was quiet as he left, walking down the Fifth Street. He was heading home. He walked up the steps of the house he once knew and knocked timidly on the door. A short time later the door opened and the lad looked up: "Dad, I'm back!" was all he could say. Hubert seeing his son exclaimed: "Johnny!!" Johnny!! He was ashamed and frightened. There was no one around. He went on: "You were right, I fouled up everything, I'm sorry." Hubert couldn't see his son standing at the door he simply put out his arms: "Come into the house. You don't know how good it is to see you!" As he almost collapsed in his father's

arms he added: "Dad, I'm not asking you to take me back. I don't deserve it." Hubert drew the lad back and looked into his eyes: "Ah, thank God, you're home when we didn't hear, we... well, never mind." Johnny went on: "The money...dad, it's all gone. The things I've done..." The father didn't want to hear any more apologies. Putting his arms around his son's shoulders father and son walked to his study. Getting behind his desk the father said: "Johnny, forget it. Don't think about it again. You're starting over!" Now Johnny was worried about what his brother Tom. Tom was right...he had come crawling back. As the two sat in the study the father looked up and said: "What difference does it make what Tom says? You were man enough to come back, that's all that counts. You had to learn from experience; but you paid for it. You're still his brother and my son, Johnny! I thought I'd lost my boy. You came back!"

The story of Johnny Miller sounds like a strictly modern one because it happens to so many young men today actually this is one of the oldest stories ever written. Our Lord himself told it in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He told it to convince us that we have the most loving of Fathers in heaven. The kindness of the human parent is only the dimmest shadow of the mercy of God. No matter how foolish we've been; how blackly we've sinned we can always go back to our Father and say: 'I'm sorry!' and he will receive us gladly as his child and all heaven is filled with rejoicing at our return. □

## NEWSBITS

### ROME

In a narrow alley a few miles from the center of Rome, around 250 migrants gather at sunset. Half a dozen are playing cards and some kids are kicking a soccer ball. Others have already begun lining up for their evening meal in the informal refugee camp known as Via Cupa.

Most of these migrants have fled from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, part of the wave of exiles who have landed on Italy's shores in recent years, and they are a mix of Muslims and Christians.

Whatever their religion, they may be surprised to learn that their host tonight in this nondescript alleyway is going to be Pope Francis. The pontiff isn't actually joining them for dinner, though he'd probably like to. Instead, he's done the next best thing by sending the Vatican's almoner, Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, a Polish cleric responsible for dispensing the pope's charity funds, to make sure no one misses out.

"They are hungry. We are bringing them food from Pope Francis," Krajewski tells Religion News Service. "These meals come directly from the pope. They are his offering...just like the gospel says."

It's 7 p.m. on a Thursday evening later in September. Krajewski has just pulled up in a large

grey van with a small group of nuns and priests. They begin to unload heavy containers filled with steaming risotto, fresh fruit and drinks for the men, women and children who will soon bed down in the open alley for the night.

Krajewski, 52, has spent most of his ecclesiastical life in Rome but he hardly comes across like a career Vatican official. This evening he is dressed in a plain black shirt and pants with a black vest, his collar open and the distinctive white neck band of a priest nowhere in sight.

While many in the Vatican have chafed at Francis's penchant for upending age-old customs and privileges to focus on the poor, Krajewski seems to take to it with a holy passion.

After the pope was elected in 2013 Francis appointed him almoner and told him flat-out: "You can sell your desk. You don't need it. You need to get out of the Vatican. Don't wait for people to come ringing. You need to go out and look for the poor."



So Krajewski, who is known as "Don Corrado" on the streets of Rome, heads out, handing out food in the pontiff's name or taking small groups of homeless for pizza and a trip to the beach as he did this summer.

"We are certainly not saving the world with these initiatives, we are not solving the problems of the homeless in Rome, but at least we are giving them back a little dignity," Krajewski, who disdains the spotlight and rarely speaks to the media, said in an Italian interview in August.

As Krajewski and his crew dish out vegetable risotto, boiled eggs, bread and fruit to the migrants on a balmy evening last month, 28-year-old "Simoni" from Eritrea - he is reluctant to reveal his real name - tells RNS how difficult it is to survive on the streets of the Italian capital.

"Everything is stressful," he says. "They (the Italian authorities) told us we had rights but we haven't seen any. That's why everyone wants to escape to Germany and other countries. What can we do? Everyone is worried we are going to be sent back home."

Ayanle, 21, came from Somalia, traveling overland through Turkey, Greece, Serbia and Slovenia to arrive in Italy. He says he fled from the Islamist terrorist group al-Shabab, which is active in east Africa.

"I asked for asylum in the Netherlands. They sent me back to Italy so I am now here," Ayanle says. "Life is very difficult here. There is nowhere to stay and no food."

Volunteers from the nonprofit group Baobab Experience, whose

motto is "protect people not borders," come to support the migrants every day. Sonia Manzi, a 48-year-old single mother and member of the group, says their situation is dire.

"The borders have closed so there are few departures now and those who cross the border into France or Switzerland are sent back," she says.

"They sleep on the ground or on the cartons or tiny mattresses we give them. This is impossible."

But sometimes things get even worse for the refugees, and there's little the pope, or Krajewski, can do.

Indeed, a day after the papal almoner brought food, the authorities shut down the camp and cleared out at least 100 migrants. They were taken away to have their identification checked, and police said the site was "in a very serious state of neglect."

But what will happen to them is unclear since local authorities say most shelters in Rome are full.

"The tents you are carrying away were those donated by citizens. The food you're throwing out was donated by Father Konrad, the almoner of the pope," the Baobab group said in a sharply worded statement on the group's Facebook page.

"Shutting down the camp doesn't solve the problem. There will still be migrants looking for a place to sleep tonight," Baobab co-founder Andrea Costa told Reuters.

And Krajewski will be out again looking for them. □

## THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



*The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion.*

*Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the*

*invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from*

*mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail*

*Marys as part of their morning and night prayers.*

*To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress,*

*special need or temptation, is a sure means to*

*obtain Our Lady's help.*

My husband was at home without a project for almost a year. My mother told me to start praying the 3 Hail

Marys everyday. Within few days my husband got a project out of Mumbai. My heart felt gratitude to Jesus and dear Mother Mary for this project. Also thank you Jesus and Mother Mary for all the blessings and graces bestowed on me and my family. Please continue to bless us and keep us in good health. Mrs. Nicola D'Souza, Mumbai

Thank you Most Holy Trinity, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the graces and favours bestowed on our family through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. Lolita and Mathew Moraes, Melbourne

I thank Jesus, Our Lady and the Saints for granting me great favours especially my daughter's marriage through the recitation of the "Three Hail Marys." I pray they continue to bless my family and me.

Mrs. C. D'Sa, Mumbai

Belated but evergrateful thanks to Divine Mercy of Jesus and Mother Mary for the miraculous cure without surgery for severe low back ache of my older son. He was advised surgery by reputed doctors but by the Mercy of Jesus and intercession of Mary our Mother he is not only fine but able to play his game of cricket as well! Thanks also for the successful bypass surgery of my husband and for choosing a perfect life partner for my younger son. Mother Mary keep us always in your loving care. Margaret Abraham, Bangalore

Thank you Jesus, and Mother Mary for all the favours received through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. My eldest daughter got a job, my second daughter got a distinction in her SSC examination and got admission in a good college and also for curing them from various sicknesses. Thank you Mother Mary for saving my husband from an accident two years back. Sandra, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary for helping me to have good seasons: 2014-2015, 2015-2016 S. de Souza, Goa

Mary, many thanks to you Jesus of the Divine Mercy and Mother Mary for the many blessings received and most of all for the success of a court case after 16 years and for getting my property back. I put my trust and faith completely in Our Lady and her Divine Son and I have never doubted. June Kapoor, Dublin

### LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

On 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2016, I slipped in the bathroom resulting in a fracture of two ribs. I have always been devoted to Our Lady Help of Christians and when I fell, I called out to her for assistance. At the clinic the doctor advised me complete bed rest. I continued to pray to Our Lord, Jesus, Our Lady Help of Christians and St Jude to come to my aid. One day, I remembered that one of my relatives had given me a white cloth from the Holy Land which had the verses from Acts (19:11-12). I wore it with great faith and on my follow-up visit; I was informed that there was great improvement in my condition. I wish to thank the Lord Jesus and Our Lady for their continuous blessings.

*Barbina John Dias*

My son Terence Barros (Std X) was diagnosed with acute appendicitis and was treated for the same in vain. He was admitted to a private hospital but nothing helped. On July 15<sup>th</sup> (three days later) he had to be shifted to another hospital where his appendix ruptured causing a puss formation in his abdomen. After a successful three hour surgery on July 17<sup>th</sup> he has been restored to health. A month later Terrence is back attending school. We are immensely grateful to Our blessed Lord and his most Holy Mother Mary and to all those who kept Terence in their prayers.

*Oswald Barros, Thane*

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

I was suffering from multiple ailments: kidney stones, liver problems, spleen, prostate and colic problems. Through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco I have been completely healed.

*Francis Gonsalves, Belgium*

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for granting me a safe trip to Bombay and for all the lovely food I enjoyed there.

*M. Dodd, Pune*

Many many thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for Mira's acceptance into the French programme, Maya's acceptance into the Wind Ensemble, for healing my ailing body, for Mira's acceptance into her major and Maya's summer job.

*Natasha Samagond*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St Rita of Cascia for helping me.

*Devotee*

I suddenly developed an ear problem and the doctor advised me to undergo a surgery. I stormed heaven and prayed to Our Lord and Our Lady. After two days there was improvement and the ear is better. Many thanks to Our Lord and Mother Mary for all the blessings bestowed on us and our family.

*Maria Fernandes, Mumbai*

Many thanks to Mother Mary for relieving me from stress and for giving me peace of mind.

*Judy, Mumbai*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our special thanks to Mother Mary and St Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby boy.

*Mrs Marilyn D'Souza, Goa*

Our grateful thanks to St Dominic Savio, St Ann and all the saints for a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby boy.

*Sydney and Rifka D'Souza*

Belated thanksgiving to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Dominic Savio and all the saints, through whose intercession my daughter was blessed with a gift of a baby boy after seven years of her marriage. Thanks also for all the blessings showered on my family members especially for the successful heart surgery of my husband. I pledge for continued prayers and help on all my family members.

*A Devotee*

Sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St Joseph, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the favours received.

*Gladys, Mumbai*

We thank our Loving Mother, her Son Jesus, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for their manifold blessings. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mother Mary saved my nephew Angelo from two major accidents. My niece was also saved when she had a fatal fall from the bike and hurt her head. Thank you dear Mother, if not for your help, both my nephew and niece would not have been saved. A million thanks to you our loving Mother. Do continue your powerful help dear mother in all our troubles. Be with us Mary along the way, guide every step we take.

*Ms S. Arputhaswamy, Tiruchirapalli, TN*

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady and St Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a healthy baby girl: Shanaya, Sameera.

*Patricia M. Mumbai*

Thank you Dominic Savio for your love and care during my entire pregnancy. I had been through complications between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> months and Dominic Savio kept me calm throughout. I have been blessed with a baby boy and we have named him "Savio."

*Jaqueline Nathan.*

## APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER FEBRUARY 2017

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#### MARY WAS THERE

On the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 2016, I was on my way home from the market. I was walking past a restaurant in Basavanagar (Bengaluru). I was a little more than a metre away from the restaurant, when I heard a loud sound. I turned around and saw a transformer near the restaurant had blown up and the electric wires had fallen missing a woman and her small child. I was stunned. This is the third time I had experienced such situation on the same road. This could have resulted in a bad accident or even a fatality. My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Mary help of Christians for protecting me. We pray to God in times of our need, but forget to thank God when we are blessed and protected, but still unworthy as we are, our God has mercy and blesses us.

*Lloyd Daniel Parakh – Solapur*

**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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