

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

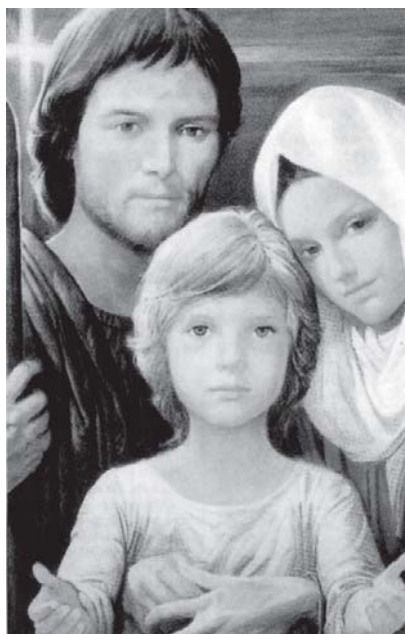
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CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>Something Borrowed!</i>	3
How I Changed my Life In Just Four Lines - Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS....	4
Youth On The Move: This is the Moment - Giuliano Palizzi.....	7
Walking With the Church: Angels of God - Fr. Vincent Barboza.....	8
St. John Bosco (1815 - 1888).....	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: St. Felix of Nola (523).....	12
Lectio Divina: The Messiah is Among Us, Do You Recognize Him (Mk 1, 7-11) - Carlo Broccardo.....	17
Quietspaces: The Power of the Lamb - Pope Francis.....	18
Carbon Copy - Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection..	20
The Holistic Character of Don Bosco's Spirituality: 11 - Fr. Elias Diaz, SDB.....	24
Reflecting on Mary: In The Heart of the Mother - Andrea Canale.....	28
NewsBits.....	31
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i>	15
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco</i>	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio</i>	35



*O God, you give us
the shining example
of the Holy Family,
may we imitate them
in practicing the virtues
of family life and
in the bonds of charity,
and so, in the joy of your
house, delight one day in
eternal rewards.*

(The Feast of the Holy Family)

*The Young Johnny Bosco's dream
at the age of 9*

From The Editor's Desk

Something Borrowed!

Sometime ago my friend and I swapped laptops. He needed one with a larger screen and that did his work quicker. He lent me his which was smaller and handier while he took my larger and more bulky piece. It began with him needing to borrow my laptop but as soon as I got his, it felt as if I was doing the borrowing. I was very aware that the laptop did not belong to me so I was particularly careful not to get it damaged.

If something belongs to me I may think I can do with it whatever I like because since it's mine it really won't affect anyone else.

Paradoxically things that belong to me sometimes tend to get better treatment. My sense of ownership brings with it a fairly self-centred outlook. Borrowing on the other hand forces us to take care of something that doesn't belong to us. We may feel pretty frightened about what may happen while it is in our care. It reminds me that I am responsible and will be held accountable.

O God, grant that we may so use the good things that pass in such a way as to hold fast even now to those that ever endure through Christ our Lord. (XVII Sunday in Ordinary Time)

What is it that actually belongs to me and what have I borrowed? Lately, more and more of us are aware that the environment and earth is not ours to do with however we please. As I look at creation it's easy for me to realize that I didn't make the earth. Its resilience makes it hard for me to connect my treatment of it with its ongoing existence. But it's hard to forget that God created the earth and all that is in it. It was here before me and will be here after me so I don't really own it. What then do I own?

Those few days using my friend's laptop helped me become aware that there is nothing really that totally belongs to me. I borrow everything.

Ultimately it all belongs to God. He came before all things and will be there after all things fade away, true enough. But, more than that, God has created me with certain abilities that allow me to acquire things for a season. I am borrowing them from the God who made me.

Therefore nothing really belongs to me. Yet I have been given so very much. Will I clamp down on it all and hoard it away fearing I don't have enough to make it through life? Or will I live more lightly and with greater appreciation? Will I give generously of what I have and trust that all I need will be provided?

When we are asked to support a cause out of our financial resources, it helps us prepare for that day when we will be held accountable for all we have done with what has been given to us. By making a joyful return to God, we realise at a deeper level that everything we have belongs to him and not to us. We are given much because we are loved much....even this New Year!

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

INTRODUCTION

The time is ripe to begin yet another series on the Eucharist. Although it is well nigh thirty years that we have started these series carrying an article each month on one aspect of the Eucharist, yet there is still so much more to be learnt and practiced. Delving into the depths of the great mystery of love which Jesus left us as an indelible sign of His tremendous love for each one of us, each article seeks to lead the reader into a little deeper understanding of God's unfathomable love and compassion. There is no doubt that these short pithy articles help to keep alive the sense of indebtedness to the Lord for the great gift given us; and we hope that this effort does not remain only on the level of feelings – which inevitably come and go in waves that are beyond our personal control.

The jubilee of the Eucharistic Congress celebrated towards the end of 2014 would have undoubtedly invited energetic Catholics to live the Eucharist more than merely to celebrate it, even if that celebration is done with great care and attention. For, as Jesus reminded us on the night of the Last Supper, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another (Jn 15:13-17).

May this sense of privilege and of mission be uppermost in our minds and hearts as we read and endeavour to live the Eucharist more and more meaningfully all through the coming months of 2015-2016.

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

HOW I CHANGED MY LIFE IN JUST FOUR LINES

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Come Advent or Lent and we find several well-intentioned people who are eager to change their lives for the better. Besides, almost every Advent/Lenten homily as also 'better-yourself' articles invite people to make the best of the opportunities that come up in such seasons! But it often happens that many people just do not know how to go about it effectively. For most people, changing one's life can seem an

incredibly tough and complicated thing, especially if one has sincerely tried and yet failed a great number of times (like I did), found it too hard, and resigned oneself to struggling harder the next time, but hardly changing in any significant degree! Perseverance seems to be the crux of the problem!

But evidently there are and must be some successful ways to change, even when one is not any



Leo Babauta

better than the neighbour next door - not more disciplined, nor more motivated or ingeniously creative! What we need most, however, in such circumstances is to just learn a few simple principles that changed someone's life. Most likely these will be at least part of the universal founding blocks that we could use too - if we really want to see a striking difference in our lives.

Here, in a nutshell, is how I (based on insights shared by Leo Babauta) changed my life.

How I Started Running

In 2005 I was predominantly sedentary, and couldn't for the life of me figure out how to make some strenuous exercise a regular habit. At the end of 2006, not only was I running very regularly, I finished my first marathon. By now I can run a half marathon race at the drop of a hat, and have run several marathons on a regular basis, much to the surprise of my close friends and family.

How did it all happen? Certainly not in just one day or even a week! I started with only ten minutes of running a day. The key that triggered off the success seems to have been my discovery

of an important principle: focus not on how hard it is going to be, but how much I can *enjoy* the movement and the fresh air outdoors. I increased the distance and time gradually, until I could run fifteen minutes, then twenty, and later a couple hours. I was consciously grateful for every run I was able to take. In the bargain, I got healthier, fitter, slimmer, happier! Another useful principle is: don't give up the first moment you feel you are going to collapse! Hang on for just a little longer - and pronto, you realize your tiredness has disappeared.

How I Started Eating Healthier

Also in 2005 I was overweight, and uncontrollably hooked on to junk food. I gorged on fast food, chips and cookies, fried meats, anything fatty or sweet or salty ... and I had no idea how to change. Today, I am 70 lbs. lighter, I eat almost all whole, real foods (practically nothing processed), I eat a sweet treat now and then but am happier eating healthy food as my regular diet.

How did I change? I started with small changes like drinking more water, eating more fruits and veggies, cooking at home more and preparing my lunches for work. One at a time! I gradually improved my diet, eventually cleared my fridge and pantry of junk, and stopped going to fast food places. I found healthy foods I really loved. I was grateful for every delicious healthy meal I ate. The end result was that I felt better about myself, trimmed down, and feel great every single day. Here too I focussed on the pleasant and gratifying results - even if it took months to get there!

How I Got Out of Debt

In 2005 again, I was way over my head in debt — it was so bad, I had creditors chasing after me, and I was so embarrassed that I would ignore all phone calls. I struggled to make it paycheck to paycheck, and sometimes didn't even make it — I had to borrow money from friends and family. It was one of the most stressful times of my life. At the end of 2007, I celebrated with my wife Eva when we paid off our last debt and were free!

How did I do it? I started one little change at a time: I started cutting back on expenses a little, saving a little at a time, paying off the little debts and then the bigger ones, found some breathing room, and saw the light at the end of the tunnel. I gradually changed my financial habits and got into better shape. I rejoiced and celebrated every debt paid off, every dollar saved, every inch of breathing space I managed to create for myself. I enjoyed how good I felt not to be hounded by creditors. I am debt free now and would not ever want to go back to be indebted with creditors on my back. It certainly is the most liberating thing ever.

Finally I Gave Up Goals

About two years ago, I started to give up goals. Just as an experiment. It turns out, I could still accomplish the same kinds of things, but the only difference was that I just didn't plan it out. Instead, I strictly followed the same principles which still worked, even without goals.

Some might say I can give up goals because I had already accomplished a lot ... but the truth is, I

can give up goals because I have learned a few things that work, and realized they work with or without goals. And if you follow these things, you can change your life too, with or without goals.

The Nutshell Principles

So what are the principles that changed my life, repeatedly? If you read the brief stories above, you already know:

1. Start very small.
2. Do only one change at a time.
3. Be present and enjoy the activity (don't focus on results).
4. Be grateful for every step you take.

In programming, this is called an algorithm. It's a series of steps that you can apply to make any change, no matter what your situation.

It works. This is the Zen Habits method, the Change Your Life App, in four lines. I hope it helps.



Link with the Eucharist

This is the advice Leo Babauta gives, based on his own personal struggle to change. Perhaps we could add a couple more principles based on what the Eucharist teaches us. Jesus says to us, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and

you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt 11:28-30). With this invitation Jesus offers to do all the hard work for us – in His own inimitable way! All we need to do is to genuinely and humbly place our total selves into His hands and allow Him to do the work of changing us from deep within. All we need to do is to listen to His voice and 'do whatever he tells us' as Mary advised the servants at the wedding feast of Cana. This approach also recalls the experience of Paul recounted in Rom. 7:21-25.

Simple as this sounds, it is not easy, because quite often what the Lord tells us would seem pretty silly to our sophisticated minds and customs. At the Wedding feast, for instance, Jesus first told the servants to fill the jars with water. Those jars contained water for ritual washing – evidently not drinking water! Besides, it was wine that was needed at that point and not more water! Further, when the servants filled those jars to the brim they were told to "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward" (Jn 2:8). They were shocked to see that the jars still had nothing different from the water they had filled! "So (Yet) they took it. When the steward tasted the *water* that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants *who had drawn the water knew* – v. 9) they did not contradict the steward who referred now to it as 'the best wine!' If only we too could obey like this!

Unlike Abraham & Sarah

In Gen. chs. 12-22 we see God

instructing Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." We are next told that Abram went *as the Lord told him*, but he took Lot along with him. Wasn't this sheer disobedience? Later Abram himself had to ask Lot to separate and now he cut himself off from his nephew almost totally. Further, God promised Abram a large progeny but made it sufficiently clear that "no one but your very own issue shall be your heir" (Gen 15:4). Yet Abram himself suggested an alternative viz. that Eliezer his trusted slave would be his heir according to local custom; later Sarai too resorts to another customary practice of having a child through her maid-servant, Hagar – both suggestions being rejected by God. Abraham eventually indicates his total surrender when in ch. 18 he invites the three guests into his tent and serves them a meal, but he himself stands outside under a tree – thereby indicating that he is their servant, ready to abide by whatever he is told to do. Ch. 22 finally shows Abraham ready to obey unquestioningly, even to the point of sacrificing his only son, the son whom he loved very much!

Only when Abraham reaches this last stage does he experience the full truth of God's promise to make him the father of a large nation. So also with us: our total obedience is a must if we are to experience God's powerful help in our day-to-day lives. Would you like to try this recipe for change as you turn over a new leaf? The Lord assures you of His powerful presence and love! □

THIS IS THE MOMENT

Giuliano Palizzi

2015 and *"it's high time we wake up from sleep."* The year flies by very quickly: a year be filled with Him, a year to take up your faith, a year to achieve a breakthrough in your life: how we are living it?

Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses. He sets the time for sorrow and the time for joy, the time for mourning and the time for dancing...the time for silence and the time to talk. He sets the time for love and the time for hate, the time for war and the time for peace." (Eccl 3,1, 4, 6-8).

IS THERE A TIME WE GIVE TO GOD?

"Give your time to God," Don Bosco told his youngsters. We need a strong discernment. "As they went on their way, a man said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest." He said to another man, "Follow me." But that man said, "Sir, first let me go back and bury my father." Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Another man said, "I will follow you, sir; but first let me go and say good-bye to my family." Jesus said to him, "Anyone who starts to plough and then keeps looking back is of no use to the Kingdom of God" (Lk 9, 57-62).

Each year we begin a new journey and every year we have a time for an annual re-reading of the Word but with variations according to the year and because of the several experiences we have lived through. Now, at this time in your life, is your *yes* to God as fresh as it was at the first time? Is it new but mature according to your years and is your readiness to love him coupled with the desire to live fully every useful minute?

TO BE CONVERTED: LEAVING YOUR NETS IMMEDIATELY

"After John had been arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. "The right time has come," he said, "and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good news."

"As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus said to them, "Come with me, and I will teach you to catch men." At once they left their nets and went with him" (Mk 1,14-18).

"In our work together with God, then, we beg you who have received



ved God's grace not to let it be wasted. "Hear what God says: "when the time came for me to show you favour I heard you; when the day arrived for me to save you, I helped you." Listen! This is the hour to receive God's favour, today is the day to be saved!" (2Cor 6, 1-2). Chronological time (κρονος) is to be filled with intense content (καρος).

So, spending an hour with your girlfriend and listening for an hour to a boring lecture chronologically is always an hour but what do you get out of its content?! With Jesus, chronological time acquires greater importance and more substance and he decides to live it "instantly" and completely, making positive choices such as being invited to follow him and become a fisher of men, filling the world around him with new flavours that taste of eternity.

TO BE CONVERTED: TO WAKE UP FROM SLEEP

"You must do this, because you know that the time has come for you to wake up from your sleep, for the moment when we will be saved is closer now than it was when we first believed... Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day... Take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ and stop paying attention to your sinful nature and satisfying your desires (Rm 13,11, 13-14). "While we were with you, we used to say to you, "Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat." We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives and who do nothing except meddle in other people's business (2Thes 3, 10-11). "Behave honestly..." Live well

ordered lives and that is not easy. It is a continuous process. It is necessary to programme the growth of your spiritual life. Do you have a spiritual guide who will confront you and challenge you with the Word? Reread the advice that Paul gives to the Romans in Chapter 12 and feel as one with his effort to do the good he wants while he is driven towards the evil he doesn't want (Rm 7, 18 to 19).

TO BE CONVERTED: "TO LIVE WITH LESS"

On Ash Wednesday a pinch of ashes are applied to our foreheads as if to say that if our ideas are not like those of Christ, we run the risk of turning into ashes. But if we are converted and believe in the Gospel, then that's another story and our life acquires a dimension that is characteristic of eternity and all we do does not fly away like ash, but it means "we can live with less" because we know what is essential and so we detach ourselves from all that weighs us down, hindering us from progressing efficiently without any impediment.

"What I mean, my brothers is this: there is not much time left, and from now on married men should live as if they were not married; those who weep, as though they were not sad; those who laugh, as though they were not happy; those who buy, as though they did not own what they bought; those who deal in material goods as though they were not fully occupied with them, for this world, as it is now, will not last much longer!" (1 Cor 7,29-31)

If we are as we think or what we think, our thoughts (our intentions) can become the worst enemies to our life of faith. □

walking with the Church



ANGELS OF GOD

Fr. Vincent Barboza

The belief in the spiritual beings called “angels” is not the uniqueness of Christianity. Other religions also believe in the existence of angels but their understanding is different from the Church. The Church belief in angels is enshrined in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed of the Church which says “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible”. What is this invisible thing? It is interpreted by Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and repeated by Vatican I in the context of the doctrine of creation “God at the beginning of time created from nothing both creatures the spiritual and the corporeal i.e. angelic and the earthly” (*Constitution De Fide Catholica*, DS 3002).

The belief in angels is basically the teaching of scripture right from the Old Testament, continued in the New Testament by Jesus and others and it is echoed by Paul in his letter to the Colossians: “For in Him (Christ) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). In other words God created



both realities from the very beginning: the spiritual reality and the corporeal, the earthly world and the angelic world. This belief in the angels is reflected in the practice of the Church in the celebration of the two feasts of Angels: the feast of Archangels Sts. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael on September 29 and the feast of Guardian Angels on October 2.

(Continued on pg. 30)

SALESIAN SAINTS

SAINT JOHN BOSCO (1815 - 1888)

He was born in 1815, lost his father when he was two years old and became a priest in 1841. Don Bosco wanted to become a missionary but his spiritual director Joseph Cafasso told him to look around Turin, the capital of the kingdom of Sardinia. There he discovered thousands of migrant youngsters, ruffians, urchins and rogues. There were several of them in prison. "So many youngsters, from twelve to eighteen years, all healthy, strong, talented and alert but all of them were idle, infested with lice and starving for spiritual and material bread. That was something that horrified me." That was his mission: those youngsters.

Two hundred unemployed and homeless were shunted around for four years because of the unbearable noise they made. But Don Bosco was not discouraged.

By 1846 three hundred boys he had found a permanent home which he bought and paid for. From his hospitable Sunday gatherings he started a real home where real young men were formed. The first benefactor to come forward was a peasant woman who sold her wedding ring and earrings to feed those boys. She was Margaret Occhiena, Don Bosco's wonderful mother. Those were simple but beautiful beginnings. Later Don Bosco's own boys who had become priests were dedicated exclusively to educating his youngsters and



the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians looked after girls. Today the world knows them even beyond the confines of the Catholic Church; even non-Christians send their children to their schools.

Don Bosco was 73 when he died. During his last years his body showed signs of immense fatigue. He had sacrificed himself for the youngsters of his time and for future times.

Even at that age he was not left in peace. Friend and confidant to Pope Pius IX, he would have bitter disagreements with the Archbishop of Turin, Lorenzo Gastaldi. But then out of obedience to Pope Leo XIII, Don Bosco dragged himself around Italy and the rest of Europe searching for funds to build the Church of Sacred Heart in Rome.

During his last years a Lombard priest visited him to see his very modern typesetting machine and exclaimed: "Dear Don Bosco, you are always *avant-garde!*" Several years later in 1922, that priest became Pope Pius XI and proclaimed him a Saint. It was Easter Sunday 1934. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. FELIX OF NOLA, (523) (JANUARY 14)

by Bede the Venerable

Saint Felix was born in Nola, in Campania, of a Syrian father, whose name was Hermias, and who coming from the East settled at Nola where Felix was born. He left a rich worldly inheritance. He had a brother named Hermias like his father, who was only interested in worldly goods, and preferred to become a soldier of Caesar rather than of Christ. Felix on the other hand devoted himself to the service of God. From his boyhood first undertook the duties of reader in the church; and afterwards becoming exorcist, began to cast out unclean spirits from those who were possessed. It came to pass that some of the leaders of the enemy came to Nola, to arrest him in order to torment his bishop, Maximus, a man venerable for learning, piety and his gray hairs. But the Divine Love, sent down an angel to pluck Felix who was now in prison and sent him forth to seek the bishop and bring him home while the persecution still raged on.

The bishop thanked holy Felix for his labour of love, and placing his right hand upon his head, gave him his fatherly blessing. Depart-



ing from there he concealed himself for a few days in his own house, until the storm of persecution had passed over. As soon as this happened he left his concealment and restored himself to the sight of his congratulating citizens. He went about everywhere, consoling and confirming their minds with words of exhortation; for, during the bitterness of the late persecution; they had been terribly cast down. He taught them not only by his word, but by his example, to despise the prosperities and adversities of this world, and to seek only the joys of the heavenly country, to fear alone the anger of the Heavenly Judge.

But the persecution was not yet over; Felix was again sought for, the enemy came to his house, and again attempted to seize him and deliver him over to death. He was by chance away from home, standing in the market-place with his friends, and teaching to the surrounding people, as was his wont, the word of God. His adversaries were unable to find him through a sudden act of Divine Providence his persecutors no longer knew him, though up to that day they had known him well. Upon this the persecutors turned their attention elsewhere, and asked those whom they met, where Felix was. One of them, by chance, ignorant of their motives, and thinking they were out of their wits, began to reprove them for their folly in not knowing the man they had been talking to, and at the same time pointed out to them where he was gone. Fired to madness they rushed after Felix, who, warned of their coming by the multitude of citizens that preceded, and by the clamours of the people who were confounded at the enemy's approach, withdrew to a secret place, which had no other defence than a fragment of a half ruined wall. No sooner, however, had the man of God entered that place, than he was protected by a work of the Divine hand; for a mound of rubbish suddenly arose and closed in the place, and a spider, by Divine warning, immediately hung its floating web on the abandoned spot. Thus foiled, they retraced their steps in anger, and fixed with rage against him who had by his deceit led them to the place, to witness the wisdom of our pious Creator and Protector. Surely, the highest walls sometimes betray a beleaguered city, as

well as defend it: for Christ protected his humble servant from detection and imprisonment at the hands of his armed enemies by a frail spider's web: as the venerable father Paulinus says truly on this subject, — "Where Christ is with us, a spider's web our wall shall be; where Christ is not, our wall a spider's web shall be." The evening was approaching when his enemies departed; and Felix, when they were gone, withdrew to a safer place of refuge, rejoicing in the Divine protection, and singing within himself, — "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil, for Thou art with me." When day dawned, he withdrew to a more retired place among the buildings of the city, where for six whole months he lived apart from men, relying on the protection of the Divine presence, according to the words of the Psalmist — "His countenance was hidden from the fear of men;" and Providence fed him during this long space of time in a manner wonderful and unknown to men.

There was a certain countryman, poor in worldly goods, but rich in faith, who supported himself in straitened circumstances by the possession of two oxen, which he used in his own work, and also let out for hire to his neighbours. These oxen, which he took great care of, were one morning missing; and their owner, when he discovered the loss, without the slightest idea of searching for and finding them, ran to the church of St. Felix, where he threw himself prostrate on the ground before the doors of the sacred house; and, fixing his eyes on the earth, besought the holy man to

restore him his oxen which he had lost, and vowed never to leave the church until he should recover them. He remained there all the day, uttering cries which savoured of a rustic dialect, but nevertheless evinced the faith which was in his heart. When evening came on he was rejected by the multitude, and thrust out of the sacred edifice. He then returned home, where he continued his lamentations all the night. But, because everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened, and, as the Psalmist says, "*The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor,*" — at midnight, when everything was buried in sleep, the countryman recovers his oxen. and the poor man alone was kept awake by poverty and sorrow for his loss, on a sudden, wonderful to be related, the oxen which he was seeking came to the door, as if by Divine interposition; having returned safe from the hands of the robbers, through the wild country and the darkness of night, to their owner's house. They knocked with their horns against the door of the house, to signify that they had come back; but the poor man, in fear and trembling, thinking that the thieves were returned, did not open the door, until the oxen, as if understanding the cause of his delay, informed him who they were by lowing. The rustic, having thus recovered his cattle, acted by no means like a rustic on the occasion, but like a wise man and a faithful Christian; for the first thing which he did in the morning was to offer up thanks to his Redeemer. He went to the church of St. Felix, and took his oxen along with him. He joyfully told everyone

who met him on his way thither, and also those who were at the church, the benefits which he had received from the holy confessor; and, in as much as by lamenting so long for his loss he had done no small injury to his eyes, he offered up a petition to St. Felix, and got them cured; so that he returned home benefited in more ways than one, and full of joy.

Such, indeed, was its power, that the usual nature of things was changed; and fire, which usually consumes everything, was itself consumed by the wood of our Lord's passion. When the conflagration was over, the citizens came in the morning to see what havoc had been committed during the night, and expected to find that they were great losers: but they found that nothing had been burnt, except what deserved to be burnt. Of the two houses before-mentioned, which even themselves wished to destroy, one was utterly consumed by the flames. The owner was put to shame by the thing; for he perceived that he had lost his house all the same, without meriting any obligation from the holy father; and immediately afterwards the owner of the other house which remained began to pull it down with his own hands, that the whole space round the church might be cleared, and be rendered worthy the merits of the saint. When all the rubbish was removed, the Bishop Paulinus persevered in rebuilding the church, and accompanied the task in three years, adding pictures, and every other proper ornament. On the 14th of January he finished his glorious career, and received the crown of life, *which God hath promised to those which love him.* □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Don't be too sure

A young agricultural student was very proud of his knowledge. With a touch of scorn he told an elderly farmer, "I bet you won't get ten kilos of apples from that tree."

"You are probably right," said the farmer, "but this happens to be a pear tree."

Not satisfied

Said the old gentleman to the doctor: "I have a bad pain in my left leg, and I wonder if you could do something to cure it."

"There is no cure for it. The pain is due to your old age, and medical science cannot cure that."

"Nonsense!" cried the old gentleman. "My right leg is as old as my left leg, and it has no pain."

Woe is me

Little boy: "I wish I hadn't improved my handwriting."

Mother: Why not?

Little boy: "Teacher has discovered I can't spell now."

No claims

The bride was shy about asking her husband for money. "Pat, dear," she said at breakfast, "will you lend me hundred rupees? But only give me half of it."

"Of course, darling," said her husband, puzzled. "But why only half of it?"

"Well, then you'll owe me fifty, and I'll owe you fifty, and so we'll be square, won't we?"

Real regret

She had insisted on taking along

every garment she had and they arrived at the station loaded with luggage.

"I wish," said the husband thoughtfully, "that we had brought your piano, too."

"Oh, stop trying to be funny," came the frigid reply.

"I'm not trying to be funny," said the husband wistfully, "I left the tickets on it."

So what?

Joe: "What animal has eyes that can't see, legs that can't walk, but can jump as high as a skyscraper?"

Bill: "I give up."

Joe: "A wooden horse. It has eyes that can't see, and legs that can't walk."

Bill: "But, it can't jump."

Joe: "Neither can a skyscraper."

Asking for more

Young Paddy came home from school with a black eye.

"What have you been up to?" his mother demanded.

"I've been fighting Billy Murphy," Paddy confessed.

"Well, take him some sweets and make friends again," his mother said.

Paddy did so, but in the afternoon he came home with another black eye.

"Good gracious!" his mother exclaimed.

"What's happened now?"

"He did it again," Paddy replied sadly.

"He wants more sweets tomorrow." □



THE MESSIAH IS AMONG US. DO YOU RECOGNIZE HIM?

(Mark 1, 7 -11)

by Carlo Broccardo

Jesus, the long-awaited one, is not just someone: He is the Son of God yet his greatness is not manifested as John would have liked. His Power is not revealed in great works.

The New Year 2015 begins with the narration of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan which is an appropriate way that evangelist Mark (who will accompany us through most of the year) asks us to pay attention to the Gospel Sunday after Sunday and day after day. But let us not jump to conclusions, instead let's just read this passage from the beginning.

The first person we encounter is John the Baptist. We already heard him during the month of December. Summarising, John was a great preacher: he proclaimed a baptism for the remission of sins at a place not well-identified as Judea (the southern region near Jerusalem) along the Jordan River. And "many people from the province of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to hear him... and he baptised them in the River Jordan (Mk 1, 6).

Why did John call the people to repentance and to be baptised? He himself tells us why in the opening verses of today's passage: because

he was convinced that even now the Messiah, the long-awaited saviour of the people of Israel was coming. He was already at the gates; and if he was already there they needed to prepare and purify themselves. He needed to purify them of their sins in order to be ready for his coming.

"The man who will come after me is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to bend down and untie his sandals." Try to imagine what walking in sandals all day long in a place without paved roads or along footpaths is like; then getting home in the evening, sitting on a stool, or better a mat, taking off one's sandals and washing one's feet. There is little poetry in an operation like this; in fact, it is considered a slave's task performed for his master as he returns home.

Well, says John, encountering the one he was waiting for, I am even less than a slave. I am nobody, he is so great! He's so strong! He's the one who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The Greek word "to baptize" literally means: "to immerse." John immerses in the water of the Jordan but he will immerse them in the Spirit of God. John fulfilled the ritual purification of sins. John said: he will be God in your midst and it will be so real that everyone will be aware of it. We will be immersed in the presence of God. Matthew calls this presence God-with-us.

John's proclamation is very significant; not for nothing does he capture the attention of those large crowds. Centuries of waiting have come to an end, the long-awaited saviour, who was invoked every Sabbath in the synagogue is finally here. We have to wait

no longer, he is in our midst! He is stronger, he is greater and more powerful and he will baptise you in the Holy Spirit. These words have the capacity to inflame, to captivate and to stir up great expectations – these ideas are completely contradicted by the reality!

It is beautiful to see v. 9 in which the evangelist presents Jesus, finally after so much has been said about him. “Not long afterwards Jesus came from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” But how, did he seem to be the most powerful or the greatest? In fact, he came from a town which, at that time, was very small and unknown and like everyone else he came to be baptised by John. What a disappointment! None of those present, when they saw Jesus, thought he was the man John spoke of, none of them thought he was very powerful. Here was the one John thought was greater than himself and he himself was not even worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. No one noticed him, no one recognized him.

If it does not get too complicated, we should, at this point make a little digression. All of us remember the words that the Baptist exclaims in the Gospel according to John (and which we joyfully repeat every time we go to Mass): **“Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”** According to the evangelist John, the Baptist recognized Jesus and indeed pointed him out to his disciples and they followed him. The fourth Gospel points out that despite a thousand uncertainties – the Baptist was “the friend of the bridegroom,” who followed them to faith in Jesus. Mark instead,



*Baptism of Jesus by Mattia Preti
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Malta*

wished to highlight another aspect and so emphasizes rather the fact that John, who would sooner or later recognize Jesus, was confused when he first saw him.

John remained confused, he expected someone great instead he saw before him a “nondescript” from an insignificant village, seemingly devoid of any distinctive signs. We know Jesus is not just someone. After his baptism, the heavens opened and God himself exclaimed: “You are my beloved Son, the Beloved.” Jesus is not just anybody; he is the beloved Son of God. But his greatness was not manifested as John expected and his power was not revealed in great works.

This experience of John the Baptist is just ideal to start reading the Gospel according to Mark. It is an invitation to be still more amazed by Jesus Sunday after Sunday and not to assume that we know who he is. From his first page, Mark invites us to continue searching; not from scratch, but to take up the journey once more. The person of John is an invitation not to be content with first impressions, because Jesus is much more than what we perceive him to be. □

On Sunday afternoon, 19 January 2014, Pope Francis made a pastoral visit to the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Castro Pregonio, not far from Termini train station, in Rome. Concelebrating the Holy Mass were Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar of Rome, and Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, Deacon of the Sacred Heart Parish, Bishop Matteo Zuppi, Auxiliary of the central sector, and Salesian Bishop Mario Toso, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, were also present, together with the parish priest Don Valerio Baresi and many others. After Mass, the Holy Father spent 40 minutes meeting with the organizers of the parish youth group. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's homily at Mass on the passage from John's Gospel (1:29-34), which was delivered in Italian.

This passage from the Gospel is beautiful. John was baptizing; and Jesus, who had been baptized prior to this – some days before – was coming towards him and came before John. And John felt the power of the Holy Spirit within him to bear witness to Jesus. Looking at him, and looking at the people around Him, he said: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. And he bore witness to Jesus: this is Jesus, this is the One who has come to save us; this is the One who will give us the power of hope.

Jesus is called the Lamb: He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Someone might think: but how can a lamb, which is so weak, a weak little lamb, how can it take away so many sins, so much wickedness? With Love. With his meekness. Jesus never ceased being a lamb: meek, good, full of love, close to the little ones, close to the poor. He was there, among the people, healing everyone, teaching,



praying. Jesus, so weak, like a lamb. However, he had the strength to take all our sins upon himself, all of them. “But, Father, you don’t know my life: I have a sin that..., I can’t even carry it with a truck...”. Many times, when we examine our conscience, we find some there that are truly bad! But he

OF THE LAMB*s Pope Francis*

carries them. He came for this: to forgive, to make peace in the world, but first in the heart. Perhaps each one of us feels troubled in his heart, perhaps he experiences darkness in his heart, perhaps he feels a little sad over a fault.... He has come to take away all of this, He gives us peace, he forgives everything.



“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away sin”: he takes away sin, it’s root and all! This is salvation Jesus brings about by his love and his meekness. And in listening to what John the Baptist says, who bears witness to Jesus as the Saviour, our confidence in Jesus should grow. Many times we trust a doctor: it is good, because the doctor is there to cure us; we trust in a person: brothers and sisters can help us. It is good to have this human trust among ourselves. But we forget about trust in the Lord: this is the key to success in life. Trust in the Lord, let us trust in the Lord! “Lord, look at my life: I’m in the dark, I have this struggle, I have this sin...”; everything we have: “Look at this: I trust in you!”. And this is a risk we must take: to trust in Him, and He never disappoints. Never, never! Listen carefully, young people, who are just beginning life now: Jesus never disappoints. Never. This is the testimony of John: Jesus, the good One, the meek One, will end as a lamb, who is slain. Without crying out. He came to save us, to take away sin. Mine, yours and that of the whole world: all of it, all of it.

And now I invite you to do something: let us close our eyes, let us imagine the scene on the banks of the river, John as he is baptizing and Jesus who is approaching. And let us listen to John’s voice: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. Let us watch Jesus and in silence, each one of us, say something to Jesus from his heart. In silence. (Pause for silence).

May the Lord Jesus, who is meek, who is good – he is a lamb – who came to take away sin, accompany us on the path of our life. So be it. □

CARBON COPY

From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories

Nancy Martin is eight years old. She has brown eyes and blond hair that Hilda the maid keeps screwed back into a pony-tail. One morning Nancy woke up and found that the whole world had changed. Sunlight was already streaming through the windows of her room but Hilda hadn't come to wake her up and help her get dressed. Nancy waited and waited but Hilda didn't come. She listened hard but she couldn't hear her mother and her daddy talking in their room across the hall. She decided to dress herself and find out where everybody was. She was getting pretty big now anyway, at least that's what Hilda told her again and again.

The operation done, there she was, all dressed except for tying her Oxfords. Heavy footsteps sounded on the stairs, Nancy opened the door and peeked out. She saw two strange men in overalls they smiled at her but she ran past them down the stairs. She found Hilda in the breakfast room. With a worried look she told Hilda: "Hilda, I saw two burglars." Hilda assured her that they were not burglars. They were just the men who had come to carry the trunks. "What are they taking the trunks for?" Nancy asked. "Because your mother and you and me are going on a trip," said Hilda. Nancy wanted to know where they were going and she got the reply: "We're going to Reno." Nancy hadn't the faintest idea where or what Reno was like. Hilda put cereal into a bowl and

Nancy started eating while Hilda continued, telling her that Reno was in the middle of a desert and that a desert was a sandy and very hot place. Nancy, little as she was noticed that Hilda sounded and behaved rather funny this morning. "Hilda," she asked: "Don't you feel good? You aren't singing this morning." Pretending to be distracted Hilda looked away and replied: "Some days you feel like singing. Some days you don't. Come on drink your milk." This mystery was eating Nancy up but she assured herself that when her father came home in the evening she would ask him. Hilda interrupted her musings and coldly told her that she had better go up after breakfast and ask her mother. Hilda turned and went to the kitchen but from the dining room little Nancy could hear Hilda and the cook whispering in the kitchen. They acted the way they did when the stork brought a baby to Mrs. Taylor's house next door. Nancy drank her milk in two gulps and ran upstairs to her mother's room. Mother was folding dresses and putting them in a suitcase. Clothes were strewn across chairs and on the bed. Mother's face was whiter than Nancy had ever seen it. But her eyes were dark and sparkly. Like they were at those times when daddy telephoned and said he wouldn't be home for dinner.

Nancy walked into her mother's room and asked: "Mother, what are we going to Reno for?" Gladys Martin looked

up from her packing: "Who told you we were going to Reno?" Before Nancy could open her mouth again Gladys added: "Don't ask so many questions." She was told that her father would meet them as they reached the train station. Then she added: "Anyway he's not coming with us." Nancy was disappointed: "Daddy's not coming?" It was then that it dawned on Nancy that there were quite a few vacations that Mr. Martin did not go for with the two of them.

One thing Nancy liked was the beach: "I like the beach," said Nancy excitedly, "I like the pretty ladies going into the water." Then looking out of the window Nancy mused: "But I want daddy to come. Daddy hasn't gone to the beach with us in a long time. He doesn't go any place with us anymore." Gladys was feeling a little awkward. To distract her daughter she said: "Nancy, go find Hilda. Tell her....tell her to get you dressed for the trip. We're going for a nice train ride darling. You like it on the train don't you?" Nancy skipped out of the room happily forgetting all the questions that had buzzed around her little head just a few seconds ago.

Nancy's father was waiting when she, her mother and Hilda arrived at the station. Hilda shook her head and said: "I'm sorry Mr. Martin, good bye." Then she took the suitcases and got onto the train. Nancy wondered what Hilda was sorry about. She got a funny feeling in her stomach. Her father picked her up and hugged her. Nancy thought he held her

for too long. He didn't laugh or pull her ponytail as he usually did. He just said: "You be a good little girl, Nancy." Gladys was getting a little impatient: "We only have a minute." Ralph said: "You take care of my girl," and Gladys replied defiantly: "You don't need to worry about that." Nancy wondered, her father, Ralph hadn't even kissed Gladys goodbye like in the old days. There was something wrong.

Nancy's funny feeling only increased. Everybody was acting strange today. But once she was on the train, she forgot everything except the fun she was having. She sat by a window and tried to count the telephone poles flying past. She kept losing count and starting all over again. Then they sped past a green pasture filled with cows and little red calves, the littlest calves she had ever seen. When she was tired of watching the scenery, Hilda brought out a new picture book and with Hilda's droning voice Nancy fell asleep. When she awoke it was time for dinner.

She was still sleepy when they got off the train at Reno. They took a taxi that rushed them to a little white house with flowers in the front and a small grassy yard at the back. Nancy took a nap and then went out to explore the yard. A little girl from the house next door came to the fence and swung herself up on the planks. Her round face was wreathed in a smile and her black eyes sparkled with friendliness. "My name's June Lewis, what's yours?" "Nancy Martin," came the reply. Then June asked very casually:

"Has your mother got her divorce yet?" Nancy asked: "What's divorce?" June laughed in surprise and added that her five year old brother already knew what a divorce was. Then June went on to tell Nancy about a 'divorce' with some authority: "It's only fair. A divorce is when your mother and your daddy don't live in the same house any more." That meant she wouldn't see her father again, but she couldn't believe that something like this was happening. She thought she had better ask her mother.

That night, after Hilda had her ready for bed, Nancy slipped across the hall into her mother's room. Gladys was walking up and down, smoking. When one cigarette was down to a little stub she'd light another. She tiptoed into the room and asked in little above a whisper: "Mother, are you getting a divorce?" Finally, Gladys had to admit: "Yes, Nancy, I'm getting a divorce."

So that's what it was. Nancy now realized what all the screaming and arguing and the long absences from the home had led to. Gladys said: "Your father and I can't live in the same house when we disagree all the time." Gladys held Nancy close to her and said: "Anyway in a few days we're going to the beach. You'll like that won't you?" Nancy was wide-awake: "Oh, yes, I like the beach. Will the Major be there? He acts funny." Gladys looked at Nancy and asked: "What do you mean?" Nancy said innocently: "He looks at you all the time and he smiles funny." Gladys turned away. Then she called for Hilda

to take Nancy to bed.

Some time later Gladys and Hilda took her to a big building with long flights of steps. She sat on her mother's lap while a man asked her mother questions. Mother cried a little. Then they went home. When Nancy was alone with Hilda that afternoon she said in a low voice: "That's the divorce. Just like that" and she snapped her fingers. In the afternoon Hilda took Nancy to the park. She talked to the other maids while Nancy played with a girl named Marie and a boy named Tommy. Nancy boasted: "My mother got her divorce today." Tommy asked: "Is it her first one?" Marie interrupted and told them proudly that her mother was on to her second divorce. Some fellow Howard was really queer and Tommy said solemnly that his mother was getting her third divorce. His last dad Steve lasted only a year. He laughed as he said: "I have three fathers." Nancy was a little confused and not a little worried and so asked rather unsteadily: "Are they nice?" Tommy continued: "I liked Alfred almost as much as my real father. But Steve is a pain. He made me go to boarding school for a whole year. And his little girl lived in our house with my mother. But I think mother's going to get a nice dad this time." Marie, Tommy and Nancy discussed their fathers like people discuss film stars and then Tommy said: "My dad says, nobody can tell my mother what to do. He says she's a woman who can't be tamed." Marie agreed and said: "That's what I'm going to be when I grow up: A woman

who can't be tamed; nobody's going to boss me around and if he tries it I'll get a divorce." That sounded pretty convincing so finally Nancy had her say: "That's what I'm going to do when I grow up!"

Later, when Nancy came home she tried to take a nap but she wasn't sleepy. She wandered into the living room looking for her mother. The door was slightly ajar and she peeked in and saw her mother sitting on the couch and beside her sat Mr. Hamilton, the man from the beach. They were both laughing. Mr. Hamilton had his arm around mother just the way daddy used to. Suddenly he turned in the direction of the door and saw the two little eyes peering at them so, from where he sat, he asked Nancy if she would like him to be her daddy. Nancy was confused and blurted out: "But I already have a daddy." Mr. Hamilton came over to Nancy and tried to convince her. He asked her if there that there was anything wrong with having another daddy? Nancy didn't know what to say. She simply looked away. The conversation between Nancy's mother and Mr. Hamilton seemed to be over and so he came back to the centre of the room and standing beside Gladys and looking at Nancy who was still at the door said: "Well, I suppose your mother and I can go ahead with our plans can't we?" The tension seemed to have been broken so Nancy told them about her friends Marie and Tommy who had two and three fathers. Mr. Hamilton and Gladys looked at each other rather embarrassed. When she had finished, with

some determination she strutted up to her room saying with some determination: "I'm going to tell Marie and Tommy that I now have two and maybe sometime soon I'll have even five daddies." The scene was getting more awkward. Gladys was wringing her hands and looking at her feet while Mr. Hamilton hurried behind Nancy before she reached the stairs and lifted her close to his cheek and said: "Don't you think I'll make a nice daddy?" Nancy seemed to agree and with a wry smile said: "I guess so. But I don't know how long you're going to last."

This story doesn't have a happy ending. It couldn't have. Here is another little girl who is going to be haunted for the rest of her life for the failure of her father and mother to keep their promise of fidelity. She'll be restless and discontent. She'll search for happiness where her parents did and she won't find it. How will she? What kind of a family will she start as she decides to start a family of her own with a man she thinks she loves? She will probably relive the only kind of home she knew and that was not a happy one.

How strong will a family built by children from broken homes be? But there is hope left for the homes of our day only if we deepen our understanding of the words of the marriage promise and abide by them. That is why we call them *Marriage vows*. "I take you to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part." □

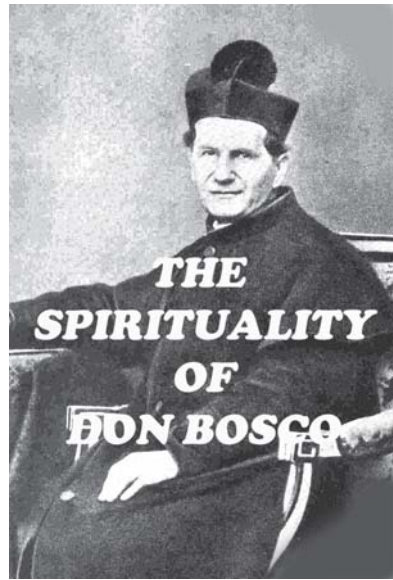
THE HOLISTIC CHARACTER OF DON BOSCO'S SPIRITUALITY

11

by Fr. Elias Dias

Spirituality is the way by which we attain the God given goal of "the Love of God and love of our neighbour." Various saints had their own spirituality: the Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Ignatian, Salesian and other types of spirituality were typical of their founders of congregations. A spirituality is a man's response to God's call in a particular place, time and circumstance. He follows God's command in this manner and practices holiness. The problem however is: What is holiness? Varied definitions come from the way various people use the word. There are different criteria for evaluating them and most often they are unaware of these images and criteria and yet are guided by them at an unconscious level. Fr. Vincent Pereira, one-time Director of the Orientation Year for Human Development and Spirituality at the St. Pius X College, Goregaon, Mumbai gives eight images and models of holiness. We shall briefly consider these models.

The Moulding Model: The image here is that of a mould which one has to fit into. The mould represents Jesus or a particular saint. The liquid metal is poured in and after a certain period of setting what emerges is a replica of Jesus or a saint concerned. It is



good to be in a mould but we have to accept that we can never completely copy others.

The Angelic Model: The image here is that of a disembodied spirit. This model makes a man into an angel. To be holy means he ceases to be human. They consider anything worldly or sexual is distasteful. The fact, however is that Jesus became man though he was "in the form of God" (Phil 2:6-8) and made us human beings.

The Hermit Model: The image here is that of a hermit who flees to the seclusion of the desert to become a saint. The assumption of the hermit model is that the world is bad and therefore he must flee it. Vatican II in its document *Gaudium et Spes* (65-75) radically changed the focus from a monastic spirituality to the spirituality of involvement.

The Cultic Model: The word "cultic" evokes in many people a vivid image of an altar of sacrifice, liturgical rituals, devotions,

candlesticks and vestments. In this model holiness is measured by the number of prayers recited, rubrics followed, sacraments administered and the faithful performance of rituals according to the rubrics. Jesus has strong words for those whose pious words do not match their hearts and actions. Rituals and ceremonies have a place in any human relationship but to restrict God to just right rituals and language is not enough.

The Good Works Model: A striking picture for this model is that of a smiling and dedicated nun with a large charitable institution in the background. Holiness is measured here by the hours one spends cheerfully engaged in "corporal works of mercy". Those who follow this trend strongly believe in the words of Jesus: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). It must be done with proper motives and to those who are in need according to the will of God.

Hot-Line Model: This model reminds us of a telephone with a direct hot line with God. By this model one is considered to be holy if he carries out the will of God in life. In a sense, one does not have to look outside for direction, God's law is written on everyone's heart (Jer. 31:31-34). In the world of today the will of God is discerned in dialogue between the superior and the subject who helps one to find the real will of God.

The Ladder Model: Holiness is seen as a task of climbing up a ladder to the heights of perfection like the Jacob's ladder in the Old Testament. Holiness consists in climbing the ladder with God

waiting at the top of the ladder. People following this model will tend to be formal, rigid or stubborn in their views. It is impossible for everyone to be perfect in all things at all times. There is a limit to everything and we have to accept it.

Sculptor Model: People who follow this model believe that they are unfinished products. Like a sculptor chisels out the unwanted material from the piece of marble to bring out the best statue so too must we rid ourselves of all that is imperfect in us in order to be perfect. We are only stewards of God's gifts and God will ask us for an account of the stewardship at the end of our lives.

All these models have many positive contributions to spirituality and by following these models many became saints. At the same time not everyone can follow these models. Today much stress is given to a wholeness model.

Wholeness implies integration of the opposites. In all of us there is good and evil, light and shadow, integrity and a tendency toward selfishness. Instead of hiding our defects or suppressing it is better for one to accept oneself without a feeling of guilt. That will us him to be realistic and creative. Praise God for the goodness and be aware of your weakness and try to control and integrate it in life.

The Church is holy precisely because in it there are not only saints but sinners too. Don Bosco accepted youngsters as masterpieces of God's creation and at the same time individuals tainted by original sin. Through his presence he tried to integrate these two

aspects in the life of the young.

Individuation: God has created us individually and with unique identities for a purpose. Just as in the garden there are a variety of plants with flowers of different hues and scents, so also the world has a variety of personalities each different from the other. Conformity implies being similar to, or having the same shape as something else. Individuation on the other hand means becoming the person that one is meant to be.

With the concept of Individuation in mind one recognizes that one is unique and unrepeatable. Don Bosco accepted his boys as they were with their individuation. He did not make Mickey Magone into Dominic Savio or austere Michael Rua into the mischievous John Cagliero.

Metanoia: Sin and weakness distorts reality, impedes relationships and blocks our capacity to grow. In order to overcome this in life we need to change. Our conversion from within is called *metanoia*. It is a radical change that brings about a transformation in life. Don Bosco believed in the internal change in his boys. By "Reason," his first principle of education he entered into a dialogue with the youngster, by his constant presence, animation and motivation and sacraments he brought that internal transformation in the youngster.

Integration of Mind, Body and spirit: There are people who are wrapped up in their own thoughts and hardly pay attention to their bodily needs. The wholeness model integrates all aspects of body, intellect and spirit. In the

wholeness model one learns to respect the body and yet respond to the spirit. Needing to ask questions and find answers, they depend on God yet make their own decisions. A holy person according to this model will befriend the body and take care of it while developing his mind.

Don Bosco firmly believed in caring for the body, the intellect and the soul. He followed the principle of "sanita, sapientia and sanctita." (*Health, wisdom and holiness*) He integrated all the aspects of life to achieve his goal of making his boys "honest citizens and good Christians."

To be aware and to be fully Human and fully Alive: Awareness is a consciousness of knowing what is happening in us and around us. To be holy we must be aware and be fully human and fully alive. God made us as a gift to the world and, what we make of this gift is our gift to God. Not to live a life that God wants us to live is to insult God and will harm ourselves. Finally we need the awareness of a Transcendent Experience of God and His mystery in our lives.

Don Bosco was very conscious and aware of God's presence and the needs of the people of his time. He was aware of the situation in the world and in the Church and among the young and he contributed his mite to alleviate the problems of his time.

Compassion and Love: Wholeness of life generates spontaneous love and compassion. All the great world religions tell us that love is the apex of a holy person. Christians are exhorted to treat others as they would like to be treated. This is the meaning of the Law and the Pro-

phets (Mt 7:12). Compassion and love are not the mere fulfillment of the Love commandment in the Gospel. St Paul tells us that we may have every quality and suffer all kinds of torture but if we have no love we are meaningless (1 Cor 13, 1-10). Christianity is a religion of love and compassion and it is by virtue of this that we are recognized as disciples of Jesus. If Don Bosco is a saint it was because in his love he imitated the love of the Good Shepherd and in his compassion he copied the Good Samaritan towards the poor especially the young who were at risk.

Centeredness: The Leaning Tower of Pisa is a popular tourist attraction. Though inclined it is still centered and this is what saves it from falling. Those who do gymnastics do not fall because they keep their centre of gravity. In order to be balanced or centred one has to have equanimity or detachment. Don Bosco teaches us about balanced living in his dream on Work and Temperance. The virtue of Temperance influenced life of Don Bosco and he bequeathed this as a means for the spiritual life. Centeredness is very important to be holy and to live a life of wholeness.

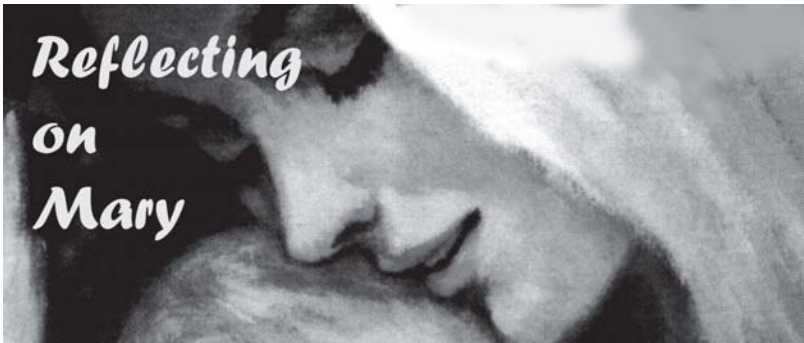
Holistic elements in Don Bosco's spirituality: What model of spirituality did Don Bosco follow? God gave him a mission and a method too. In order to do this he engaged himself in teaching Catechism, building boarding schools for his boys, starting classes to teach them and workshops to teach them a trade. Above all, he helped them to live good Christian lives

based on the beliefs of his time and place.

The concept of man during Don Bosco's time was dualistic in nature: man was composed of body and soul. The body is "matter" and soul is "form," but Don Bosco believed in a personalist anthropology. For him the "anima" meant the entire person, body, intellect and the spirit. Don Bosco was able to transcend the negative traits of the dualistic tradition and his zeal impelled him to save the whole person especially the young.

Today love of God and neighbour cannot be expressed only through pious practices. A person cannot be isolated from his situation. The genuineness of the love of God and neighbour is tested on the battlefield of society and in the Church which is expressed through worship and life, interiority and social concern, union with God and communion in the Church and society.

Don Bosco was inspired by the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, a devout humanist. He saw in his humanism the total well-being of his youngsters. He was concerned about their health education and spiritual life (*sanita, sapienza, sanctita*). His spirituality was the spirituality of the joy of the playground, of intellectual and moral formation and of the dignity of working with competence. It was the spirituality of the spiritual life through worship, the sacraments and contact with God. His spirituality was a spirituality of wholeness - a holistic spirituality. □



IN THE HEART OF THE MOTHER

The Solemnity Mary, the Mother of God
by Andrea Canale

It would be wise to underline the fact that a sense of discovery existed in the heart of Mary as she put the 'pieces together' in the presence of such a great mystery.

The New Year always begins with the Solemnity of *Mary, Mother of God* it is a kind of hopeful wish that we begin the New Year well. It is not just a casual wish. It is the feast of a woman who is the Mother of God. What an incredible thought! How does a woman, a virgin become the Mother of the Eternal God? Such a mystery of mysteries!

The Church has placed the commemoration of this mystery at the beginning of every year. At a very normal beginning we have this very unusual commemoration. This normal moment which is measured in the usual way is immediately marked and opened to the presence of something that is not so normal, something that has never ever existed before, an event that gave history another beginning.

We may ask why this feast of Mary is placed at the opening of the year. In a manner of speaking, with this feast, we enter in the core of the beginning. We gaze into the heart of Mary and ask is there a place, a space, a very mysterious spectacle there?

In a sense, we know the heart of Jesus which is open so wide that we see how he was wounded for us and we beheld what lay therein. What a passionate love he had for humankind! What a readiness to do his Father's will! We know from the Gospel that he always spoke "from the heart." It was not a sentimental message. For the ancients, the heart – especially for the Jews – was not just the repository of feelings. It was not a banal heart which the media and politicians exalt today, something so tragically sentimental. No, the heart is every



The Madonna with Child

by Alessio Baldovinetti (1422-1499),
the Museum of Jacquemart- Andre, Paris

person's secret. It is his/her personality, affections and intellect. It is the window through which s/he views the world. Jesus showed us his heart. He showed us his heart through his silences and his cries, through his joy and his groans.

We know very little of Mary except for the fact that she was present at the events in the life of Jesus and she "kept all these things in her heart." According to the original Greek version of the story, you must replace "kept" with "put together." It would be wise to underline the fact that a

sense of discovery existed in the heart of Mary as she put the 'pieces together' in the presence of such a great mystery; as if to say her mediation in the presence of Jesus was a question of putting the 'signs' together.

Ultimately her attitude was like those who discover a picture as they view it. She was a mother who recognized her Son; like us, but before us. Her heart was thus surprised. From the beginning she was continuously surprised as things began getting gradually clearer.

Therefore, at the beginning of the year, Mary is not like some kind of statue at the entrance which we venerate as we pass beneath the arch of time along the passage of days. We venerate this most honoured of women who understood and experienced everything in her own heart. That rational "putting together," is the trait of every Christian. It nourishes within us such hope and peace! No thanks to slogans or impeccable programmes, in our hearts there we notice a familiar face which recognizes the greatness and the meaning of time. □

(Continued from pg. 10)
When did God create Angels?

The Scripture speaks about the creation of angels. From this it is clear that they have not existed from all eternity (Neh. 9:6; Psalm 148:2,5). The time of their creation is never definitely specified, but it is most probable that it occurred in connection with the creation of the heavens in Genesis 1:1. It may be that God created the angels immediately after he had created the heavens and before He created the earth – according to Job 38:4-7, “*The sons of God shouted for joy*” when He laid the foundations of the earth.

The word “angel” actually comes from the Greek word ἀγγε-
λος, which means “messenger.”

The Hebrew word mal’ak used in the Old Testament signifies more precisely “delegate” or “ambassador”. The angels are spiritual beings and they don’t have bodies like us and so not subject to the laws of corruptibility. As creatures of a spiritual nature, the angels are endowed with intellect and free will like man in a degree superior to him. Angels are created in image and likeness of God like man but they are superior to all that is created in the visible world including man because God who is absolutely perfect Spirit is reflected especially in spiritual beings and they are nearer to him than material creatures.

(To be continued)

The Covers for the Year 2015

This year, as we Salesians, the Sons of Don Bosco commemorate and celebrate the bi-centenary of his birth, we wish to depict on the covers of our magazine, throughout this year, various moments in the life of Don Bosco as our tribute to this wonderful Saint who gave back to youth the joy they lost thanks to the vagaries of the culture and ethos of the time.

The period of the middle and late 1800’s saw the first camera being constructed commercially and the first photographs of persons being taken but we have our very own artist Nino Musio who has given us not just the life of Don Bosco in pictures but has succeeded in capturing the times and the moods of the saint and the youngsters whose lives he touched.

Thanks to graphic designer and artist William Fernandes of Intouch Graphics; he has put together this wonderful collection of visuals for you, our dear readers of *Don Bosco’s Madonna* during the year 2015. During the entire year 2014 the Shrine of Don Bosco’s Madonna displayed an exhibition on the life and times of Don Bosco with short narrations to guide the viewer to get a sneak peek into the life of this fascinating saint. Our slogan was and continues to be: **Know him better to love him more!**

Our calendar has selections of the masterful hand of the artist Nino Musio who has given our readers a pictorial biography of Don Bosco and our prayer is that you too are able to *know him better to love him more.* □

NEWSBITS

USA

Rosemead – High school seniors studying green technologies in Don Bosco Technical Institute's (Bosco Tech) Architecture & Construction Engineering (ACE) programme are creating and testing viable alternative fuels from cooking oil with remarkable results.



The Green and Energy Efficient Engineering course offered at Bosco Tech in Rosemead, California, stresses the importance of reducing, re-using, and recycling and how these important environmentally sound precepts apply to architecture and engineering.

While studying alternative fuels, the students recently executed a successful burn-comparison test where they observed and documented the energy and pollutants generated by their biodiesel formulas and compared it to those of petroleum-based diesel fuel. They found the biodiesel had an equivalent energy density to petroleum-based diesel, making it a viable alternative, while also diverting waste that would previously have gone to a landfill.

The biodiesel also produced

less smoke, possibly making it cleaner burning and less harmful to the environment. "The goal of ACE's green technology course is to inspire students to seek alternative, environmentally sound solutions to everyday problems," says ACE Chairman Chris Barnett.

"In architecture and engineering, that includes passive and active solar design, wind energy production, alternative eco-friendly building materials like bamboo flooring, and the use of recycled finishing materials such as reclaimed wood and counter tops made from broken glass."

The ACE students also study Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) curriculum, a unique course for high school students. "Our students are not just learning how to design better buildings," Barnett shared, "they're learning to build a better environment."

Bosco Tech is a private all-male Catholic high school that uniquely combines a rigorous college preparatory and technology focused education. The innovative science, engineering, technology and math (STEM) curriculum allows students to exceed university admission requirements while completing extensive integrated coursework in one of several applied science and engineering fields.(ANS)

TAIWAN

Martin Scorsese had talked about making the film for some time and now he has finally made it happen: at the end of



September 2014 Martin Scorsese started shooting "Silence", a film inspired by the homonymous Japanese novel by Shushako Endo which is based on Portuguese Jesuit Cristóvão Ferreira. We are in 17th century Japan. After being tortured, Ferreira turns his back on the Christian faith, partly in order to save other faithful who were arrested along with him. Soon, however, the Jesuit finds himself on a journey that resembles that of St. Paul. He begins to persecute his former fellow Jesuits. The two confreres whom superiors send to Rome to try to understand why the Gospel is not taking root in Japan, embark on similar dramatic paths.

A film director like Scorsese - most of whose films have explored the theme of the eternal clash between good and evil-couldn't help being drawn in by a story like Ferreira's. In fact it seems he started thinking about making a film about him 25 years ago. The film is going to be featuring big stars like Liam Neeson and Andrew Garfield and is due in cinemas at the end of 2015. Some are already saying it is lined up for the Oscars.

What makes "Silence" unique is that it is not just a film "about" the Jesuits, it is also in some ways a film made "with" the Jesuits. One of the members

of Scorsese's team of consultants is Antoni Üçerler, an English Jesuit and Professor of Japanese History at Tokyo's Sophia University and at the University of San Francisco, California. Kuangchi Programme Service (KPS) a local Jesuit television production company will be helping produce the film, which is being shot in Taiwan.

Emilio Zanetti, a young Italian Jesuit who works at KPS, said "the film is being shot here rather than in Japan because government subsidies make it cheaper." In the case of "Silence" we are offering consultation on the history of the Society of Jesus and links to cinematography companies. Dante Ferretti and Francesca Lo Schiavo who have been working with Scorsese for years, asked for us to help them get in contact with religious and parishes in Taiwan."

We asked Üçerler what the crux of Ferreira's story is, in Endo's book as well: "There are some differences between the historical reality and the book. But both are centered around the upheaval caused by the arrival of the Christians who entered a system of coded rules such as the ones established by the Shoguns: what frightened rulers the most, was the loyalty Christians felt toward a supernatural God who in a way transcended and disturbed a rigid hierarchical system. This faith undermined the basis of the entire social system of the time. Another aspect that emerges very clearly, is that even in the midst of the apostasy crisis, in the end there is an awareness that God is greater than any betrayal."□

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.

While I was gardening in Goa during the holidays this year, a small "voice" in my head told me time and again to stay away from a particular patch of overgrown plants. At first, I didn't pay attention, but finally I decided to heed the "voice" and stay away from that spot. About 30 mins later, my maid came in from the garden. She pointed to that same spot and said "There was a scorpion there. I just killed it with a stone." I was speechless. My husband and I both praised God and Our Lady for sending me that angelic voice to save me from a poisonous bite.

Mrs Velany Rodrigues, Mumbai

In February 2014 my husband and myself had attended our godchild's christening in Goa. One night when returning from their house to ours, it was late and suddenly my husband an experienced bike rider lost balance over a speed breaker. As the kinetic was in high speed, it began wobbling and my husband told me that we are going experience a bad fall and he did not know what to do. Both of us sat frozen and I just told him don't worry everything will be fine. To our greatest surprise miraculously our bike stopped wobbling and was under control. We reached home and still could not fathom what had just happened, till date when we recollect that incident we always thank Mary for protecting us on the way.

Brenden & Candice Saldanha, Mumbai

Thank you darling Mamma Mary for curing the redness in my left eye. Continue to keep your hand over our family.

Rini Aranha, Mumbai

Thank you Mama Mary for all the graces received.

Tanya Lobo

Thank you, Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for a successful operation and for the many blessings and favours granted as we faithfully prayed the 3 Hail Marys. May Jesus and Mother Mary continue to shower their blessings on our family.

Branca Couto, Portugal

I am grateful to Mother Mary since through her intercession and the faithful recitation of the Three Hail Marys I secured 85% in the SSC board examinations 2013-2014.

Mark Claver Patel

Thank you dear Mother for the graces received through the faithful recitation of the Three Hail Marys.

Margaret D'Souza, Pune

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Our sincere thanks to our Blessed Mother for all the favours received.

Maria Furtado

My baby Brynelle is just one year old. From the time she was six months she suffered wierd attacks during which her lips would turn blue, she would go limp and faint. This happened at least once a month. She was admitted to hospital and had a lot of tests done...by God's grace all her reports came out clear. People from all over the world were praying for her. I took her to priests to pray over her as well. On 16th August 2014 the priest informed us that Brynelle had been healed. I praise and thank Jesus and Mother Mary for all that they are doing in our lives. I completely entrust our baby to them.

Rebecca DSouza, (Brynelle's Mother)

My most sincere and grateful thanks to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary for my safe and successful second cataract operation.

Mrs A deSouza, Melbourne

Special belated thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, all the angles and saints for the innumerable favours received over the years: The safety of our daughter to come clean through litigation. The successful TKR operation of my wife last November who is now walking freely. Being granted extension for a year after my retirement which enabled our son to successfully complete his post graduation in IT and recently get employed in a good company with a job of his choice, and our good health. Always continue to protect and guide us through every walk of our life and take care of our children.

Geeta & Feroze

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

I Sincerely Thank You dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe and normal delivery of my daughter-In-Law Nicole and for the gift of A Healthy Baby Boy and for helping my son Llewellyn to miraculously find his wedding Ring, which he had lost after almost 20 days and for many other favours received. Please guard and protect us always and keep us All under your mantle blue.

Philomena D'Souza, Thane

My son (24 years) was to go to Kashmir as part of a group to attend gig there. He was all excited as this was his first trip to Kashmir. He received his e-ticket and was waiting for the confirmation to come. He was ready to go but just then the terrible rains started. He was in Pune and I told him to check the news on TV. I prayed to Our Lady. My prayers were answered and the gig was cancelled. I dread to think what if the gig was held a week earlier. Thank you dearest Mother Mary for keeping my son safe from all harm and danger.

Bosco Silveira

After buying some chocolates I started my bike and all of a sudden a bike came on the opposite side and rammed my bike. I fell down unhurt. I thank our Blessed Mother for protecting me. Glory to God.

Edwin George

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Almighty God, Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for hearing my prayers, for protecting my baby and me throughout the nine months of my pregnancy, and for the gift of a healthy baby boy after eight years of marriage.

Garry and Flavia D'souza, Mumbai

Thank you Holy Trinity, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and blessing us with a healthy baby boy. Keep us in your loving care. *Ann & Elton Meyne*
For the numerous favours granted to me and my family through the years. My daily three Hail Marys has kept me and my family through all problems and sickness in life

especially I thank my Mother Mary for my daughter's healing of her head and leg injury last year. She was hit by a car. Thank you dearest mama Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. *Gemma Alvares, Canada*

Our heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the birth of a baby girl on October 11th to Nicole and Mathew Cherian and a very special appreciation for all the blessings showered on the entire clan over the years. *J.R. and P.D. Thoman, Sydney Australia*

Our sincere gratitude and heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery of a healthy baby girl. *Vinfran & Elifa, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a baby boy. *J.G. Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for curing my grand daughter from her illness and for curing me of a chest problem.

Monica Somani, Pune

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Almighty God, Jesus, Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter and the precious gift of a baby girl. May the Lord continue to bless our family.

A Devotee, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JANUARY 2015

The Holy Father's General Intention: *That those from diverse religious traditions and all people of good will may work together for peace.*

Missionary Intention: *That in this year dedicated to consecrated life, religious men and women may rediscover the joy of following Christ and strive to serve the poor with zeal.*

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MARY WAS THERE

I was diagnosed with Pneumonia and was being treated for it, but on the third day my face started swelling. By the fifth day that is 28th February 2014, I was in bad shape and knew nothing of what was happening to me. My face had swollen, my eyes were closed and I couldn't open my mouth. But *Mary was there*. After ten days, on returning home I began feeling very uneasy. After a week I began to shiver very severely in the evenings. I was hospitalized again, treated for a urinary infection and discharged a week later. I returned home completely cured. At home my health started improving. I owe my recovery entirely to the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. This is the third time in my life that Mary was there to save me.

Basil Coutinho

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.

To help a poor lad to reach the priesthood, is a privilege

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

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Send your offerings by Payee cheque or Draft on Mumbai banks;

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Please address all correspondence to:

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