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***We pray that
through her
intercession, he may
light up
our darkness with
the splendor
of his presence,
and from his fullness
give us
joy and peace.***

*From the Common of Our Lady
in Christmas Time*

From The Editor's Desk

THE GIFT OF TIME

It's the beginning of another calendar year, and it's probably, only at this time of that I pause to dwell on what I'm gradually beginning to believe that time is 'a gift!' It is a precious commodity that we can waste, spend or invest. The Psalmist prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (90:12). In a sense, nothing more clearly requires - or displays - a heart of wisdom than the way we use our time. This may be why Jesus - pressed by the crowds, confronted by the needs around Him, and threatened by the religious establishment - is never described in the Gospels as being in a hurry. When someone interrupts my silence in the office and peeps into the doorway asking: "Are you busy?" Most of the time I instinctively give the 'intruder' the impression that I am awfully busy. I cannot be seen to be wasting my time - that's awful...nay, shameful. Yet, 'time' is not mine, it's been gifted to me so I can't gloat and think it's my 'property.'

I remember once having to go to one of the Ward offices around here to tender in some form for my voter ID card and as I came into the compound I found a queue spilling down the steps out of the door and I was frustrated. "Hurry up and wait," I muttered, glancing at my watch.

I had barely found my place in the queue when an elderly stranger approached me. "I can't understand how to fill out this form," he said, pointing to the paper he had in his gnarled arthritic fingers. "They asked me to pay Rs. 10 for it and I don't know what to do." Immediately I knew what God wanted *me* to do. I stepped out of line and was able to assist him with the problem in ten minutes.

The man thanked me and then left. As I turned to get back in line, it was *gone*. I walked straight to the service counter.

My experience that day reminds me of Jesus's words: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

My wait seemed shorter because God interrupted my hurry. By turning my eyes to others' needs and helping me give of my time, He gave me a gift. It's a lesson I hope to remember, next time I look at my watch.

In John 12:27 He affirmed, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour." Living wisely is rooted in understanding that our loving God has a purpose behind our seconds, minutes, hours and days.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

THE PATIENCE OF LOVE

Giancarlo Dianin

We could define love as fidelity that lasts, but it also defies time. Those who recognize God's patience can open themselves up to patience with themselves and with others.

We often joke about the patience that family life requires! Patience with one's partner seems to be top-priority till the children arrive and they often ask for an even greater dose of patience. How many times do we have to ask God to forgive us for having "lost our patience," as if it were an endowment that could be lost and not some skill that you can learn to develop? Patience summons up other words such as tolerance and endurance, but also haste and demand. Patience is nourished with hope but sometimes lost through resignation.

Patience is also suffering: the term means "to suffer over time." I am patient when I let others overtake me, touch me, enter my life and this does not happen passively but actively, but it also happens because I want it and I desire it.

St. Paul in his famous hymn to charity (1 Cor 13, 1-13) puts patience as the first among the characteristics of love. Even Pope Francis commenting on the Pauline hymn, focuses primarily on this as it features in family relationships but it is also a real virtue (*Amoris Laetitia* 91-92).

Like every dimension of love, patience is primarily a Divine quality together with God's mercy. Note how patiently God

deals with the hardness of heart of the Chosen People; how he endures their continuous complaints while they constantly forget his great works and long for the past where they were bonded slaves. God is patient because he loves his people, because he is committed to being faithful to them in spite of everything.

We could define love as fidelity that endures, but also which defies time. You know how patient God is with us, with our slow steps, our weaknesses which bring us back to him and he forgives us more than seventy times seven! Those who recognize and have experienced the patience of God can be patient with themselves and with others.

Patience reminds me of two other virtues: magnanimity and long-suffering. A magnanimous



person (one who has a large heart) creates a space with himself/herself for the other. Just like a pregnant woman within whose womb another person is free to move around, without this freedom the womb turns into a prison.

In this sense, love cannot have laws demanding concern rights and duties that confine the other. Love has open spaces for fantasy, creativity and acceptance. In the beginning there are bound to be ups and downs, light and shadow, certainty and doubts.

Long-suffering (a patient enduring love) not only welcomes and makes room for the other but does so over time by respecting the rhythms and pauses over time without pretending to adapt their life to ours. Affection knows how to change one's own times and rhythms to the times and rhythms of the other, em-

bracing the seasons of the growth for the seed which is love.

Thus patience is able to let the seed of love bring out and unleash its full potential. To demand something immediately risks freezing the seed. Love takes its time to mature. So, patience is the ability to combine value with time. Love is a value and requires its own season to mature.

Patience is the antidote for wanting things immediately.

The larger and more important something is, the more it has to be developed slowly and without haste, without striving to force ahead.

How can we not be reminded of the rush of young lovers who often burn their bridges, without having the patience to build their love-relationship a little at a time, letting them mature at the school of time and its seasons? □

BETWEEN FREE-RANGE AND HELICOPTERS

Maria Chiara Bregolin Tezzon

With regard to giving children freedom, the world of parents seem to be divided into two categories: the ones that leave them "shamelessly" free and the others that control their every breath

I already anticipate, dear readers, that some of you reading this article will start getting your hands into your hair. I'll tell you why; because what I am going to tell you is what I've been struggling with for a few months and as you'll see I have not really been able to give myself a satisfactory explanation.

I'll begin by telling you that a few days into my son's fifth grade I was summoned by the principal to inform me that by law, it was no longer possible to

leave a student alone at home despite the parent's authorization.

Some complaints, he tells very harshly, with regard to the school suggesting that it was prudently decided that all fifth grade children were forbidden to go home except with their parents or an authorized guardian.

I must tell you that my son goes to his grandparents' house which is a few hundred metres from the school where he has his

lunch. He crosses the road which is supervised by a social worker there.

I try to make a few weak comments but I am presented with a hypothesis that in the event of an accident, the responsibility lies with the parent who has in fact abandoned the child. But I try to reason: But excuse me, when I was my son's age I was allowed to go to school and back alone; to the park across the road and even down the road to the corner shop to do some small purchases.

After all, it was the '80s. I highly doubt that they were considered safer than what we are experiencing now, or with less of a possibility of accidents or of some unpleasant encounters.

In those days I was better informed; noting that the material world was divided into parents who brought up "free-range" kids, free from schedules and maybe (the extremists) from schools altogether and "helicopter parents" who monitored every step and breath and *sm*.

In America there are impressive movements that continue to fill newspapers, blogs and television programmes exclaiming: "We need to give our children the freedom without going nuts." (from the book *Free-Range Kids*, by Lenore Skenazy)

The question I should ask myself today is not: what will be the right age to let my child come home on his own? But in fact, what I really mean is: do we put all our energy to raise these people who've been entrusted to us by God and by life, by giving them freedom, a sense of self-fulfilment and self-worth so that

the children will reach some very important goals if they feel that they are trusted, to acquire and increase their sense of responsibility?



This is no easy matter. We must avoid heeding anxiety and fear, convinced as we are that the worst can always happen but we must believe in the idea that we have to equip our children with skills to face the large and small obstacles to life outside the confines of the home.

To be clear, the writer, a mother of two has earned the sobriquet "*America's Worst Mom*" after reporting in a newspaper column that she allowed her younger son, then 9, to ride the subway alone (after having done the route with him several times and having given him a map of the metro and some change if he needed to call...and all the appropriate information). Ok it's New York City...and it shocked me a little too!

I would not want to pass for being the worst mother in the country, but neither would I want to be an oppressive mother who deprives their children of the pleasure of growing up, making friends, feeling smart because they had the courage to face something alone for the first time, getting hurt without having to rant that the world we live in is extremely dangerous.

Well, they should have wings as well as roots! □

WHY HE SPEAKS TO YOUNGSTERS

Cesare Bissoli

That Pope Francis addresses young people is not an isolated fact. For instance, he speaks to the members of the Aniene Club in Rome...

Let us take a first distinctive trait: Francis' discourses to young people take place all the time, and everywhere he goes, especially at great ecclesial meetings (therefore we can say, all over the world).

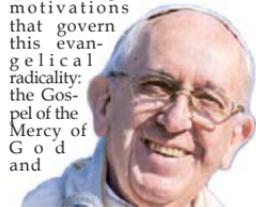
And it is not a brief greeting however cordial; he speaks *to* them indeed *with* them. His speech often takes the form of a dialogue: questions and answers, letting the young people have the freedom to say what they think and the freedom to say it unabashedly, so they can respond with equal freedom and as frankly as possible the questions he asks and they say why they do what they do. The Pope is as respectful as he is frank and cordial: his young interlocutors are often called by name: Lucy, Peter, Walter, Ludmilla...

Let us bear in mind that the content of Pope Francis' discourse-dialogue with young people is anything but playful banter or talk about secondary or superficial things. He does not even do this with the little children he meets in the parishes he visits. Of course, there are some jokes to draw their attention and to show his affection, or recalling some personal incidents for better effect, but the intention is very serious. He speaks to awaken, to move and to draw out a decision. Not infrequently he asks for a vocal consent. In short, he speaks not so

much to inform them but to convince them without being imperious, much less by making accusations; giving everyone the opportunity to change, he encourages never accuses them... It is from here that the title of this piece gave rise to these reflections: why is he so direct, so sincere, why does the Pope have such tender attachment to young people?

The answer comes from afar. It is connected to his vision of the church and before that to the faith that Pope Francis has and also his universal mission of which he speaks during his homilies at the Chapel of Santa Martha in the morning and throughout the day, especially at the Wednesday Catechesis and then at noon on Sunday to different groups. The Pope's ultimate goal is one that is identified with his being and acting as Pope despite the difficulties and misunderstandings he faces. He gave it a name. He calls it "evangelical radicality." What it is he explains in particular in his basic document *Evangelii Gaudium* and now in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*.

Let us keep in mind the two motivations that govern this evangelical radicality: the Gospel of the Mercy of God and



its consequent mission and development or implementation. It is more or less like going to the roots of the Christian faith: a church that becomes a contemporary of Jesus of 2000 years ago and feels itself his contemporary 2000 years later because the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of the Gospel, is its soul (in the literal sense), and its ability to discern God's will, is summarized in the well-known conciliar statement: "Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man." (cf. GS 41)

In this very high-profile Christological and anthropological perspective, Francis' intent is to involve the young person, man and woman, as protagonists, because they have the grace of the future, precisely because of their youthful condition. Hence the different beads of the Pope's thought form a kind of rosary of this thoughts and words. Let us bear in mind that Francis neither encircles nor sequesters young people to make them the property of the Church and her religious activity as a kind of youthful "third order." He speaks to young people as persons created by God and endowed with the resources of humanity that can express the Gospel through incarnation, aiming to become, as Don Bosco said in the language of his time, but so current, "Good Christians and honest citizens", Christians as citizens and citizens as Christians. With this harmonious globalization of intentions, the Pope sees being young as a potential resource to be valued in a right manner instead of being lost in narrow horizons exposed to de-

linquency. He therefore urges young people to "take life in their hands with determination and enthusiasm to be protagonists to construct a more just and fraternal society and to give an impetus to the missionary outreach of the Church" (Papa Francesco, *Il coraggio di essere giovani Discorsi e dialoghi*, EDB Bologna 2018). Other beads in his rosary are: 'do not be afraid, look to the future, believe and live joyfully, dream big, cultivate hope, invent the present, converse with the elderly, care for the poor, those marginalized by culture, shun the culture of waste, reject injustice, violence, war, bring down the walls of exclusivism and all forms of racism...'

Here is one great conversation that he recently had in Chile and Peru.

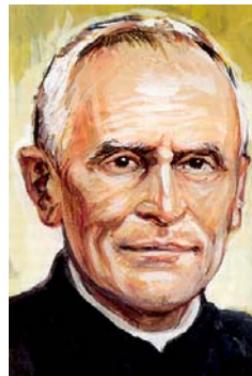
"Your heart, your young heart wants to build a better world. I follow the news of the world and I see that many young people in many parts of the world have come out on to the streets to express their desire for a more just and fraternal society. They are young people who want to be protagonists of change, please do not let others be the protagonists of change!" YOU are the ones who have the future! Continue to overcome apathy by offering a Christian response to the social and political concerns that are occurring in various parts of the world... Dear young people please do not look from your balcony...put yourself in it. Jesus did not stay on the balcony..." (WYD, Rio de Janeiro, 27 July, 2013) □

SALESIAN SAINTS

MICHAEL RUA 1837 - 1910 PRIEST, BLESSED

One day Don Bosco confided to Don Costamagna, "If God said to me: prepare to die, however, choose a successor because I don't want your work to stop; I will grant him the graces, gifts, charisms and the necessary talents. I assure you, Costamagna, I would not know what to ask for because I see everything already in Rua."

Michael Rua was born in Turin on June 9, 1837 in the popular Borgo Dora district. His father worked in the ammunition factory and the family lived on the premises. It was at this kind of barracks where the boy attended his first two years of school. This was followed by his third grade at the school of the Christian Brothers in the Borgo. It was while he was there that he met Don Bosco who saw in the boy's eyes something special, so stretching out his hand as he usually did with many of his boys, he said: "We two will always go halves." Those words remained etched in Michael's heart and from that day on Michael took him as his confessor. For the priest who himself was left fatherless very early in life it was not difficult for him to convince Michael's mother to let him continue his studies and so Michael entered Valdocco as a boarder. The Oratory already had over five hundred boys. In the meantime the priestly vocation was born in



his heart and on October 3, 1852 he received the clerical habit from the saint at Becchi in Castelnuovo. The following year was a special year because Turin was celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Eucharistic Miracle. For that occasion Don Bosco printed a booklet and one day, while walking together with the youngster along the streets of Turin he predicted that Michael would reprint it fifty years later.

On January 26, 1854 Don Bosco gathered in his room four of his young students, creating, perhaps unconsciously, the Salesian Congregation. John Cagliero and Michael Rua were among those present and in charge of drafting the "minutes." Inseparable friends, they eagerly volunteered when a Cholera epidemic broke out in August in the city which was probably brought over by the war veterans returning from Crimea. In the poorer neighbor-

hoods the two generously helped the sick and Cagliari contracted the illness. On March 25, 1855, in Don Bosco's room, Michael made his simple "profession." He was the first Salesian. Michael became the saint's right-hand-man despite his age. He earned the trust of the saint and would help him to write the drafts of his books, often stealing hours of sleep to do this. During the day he went to the Oratory of St. Aloysius near the *Porta Nuova*, an area full of migrants. Most of the migrants were boys who had come down from the hills into the city looking for work such as chimneysweeps. Rua taught them catechism and elementary school subjects and heard their countless stories of misery. In November 1856 when Margaret Occhiena, the mother of Don Bosco died, Michael called his own mother to look after the boys of Valdocco. Signora Giovanna Maria must have worked there for at least twenty years until her death.

In February 1858 Don Bosco wrote the Rules of the Congregation and his "trusted secretary" spent many a night copying his indecipherable handwriting. Together they went to Rome to receive the approval of Pius IX who, in his own hand corrected the rules. Michael then had to copy them at night and by day he was the shadow of the founder committed to accompany the saint at his meetings with various personalities. The following year the Pope formally recognized the Salesian Congregation. On the evening of December 18, 1859 cleric Rua was ordained a subdeacon, a day earlier he was unanimously elected Spiritual Di-

rector of the Congregation. On July 29, 1860 he was ordained a priest. The white flowers on the altar at his first Mass were the donation of the chimneysweeps of the Oratory of *St. Aloysius*. Three years later he was sent to open the first Salesian house outside Turin: a minor seminary at Mirabello Monferrato. He remained there for two years and then returned to oversee the construction of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. He worked continuously till in July 1868 he was at death's door with peritonitis. Given up for dead, he recovered; someone said, through the intercession of Don Bosco. Among the boys of the Oratory, more than seven hundred had vocations to various religious vocations. Valdocco had reached enormous proportions, while in Rome Pope Leo XIII asked the Congregation to build the Basilica of the Sacred Heart which meant that Don Bosco had to keep travelling to France and Spain with Don Rua always by his side. In 1884 the health of the founder was declining and it was the Pope himself who suggested that he think of a successor. On November 7, Don Rua was appointed vicar with the right of succession by the pontiff. On the night between 30th and 31st January 1888, in the presence of many priests he held up the hand of Don Bosco to give his final blessing. He knelt by the body of Don Bosco for over two hours.

As Rector Major Don Rua was the faithful interpreter, executor, consolidator and promoter of the charism in all its dimensions with a very clear objective from the inception of his mandate. "Another thought that comes to mind is that we must consider ourselves fortu-

nate to be children of such a Father. Therefore our preoccupation must be to sustain and simultaneously develop more and more the works that he began, faithfully follow the methods he practiced and taught; and in our way of speaking and working let us try to imitate and model him whom the Lord in his goodness gave us. This, my dear Sons, will be the programme that I will follow on my watch. This should also be the aim and concern of each and every Salesian."

The fruits of such animation and government are: the expansion of Salesian foundations often opened with a paucity of means and scarcity of personnel and in many cases in very difficult situations. Missionary expeditions sent to support and bring to full development the works already opened and to open new works, particularly among people not yet evangelized. In the 22 years of his tenure Don Rua expanded the Salesian foundations from 64 houses at the time of Don Bosco's death to 341 houses at the time of his death in 1910.

For Don Rua the excellence of any Salesian work was seen in its ability to promote vocations and this was a sign of fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco as well as a sign of the fruitfulness of the Salesian Pastoral and Educational system.

Don Rua was convinced that the insistence on the Salesians living in close communion with the person and figure of Don Bosco was a sure way to overcome individualism, isolation and liberal tendencies visible in the society outside; to strengthen a strong sense of belonging to the Congre-

gation and to create prayerful, harmonious, fraternal and apostolic Salesian communities united with their rectors and firmly linked to their provincial, the Rector Major and his Council.

Though Don Rua had many consolations (the declaration of Don Bosco as Venerable in 1907, in 1908 the completion of the Roman church of *Santa Maria Liberatrice* was completed) there were also certain trials and difficulties. In 1896 the anticlerical government of Ecuador sent the Salesians out of the country and the same happened in France in 1902. In 1907, in Liguria, at Varazze, he had to respond to legal action to some who severely slandered the Congregation. The Masonic plan was deflated and the slanderers had to flee abroad. All this however, seriously compromised Don Rua's health and considering his age he was forced to take to his bed. He died on the night between the 5th and 6th April 1910. While he was dying he was heard murmuring the short prayer taught to him by Don Bosco: "Dear Mother Mary, ever a Virgin, help me to save my soul." The "second father of the Salesian Family" was buried alongside his teacher. Pope Paul VI beatified him on October 29, 1972, stating: "The Salesian Family had in Don Bosco its origin and in Don Rua its continuation. He drew all his teachings from the Saint; he derived an authentic ethos from his Rule; and he made the Saint's holiness the model to be followed. Don Rua instituted a genuine tradition." His remains are now venerated in the crypt of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. ANTHONY THE ABBOT

17 January, (251-356)

Where were You When I was Suffering?

It is said that Anthony, already over ninety and still in good health despite all his austerities, wanted to visit Paul the Hermit. The reason, if you want to know, was a tad trivial. He was informed in a dream that there was someone else holier than himself. Anthony was really a very holy man, but he still had some grey areas in his spiritual life that he had not yet subdued, which had not yet been enlightened by the light of Christ. In the area of Pride, for instance, he sometimes stumbled. How? Very simple: he believed that he was the one who had served God the longest in the desert. Instead, in a dream he was informed that it was Paul the hermit. So he thought: 'Let's visit him and learn also from him,' he must have thought. So he slowly made his way to Paul's hermitage and after an arduous journey of two days he reached Paul. The two embraced each other warmly and talked for a long time. When it was lunch time a raven brought them some bread. To



Anthony's amazement, Paul said that this had been going on for years... they dined well. Anthony also mentioned that he had been sent to bury him, since his time had come. Paul expressed that his last wish was to be buried in the cloak that Athanasius had given to Anthony. The latter returned to the monastery to get it and when he

came back he found Paul already dead but still on his knees.

Anthony lived for a few more years and died on January 17, 356. He was over a hundred years old. He had earlier ordered his disciples to bury him on the top of a mountain to discourage curious pilgrims. He also sent Athanasius his sheepskin robe and the cloak (that was used by Paul the Hermit) as a sign of their unity in the faith. His remains, despite his wishes never rested in peace...for a long time they were moved first to Alexandria (where Athanasius was) then to Constantinople and to various other places, such was his fame.

To this day he is a very popular saint, invoked in many situations, because he is considered a miracle worker. For instance, he is invoked in case of the fire. In the Middle Ages he became famous because two noblemen were healed through his intercession. In their gratitude they founded the Hospitallers of St. Anthony. He is also invoked for the protection of livestock (not for nothing is he also called St. Anthony the Abbot or the piglet), against contagious diseases, skin ailments, varicose veins and even against fires. He is also the protector of farmers, gravediggers, bell-ringers, pig traders, butchers, shearers, farmers, manufacturers of brushes (from pig bristles) etc. A truly versatile saint as you can see and imagine; very active even in Paradise, given the number of devotees that have been protected and need to be protected.

Go, sell all you have

He was also called abbot, although in itself he was never an abbot of any Abbey. The reason for this title is interesting. According to the monk and writer Thomas Merton: Among the Desert Fathers, the abbot was any monk who had struggled for years in the desert and showed himself to be a servant of God. Our hero had fully demonstrated both traits. So, they called him an abbot, he deserved it.

Anthony was born of wealthy Christian parents in Upper Egypt around the year 251. They died when he was about twenty years old. It was during that time that, listening to the Gospel in church, he heard Jesus' famous words: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor" (Mt 19:21). Anthony thought those were words addressed to him. Indeed, he gave part of his goods away, to those who were especially poor. He began to live the life of a hermit, first in a cemetery and then at the age of 35 he went to live in an abandoned fort. In 306 he welcomed the first disciples and founded a monastery living a life of prayer, reflection on the word of God, of penance, and solitude from the world but not extraneous to it. In fact in 311 Anthony went to Alexandria to support the "Confessors of the Faith," who were suffering for the faith during the persecution of Emperor Maximus. After two years he returned to the desert.

In 338 he had the strength and the courage, despite his 90 years to return to Alexandria to give

Bishop Athanasius (memory on May 2) a hand in his fight against the Arians and it seems that his presence was decisive for the victory over that heresy.

In appreciation of the old hermit, Athanasius wrote his *Life* which has remained the true key text containing his teachings. It is certainly not a real biography as we understand it today. In fact, Athanasius wanted it to depict the ideal kind of monk and servant of God. He wrote: "Anthony's life is for monks as an example of asceticism." There was also another characteristic that Athanasius emphasized and that was his concentration on the present moment. His was not a life of regret, not a frenetic rush to strive for unattainable spiritual dreams. He lived the present moment in God's name and in God's presence. Athanasius wrote: "He himself did not remember the time he spent, but every day, as a beginner, his asceticism was to struggle to make some more progress."

Anthony, I was here with you

His life as a hermit had not been easy, not only because his physical privations of every kind or because of prayer and his constant voluntary penance but because of his furious battles with the devil which were severe even from the point of view of his spiritual life. He also had crosses to bear: his moments of discouragement, spiritual darkness (also called "endowed by the Spirit"). At a certain point he had the impression that his whole life was an illusion

(though pious), he sadly thought that he was humanly and spiritually bankrupt, seduced and then abandoned by God (remember the prophet Jeremiah?). But a true saint that he was (indeed the sanctity of a person is seen in such terrible times) he did not give up his commitment, never flagging in his efforts, without abandoning his faith and steadfast love for God. He continued to do his duty day after day with patience and perseverance. In the end he was rewarded with the light of Christ which flooded him once more. Then Anthony asked: "But where were you all this time? Why did you not appear at the beginning and put an end to my suffering?" The reply: "Anthony, I was there with you and I was witnessing your struggle."

Probably to certain people in our time, even Christians, a person like Anthony might not say much. Perhaps his life will not be understood because most of his life was lived in the desert, far from the human fray. Someone will even contend that his life was an escape from his responsibilities as a man. That was certainly not the case. Anthony had gone into the desert to seek God, not to escape from himself and from others but because of a genuine hunger for the Absolute, not out of a neurotic impulse. He prayed and fought for others through prayer, fasting and meditation. They are also "effective" weapons. However, he did not ignore those who needed his support. He would come back again and again to support those persons, his brothers

and sisters in the faith.

Today Anthony still teaches modern man, who lives disenchanted with the world, to look at Nature with the eyes of a contemplative, seeing in every grain of beauty the genuine words of God to humankind. For Anthony Nature is God's book: he always read it, enriched himself on it, reading it with his heart he constantly thanked its Author. Animals too were always present in his world (his iconography celebrates that). He considered them almost like brothers, little words of God to man.

The choice of living for God in the desert was not a selfish or

individualistic choice, it was "a flight towards the One," searching for Unity with the fundamental Being of our being. But even in this kind of life Anthony leaves us – often sick of individualism and selfishness – a message of the importance of others, of every human person around us. "Life and death depend on our neighbour, if we conquer a brother we conquer Christ, if instead we scandalize a neighbour we have sinned against Christ." These words, attributed to Anthony are words that can change our perspective on our social life and our daily commitment with others and for others. □

NATURE, GOD'S BOOK

A certain philosopher asked Anthony: "Father, how can you be so happy if you deprive yourself of the consolation of books?" Anthony replied: "My book, or philosophy is the nature of created things, and every time I want to read the words of God, the book is before me."

(The Sayings of the Desert Fathers)



UNPERTURBED ... LIKE A ROCK

Abba Anthony was instructing Abba Ammoné telling him: "Your fear of God must go on increasing." Then taking him from his cell he showed him a huge boulder and told him to go up to it and insult it without respite. When he returned Abba Anthony asked him if the boulder reacted. Ammoné naturally replied: 'No.' Then Abba Anthony said to him: "You too must get to the point where nothing can offend you."

(From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers)



THE TOUGH BOW TEST

Once a stranger arrived and saw Anthony and some of his confreres having fun and he scolded them. Anthony ordered him to shoot arrow after arrow, until the hunter stopped, fearing that his bow would snap. Then Anthony told him: "Something similar happens with the works of God; if we push ourselves beyond our strength, the brothers would immediately collapse; therefore it is only right, from time to time, to lighten their efforts" (what is particularly interesting is that he did not say to lighten our efforts.)"



“BE CLEANSÉ!”

Ian Pinto, sdb

Leprosy is no more the dangerous killer it once was. Even though it is treatable it can still have devastating effects especially in areas of poor literacy and health care. You might wonder why I mentioned literacy when talking about leprosy's effects, it's because ignorance often aggravates illness. People who don't know about the kind of medical attention leprosy requires are likely to neglect or worse still abandon the patient. This was exactly what was happening during the time of Jesus.

In the bygone days, when medical knowledge was in its infancy, leprosy was incurable. This led people to see it as a curse from God or punishment for sins. The individual was outcasted and ostracized, left to fend for himself/herself and finish his/her days in loneliness and suffering. After all, who would want to reach out to someone who is bearing the burden of sin? If someone was suffering it was probably because he/she did some really bad things or

because they were paying the price for sins committed by their parents. Reaching out to them meant interfering with God's curse. This could be disastrous to the one helping since the curse might spread to him/her and in turn to his/her family. From this point of view it isn't so hard to understand why people were afraid of dealing with lepers and why they treated them as they did. It was simply a matter of life and death, not just for the one suffering but for anyone else who dared to maintain contact with them!



Leprosy thus gradually mutated from a physical sickness to a mental one, and in my opinion, the latter is far more dangerous. While leprosy has claimed thousands of lives worldwide, mental leprosy has claimed tens of thou-

sands. You might be wondering if I'm referring to a newer mutated form of pathological leprosy; don't fret, I'm not. I'm referring to a kind of leprosy that is dangerous and yet surprisingly common and it isn't something you can treat medically. It requires a different form of treatment. Its treatment is education and personal commitment to change. The leprosy I'm referring to has given rise to some of the biggest blots in world history: the Caste System, the Holocaust, World Wars, Environmental Destruction, Wanton Abuse, Terrorism and the like.

Mental leprosy or prejudice, if you would like to call it, unlike its physical counterpart, allows the diseased to move about freely without any worry since there is no external sign of sickness. The person seems to be perfectly normal. To discover the malady one needs to look at the symptoms and these symptoms often surface in a person's talk and action.

The Caste System of India, Apartheid of South Africa, Fascism of Italy, Nazism of Germany and Communism of the Soviet Union, are all well-known and cruel examples of mental leprosy. History has recorded the grave danger these systems have created as well as the destruction of life and property they left in their wake. While these are large scale events, there are also smaller, lesser ones that might be shrugged off as being unimportant. Gossiping, back-biting, pessimism, lying, cheating, taking advantage of people, imprudence, rudeness and the like all come under the broad purview of mental leprosy. They start out subtle and therefore are

far more dangerous. Just as a small wound if left unattended can develop gangrene which in turn could cause one to lose a limb, so also can these small acts of evil, if not checked early, end up destroying lives.

In the world today, there are still so many lepers - people discriminated against because of their race, caste, creed, gender and social status. Some claim discrimination to be cultural fact. This cannot be true. Any culture which discriminates against another and justifies that discrimination is desperately in need of treatment and purification. Equality is recognized as a universal and fundamental right of all people. How then can one continue to discriminate? "If you want to, you can make me clean", said the leper to Jesus (Mt 8:2). The beggar at the street corner, the peon in our office, the sweeper of our road, the Muslim neighbour next door, the black tenant all cry out to us in a similar manner as the leper did to Jesus. How do we respond? Are we gracious like Jesus to say "I do want it, be cleansed" (Mt 8:3) or have we our own agenda for continuing discrimination?

Jesus came to break down all barriers. He taught that all are children of the one God and Father. No one is greater or smaller since all have been created by God and are loved by him equally. Jesus commanded his disciples as he commands us today to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19), uniting them under the banner of love, 'cleansing' them of all that defiles them and restoring to them their God-given dignity. □

Quiet Spaces

THE PARROT'S CREED

This was a morning homily that Pope Francis gave on Thursday January 27, 2014 at the chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae.

At Holy Mass Pope Francis continued to comment on the first Letter of St. John. The Apostle “insists and greatly emphasizes the word which, for him, sums up the Christian life: to abide, to abide in the Lord,” he said. “Over the last days, we have seen how he envisions this abiding: we in the Lord and the Lord in us. This means abiding in love, for the two main commandments are love of God and neighbour.”

For John, then, the heart of the Christian life is “to abide in the Lord, and for the Lord to abide in us, to abide in love. And that is why the Spirit has been given to us. It is the Holy Spirit who carries out this work of abiding.” In the passage of St. John’s Letter (4:19-5:4) proclaimed in the liturgy, the Apostle answers a question that comes quite naturally to us: for our part, what do we have to do in order to live out this “abiding?” Taking up the words of the Apostle, Pope Francis replied: whoever abides in God, whoever has been born of God, whoever abides in love overcomes the world, “and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.” Faith enables us to live out this abiding, while “on God’s part the Holy Spirit carries out this work of grace.”

“It is powerful,” the Pope exclaimed. “The victory that overcomes the world is our faith. Our faith can do all things: it is the victory!” “It would be beautiful” to repeat this truth often, he said, “because so many times we are defeated Christians. The Church is full of defeated Christians, who do not believe that faith is a victory, who do not live this faith. Defeat comes if we do not live out this faith. Yet it overcomes the world, the prince of the world.”

The fundamental question we need to ask ourselves is this: “What is this faith?” Pope Francis recalled how Jesus spoke about this faith and revealed its power in passages such as those which tell of the woman with the haemorrhage, or the Canaanite woman, or the man who drew near to him asking for a healing in faith “great is your faith” or of the man born blind. The Pope also recalled the Lord’s words that “the man who has faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains.”

“This faith,” the Pope added, “demands two attitudes from us: confession and trust.” First “faith means confessing God; but the God who has revealed himself to us from the time of our fathers until now: the God of history.” That is what we profess in the Creed. Yet as he noted, “it is one thing to recite the Creed from the heart and quite another to recite it like a parrot: I believe in God, I believe

in Jesus Christ, I believe...?. The Pope then suggested an examination of conscience: “Do I believe what I say? Is this confession of faith true or I am saying it from memory because I have to say it Or do I believe by halves.”

Therefore, we must “confess the faith, all of it, not only a part. All of it!” However, he added, we must also “guard it as it has come down to us through the Tradition. All the faith!” The Pope then indicated the “sign” for recognizing if we “confess the faith well: adoration. “Whoever confesses the faith well,” he said, “all of the faith, is capable of adoring God.” It is a “sign that may appear somewhat strange, because we know how to petition God, how to thank God. But to adore God, to praise God is more. Only someone with a strong faith is able to adore.”

The Pope then added: “I dare say the thermometer of the Church’s life is a bit low: we Christians do not have a great ability to adore, because we are not convinced about the profession of faith. Or we are convinced only halfway.” We need to recover the ability “to praise and to adore,” he said.

Regarding the second attitude, Pope Francis recalled how “the man or woman with faith trusts God. They trust. Paul, in the dark moments of his life, said: I know well in whom I have trusted. In God. In the Lord Jesus.” And “trusting leads us to hope. As the confession of faith leads us to the adoration and praise of God, trust in God leads us to an attitude of hope.”

“There are many Christians with a watered down hope” that is not “strong.” What is the reason for this “weak hope?” A lack of “strength and courage to trust in the Lord.” To be “Christian victors,” Pope Francis said, we must believe “by confessing the faith, and also keeping watch over our faith, and trusting in God, in the Lord. And this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith.”

“To abide in the Lord, to abide in love,” he repeated, “on God’s part we need the Holy Spirit. But on our part, we need to confess the faith which is a gift, and to trust in the Lord Jesus in order to adore, praise and be people of hope.”

Pope Francis concluded his homily, praying that “the Lord might enable us to understand and live this beautiful word” of the Apostle John proposed in the day’s liturgy: “and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.” (by *L’Osservatore Romano*, *Weekly ed. in English*, n. 3, 17 January 2014)

ESCAPE TO SLAVERY

From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories

This is a true story as told to us by Laura Hamilton (*the name changed*):

"For twenty-one years I've been the wife of a respected doctor, and for fifteen of those twenty-one years I was a drug addict. There was nothing in my background to flash a warning of the danger ahead. I had married a handsome, wonderfully gentle man. We were perfect companions; we went to the movies or on road trips together; shared the same deep love of music. In the sixth year of our marriage I had a baby. Our happiness was complete. Who would think the tragedy of my life would be connected with the birth of my baby? It began with a simple remark that Clay made just two weeks after my baby was born."

Clay came down one morning and mentioned that his friend Ted, who hadn't taken a holiday in three years, was going on a holiday and a friend of his was offering him his farm house for free for all of six days. So, Clay asked Laura: "Well, I thought I would go too. I never know when I'll get a chance like this."

"I told him not to bother, I would be perfectly well and he should just go on this trip and enjoy himself, he deserved it. But after he left, I did nothing but brood. I told myself that Clay was heartless; he was tired of me; he didn't love me anymore. By the second morning, I had sunk to the depths of misery and self-

pity. I had to do something to give myself a lift. I thought of the pills I used to take occasionally when I felt nervous and depressed. There should be some in Clay's dispensary, just across the street from the house. Looking back now, I can see how childish and reckless I was. But then in my sick pride it seemed so easy to walk across the street and into the dispensary, find the keys and open the drug cabinet. I couldn't find the pills I wanted but I saw a brown bottle marked 'Morphine' tablets. Morphine was strong, it worked fast. Clay would never miss just one tablet. I took the tablet. I floated off into a world where there is no pain, no worry; and I did it every day while Clay was gone. Then he came home and there was no longer any reason for the tablets. But by the second morning I stood before that cabinet, shaking all over, my hands trembling as I reached for the brown bottle. I was caught, I couldn't do without it.

"That morning I began three years of a double life. You might wonder how it was possible to go so long without being discovered. It can be done, as long as you have a supply of the drug. My two lives ran smoothly side by side like rails along a track and suddenly they almost crossed on a morning when Clay was late in leaving for his calls. He usually left at eleven and then I could hurry over to the dispensary for my day's supply. This morning I walked the floor rag-

ing inwardly."

Clay noticed I was edgy but he said he was only ten minutes late. "You'll be late on all your calls." Laura said, "What's the rush? Ever since I came back from the trip you've been stopping a stop watch." "I have not! The earlier you start, the earlier you'll get home. Here's your bag." She barely gave Clay a peck on the cheek and he turned to her and smiled: "You know something?" "What?" "I'm the luckiest man in the world because I married you." With that he was out the door and headed for his car.

"Here I was stamping my feet in impatience whispering, 'Oh hurry, hurry, start the car and go...I have to get to the dispensary now!'" I walked across shaking and perspiring, "Where's the morphine? Has Clay missed it? Oh, what'll I do? A doctor, he'll give me a prescription; some doctor who won't tell Clay. There's that old retired one Clay was talking of the other night...the one out on the Elms road."

So Laura walked over to Elms road - it was the next street and walked over to the doctor complaining about a severe abdominal pain: "And I'm sure it's the same pain Dr. Armstrong...I've had it before and I know it will get worse." The doctor, an elderly gentleman with a kind manner looked Laura over and said: "Well, I'll write you a prescription for a little Morphine." "Oh yes thank you!" Laura was happy.

It didn't last too long and so she was back a couple of days later:

"Dr. Armstrong, that prescription you gave me two days ago, I've lost it, I don't know where. I've looked and looked." The doctor just made her another prescription and added with a slight smile, "Whenever you need help, I'll just give you a prescription. Just phone for an appointment; the fee will always be the same, you must get very lonely, a young woman left to herself all day?"

Laura hated the way he looked at her. She knew what he meant and she knew she would have done anything he asked but he was senile and he never went beyond words and looks. Then Laura thought to herself, "Perhaps you can believe that I, the mother of two children with the best husband in the world could even consider such a thing. That's because you've never suffered the agony of that craving."

Sometime later, she went to the hospital to have her second baby Curtis. She had to take the drug with her hiding it among her cosmetics. Then about a month later there was a call from Dr. Armstrong's residence informing her that Dr. Armstrong had suddenly died. Laura was shocked, all she could say to the housekeeper who called, "What dead? Thank you for calling."

Clay came home a little later and found Laura in quite a state of distress: "Now Laura, don't keep telling me nothing's the matter. You're shaking all over, you're soaked with perspiration; what's happening?" She said it was nothing but she was turning and holding her stomach and in

tears. She simply pleaded, "Give me a little Morphine...please give me a little morphine...please." Clay was firm and simply said he wouldn't until she told him what her problem was. She added, "Will you give me some, then? Will you?" He immediately said, "Yes." Then Laura told him that it had all begun while he was on that hunting trip three years ago. Then she pleaded: "Now I can't stop...I want to. I can't, I can't." That was when he knew he had to take her to a sanitarium.

"When I was in the sanitarium each hour seemed a lifetime. My condition was like a suburb of hell; I shrieked with agony; my eyes were filled with tears; my whole body convulsed. After an eternity, the day my husband brought me home, they said I was cured. I felt like a real mother to Robert and Curtis. I was supremely happy.

"Sixty eight hours later, I was a drug addict again. You'll find it hard to understand that anyone would take a chance of going to hell a second time. The trouble was in my will power. I hadn't really asked for that cure of my own free will. So, sixty eight hours after I came home Clay found me pacing up and down in the living room.

"Laura, sit down, try to relax," he said. "I'm alright Clay, I'm just getting used to being home," she replied. Clay was "I'm getting used to home being heaven again. Sure I wish I hadn't to go out on this emergency but I should be back soon. Robert and

Curtis will be back from school in an hour from now. So, why don't you fix them some sandwiches?" She saw Clay off and then she was on her own.

"Just across the street in the dispensary... I *mustn't* think of *that*...the sandwiches, I must fix the sandwiches. Oh, if I could just get something to quieten my nerves. Clay doesn't know what it's like. I can't stand it...I can't."

Curtis had come home and was sitting in the living room with his laptop. "Hello Curtis..." Clay had just arrived, "Hi dad?" Then he added, "School was okay, Robert stayed for basketball practice." Then Clay asked about Laura, "She's asleep and I can't wake her up." Clay sensed something was wrong and so he ran up to their bedroom and tried to wake her up.

"That was the story of my next ten years - sanitarium, release; the heartbroken look on my husband's face again - sanitarium. Ten years of my desperate search for drugs. I dreaded that the supply would run out. I made a list of doctors and told them fantastic stories to get prescriptions with morphine. I lied, I stole. I stole from Clay's bag and his pockets. At last I discovered the addict's paradise: a supply that was secret, cheap and endless. A chemist put it into my head. When I went over one morning with Curtis' prescription for chest congestion: "There, Mrs. Hamilton, I think this will take care of your boy. Follow the directions on the bottle. Don't overdose. This medicine has mor-

phine in it; not enough to hurt anybody. You don't even have to have a prescription to get it, not in this state. Now, just sign here."

"I knew how to get the morphine out of that medicine and there were drug stores open nights, open Sundays. Then suddenly my paradise turned into hell."

Then Laura had a bad attack of pneumonia and she had become really weak and she needed her 'dose.' Clay saw her restless, trying to get out of bed. "No Laura, I can't give you anything that will help you to get out of bed you - you've had pneumonia. It will take you a good while to get your strength back." But she wanted to. "So Clay asked her to try and she couldn't. "Now, will you believe me? You couldn't walk across the room. I have to run out on an emergency call. I want you to promise me that you'll stay in bed. Curtis and Robert are in school, and they'll have lunch there, so you can sleep the whole day." Once Clay left Laura was all alone.

"My last dose of morphine had worn off; already the craving was becoming unbearable but I had no more of the medicine and I couldn't possibly get to the drugstore for days. I lay helpless staring at the ceiling. I saw my future there, and it was black and hopeless and I saw myself as I was, as I had always been; selfish, cowardly, unwilling to bear any pain, even thoughts that hurt; too weak of will to fight down the craving that was wrecking the lives of my hus-

band and my children. I hated myself and I decided to die. I dragged myself out of bed. I managed to pull on my slippers and my housecoat. I was so weak, I sank to the floor. I began to crawl, to crawl down the stairs. I had to get across the street to the dispensary. There were poisons there.

Suddenly the front door opened and there stood Curtis. He was surprised to see his mother on her fours. She was upset that Curtis wasn't in school. She wanted to know why he was not in school, "I was out at first recess and I came home..." and she asked him why, "I don't know, I just wanted to come home." Laura just lay there and sobbed bitterly as Curtis rallied around her, letting her lean on his knee. "Oh, oh God! God help me. Heavenly Father, have mercy on me. Help me..."

She looked up, "It was as if I was seeing my son for the first time; realizing what I was doing to both my children, my husband. The shock of it brought to my lips the prayer I hadn't uttered in years. I kept on praying - and God did come to my help. He gave that weak will of mine strength that I needed. I never touched drugs since that morning.

"Now I am at peace within myself and profoundly grateful. I pray that other men and women who are miserable and seemingly lost will turn to the same great goodness. I know they will receive the same help. □

LOVE FOR HIS HOMELAND CHAPTER X

by Natale Cerrato

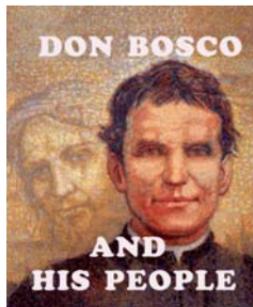
One morning in 1857 Don Bosco and professor Leonardo Murialdo met on Via Doragrossa, currently Via Garibaldi. Murialdo had just emerged from the church of San Dalmazzo where he went every morning to celebrate Mass. They greeted each other cordially and Don Bosco said: "My dear professor, why don't you stand me breakfast?" he said jokingly.

A typical Turinese breakfast consisted of a *bicerin*, a mug of milk, chocolate and hot coffee. Murialdo did not need to be told twice. They entered the *Caffè de Alpi* and ordered two *bicerin*.

The conversation soon passed from light banter to serious matters: the education of the young, the problems of the Oratories and the poor boys of *Porta Nuova* that was still without a director after the death of Father Paolo Rossi.

At the right moment Don Bosco made this suggestion: "Dear Professor, why don't you give me a hand with the Oratory of St. Aloysius and take it up?"

Murialdo did not refuse the request. Already as a cleric he had taken care of needy youngsters in Turin and assisted his cousin Prof. Roberto at the Oratory of the Guardian Angels in Vanchiglia. He said 'yes' and so at the Café on Via Doragrossa the two saints agreed to collaborate with one another.



Saint Leonardo Murialdo was born in Turin on October 26, 1828, the son of a banker and a lady of noble descent. He was educated in Savona by the Piarists. He entered the seminary and was ordained a priest in 1851 after which he obtained a doctorate in theology at the royal University of Turin. In 1857 he entrusted his zeal and a little of his stipend offering to direct the Oratory of St. Aloysius at *Porta Nuova*, where he busied himself looking after poor and abandoned youngsters from the suburbs until 1865. Later in life he started major initiatives: vocational training schools, clean literature, the Catholic Workers Union, the Pious Turinese Society of St. Joseph known all over the world as "The Josephites of Murialdo." He died in Turin at the age of 72 in 1900.

This genuinely Turinese saint, full of humanity and in sync with the times, humility yet bold, possessing a balance between inner recollection and outer enthusi-

asm, the precursor of Christian social action, nurtured a lively sense and a sincere love for his city and his little homeland. This is what he wrote in a long note published by him on May 15, 1866, in a moment of nostalgia, while in Issy on a holiday with the seminarians of St. Sulpice; it brims over with his love for Italy and his Piedmont and shines through Turin too:

"How I long these days for the beautiful sunshine of Italy, the beautiful skies of my Piedmont and the peaks of the Alps! How frequently my thoughts fly back to your beautiful hills! And above all to your old centre! There on Via Doragrossa, at the corner of Stampatori district is the palace where I was born and where I loved till the age of 27, living with my family. There is the dear church of St. Dalmazzo with its sacred fountain that has refreshed me and the altar where I celebrated my first Mass. There can be found the venerable churches of the Consolata, the duomo of the Holy Shroud, of the Miracle: churches that are as familiar to me as my home and whose thresholds I have often crossed when I was very young...in my distant youth in the company of my saintly mother."

"Even today, when I return there to pray I always try to relive the fresh, sweet and fervent emotions of the past."

"There, always at the centre of my old Turin, in the shadow of the palaces of our kings, rise the Seminary, the University, there are the academies, where I spent my years of philosophy and theology in the company of dear and



Victor Emmanuel II

faithful friends and companions; under the guidance of pious and very saintly priests outstanding in their theological, biblical and moral competence, singular in virtue and orthodox in their teachings."

"Every day for years, I walked the streets in the porticos of the Via Po, and the Piazza Castello and the theatre, cafes, gatherings, popular military parades, and bustling with traffic, to the city centre, where I saw young soldiers leaving for the liberation of Italy and the magnanimous and unfortunate Charles Albert.

"And as my thoughts fly to the Po, to the Dora and the miserable poor villages of Vanchiglia and S. Salvario, to the dear Oratory of the Guardian Angels and St. Aloysius where God led me right away, not yet a priest, with a vo-

cation with a predilection to work for poor and most needy youngsters and the children of the poor humble people!

"How grateful I am to God for allowing me to be born in beautiful Italy, in the city of the Blessed Sacrament, the Consolata, the Holy Shroud, the Cottolengo, the city of so many charities, of holy men, saints and generous patriots! Oh how I love you, Turin!"

We wanted to transcribe this entire passage so exquisitely lyrical, that one could look for it in a book of lyrical poetry because it reflects his love for his land which was prevalent among the people, perhaps because they now reside in peace in this beautiful land that had been wrought with so much blood sweat and tears. Great souls like St. Leonard Murialdo gave voice to a common sentiment hidden in the hearts of those who did not know how to give poetic expression to a deep love that the simple and humble people gave voice to by their deeds. They were wise, in large part, because in times gone by, the Piedmontese, were more soldiers than artists and did not deal much in poetry.¹

The same sentiments resonated in the heart of Don Bosco, even though lyrical compositions were not found among his writings. His style was more narrative. The author's ideas and emotions were merged with facts without expressing himself directly but one can easily identify them. From his academic writings, his summaries of Church history and civil history one no-

tices a profound devotion to God, respect for the Church and for his homeland.

So it will not seem strange if we try to document Don Bosco's love for his land, leafing through the pages of his '*History of Italy*' homing in on passages that concern Piedmont. We will highlight the members of the House of Savoy because, Don Bosco's love for the sovereigns was like his love for his people, the land that give him birth and indeed the Sovereigns were symbolic of the land.

By dwelling on Piedmont we, in no way disregard his great love for the common fatherland. His educational and social activity in Italy of the *Risorgimento* reveals his true patriotic spirit. Fr. Caviglia writes: "Don Bosco has the merit of knowing how to love his fatherland very intensely as also his little country without detracting from respecting and loving his country at large."²

Don Bosco begins his presentation from the earliest Counts of Savoy thus:

"A long line of illustrious men, who were largely involved in the events taking place in Italy, were the Princes of Savoy and I think it will be useful and pleasant knowing how our beloved monarchs began and progressed as they governed for over eight hundred years.³

Among the earliest Counts of Savoy, Don Bosco recalls in a special way Blessed Umberto III (+1189), pious, stern and a generous benefactor of the abbeys of Ranverso and Altacomba...and Barbarossa himself.

"Umberto could easily have avenged the harm he received by taking advantage of the circumstances that forced Frederick [Barbarossa] to flee Italy, but being of a very good heart, he humanely granted this common enemy safe passage through his lands.⁴

We have alluded quite often to the deaths in the Royal Household. They were warnings that Don Bosco gave but he was not a fanatic who wanted to take advantage of their trials to frighten the Sovereign. He did what his conscience dictated but always nourished a great respect and genuine affection for King Victor Emmanuel and the dynasty of Savoy. Even after the fall of the temporal power of the Popes, he never had the bad habit, common in certain circles, of demeaning the House of Savoy. While he made no secret of his absolute fidelity to the Church and the Pope, he also knew how to instill in his boys a love for the Sovereign and respect for civil authority. One day he told Marquis Scati: "It is necessary to give to Caesar everything that belongs to Caesar, nothing more, nothing less."⁵

It may be argued that his admiration for the dynasty of Savoy was not critically founded but Don Bosco never ignored the errors of his sovereigns; he could clearly distinguish the authority established by the men who exercised it. But to understand his *Italian History* one must see it in the proper perspective.

A man of the *Risorgimento*, Don

Bosco used history to teach the Faith. He always saw, in historical events, a divine plan which directs the progress of humankind.

In an article he wrote for the boys concerning the characteristics of the people he highlights the civic and Christian virtues of the people and of the Sovereign because he sees in them the secret of progress, the guarantee of a better future and the noblest characteristics and traditions of his people, the purest traditions of land and the true glory of his homeland. His ethical-religious and educational intent was an uplifting story not a historical critique. This did not mean that he falsified reality. He presented it, leaving what is not educative, in the shadows.

The current rethinking of history leads us to see men and events of the past in a very different light likely to be manipulated so as not to do justice to the truth, stifling any attempt to educate youngsters to a healthy love for the fatherland which is the basic condition for the universal brotherhood of humankind.

(Endnotes)

¹ *Notations*, Issy, 15 March 1866, in: A. Castellani, *Il Beato Leonardo Murialdo*, Vol. I, p. 817

² A. CAVIGLIA, *Discorso* introdotto, in: *Opere e Scritti editi e inediti di Don Bosco*, Vol III: *La Storia d'Italia*, Torino, SEI, 1935, p. XXI

³ OE VII, 315

⁴ OE VII, 318

⁵ MB 14, 578



MARY, 'MOTHER OF MERCY'

Carlo Miglietta

*Mary, filled with mercy,
becomes mercy for the poor and the oppressed*

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! When we call Mary "Mother of Mercy," in that beautiful prayer of Herman of Reichenau, [who was called "shrunken one" or "the cripple," a monk who suffered greatly from birth at the beginning of the second millennium (in 1013) and was proclaimed blessed in 1863 by Pius IX,] that genitive or specific compliment ("of mercy") can have both an objective and a subjective significance. In the objective sense, she is the Mother of Mercy because she is the Mother of Jesus, who is the mercy of God incarnate. Its subjective meaning: Mary is a mother full of mercy, totally merciful and so we should contemplate Mary in both these aspects.

MARY, THE "GRACED" ONE

The angel calls Mary to her sublime vocation saying: "Rejoice, be graced (kecharitōmene), the Lord is with you" (Lk 1:18).

Mary is not the "full of grace" (that would be *plerēs charitōs*, as in the Acts 6:8 refers to Stephen) she is "graced;" the one who lovingly surrendered to God. It is God's mercy that makes Mary



beautiful. There are so many popular praises of Mary's beauty: "You are the most beautiful of all dawns...More beautiful than the sun..."; "Beautiful, Immaculate virgin..."; "Look at your people...O beautiful Lady...." Here we speak of a theological not an aesthetic beauty, the fruit of divine mercy. In fact, Mary is Israel who has been chosen and favoured by God in his mercy and love (Hos 11:1-4; Ez. 16:8-14). In the language of the Bible "grace" refers to a special gift which has its source in the Trinitarian life of God himself, who is only love and the fruit of this love is election (Eph. 1:2-23). So, Mary must "rejoice" (Kàire!) because she is the incarnation of the Chosen People who must explode with joy because the Messiah as come, as promised by the prophets: "Rejoice, exult for joy, daughter of Zion, for I am in your midst!" (Zech. 2:14-17; cf. 9:9-10; Zeph. 3:14-20; Jl.2:21-27)

MERCIFUL MARY

Mary's journey to her elderly

relative Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist makes her a missionary and a deacon. She is "the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:36) precisely where she needs to serve his brothers. So also at the wedding of Cana, beyond all the regular rituals of the time we are struck by Mary's attention to the needs of the newlywed couple (Jn 2:1-12). Then, in a rather perplexing passage, she doesn't seem to hesitate to stand with her family of sinners who want to go and take Jesus away, thinking he was out of his mind (Mk 3:31-35). Under the cross we see her supreme maternal compassion; when everyone had fled only she with some women and John remain with Jesus (Jn 19:25).

MARY, THEOLOGIAN OF MERCY: THE MAGNIFICAT

The early community of Jewish Christians, perhaps a community of the *anawim*, the poor, took some phrases uttered by Mary and composed a Psalm precisely to sing of the mercy of God. Luke put this song on

Mary's lips because he thinks it fully respects the theology of the mother of Jesus, her emotions and her style.

The Magnificat is a great theological canticle. Almost all the verbs have as their subject God, the God who "has done" works mercifully (Lk 1:49-51). But the Magnificat is also a hymn of political and social liberation: Mary refuses a religion divorced from life and history. "Mary sang this Psalm in the name of all those she personifies: the people, the poor of Israel, the *anawim* who were waiting for the liberation promised by the God of Abraham, sterile women of the first covenant and sterile Israel itself" (E. Bianchi). It is very strange that among the many names given to Mary in ecclesial devotion, the appellations "Mary the poor" or "Mary sister and mother of the poor!" are never mentioned.

The central part of the Magnificat (Lk 1:51-53) consists of three antitheses: the contrast between the proud who will be dispersed by God and those who reverence and respect him will be covered with his love; those who are powerful will be over-



thrown and the humble ones will be raised up; the rich will be left hungry while the poor will be satisfied. This middle section is preceded by the first part (Lk 1:46-50) which is dominated by the figure of Mary who rejoices in God because "from generation to generation his mercy is on those who fear him," and is followed by the third part (Lk 1:54-55) which highlights the figure of Israel that God rescues "in remembrance of his mercy." The two figures, the first and the last, meet at last, Mary and Israel as "handmaids of the Lord."

We have never truly understood that following God is salvation, it is bliss; it is happiness and joy. Too many times have we contemplated Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows at the foot of the cross, without realizing that there are only words of joy in obeying the angel who commanded her to "Rejoice!" (Lk 1:28) Mary is always a joyful woman who "magnifies and exalts the Lord" (Lk 1:46) because she reflects on Israel's historical experiences, as she meditates on what God has done for his people. God is miraculously fulfilling his promise: becoming a Saviour God incarnate in her.

But the woman of the Magnificat shows us that God's mercy is not only spiritual sweetness but concrete action for a better world. So Mary shakes up our consciences from their private-self-centered spirituality and invites us never to be neutral but to always take sides like God on behalf of the excluded, as she keeps praising His divine mercy and immediately becomes mercy for others. □

NEWSBITS

ROUEN - FRANCE

Two years after the brutal assassination, Monsignor Dominique Lebrun, Pastor of Rouen, described the elderly priest as an "icon of martyrdom". The process of beatification pushed by Francis is ongoing. "A saint," one of those "everyday saints" of which Pope Francis speaks. "A faithful man," always a little "in the shade of the diocese, but he spent days and nights writing by hand, on sheets of paper, reflections on the Gospel; an "affectionate" priest with his parishioners whom, however, he never failed to scold, when they arrived late for mass "because for him, the Eucharist was the fundamental moment of the day;" a positive figure who has forged good relations with everyone, including the faithful of other religions.

There was a touch of emotion in the voice of Monsignor Dominique Lebrun, bishop of the French diocese of Rouen, recalled Father Jacques Hamel, the 86-year-old priest whom only a few knew until 9 a.m. on 26 July two years ago. His barbaric killing at the hands of two very young extremists who slaughtered him, while he was celebrating Mass, turned him into a universal symbol of martyrdom that is still celebrated throughout France and the world.

So much so that Pope Francis himself wanted to offer him a memorial service in Casa Santa Martha concelebrated with Lebrun, in the presence of the relatives of the 86-year-old parish priest who had come from



Normandy. On that occasion Bergoglio, recalling this "good man of brotherhood, who always sought to make peace," "murdered as if he were a criminal", emblem of that "satanic thread" that binds all persecutions to Christians, announced the decision to proclaim him blessed as soon as possible. Because he, the Pope said, "We must pray to him that he may give us meekness, brotherhood, peace, and even the courage to tell the truth: to kill in the name of God is satanic".

The cause for Father Hamel's beatification was thus opened just one year after his assassination, on 13 April 2017, thanks to the papal dispensation from the five years required for the opening of the trial. Lebrun announced the news which was greeted by the applause and tears of those who had known the elderly priest in person or who had learned of his testimony in the months following the assassination. Last April, on a pilgrimage to Rome with a group of young people from the diocese, the bishop met the Pope again: "Together we recalled the testimony of Father Jacques, and concerning the cause, the Holy Father urged me to hurry up" Lebrun tells *Vatican Insider*. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Stitch in Time

"That," said the museum attendant to the dear old lady, "is Lord Nelson's waistcoat. Note the hole through which passed the bullets that killed him." "Isn't it sad," grieved the dear old lady, "to think that no one mended the hole before the bullet went through? Had they done so, his life might have been saved."

A Boy's Essay on Anatomy

How does a little boy see the human body? Here is a little lad's effort at anatomy:

"Your head is kind of round and hard, and your brains are in it and your hair on it. Your face is the front of your head where you eat and make faces. Your neck is what keeps your head out of your collar. It's hard to keep clean. Your shoulders are sort of shelves where you hook your suspenders on them. You stum-bled is something that if you do not eat enough it hurts, and spinach don't help none. Your spine is a long bone in your back that keeps you from folding up. Your back is always behind you no matter how quick you turn around. Your arms you got to have to pitch with and so you can reach the butter. Your fingers stick out of your hands so you can throw a curve and add up rithmatick. Your legs is what if you have not got two of, you can't get to first base. Your feet are what you can run on, your toes are what get stubbed. And that's all there is of you, except what's inside, and I never saw it."

Funny Business

We are all familiar with the phraseology employed in business correspondence. Occasionally it is so high-sounding that the language is open to varying interpretations. A magazine issued by Bertran's Ltd. of Edinburgh indicated what we mean:

"Under consideration" - forgotten all about it.

"Under active consideration" - will endeavour to find the file.

"In abeyance" - file still missing.

"I should be glad of your further comment" - Can you give me some idea what it is all about?

"Expedite" - to confound confusion with commotion.

"Consultant" - any ordinary guy more than 50 km from home.

"To negotiate" - to seek a meeting of minds without knocking two heads together.

Figure of Speech

A skinny beggar approached a fat rich-looking lady for some alms. "I haven't eaten in four days," he said. "Gracious," she replied admiringly, "I only wish I had your will power."

Eyes Matter

The guest came downstairs after his first night at the hotel. "I trust you had a comfortable night, sir?" said the manager.

"I had a terrible night," snapped the guest.

"I didn't close my eyes all night."

"But that's your own fault, sir," retorted the manager.

"If you want to sleep, you must close your eyes." □

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.

Thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians who comes to my aid each time I say the "Three Hail Marys." Mama

Mary keep us always close to you. *Clare B. Fernandes*
Thank you Mother Mary for granting me many favours through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys; for helping us to get back our Goa house's original papers and completing all the paper work which were required to build our new Goa house which was in a very bad shape; for my daughter's happy marriage; for good health and for granting me many other favours big and small; may she always be with us and continue to bless our family.

S. Mascarenhas, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to you dear Mother Mary, through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys I received many blessings. Thank you for the success of my 3 grandchildren in their SSC Board Examination. Also for 4 of my grandchildren successfully completing their XII Board Examinations. Thank you, Mother Mary and continue to bless us.

M. Lobo, Mumbai
For many years the eldest of my three daughters could not find a suitable groom. She longed very much for a family particularly after both her younger sisters were well settled with their families. It was over ten years by now, and we continued to believe that God would surely bless her with the right person. Although the wait was terribly long and emotionally very tough for all of us and stressful for my eldest daughter, we never lost hope! January 2017: God finally showed mercy on my family and my daughter is now happily married. At the age of forty, my daughter was even able to conceive and deliver a healthy baby girl too! God provides and in abundance and works in mysterious ways. With all the hardships, my family has gone through and all the trials of life we faced, God was always by our side and pulled us out to safe and green pastures. My husband and I are blessed with six grandchildren and we are all very grateful to Our Almighty Father through the intercession of Mother Mary and we pray that we stay united as one family for generations to come.

Daughter of Christ, Goa

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My heartfelt thanks to Our Blessed Mother for helping my brother get another job within a month of losing his earlier job due to a redundancy. Thank You Mother. Do bless and protect us always.

Catherine, Bangalore
I would like to share this experience, which shows Mother Mary's loving care for us. It was the feast of St. Ignatius. After the day's work I was heading to the church of Our Lady of Miracles (Ratnagiri) to attend the feast Mass. I was on a bike waiting for the signal to change. Just when the signal turned green everyone hurried to catch up the next signal. There was an oil spill on the road and my bike skidded and I fell. My bike went sliding ahead while I lay flat in the middle of the road. An ST bus was behind me and was travelling almost as fast. I would have been run over, but thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary the bus driver suddenly braked and I was saved. When I got up I realised that it was only because of my devotion to Mother Mary that I was saved. I always carry a rosary in my pocket. I had escaped with just a few bruises. My family and I are grateful to Our Lady of Miracles. She has always protected us.

Julian John, Ratnagiri
My dearest Mother, thank you so much for all the gifts you gave us and now above all, the house registered in my husband's name. Please, Mother, keep us under your protection and help me to take whatever further step is needed.

A Devotee

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

My grateful and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for their powerful intercession and protection of our family and a miraculous court result.

Margaret Rowland
A million thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints for the numerous favours received through their intercession. May they continue to bless my family protect us always in the days to come.

Aurita Fernandes, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother and all the saints for a miracle received.

A Devotee
Special thanks to Our Lady for her assistance and help to me and my family, especially saving me from a serious accident. *A Devotee*
Thank you, dear Mother Mary, for helping us in our difficult times. Our son had an accident but he's back at work, our daughter also is back at work after 13 months. Thank you dear Mother. Please continue to bless us and help us.

Your Grateful Children
Sincere thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians.

A Devotee
I am very grateful to Our Lady and the saints for the favours granted through their intercession.

A Devotee

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and all the Saints for granting me numerous favours. For my younger son's quick recovery from an acute gastro-intestinal problem and for blessing my elder son in Canada with happiness and for guiding me at every step of my life. Keep all of us under your mantle and shower your blessings on our family always.

Mrs. Pacellia Mendes, Mumbai
My sincere and heartfelt thanks to dear Infant Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Gerard and St. Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with the gift of a healthy baby

girl, a job to my daughter-in-law. I also thank Jesus and Mother Mary for keeping our family under your protection and in good health. For all these favours I ever remain grateful to you. Do continue to bless and protect my grandchildren.

Mrs. John
We are very grateful to St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal pregnancy and the delivery of a baby girl. *Janice and Ralph D'Souza*
Thank you Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for healing me of my kidney stones and all the favours granted to me and my family. Be with us always.

L. Fernandes, Mumbai
I am grateful to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a cute granddaughter.

Mrs. Frantina D'Souza
We are sincerely grateful to Jesus, Mary Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for granting our daughter-in-law Erin a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby girl. Dear Lord Jesus and Mother Mary protect and bless our son Rodney, his wife Erin and baby Leah.

Grandparents Devika, Cassy and son Ryan, Canada

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JANUARY 2019

Evangelization

That young people, especially in Latin America, follow the example of Mary and respond to the call of the Lord to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.

THE SEED OF GOD IN US

We all have the seed of God in us, and it is because it is there, wanting to grow in us, that we cannot settle into complacency but must be always ready to grow. But we do not always allow ourselves to grow. We resist change, and that means we resist growing into the true selves.

Sr. Stan Kennedy in Gardening the Soul

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MARY WAS THERE

It was from my mother that I learned to put my faith in Mother Mary and developed the habit of praying the - "Hail Mary" at every difficult situation. One such experience took place in the first week of August'18. My 18-year-old son Devang, had a serious infection but, he was not ready to go to the hospital. So I just went to the next room of our house and started praying the "Hail Mary" and before I could complete it third time, my son called me from his room and said - "Mamma, let's go to the hospital." The doctor examined my son immediately. My son remained hospitalized for 4 days and is now fine. My family and I sincerely thank Mother Mary for this grace.

Mrs. Isabella Joshi, Mhow, MP

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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