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**May the venerable  
intercession of the glorious  
Virgin Mary  
come to our aid,  
we pray, O Lord,  
so that, fortified  
by her protection,  
we may reach the mountain  
which is Christ.  
Who lives and reigns  
with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
one God,  
for ever and ever.**

*(The Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel)*

## From The Editor's Desk

## HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?

It was Wednesday in the Easter Octave (Easter Wednesday) and I was suddenly captivated by Acts 3 which opens with Peter and John on their way to the temple when a crippled man begs for a hand-out. Peter tells him they have no money, but something much more powerful - "the name of Jesus Christ." Because of this, the man's use of his legs is restored. What attracts attention and draws the big crowd to the temple is not a tragic crime. Instead, it is the shocking news of the crippled man's healing, and they were "utterly astonished." While they are staring with baffled incomprehension at Peter and John, Peter turns their attention to God, who, he reminds them, had acted in numerous ways across the centuries to bring the people to know God's ways. They seemed to have forgotten. Their expectations of God were so small that it never occurred to them that it was God, not Peter, who did the healing!

It has been said that low expectations lead to mediocrity. A diminished sense of wonder results in a diminished sense of the possible. Conversely, a heightened sense of the possible expands horizons. Basically many of us have a diminished sense of God and of God's power to act. Christ wants to take us out of our narrow, personal ideas about God and shows us creation from God's perspective. Peter reiterates to the crowd that it is this living Jesus who healed the crippled beggar. He is telling them that their God is too small; their sense of what God did and does and can do is too diminished.

How big is your God? What would our faith look and feel like if we worshipped a God as grand as, for instance, the Vatican basilica, for instance? Perhaps the reason for the people's amazement and wonder at the man's healing was due in part to their petty image of God. For them, brokenness must be the rule and healing the exception.

Peter asks the people who rushed to him, "Why do you wonder at this?" Peter's mind is immersed in a world far different than theirs, an Easter world, where the healing and the forgiving power of God is as present and pervasive as sunshine and rain.

Those listening to Peter hear tough yet unbelievable words not designed to fit their ears. They were not words designed to soothe. But the crowd is responsive to Peter because of Peter's belief. Peter had faith. He believed that God had the power to heal, and so he offered it to the man.

Peter spoke his bold message "from his own brokenness." Peter did not have the excuse of ignorance for his actions in denying Jesus just before he was crucified. He was fully culpable and aware of his sin. But he does not call the crowd to repentance with the intent "to shame, to discourage, to declare his own superiority." Instead, he spoke as someone who had himself discovered that forgiveness is possible. If there can be forgiveness for Peter, then it is available to anyone and that engenders nothing less than a feeling of wonder, humility, and gratitude.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## LOVE IS FAIR

by Giampaolo Dianin

*If loving means giving oneself to the beloved without any calculation and without reserve, then is there a place for justice that inevitably refers to a certain amount of calculation and assessment?*

**T**he Hymn to Charity of St. Paul (1 Cor. 13:1-13) gets into the nuances of love when it is practiced, protected and nurtured. It is never just another name for altruism. Love is meant to be an adventure which leads couples and individuals beyond intensity to a particular intimacy.

Here is another aspect of love: "Love does not enjoy injustice (wrong) but rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). Pope Francis in commenting on this verse says: Enjoying injustice is the poisonous attitude of one who rejoices to see it committed to someone."

When I don't like a person I can enjoy the unfair and unfortunate things that happen to him/her. It's when I recognize that the misfortune that strikes such a person makes me say: "Serves him right!" I inwardly enjoy the harm that befalls him/her.

Real love, Francis goes on, rejoices in the good of others, when their dignity is recognized, when their qualities and their good works are appreciated" (AL 109-110). The second part of this Pauline verse is not easy or obvious. Rejoicing in the good fortune of another person is necessary if we are to be at peace with ourselves, not envious but free. For example, it's not easy when

a colleague makes a career jump and occupies a position that could have been ours.

All this can happen in a marriage when one of the partners creates some competition believing oneself to be superior to the other or because s/he wants to emphasize that the other isn't pulling his/her weight of responsibility. So it happens that one mistake of the other is picked out and highlighted almost with the intention of humiliating the person. Perhaps you even enjoy the mistakes of others because they make you feel that you're right: "See? What did I tell you? Am I not right?" You can enjoy an injustice because – as they say – it brings grist to my mill.

True love, St. Paul reminds us and Francis comments, does not enjoy injustice even when it could be to my advantage. Instead it enjoys the good that the other does and which brings him/her appreciation and esteem. True love rejoices that the loved one is recognized, praised and esteemed. Love always promotes the good of the other.

The figure of John the Baptist comes to mind. He is able to step aside when Jesus comes. He is ready to leave the scene to his Lord. John describes himself as a voice in the face of the one who

is the Word. John is not afraid to state: "He must increase and I must decrease." We immediately understand that when this is the attitude of each of the partners, love becomes a spiritual race seeking to always promote the other. These are some amazing hues of love! The Pope concludes: "The family must be the place where anyone who does something good in life knows that it will be celebrated together with him/her."

Going deeper into these verses we might want to ask ourselves what relationship is there between love and justice? If to love means giving oneself to the one loved without calculation and reserve, we ask: is it right, for example to pay a just wage when love might even go overboard in giving the gift? Love seems incompatible with every calculation. So, how does one use justice here when the gift itself is love?

We can conjugate this relationship between love and justice in different ways. First of all, in love, justice is living to the full the gift of oneself promised on one's wedding day and to do it not only when it comes easily and spontaneously but also when it's a struggle. Justice protects love from being at the mercy of emotions that come and go. Marriage is born of love, but the relationship is based on a covenant and a promise. I cannot tell you when I marry you that every morning when I wake up and see you my heart will burn with love for you, but I can promise you that I will be with you for better or for worse and this is the justice of love.

We might say that justice is the first form of love and is the very condition of love. Love asks above all, to 'honour' the other which means to recognize and appreciate the differences in the other, respecting his/her desires



and expectations without having to run them past me. To be fair means to revise my priorities in the light of my relationship with

you, shifting the focus of my life because of us and each time it is the result of a higher synthesis between the 'I' and the 'thou.' □

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STAYING TOGETHER

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### "SO, IT'S ALL MY FAULT!"

by Maria Chiara Bregolin

In our home the theme of "justice" is a very sensitive issue.

From the comments I hear from my children back from school and the conversations I have with other children I believe that is true of most families.

At the beginning of our "careers" as parents we loved to settle the quarrels of our children in a 'Samson' like manner till we realized that from an educational standpoint it wasn't possible to get into the dynamics of those little feet so as to get the desired effects.

**Case 1:** A little extract from umpire of the game Avengers, who claims to have seen both sides. However, the umpire was sure that he was appointed on some specific occasion by his grandparents. We do not really remember how things went. We propose that the children use a little of each. After some screams and tugs, we provided them with the alternative of breaking them into two and giving a part to each. In the end they preferred this absurd alternative!

So the object of the dispute or the point of contention became the point of the situation and we began to use the "American court" system with a lot of witnesses and a jury.

**Case 2:** The reckless use of the

larger play-station. The little one tells us that, even though the alarm was ringing indicating that the shift had ended, the defendant - the elder - did not make the joystick available. The elder justified himself saying that he was completing the game for his brothers. The younger one however replied that it was not true and claimed that he would not speak in the absence of an umpire.

So: Appealing to the Fifth Amendment seems too much for my family too!

Conflicts are always sprouting up in our homes. The challenge is not to allow them to get to you but to find a way to come together and solve them; or overcome them by having them evolve into something else.

For some time now, we start to stay the proceedings and begin with patient listening to what led that family member to behave in that manner. It was precisely those needs that generated something in the complaint that was deemed unjust or wrong... but if we left those needs aside (on rare occasions) we could find a just solution.

The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, who has conducted a series of conferences in schools on the theme of justice, said: "As justice requires the equality of people who are different and unique, justice has an endless role to play.

And to think that we are never quite right is already a way to start being so."

**Case 3:** This situation is presented to us again and again so insistently, it has been the source of endless discussions with our three children. Each of them asked this question: "What do you find unfair in our family?" And each of them complains: "That you always blame me for everything!"

Precisely for this reason, I decided that unless someone starts bleeding I will stay out of their quarrels and enjoy the ways that they come out of them, overcoming their issues. I will praise those who, for the sake of sharing with

us a value, will perhaps give a little space to the others and I will support everyone in the free and non-judgmental expression of needs even profound ones.

And what of my husband? I will try to let myself be guided by the words of St. Paul who urges that Love rejoices in the truth and not in injustice. My spouse is better than me in giving without counting the cost and not being interested in what comes back! It would be nice if justice in our families were to rhyme with sharing and a zest for life and gratitude.

And for this we will seek the intercession of our Advocate *par excellence*: Mary, our special guide to the Just One. □

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### MOANING AND GROANING

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You can never satisfy a negative person. Have you noticed how they are avoided? They have brought moaning and groaning to a fine art. At its worst, it has become second nature and they aren't even aware of the depressing effect their negativity has on the people around them. By their whining, you shall know them: "Nobody loves me. Nothing good happens to me. I never get picked on any committee." They go on and on in that vein and you want to say to them, "Will you, for God's sake, come down off the cross? We need the wood."

Nietzsche, one of the best-known atheists of the last century once reproached a group of Christians saying, "You make me sick." When he was asked to explain himself, he replied, "Because you redeemed don't look like you're redeemed."

I know the danger of pointing the finger at others; I end up with three fingers pointing back at myself. With this in mind, I share the story of the woman married to a man whom she could never please no matter what she did. If she gave him orange juice he wanted apple juice, if she gave him tea he wanted coffee, if she gave him a scrambled egg he wanted a fried egg. He was that miserable. She reached breaking point and decided to fix him once and for all. She took two eggs. She fried one and scrambled the other. She called him to the breakfast table. He came in and sat down. She put the eggs before him. He looked down and then looked up at her and said, "You fried the wrong egg!" Do you see what I mean? There are some people, and no matter how hard you try, you're not going to please them, you just can't win. Nietzsche was right, "They make you sick!"

We are called to be life givers, not life drainers. Life is a gift to be enjoyed, cherished, and celebrated. I'll conclude with one of my favourite sayings: "When you were born you cried, and the world rejoiced. Live and love in such a way, that when you die, the world will cry and you will rejoice." □ Vincent Travers, OP

## THE FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE

by Letizia Molesti

Those who have walked the road to Santiago de Compostela know how helpful and encouraging those pillars that dot the road are. They tell (if pilgrims leave them in tact) the pilgrim the number of kilometres that separate them from their destination. These little pillars stand at turning points or at crossroads. Every time a pilgrim has to ask himself/herself which way to go s/he instinctively looks for the nearest pillar and the yellow arrow.

In daily life it does not work that way. Sometimes you need clear signs concerning the choice you have to make. It is possible to reflect, or even visualize your own story, inspired by a pilgrimage to Santiago.

Let us try to imagine our pathway dotted with many 'pillars' that mark our turning points. They could be:

- the more-or-less significant choices that, in each case have helped us become who we are today;
- important people who have accompanied us on a certain stretch of road;

- events and experiences, planned or unexpected that have molded us inwardly and helped us to grow, etc.

Visualizing the path you have traversed makes you reflect on the choices you've made. It tells you about yourself. Every choice you made more or less consciously tells you something about yourself and you're not left unaffected. Sometimes sharing yourself has meant getting others involved in the events of your own life and that of others; in reality, "getting your hands dirty." This can become a source of encouragement and comfort now and for the future.

Maybe sometimes, sharing has meant that you lose something, you squander your assets, waste your time and energy and that of others. Looking back at your life thus far you may also notice that sometimes you've preferred not to share anything with anyone, staying inside our pain, our pride, almost in a state of 'self-sufficiency.'



You might then possibly feel a certain regret or frustration at some of your choices or because you've not had the courage to at the right time to face others.

If it is true that you cannot turn the clock back, you can however take note of your own 'path' and how you have covered that distance by recovering what you have lost or not shared. This is not a useless exercise. From today's perspective **you can repossess your history** by choosing to begin a new journey, by employing those dynamics that for you were not possible yesterday.

You could ask yourselves today what you have learned about yourselves and others and try to find out how to reactivate those vital energies that impel you from within, to realize life in all its fullness.

The next step is to **visualize the next turning points** on your path and how, with those you choose to share them with, you can imagine them, **plan them and gear up to realize them.** You can do this because you are "future-able." You have the ability to listen and put into action the spark of the desire that God has placed within you.

"They will grow from strength to strength..." (Ps. 84(83),8). Choice after choice, step by step, one's ability to make choices grows thus enhancing the fundamental choice around which all other choices are

made and based. If you dare to make explicit the desire that God has planted in you, you will be able to discover the greatness of a new horizon that you were unaware of; that significant horizon that makes your history unique! This horizon convinces you throughout our life, giving you the impetus to give of yourselves towards building up that piece of the world that has been entrusted to you.

Then the ups and downs, the long lonely stretches when you would have liked to share your journey with someone familiar, or actual life companions...they are all worth holding on to; they are part of your journey!

Till you understand that goal, the Lord who comes to meet you every day in the Word, in the Eucharist, in the community, in the face of the poor, has already found you where your desire has already been inflamed. Go, live a good life!

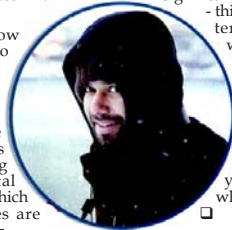
### Another Step of the Journey

Pray with Psalm 83 [84]: "How lovely is your dwelling place..." trace your life with its pillars/turning points, its names, dates, significant events...

- this was how God intervened along the way

- the horizon of your life is unfolding like this...

- are you going to be more "alive" where you are and be able to share your life with those who walk with you?

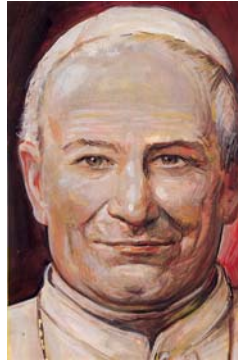


## SALESIAN SAINTS

### PIUS IX 1792 - 1878 POPE - BLESSED

The Pope with whom Don Bosco had the most interactions for the major part of his life was Pius IX who was pope for 32 years, from 1846 to 1878. Don Bosco met him several times. In fact he had twenty audiences with Pius IX and wrote him hundreds of letters.

Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti (Pius IX) was the ninth son of Count Girolamo and Caterina Sollazzi. He was born in Senigallia on May 13, 1792. He was a student with the Piarists at the college for the nobility at Volterra. Though eager to become a priest he was forced to interrupt his studies because of sudden epileptic attacks. On a visit to Loreto in 1815 he was healed. He resumed his theological studies and in 1819 he was ordained a priest. In 1823 he spent two years as a missionary in Chile. At just 35 he was appointed Archbishop of Spoleto and later in 1832 at Imola. In 1840 he was made a cardinal and on June 16, 1846 at the fourth ballot with 36 votes out of 50 he was elected Supreme Pontiff at the age of just 54. He immediately introduced several reforms within the Papal States (the freedom of the press, the freedom for the Jews, the commencement of the railways) but when in 1848 he refused to sup-



port the war against Austria, a "persecution" began against him. On December 8, 1854 he defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In 1869 he inaugurated the First Vatican Council. On December 8, 1870 he proclaimed St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church. He died on February 7, 1878.

Don Bosco's love for the Pope stemmed from a profound vision of faith. He insisted with his boys in his typical fashion: "Don't shout 'Long live Pius IX' rather shout 'Long live the Pope!'" Don Bosco demonstrated a tangible example of his attachment to the pope as a young priest in 1848. Don Bosco had been a priest for seven years and he learned that Pius IX was forced to flee from Rome to Gaeta because of the proclamation of the Republic of Rome and

there the Pope was in serious financial difficulties. At that time Don Bosco organized a collection among his young boys of the Oratory and sent a donation of 33 lire to Gaeta! The Pope directed Cardinal Antonelli, his secretary of State to thank Don Bosco for this very practical gesture of solidarity with the Successor of Peter.

It was said that Pius IX was the founder of various congregations at the time. For the "Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales" he was more than a 'co-founder' he was a 'father,' both loving and demanding at the same time. In fact, the initial idea of the "Congregation of Oratories" came well before Don Bosco's first papal audience (1858). Don Bosco seemed to have the same serious concern while trying to reconcile the concepts of 'religious' life and 'civic' existence' which preoccupied him already from the early 1850s because of some clarifying suggestions at the insistence of the anti-clerical minister Ratazzi. Likewise, one could perhaps argue that Don Bosco seemed to get a more attentive hearing from the Pope rather than the officials of the Sacred Congregations. On the other hand, the fatherly concern of the Supreme Pontiff for the Salesian family seems to be beyond doubt. The advice of Pope Pius IX to Don Bosco was so significant and papal interventions so 'protective' during a time when religious institutes had to wait interminably, the Salesian Constitutions were approved much more quickly.

St. John Bosco had his first au-

dience with Pius IX on March 9, 1858. Both had the perception they were each encountering a saint. Pius IX supported and directed Don Bosco to found the Salesian Congregation. He suggested that Don Bosco call the congregation a 'Society' in keeping with the times; to take vows but not solemn ones; he advised simple clothing and intense piety, but not too complicated. As usual there were two phases through which the approval of the Salesian Society and its constitutions had reached and in both cases the participation of the Pope was definitive and decisive. The first stage concluded with the approval of the Salesian Congregation in 1869 and when Don Bosco complained of some limitations placed on the priestly ordinations of the Salesians, the Pontiff said: "Things are going well, let's take one step at a time, the Holy See will never relent." So it happened. Pius IX convinced Don Bosco to write his own memoirs as a spiritual heritage to his Salesians.

Also during his pontificate in 1870 Pius IX established the Arch-confraternity of the Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA); in 1871 he approved the plan for the founding of the religious institute for women of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and in 1876 he approved the Pious Union of the Salesian Cooperators of which he was the first member. Don Bosco loved Pius IX very much and accepted all his advice even at the cost of great sacrifice: "I am ready to face any hardship where the

Church and the Papacy are concerned." The pontiff too had a great esteem for Don Bosco and several times summoned him to Rome to confer with him on very sensitive matters. The following incident portrays in better light the reciprocal love between Pius IX and the Apostolic See and Don Bosco and the Salesians and how wonderful was the fondness of this Pope. In February 1869, when Don Bosco went to visit the Pope once more, the Pontiff welcomed him with tears in his eyes saying: "Dear Don Bosco, I am old and at any moment I might be gone, if you have anything to ask

of me or for your congregation, hurry." The Saint with his usual sense of confidence and serenity looked at the pontiff with affection and replied prophetically: "Holy Father, the Lord still has great things for you to do for the good of the Church." "Oh," added the Pius IX, "There is only a year and a half to reach the pontificate of St. Peter." "And your Holiness will surpass him." "What are you saying? It has never happened." "Well, I tell your Holiness, that you will not only see the days and years of the pontificate of St. Peter, but others too." That prophecy came true. □

### IN ST. PETER'S BASILICA

In St. Peter's Basilica, directly above the huge bronze statue of the Prince of the Apostles so venerated by pilgrims is a memorial to Pius IX, placed there because his papacy has been the longest since St. Peter. And above both these papal representations is a gigantic marble statue of Don Bosco with two youths, apparently fulfilling one of his dreams (MB 17:11).



July 2019



close up of memorial to Pius IX

## Witnesses in & for Our Times

**ST. CHRISTOPHER  
(+ 250)  
(JULY 25)**



**B**efore my baptism I was called "Rejected," now I am called "Christopher." According to tradition, those were the words he uttered and which would lead to his martyrdom. It was the task he had chosen for life. He was to be a Bearer of Christ, i.e. Christopher.

Before becoming a bearer of Christ Christopher had a strong desire to serve the strongest person on earth with all his heart and with all his strength and his strength was not something mean, it was great.

#### To serve the strongest

The cult and devotion attributed to this saint are varied and present everywhere, not just in the middle ages. Pilgrims always had recourse to his protection before they dared to attempt the Alpine passes or to cross rivers. He became the protector of ferrymen, postmen, athletes and porters and those who did any heavy work. He was patron and protector of other categories of people too such as gardeners, nurserymen and green grocers. He is invoked as an aid against a bad death, that is, a sud-



den 'bad' death without the comfort of the sacraments and prayer. Then in the sixteenth century devotion to him seemed to fade. It is not known why.

Even in the twentieth century

our Saint re-found a second 'vocation' or if you prefer, another 'job,' nothing less than the protector of motorists and that's a multitude of people (often dangerous... judging from the statistics). Doubtless this task will be burdensome as he has to protect millions of motorists who alas believe they don't need him.

Why all this devotion and these numerous devotees seeking his burdensome protection? All this was due to a hagiographical account about him crafted by Jacopo da Varagine in his "*Legenda Aurea*." There is nothing (or almost) historical about it but the story is touching and significant. Here it is:

Christopher was a Canaanite, a giant of a person endowed with great strength and an impressive physique. He was a warrior and his face aroused terror in all who laid eyes on him. He had a great desire to put himself at the service of the strongest person in the world. And that was when his quest began. At first he found a powerful king and gladly put himself at his service.

But one day, in the presence of a juggler who sang a song in which the devil was named...he saw the king make the Sign of the Cross every time he heard him named. Doubtful and restless, Christopher asked the king to explain his behaviour. Since he saw the king hesitating Christopher threatened to leave his service. Finally he confided: "When I hear the devil's name I make the Sign of the Cross to defend myself from being harmed by him." Christopher logically concluded that the devil was stronger than the king and so he left him in search of the

devil...to put himself at his service.

Given the ubiquity of his subject he did not have to struggle much in his quest. In fact, as he was going along a deserted stretch of road he saw a terrible looking character coming up to him who asked him: "Where are you going? Who are you looking for?"

Christopher replied: "I am looking for the Devil because I hear he is the strongest person."

And the devil, the Master of deception, replied: "I am the strongest and you are seeking me."

And Christopher immediately entered his service. He followed him and obeyed him with utter docility like a true disciple.

One day on their travels they encountered a Crucifix and the devil changed his route precipitously. This did not escape Christopher: "What's the meaning of that? Why did you avoid the Cross?"

In devilish fashion the devil pretended not to understand and did not reply.

But the other continued: "It would seem that you are afraid of it." Again silence. Then to the threat of abandoning him forever, the devil was forced to 'confess' that his only weakness was that he feared the Cross since a certain Jesus Christ had died on it. Christopher logically concluded: "So if you're afraid to say you're not the strongest, goodbye. I will go and find this Jesus Christ."

And he sent the devil to hell, abandoning him to his destiny.

#### **What Should I do To See Jesus?**

Back on the road again, he resumed his search for the strongest person. "Where is Jesus Christ?"

he asked people. They said to him, "Go to that hermit over there. He will show you Jesus Christ." He went and found the hermit in a hut engrossed in prayer and penance. "What should I do to see Jesus Christ?" He asked him right away. What a question! The poor hermit, indeed a saint, was no expert in the discernment of spirits; he had no time to update himself. And he didn't even know the saying that to know a person you should have walked in his shoes.

"You must fast."  
Christopher looked perplexed: "Fast? I cannot. Teach me something else."

He replied: "To see Jesus Christ you need to pray much."

Christopher replied: "That's another thing I cannot do because I don't know what it means to pray." The hermit then pointed to the river and said: "No one can cross this river without peril of death. You must stand on the bank with your enormous stature and your prodigious strength and help transport travellers across from one shore to the other. This service would be very welcome to Christ. Then you will see him."

He was finally satisfied with the hermit's reply: "This is something I can do and serve Christ. I will do it." And he did so with commitment; day and night he transported people from one bank to the other without discrimination. More importantly, he was happy, but when would he see Jesus Christ?

#### **"Christopher, help me"**

One night he heard the voice of a child calling to him: "Christopher, come and help me to cross the river." Christopher came out

of his hut but saw no one. Then again he heard the child's voice but saw no one. At the third time, finally he saw a child begging to be helped across: "Come and take me to the other side." Christopher took the child on his shoulders and began the crossing. It was a simple crossing but everything gradually became very complicated.

The weight on his shoulders increased more and more and the water rose higher. And he, giant of a man, for the first time thought that he wouldn't be able to make it, but he succeeded this time too.

Then he said to him: "My child, you put me in grave danger. You were as heavy as if the whole world was on my shoulders." And the child said: "Do not be surprised Christopher. You carried not only the whole world on your shoulders but the One who created it. I am Jesus Christ, the master you serve. As a sign of the truth of my words, plant your staff near your hut and in the morning you will see it full of fruit and flowers." And the child disappeared. The next morning his staff was a date palm full of dates.

The story (with various cultural and mythological influences) is so edifying that it lends itself to innumerable philosophical, spiritual, catechetical and existential applications.

Every person on this earth is to be a ferryman transporting others from one shore to the other.

We are all called to be 'Christophers' to our neighbours. And if we do this in the same spirit that Christopher did, then each of us will have found our own path of sanctification; one that is original and unique like every single flower in a garden is. □



## THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

by Ian Pinto, *sdb*

### The Jewish Tradition

The concept of resurrection is not explicit to Christian theology. It formed one of the core teachings of traditional Jewish faith as well. Traditional Jews hold that when the Messiah comes to inaugurate the Messianic Age, the temple of Jerusalem would be restored to its original splendour, the Jews would all be gathered together and the dead would come back to life. One can find reference to this in two places of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), the books of Isaiah (26:19) and Daniel (chap. 12).

The idea of the resurrection is symbolic of certain tenets of Jewish faith which were later incorporated into Christianity:

1. Resurrection is a gift of God. One does not resurrect simply on account of possessing an immortal soul. While all will be resurrected, for some the resurrection will be blissful as they will enjoy the fruit of a life well lived. (cf. Mt. 25:34) while for others it will be painful, on account of their callous living. (cf. Mt. 25:41)

2. The resurrection is not a private

matter. It's not that an individual who has lived a good life will rise again to be alone with God. The resurrection is a community event. All those who lived righteously will rise to enjoy the glory of God. Just as one lived in community here on earth, one will resurrect into the community of saints that are continually in praise of God: "...And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1).

3. The Jews believed that resurrection was not merely a spiritual event. Since the whole person, body and soul, were created by God, one would be resurrected in the body. There is a Jewish text which says that the dead would rise in the very clothes they were laid to rest in, just to affirm the bodily resurrection. St. Paul insightfully teaches about the resurrection: "But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? ... God gives it a body as he has chosen (...). If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body...Just as we have borne the image of the

man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

### The Resurrection at Bethany

Lazarus was near death's door. Despite informing Jesus of his critical state, there was no response from him. Martha and Mary were genuinely distraught, and for good reason. Not only were they about to lose their beloved brother, they were also about to lose their identity.

In ancient Jewish culture, the woman had no identity of her own. She gained her identity from the closest male relative. Usually, it was the father who not only acted as protector of his daughter but also gave her an identity. In the absence of the father, it was the uncle, brother and later husband, who took charge of ensuring the dignity and identity of the woman.

Let's look at the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as an example of such dynamics. When Mary was found to be pregnant even before the consummation of her marriage, she risked losing her life by stoning. This was the punishment demanded by the law and a woman without any identity would not even require a trial. Had Joseph decided to expose Mary and go through with the divorce (Mt. 1:19), she would have been stoned to death for defiling herself and incurring the curse of Yahweh (Num. 5:11-31). Since he claimed her as his wife, she was spared (Mt. 1:18-24). Thus, one is able to get a glimpse of the condition of women at that time.

With this in mind, the plight of Martha and Mary becomes easy to understand. They were unmar-

ried and on the verge of losing their identities and sense of respect. If their brother died, they were as good as dead too. Where was the Lord?

Jesus capitalized on the gravity of the situation to drive home a critical point. He said: "This illness will not end in death; rather it is for God's glory, and the Son of God will be glorified through it" (Jn. 11:4).

By the time Jesus reached Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days. He was visibly moved with compassion for the sisters and wept at the loss of his close friend (Jn. 11:35-36). He then ordered the stone to be taken away and prayed and after this rather ostentatious prayer, he called Lazarus back to life (Jn. 11:41-44).

For starters, Lazarus, for all practical purposes had finished his earthly life but God 'gifted' him another chance by restoring life to his lifeless corpse. Secondly, he was not only restored to life but was also restored to his family — a family that was in dire need of his masculine presence. Finally, in raising him from the dead, Jesus did not just deliver a powerful teaching on the resurrection but also indirectly challenged the social system that looked down on women. His miracle was possible thanks to the staunch faith of Martha and Mary, women who society would soon discard as non-entities.

This incident reaffirms the truth of the resurrection and reminds us that God will never abandon any of us, no matter how weak, small or sinful we are, we are all precious to Him and He desires what's best for us even though we might not understand His ways. □



## Quiet Spaces

### **“COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO LABOUR”**

Homily at the altar of the Cathedra, in Saint Peter's Basilica  
Friday, July 6, 2018

*“You who trample upon the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land... Behold the days are coming... when I will send a famine on the land... a thirst for hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:4.11).*

**T**oday this warning of the prophet Amos is remarkably timely. How many of the poor are trampled on in our day! How many of the poor are being brought to ruin! All are the victims of that culture of waste that has been denounced time and time again. Among them, I cannot fail to include the migrants and refugees who continue to knock at the door of nations that enjoy greater prosperity.

Five years ago, during my visit to Lampedusa, recalling the victims lost at sea, I repeated that timeless appeal to human responsibility: “Where is your brother? His blood cries out to me”, says the Lord. This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us (Homily, 8 July 2013). Sadly, the response to this appeal, even if at times generous, has not been enough, and we continue to grieve thousands of deaths.

Today's Gospel acclamation contains Jesus' invitation: “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). The Lord promises refreshment and freedom to all the oppressed of our world, but he needs us to fulfil his promise. He needs our eyes to see the needs of our brothers and sisters. He needs our hands to offer them help. He needs our voice to protest the injustices committed thanks to the silence, often complicit, of so many. I should really speak of many silences: the silence of common sense; the silence that thinks, “it's always been done this way”; the silence of “us” as opposed to “you”. Above all, the Lord needs our hearts to show his merciful love towards the least, the outcast, the abandoned, the marginalized.

In the Gospel we heard, Matthew tells us of the most important day in his life, the day Jesus called him. The Evangelist clearly records the Lord's rebuke to the Pharisees, so easily given to insidious murmuring: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’” (9:13). It is a finger pointed at the sterile hypocrisy of those who do not want to “dirty the hands”, like the priest or the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a temptation powerfully present in our own day. It takes the form of closing our hearts to those who have the right, just as we do, to security and dignified living conditions. It builds walls, real or virtual, rather than bridges.

Before the challenges of contemporary movements of migration, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy. A response less concerned with calculations, than with the need for an equitable distribution of responsibilities, an honest and sincere assessment of the alternatives and a prudent management. A just policy is one at the service of the person, of every person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security, respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned for the good of one's own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world. It is to this world that the young look.

The Psalmist has shown us the right attitude to adopt in conscience before God: “I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set your ordinances before me” (Ps 119,30). A commitment to faithfulness and right judgement that all of us hope to pursue together with government leaders in our world and all people of good will. For this reason, we are following closely the efforts of the international community to respond to the challenges posed by today's movements of migration by wisely combining solidarity and subsidiarity, and by identifying both resources and responsibilities.

I would like to close with a few words in Spanish, directed particularly to the faithful who have come from Spain.

I wanted to celebrate the fifth anniversary of my visit to Lampedusa with you, who represent rescuers and those rescued on the Mediterranean Sea. I thank the rescuers for embodying in our day the parable of the Good Samaritan, who stopped to save the life of the poor man beaten by bandits. He didn't ask where he was from, his reasons for travelling or his documents... he simply decided to care for him and save his life. To those rescued I reiterate my solidarity and encouragement, since I am well aware of the tragic circumstances that you are fleeing from. I ask you to keep being witnesses of hope in a world increasingly concerned about the present, with little vision for the future and averse to sharing. With respect for the culture and laws of the country that receives you, may you work out together the path of integration.

I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and to stir our hearts to overcome all fear and anxiety, and to make us docile instruments of the Father's merciful love, ready to offer our lives for our brothers and sisters, as the Lord Jesus did for each of us.

## THE SECOND OF JANUARY

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

Can people really change? For instance, can a husband and a wife pull back their marriage from the edge of failure? This is the gripping story of the couple who had to face these questions. You will never forget their answer.

It's already after half seven and Marge is in the kitchen getting dinner ready and out in the living room little Dianne is sprawled out on the rug colouring pictures

which she wants to show her daddy when he returns but she's supposed to go to her room and wash her hands to get ready for dinner. Marge sounds tired: "I told you he won't be interested. You've been showing those pictures under my nose all day..." By the sounds of it, she seems edgy and irritable this evening when Jeff arrives. He's exhausted and even though his little daughter wants to show him her pictures, his only question is: "Is dinner ready?" "Of course it's ready." She sounds irritated and Jeff notices that but he's just casual and he defends himself: "I was just asking." When he sees what's on offer for dinner he's upset once more. "It was the same the day before yesterday and there was a lot left over." "What do you expect, chicken and roast potatoes? With the money you give me..." Dianne is watching this and playing around with her vegetables. Marge screams at her and the little girl, in tears screams back: "Daddy's not eating his vegetables!" She turns red and bursts out crying: "I won't eat it, and I won't eat dinner..." She got up

from the table and ran up to her room, slamming the door behind her."

There's silence at the table and neither Jeff nor Marge are looking up from their plates. Then Jeff breaks the silence: "That's the third time this week she's left the table crying. Marge, you've got to stop this," Marge thinks Jeff is interfering and she gets up from the table with her plate.

When Marge returns and is seated once more, Jeff says: "We just keep going over the same ground. We've to do something." "About what?" Marge asks.

"You know darn well about what: 'us' you and me and Dianne. We don't have one meal in peace anymore. We spend all our time, from the minute I get home taking pot-shots at one another. What's the matter with us anyway?"

They can't fathom how they reached this stage: "It can't go on like this. We're falling apart at the seams. We've got to do something." They seem to have the same quarrels every evening or at least every now and then and Marge says: "How many times have we gone all through this? I know something's wrong with us, so do you. How many times you've promised to settle down and get some place on your job instead of just sliding by... You're going to be a real father to Dianne, you know? You're not going to lose your temper around her. You're going to take us to church. You're going to stop drinking at parties and making a fool of yourself over some woman."

Now Jeff is on the defensive: "Alright, how many times have I heard you say there aren't going to be any more half empty brandy bottles hidden in the closet? I'll never come back home to an upset house and a crying kid? You're going to show Dianne how to do things right instead of picking on her. Home is going to be a place where I'm going to find a little affection and encouragement."

They're suddenly beginning to realize that they are in some pretty dark place. They're both trying, but always end up in such a terrible row. They can't figure it out. Jeff shakes his head as if trying to get out of some dizzy spell: "What's wrong with us? How did we get this way? Why can't we snap out of it?" They both realize they are clueless about the situation and Marge is now in tears.

Taking her in his arms as they sit in the living room side by side, he says softly: "How about let's start over; wipe the slate clean, begin fresh." Marge is skeptical. A tired smile breaks across Jeff's face: "This is just the right time for it. New Year is when everybody makes resolutions. So, let's make up our minds that things are going to be the way they used to be." Christmas is just over and there's barely a week to New Year's Eve.

"Oh, that reminds me I have to get a dress for that party." Neither of them wants to go but there is some pressure from their circle of friends.

So they will go to the party. But Jeff adds: "On New Year's Day we start over. Wipe the slate clean and start fresh." Now Marge is smiling, she's feeling different already.

There's quite a commotion

...with streamers and horns and hats here at the Dobson's place. It's just about midnight and in one roar the party erupts with: "Happy New Year, Happy New Year!" Jeff is already perspiring with the amount of punch that has gone into him and he rather cheerfully weaves his way through the crowd. Ah, there she is: "Rosalie, Rosalie, come here, come here. Oh, I just want to wish you a very Happy New Year." In a side hug he kisses her cheek. She rather awkwardly elbows him: "Oh, Jeff, just stop! I think your wife wants you. She's giving you the eye over there by the punch bowl." Jeff notices Marge all by herself, her mascara giving way beneath her eye-line. "I know I've got to talk to her. Don't you go away, I'll be right back." Once more wading through the crowd of merry-makers he reaches Marge who herself is on her sixth or is it her seventh punch of the night and she's upset: "You said you were going home early. It's 2.30, you said you were going home early." She's restless and a bit woozy. Jeff is enjoying himself and is in no mood to get out just yet. Through a put-on smile he manages to say: "You're just tight. You're jealous. You just don't want me talking to Rosalie... you ..." Jeff is insistent but Marge just wants to go home: "It's late and I want to go home." Reluctantly excusing themselves Jeff grumbles as they make their way to the car: "Oh, what's the rush, the morning is young."

It's late and only the parlour light is on; everything is still. Both Jeff and Marge are a little, well, a little more than a little soaked.

"Oh, boy, I'm ready for bed." And Marge insists that he can't, he's got to drop the babysitter home. He doesn't like the idea, but he has to and then he sees a note on the mantle. "Listen to this: 'I put Dianne in bed, she'll be OK. You only said four hours. It's 1.30 now and I'm going home. I'll come by tomorrow for my money.' He's upset and upbraids Marge: "Say, what kind of babysitter did you get anyway?" Though inebriated, Jeff still screams at Marge; what kind of a mother was she? Even a cat could take better care of her kittens, he told her.

"Fine kind of mother you are, leave Dianne with anybody. You don't care... Anything could have happened to her, when you leave her alone. You don't care." It was all quiet and the two of them were now at their inebriated best:

"Don't you scream at me; are you worrying all of a sudden about Dianne? All you do is push her...I'm wearing myself out taking care of her and this house. You don't appreciate anything I do. I'm just the cook and the housekeeper. When you want something you go drooling after somebody like that Rosalie..." Then as an afterthought she added: "You didn't kiss me. I'm your wife, your own wife and you didn't kiss me not once!" "Is that what all the fuss is about? Well, here if you want a kiss..."

When he caught her she struggled to free herself and screamed back at him: "Oh, you're big shot when you're outside. Well, I know you, you're nothing, you're a flop; you're mean, spiteful..."

Jeff is hurt and he screams: "Shut up!" And he slaps her across the face.

There was a sudden silence when both of them realized what had happened. "You hit me!" Marge said, shocked. So was Jeff... As if suddenly sobering down he put his head down: "Marge, I, I didn't mean to, I'm sorry." Then everything got quiet and both of them quietly made their way up to bed, too tired to fight anymore.

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What time was it? There were sounds coming from the living room below. Dianne was lustily playing a toy piano which sounded like wind chimes they were irritating. It was after midday and Marge had just made her way down unable to sleep any longer considering the din that little Dianne was making. She even found a horn that Jeff brought back from the party last night. "You went to a party, I know, I found a horn." Dianne was holding it up and blowing it loudly. As if on cue, Jeff made his way down from the bedroom holding his head. "Daddy, do you have a splitting headache too?" The little girl was blowing that stuff right into his ears. As he reached the foot of the stairs he saw Marge lying down on one of the sofas in the living room and all Dianne's toys on the rug. Their eyes met and he tried a weak smile: "Pretty rough night, last night; Marge how do you feel?" They tried to have a conversation while Dianne was vying for their attention. "Oh my head! Make her go someplace before I go crazy." Marge tried to coax Dianne to go out and play in the garden. It was cold but she wouldn't mind. She

didn't want to go, but she looked out of the window and saw her friend, a little boy her age, Billy Allen. "Oh, there's Billy Allen, I'm going to play with Billy Allen, I'm going..." There seemed to be some peace. Jeff was trying to make some conversation but feeling awkward after last night: "What was in that stuff last night? My eyes, my throat, I can't swallow."

Outside Dianne found Billy Allen looking for someone to play with. The two of them came and stood in the stoop in front of the door which was partially open letting in a cold blast. "Hello Dianne, what are you playing?" "I got a horn, listen."

Marge and Jeff were getting frustrated and the hangover headaches were now taking their toll. Jeff could barely keep his head up and the glare of the morning seemed to make his eyes smart: "Hey, they're not going to hang around here are they?" "No, they'll go over to his house, she always does."

Outside the children got busy with their toys: "Now's my turn." It was getting really cold. Billy suggested they go inside but Dianne stepped in the door and looked serious: "No, we can't play in the house. Everything makes noise and daddy and mother have hangovers." "Well?"

"They went to a big party last night. They didn't get home till awful late. They had a big fight. Daddy hit mother."

"Gee, did you see him hit her?" Billy's eyes became large.

"No, but they hollered so loud they woke me up and I heard them."

Jeff and Marge were lying on the

couch and by now they were listening to this rundown of events of the last night from their daughter's perspective.

"I heard mother holler, 'You hit me'. Then she cried."

"Weren't you scared?" Dianne seemed brave: "They have lots of fights but this was the biggest. Mother's got a big mark on her face." "She cried?"

Then the subject changed when Billy took out his new pocket knife. Dianne was fascinated: "Oh you got a new knife. You got that for Christmas?"

Proudly Billy opened it: "It has three blades and a can-opener."

Dianne said out loud: "I wish I had one." "Girls can't use knives. Girls can't do anything..." Billy seemed very sure of himself.

Dianne bravely countered: "They can. I can cut with a big knife in the kitchen and it's twice as big as your old knife. I got up all by myself this morning and got my own breakfast. Did you get your own breakfast?" "No, but I went to church this morning with my mother and father and my two sisters."

Dianne didn't know why. "It's a holy day, you're supposed to go to church," said Billy proudly. Then he went on: "My father says: how can you start the New Year right if you don't go to church and say your prayers?"

Dianne without skipping a beat: "Daddy says prayers. He says prayers every time he gets those envelopes with the windows in them." Billy told her they were bills. "We get that too" he added. Then Dianne said that they got a lot of them and she imitated Jeff when he opened them: "And daddy says prayers,

he says: "God oh God, where's the money coming from?" Billy found all this very boring and suddenly he picked up the horn and blew it as Dianne shushed him up. "Doris, that girl who sits in front of me in school - her father hit her mother and her mother went away and she never came back." Just then Billy realized that it was high time he went home. "Why?" Dianne wanted to know.

"We've got a big dinner and we're going to have turkey and dressing and plum pudding too. What are you going to have?"

"They don't eat when they have hangovers, they just drink coffee. Can I come over to your house?" For a moment Billy didn't know what to say. "Well - Ok. Go and ask your mother." Jeff looked at Marge, they were listening to this conversation - between their daughter and her friend. "Oh I don't have to ask her, she doesn't care. Daddy doesn't either. They won't even miss me." Billy was already walking home; sure that his dad was calling for him. "Come on," he shouted to her. Hand in hand these two kids lustily shouted into the chill winter afternoon, "Happy New Year!"

It was silent once more. By now Jeff was wide awake and very embarrassed by what he had heard. "Marge, hold up your face. That mark, I did that." "I don't even remember." She was a little shy. Jeff plucked up courage and sat down beside Marge: "I do. I never want to forget it. Just like I never want to forget what Dianne said."

Marge nodded and a tear

slipped down her cheek: "She sounded old and frightened. Not like a little girl at all." "That's right."

Suddenly it dawned on them: "It's almost the second of January. We missed New Year's - all the things we were going to do." Marge got up from the sofa.

"What's the matter with the second of January?" Jeff smiled shyly.

Marge looked puzzled, "For what?"

"Starting over; it isn't the date that counts. You can start any day you want to." Jeff sounded determined. Leaning her head on Jeff's shoulder she whispered: "And I want to, right now more than anything else in the world."

She added: "We'll have to. Not just for ourselves for Dianne. If we don't do something, what's going to happen to her?" Marge seemed scared. "Oh Jeff, I'm scared." "So am I after last night. We've been fooling around, putting it off. Let's quit kidding ourselves. We know what we ought to do. We are going to start now, right now! And this time, darling, I mean it." Clasp his hand as if she needed him more than anything else she said: "Oh Jeff, so do I. This time it's for keeps."

The same situation for Marge and Jeff is found in many homes where one failure after another is covered over by wishful thinking instead of being cured by genuine resolution. Resolution is a decision in the will; it is rooted in sincerity, nourished by sacrifice and strengthened by the grace of God. This resolution to happiness can be made any day even on the second of January. □

## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 5

by Michele Molineris

### 16. Don Bosco the magician (1834)

In the autumn of 1834, young John Bosco returned to Chieri for his fifth year of secondary school. On the advice of his parish priest Father Cinzano, he lodged at a certain Thomas Cumino. Thomas was a tailor and had a shop near the Piazza San Bernardino, close to the church of St. Anthony. Father Cafasso, who had lodged at Cumino's house earlier, knew John Bosco was short on means, arranged for the boy to stay below the staircase of the shop and as rent the lad would work for Thomas. The good man was ready to offer some humane lodging conditions and a less humiliating arrangement to some decent people on the recommendation of the parish priest.

Reading the biographies of Don Bosco it appears that this Cumino, without being uncharitable, was very gullible and easily taken. The young John Bosco took advantage of this and without a shadow of malice, to surprise him, would quite often fill a bottle with wine but when he poured it into his glass it was just plain water, or vice versa. Frequently, fruitcake would suddenly turn into bread, coins in Cumino's purse were transformed into useless, rusty scraps of tin, his hat would become a nightcap, walnuts and hazelnuts were changed into gravel.

On one occasion Cumino had gone out of his way to prepare a fine chicken in gelatin for his

lodgers on his name day. The covered dish was set on the table, but to the amazement of all, as it was uncovered, a cockerel suddenly emerged from it, cackling loudly and flapping its wings. Sometimes John would wager that he could conjure up a key, which Cumino for certain knew was elsewhere. The key would then turn up at the bottom of the soup tureen, after the soup had been served.

Such pranks occurred practically every day. All that the good man could say in the face of such occurrences was: "Men can't do these things, and God doesn't waste time with such nonsense. So it must be the devil's doing." Unwilling to discuss the matter with any of his lodgers, Cumino sought the advice of Father Berfinetti, a priest who lived nearby who decided to refer the matter to Canon Burzio, the school superintendent and a highly esteemed ecclesiastic who instructed the sexton to question the boy but to no avail.

Being summoned by Canon Burzio Bosco came without hesitation and was already convinced that he would have to explain himself to his inquisitor. Taking every precaution he meditated on what he would say. According to him, he alone could save himself from further harassment. With those thoughts in mind he knocked on the door of Father Burzio with the confidence of someone who knew what he was about. The canon was immediately aware, from John's answers that he was confident about the situation before him. He did not broach the subject directly for fear of arous-

ing suspicion but digressed from the subject feigning indifference and disinterest. But the boy's responses were so intelligent, so deferential that at one point he could not help but congratulate him.

It could be a trap. The young Bosco would have bitten the bait. But then the canon abruptly said: "Certain stories about you are making the rounds. They tell me that you can read other people's thoughts; that you can guess how much money a man has in his pocket, that you can make people see white when it is black. That is all very well, but how do you swallow swords and spit out doves, eat fire and spit out water; smash watches and return them intact, find lost money from pockets. Tell me now: who taught you these arts? Where did you learn them? Without batting an eyelid, John requested five minutes before answering and asked the dean for the exact time. Automatically, the priest put a hand in his waist pocket to look at his watch, but it was not there. Wide eyed he could not suppress a fit of anger. The lad had just entered his house and had already stolen his watch! He was about to snap when John intervened in amusement: "Well, if you don't have a watch, at least give me five soldi."

The priest rummaged through his pockets but could not find his purse. In his anger he threatened to report him to the parish priest, to the mayor for theft and then public opinion would turn against him for personal deception. During the outburst John remained calm and unruffled. The canon calmed down a little

and said: "Well let's talk it over quietly: tell me how you did it! How could you so neatly relieve me of my watch and my purse? Where did you put them?"

The mystery was soon revealed. When John knocked on the door, the canon was giving alms to a beggar and distractedly left his purse on the table. The clock wasn't very far away. Being wary of how things would unfold John picked up both the objects, certain that the example would be more persuasive than a thousand speeches.

The canon had a good laugh and asked John to do a few more tricks. When he caught on to them he was delighted and gave John a little gift and dismissed him: "Go and tell all your friends that *ignorantia est magistra admirationis* [wonderment is the result of ignorance.] (cf. EBM 1, 257-261)

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Don Bosco performed a similar trick in 1927 for Silvio Passerini, a chemical pharmacist of the University of Innsbruck and Genova.

The same professor recounted it in a letter from Trent addressed to the editors of *The Salesian Bulletin* in October of that same year.

"In July last year I went to Pergine on business. While returning I realized that I had lost my briefcase which had important documents in it and a picture of the new Blessed Don Bosco that was so dear to me. I searched within the house and outside. I even made a trip specifically to the streets, homes and pharmacies that I had visited but to no avail. Even complaining to

the police at Pergine station was of no avail.

Back in Trent at my home on piazza Venezia 4, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, I resumed my search but in vain. Then my twelve-year-old daughter Itala said: "Papa, I lit a candle and recited an Our Father in front of the picture of Don Bosco."

I was worried while the old housekeeper admired my daughter's naive devotion. Itala turned around and said: "Papa, I think Don Bosco's smiling at me."

At that very moment some distance away the house keeper and I heard a clear and distinct sound of something falling. Behind me my daughter was praying. It was the briefcase, intact. The girl was the first to turn around and pick it up and put it into my hands that were trembling with shock."

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Biographical sketches published in the Paris newspapers always brought up his erstwhile skill in sleight-of-hand tricks. Once, while visiting a wealthy gentleman he was asked to give an example of his expertise.

"Very gladly," he replied graciously, "and I'll do so right now if you don't mind."

"Yes, yes, by all means, go ahead."

"Can you tell me what time it is?"

His host put his hand into his pocket, only to find it empty. "Here is your watch," said Don Bosco with a smile, but did not hand it over to him. After a while, as Don Bosco was about to leave, the gentleman reminded him of the watch.

"Oh no!" Don Bosco replied. "I

will not return your watch until you pay me its value to care for my children."

"It's an expensive watch, you know."

"Well, think it over."

The man took five hundred francs from his pocket and got his watch back. The bystanders broke into laughter, as did the gentleman himself as he escorted Don Bosco as far as the street with the greatest cordiality. He most probably had not realized that he had left his watch nearby within Don Bosco's reach. (cf. EBM XVI, 94)

## 17. An amazing memory (1836)

One day his friend Comollo, who was a guest at the rectory of Cinzano, marveled at the power of his memory and expressed the view that few others in the world had been endowed with such a gift by God. John had read seven volumes of Flavius Josephus' *History of the Jewish War* only once. One day, he took them from the pastor's library, and handed them to his friend saying: "Just tell me the title of any chapter and I will recite the whole chapter for you."

Comollo did as he was asked, and John repeated it from memory from beginning to end with amazing promptness. After this chapter he recited others. "Now," John continued, "ask me about any event in the book."

Comollo glanced at the index and asked a question about the first topic that caught his eye. John knew it so well that he repeated it flawlessly. "Now," John continued, "open those volumes at a page you like and just tell me

the first words on the first line, even if it is in the middle of a sentence." Comollo complied and again John recited it as if he were reading from the book.

Finally, Comollo would merely mention a certain event, and John would tell him on which page and what section of the page it appeared. He had already given similar demonstrations to his pastor, Father Cinzano, who later used to tell the Oratory boys about it when they came to visit him on their excursions (EBM 1,322).

#### 18. A strong constitution (1840)

What Don Bosco experienced strongly within himself had a surprising effect on him from the year 1840. At that time he was attending his penultimate year of theology at Chieri but he was not really keeping good health. He continued to have incredible strength enough to amaze his companions but he was getting weaker, the victim of some ailment he was unaware of. He resisted as long as he could but in the end he finally had to take to his bed. The rest is narrated to us by his biographer Father Lemoyne in the first volume of the *Biographical Memoirs*.

"John's health continued to deteriorate. He had been ailing now for a year, and at last was forced to take to his bed. Any food caused him nausea, and he was bothered by chronic insomnia. He had been bedridden for a month when his mother, entirely ignorant of her son's serious condition came to visit him bringing with her a bottle of good wine and a loaf of corn bread. The moment she came into the infirmary she realized how



*The great stairway of the seminary at Chieri as seen from the dormitory.*

seriously sick he was. When leaving, she wanted to take the corn bread back with her, for she thought it would be too hard to digest. But John pleaded with her to leave it there, finally, she reluctantly agreed. Left alone, John was seized with an uncontrollable craving for that bread and wine. First he took a small piece of bread and chewed it well. He liked it immensely. Then he cut off a slice, followed by a second and a third, and finally, regardless of anything, he finished off the whole loaf, washing it down with the wine. He then fell into such a deep sleep that he did not wake up once in the night or for two days thereafter. When he finally woke up, he felt fine. Traces of his illness lingered, but these eventually disappeared during his chaplaincy at the *Refugio* [Institute] after some vicissitudes and a bad relapse (EBM 1, 357-358). □ *(To be continued)*



## PRAYER TO MARY (MEDITATIONS ON THE HAIL MARY)

*by Roberta Fora*

### Pray for us NOW

Thinking back on the concluding words of the Hail Mary, my attention stopped at the word "now" and suddenly several reflections surfaced in my mind.

The present moment, this moment that for no reason at all, I let slip by. That's what "now" means.

What I can do now I must not postpone for later.

My middle-school teacher often repeated this quote to us: "What you can do today, don't put off for tomorrow."

It's true sometimes that we don't realize that the contribution we make at this moment is precious and irreplaceable.

For some reason to refrain from giving your best in any circumstance may have deleterious consequences.

On the contrary, we should strive to do something concrete for others, certainly for those around us, without giving up and notwithstanding anything. We should not ask if we will be successful or if the outcome will be positive.

Mary is a great example, an es-

sential point of reference for Christians because she lived every moment 'fully,' never putting off for later what she could do at that particular moment.

Take, for example, the angel's announcement to her. Mary did not hesitate, she responded generously to the voice of God that spoke mysteriously to her humble heart.

Another example that might be appropriate is the episode of the Wedding at Cana. Even here Mary understood that she had to act at that moment. Without hesitation she directly asked Jesus to perform a miracle because there was no wine for the guests and the celebration could not go ahead.

In short, if we take Mary as the model for our Christian journey, we cannot but learn to live profoundly in the present moment trying to commit ourselves intensely here and now.

*Help us Lord, not to waste the time you give us each day.*

*May we follow Mary's example and learn to live the "now" of our day without useless compromises, in the sure hope that every good deed*

done for others with conviction, is a visible sign of God's love in the world, because we are God's humble instruments.

#### At the Hour of Our Death

'The Hour of Our Death' - I'm sure that reading this sentence will send a sudden chill down our spines...

Death exists; it is part of the human experience and a necessary passage for us to reach the other Life which is Eternity. But as Christians it is an essential belief and if we do not accept it, it would make us feel very disconnected from our personal experience.

Perhaps this stems from the fact that each of us is afraid to face this great moment of pain and suffering.

Who of us can think of a sudden affliction or the torment of a serious illness without letting ourselves be overcome by panic or fear?

Even Jesus in Gethsemane, fell to the ground and prayed to the Father to take away from him the cup of suffering. This shows us that humanly, we are unable to accept suffering serenely and so the thought of death disturbs us and makes us uneasy.

Despite this, everyday we turn to Mary and ask her to pray for us at the hour of our death...which seems like a contradiction for the Christian, because if we reflect positively on this phrase, we realize again, how important the Mother of God is on our Christian journey. She is a model of holiness, a consistent example of constant faith and so, extraordinarily essential for our inner life.

If we really believe that Mary prays for us, that she intercedes with the Father when we are in



trouble and turns to God when we face this highpoint of our existence, our death, everything becomes less worrisome. The strength to face that moment when we take that last step to reach the endless joy in Paradise will not be lacking. God himself, through His Mother, will give us the Holy Spirit, the giver of every good gift and his strength.

We should not be afraid but only trust and hope in the Lord so much that everything else will follow.

*Mary, help us every day of our lives, to trust in the Lord and place our life's journey in your hands that we may walk joyfully everyday. May we leave behind all that steals from us, true peace of mind and heart.*

*Lord, let us discover in our everyday lives the ultimate goal for which you created every person and may the thought of eternity be a source of real joy, a prelude to the endless joy where You, patiently and mercifully never tire of waiting for us. □*

## NEWSBITS

### VATICAN CITY



The change had already been present in the version of the Bible for several years, but now the Italian bishops have finally approved it also for the missal: in the Italian version of the "Our Father" prayer, the words "do not lead us into temptation" will disappear and will be replaced by "do not abandon us to temptation." Also in the "Gloria" recited at the beginning of Sunday Mass, the expression "peace on earth for people of good will," is now replaced by "peace on earth to people, beloved by the Lord."

It was the extraordinary general meeting of the IEC that gave the green light to the new missal. "There are still small corrections and steps to be taken", the new secretary of the Italian bishops, Stefano Russo explained. Then the "confirmatio" of the Holy See will be necessary and the new text will enter into common use after the publication of the third edition of the liturgical text: "I think and hope that 2019 will see the printing and release of the new missal in print." For Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, President of the Episcopal Conference, "it is a step forward in

the Council, not only a translation, but a deepening. It will help the communities, we hope so."

#### A work that lasted years

Last August 11, while meeting the young people at the Circus Maximus, Pope Francis said: "In the prayer of the Our Father there is a request: "Do not lead us into temptation". This Italian translation was recently adjusted according to the precise translation of the original text, because it could sound equivocal. Can God the Father "lead" us into temptation? Can he deceive his children? Of course not. And for this reason, the real translation is: "Don't abandon us to temptation."

The new version is the result of many years of work and the text was approved, and specifically voted on, by the Italian bishops gathered in the general assembly. Now, with the approval sanctioned yesterday, that version also enters the missal. It is no small passage, because it introduces a change in the formula of prayer as it has been recited by generations of the faithful. In 2000, when this was discussed during a meeting of the Permanent Council of the IEC, Cardinals Giacomo Biffi and Carlo Maria Martini also agreed with the new translation. And Biffi recalled: "This is the meaning that Saint Ambrose also attributes to those words of the Our Father." □

*Andrea Tornielli, La Stampa*

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

### Great Concern

Prosecutor: "Now, tell the jury the truth, madam. Why did you shoot your husband with a bow and arrow?"

Defendant: "I didn't want to wake the children."

### In Praise of Philosophy

"But why study philosophy? It doesn't make you any happier?"  
"No, but it enables me to be unhappy more intelligently."

### A Point of Perspective

Lawyer: "Do you realize you are facing the electric chair?"  
Prisoner: "I don't mind facing it. It's sitting down in it that gets me."

### The Thanking Angle

"Thankful! What have I to be thankful for? I can't pay my bills."  
"Then, man alive, be thankful you aren't one of the creditors."

### The Arm of the Law

A bright young lawyer was pleading for his client on trial for burglary.

"Your honour, the evidence shows that my client did not enter the room at all. He merely inserted his arm through an open window and took a few trifles. His arm, being only part of himself, why should you cause his whole body to suffer because of one offending member?"  
"Very well," said the judge with a twinkle in his eye. "Your logic is good. I therefore sentence your client's arm to one year in jail. Your client may accompany it or not as he pleases."

Whereupon the defendant unscrewed his cork arm, laid it on the judge's desk and walked out.

### In Good Times...In Bad!

Young wife: This is terrible! Not a thing in the house to eat! I'm going home to my mother.  
Husband: "I believe I'll go with you."

### Word on Dust

Tommy: "Mom, is it true that we came from dust and we return to dust?"  
Mom: "Yes, dear, that's what the Bible says."  
Tommy: "Well, I just looked under the bed and there's somebody there, either coming or going."

### Cautious Bargain

"I want a reliable chauffeur who takes no risks," said the would-be employer.  
"I'm your man sir," replied the applicant. "May I have my salary in advance."

### On the Dot

"When I applied for that job the manager had the nerve to ask if my punctuation was good."  
"What did you tell him?"  
"I said, I'd never been late for work in my life."

### Devastating Power

A Scottish minister was asked to pray for rain, and his prayer was followed by such a downpour that crops were injured. One old farmer said to another: "This comes of trustin' sech a request to a minister who ain't acquainted with agriculture." □



### TO KNOW GOD

Donagh O'Shea OP

This isn't only the information age. It is also the age of experience. Deeper than our need to know about things is our need to experience them for ourselves. It used to be said that learning taught you more in one year than experience in twenty, but we now have our doubts about that! It may be true of the less profound kinds of knowledge (like information, or even theoretical knowledge) but it is not true of the deeper kind of knowledge we call wisdom. Information and theoretical knowledge are like coins: you can take them out of your head and scatter them around just like coins from your pocket. Like coins too they have the stamp of someone else's head! But wisdom has to be your wisdom, just as your hunger is your hunger and your eating is your eating.

*O God, you are my God,  
for you I long;  
For you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
Like a dry, weary land without  
water.  
So I gaze at you in the sanctuary*

*To see your strength and your  
glory. Psalm 62*  
Knowledge is power, we say. Much of what we call knowledge is about having power or control, or at least the feeling of power and control. In contrast to this, notice the verbs in that psalm: to long, to thirst, to pine, to gaze... These are not 'control' words; they are just the opposite. They are words that express incompleteness.  
Is that a good thing? Wouldn't it be better to be complete (whole)?

### Finding God in suffering

Despite the nice words, no. Have you ever looked into the eyes of someone who felt complete? What you saw was smugness at best; and at worst, arrogance, indifference, a separateness that had no love in it. I met a man recently whom I hadn't met for twenty-five years. On that occasion long ago he was giving a lecture at a theology symposium, and he was very fluent and clever, at ease with his subject. But the other day there was a different quality in him: he had suffered greatly in the meantime, and there was such vulnerability in his eyes, such humanity. His friends, who see him every day, may not be as conscious of the transformation; but I could see it all in one instalment, so to speak. I feel that this was a glimpse of the meaning of human life. It gives substance to what someone quoted to me recently: "Religion is for people who are afraid of going to hell; spirituality is for people who have been there."

To end, some lines from Patrick Kavanagh:

*O God can a man find You when  
he lies with his face downwards and  
his nose in the rubble that was his*



achievement?

His implied answer was yes yet yes. In John's gospel (12:20) some

Greeks came looking to see Jesus. When Jesus was told this he said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." In other words, that is the place to see him. Not in

the halls of power, not in the glare of publicity, but in the ground of humility.

I would like to hear that vulnerable man speak about God now. I think only such people can really talk about God. That man has followed Christ to Calvary; that's the qualification required. □ (From *St.Martin's Messenger, Ireland*)

### THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

*Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.*

My heartfelt thanks to Our dear Mother Mary for the success in oral examination for the promotion of my son, B. ROSHAN. My family is always indebted to Mother Mary.

*L. Beniltus & Family, Chennai*

Thank you Mother Mary for granting me many favours through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys. Mother Mary, continue to bless us.

*Mrs. Ophelia D'Souza, Mumbai*

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in the year 2015. After surgery and chemotherapy, radiation etc. I was pronounced a cancer survivor in the year 2018. I am grateful to Jesus, our blessed Mother, St. Peregrine and all the saints for granting me a new lease of life. Sweet mother protect me and all who need your help. *Irene Saldanha, Mumbai*

### LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Thank you, dear Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for saving my sister from a bike accident. Protect my family always.

*Glynis Saldanha*

Heartfelt thanks to Ma, Mary Help of Christians for all the help and the cure of my foot.

*E. Menezes*

My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus and Our Blessed Mother for taking care of my family and curing my mother; even for helping my son secure 89% in his SSC exams and for all the favours granted.

*Mrs. T. D'Sa*

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

My grateful thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and all the saints for the gift of my first granddaughter on January 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

*Mrs. H. D'Souza, Australia*

My grateful and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all favours granted through their intercession. A devotee Dear Jesus of Divine Mercy, Our Lady and Don Bosco for all the favours granted.

*Mrs. D. Fernandes*

My thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Angels and Saints for all the gifts received throughout the year 2018.

*A Devotee*

### THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our very heartfelt gratitude and thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of our beautiful, very premature granddaughter who is showing great progress and our daughter for her health issues. Grateful thanks for countless blessings received through daily prayers.

*Mrs. I Pereira*

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and all my favourite saints for a safe delivery.

*Carolene & Miguel Rodrigues*

Thank you St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for a successful surgery of a bilateral total knee replacement despite the many health complications.

*Mrs. Marianinha Fatima D'Sa, Mumbai*

Heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for being so kind and generous to me over the Christmas season and for taking care of all my needs.

*M. Dodd, Pune*

Thank you, St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl Kriselle Savia Fernandes, born through the intercession of St. Dominic Savio on May 6, 2018.

*Gail and Noel Fernandes*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the good results of my sister's cancer scare.

*Rita Sequeira, California*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER JULY 2019

**Universal:** *That those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.*

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### **MARY WAS THERE**

On August 15<sup>th</sup> August 2011, our elder kid Juan was hospitalized at Hinduja hospital, Mahim, Mumbai in a critical condition which concerned his urinary tract and left kidney. The doctor at midnight on that day told us that he was trying but could not guarantee saving his life. After his miraculous escape seven years ago we firmly believe that his life was spared only through the intercession of Mother Mary and the prayers of our dear ones. Today he lives a healthy life after all his problems through the miraculous touch of our Great Lord!

*Martina, Sunil and Manuel  
Gonsalves, Vasai*

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