

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>The Right to Disconnect</i>	3
Overcoming Worry - <i>Jeanette Brimmer</i>	4
Youth on the Move: Where is The Promised Land? - <i>Melanie D'Souza</i>	7
Salesian Saint: Ven. Vincent Cimatti.....	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times: Bl. Pater To Rot (July 7).....	12
Lectio Divina: Who is My Mother? - <i>Pier Luigi Giudici</i>	16
Quietspaces: The Blank Pages of the Gospel - <i>Pope Francis</i>	18
Charity Goes Next Door - <i>Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection</i>	20
Don Bosco: Facets of His Life Don Bosco and the "Gentleman" - <i>Natale Cerrato</i>	24
Reflecting on Mary: Those Who Listen <i>Card. A. Ballestrero</i>	28
NewsBits.....	30
Walking With the Church: The Angelus Bell, Confession/Communion.....	31
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i>	15
The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys.....	33
Loving Children to their Loving Mother.....	34
They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco.....	34
Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio.....	35



*"Never was it known
that anyone
who fled
to thy protection
implored thy help
or sought
thy intercession
was left
unaided."*

(From the Memorare by St. Bernard)

From The Editor's Desk

THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

This year 2017 has brought a great gift, not to mention immense relief, for employees at larger French companies. A new employment law came into effect from January 1, stating that French workers will have the "right to disconnect" outside of work hours. Overuse of digital devices has been blamed for everything from burnout to sleeplessness, as well as relationship problems, with many employees uncertain about when they can switch off. The French government realised that the health and well-being of their workers was in peril, and has acted accordingly, while another study out of Colorado State University found that even the anticipatory stress of expecting after-hours emails might have a negative effect on people's well-being.

"All the studies show there is far more work-related stress today than there used to be, and that the stress is constant," a French member of Parliament Benoit Hamon told the BBC. "Employees physically leave the office, but they do not leave their work. They remain attached by a kind of electronic leash - like a dog. The texts, the messages, the emails - they colonise the life of the individual to the point where he or she eventually breaks down." With the pace of life especially in our big cities we may think we can cope with a visit to the pub or the disco or even for a ride or a jog. None of this truly helps.

Already in the time of Jesus when he found his disciples under tremendous stress (imagine that!) he told them: "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place that you may have some rest." (Mark 6:31) That is what the Lord recommends to every person. All of us need to deliberately take some meditative moments if we are to remain sane. In the distant past people were naturally silent, naturally happy. There was no need for them to think of meditation; in an unconscious way they were meditating. Life was moving much more silently, and at a much slower pace. Nowadays change is so tremendously fast, coming upon us with such speed, that even the most intelligent people feel at times incapable of adapting to it. The modern mind is super-loaded with information, and little time is given to digest it, to assimilate it into one's own being. In the past the input volume was one-tenth of one's time, and the meditative time was nine-tenths. Now just the reverse is true: nine-tenths input volume time against one-tenth meditative time.

Our lives have greater meaning when we can spend time *by* ourselves and only *with* ourselves. That cannot be done in crowded spaces... or with anything that could distract us or draw our minds into another vortex of activity and anxiety. When you can "be still and know that I (he is) am God" (Ps. 46:10), you will be able to see that your mind settles down to "a peace that the world cannot give." (Jn 14:27) So be kind to yourself and do yourself this favour... just disconnect and know peace!

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

OVERCOMING WORRY

by Jeannette Brimmer

A few years ago my grandchild Maya and her mom and dad came for a visit. It was shortly after our new pool had been installed. The above ground pool which had been inserted in our deck was only four feet deep but it was still a source of worry. It was a sweltering day and two and a half-year-old Maya, with her water wings intact, was ecstatic as she "swam" in its turquoise tinted water. Soon I began to fret that her wings might leak. Yet we were carefully watching her and were within arm's reach if she ran into trouble.

"And what if she gets water in her ear?" I thought. Earaches, if they don't clear up themselves, can be difficult to treat because the antibiotics, which my children relied on to cure infections, sometimes fail. However her parents were so nonchalant that I quelled my fears and began to thoroughly enjoy Maya's joy-



July 2017

ful antics which included splashing Grandma in the pool.

Now that I'm older I have become more adept at closing the door on worry. It has intruded into my life too often...even during the so-called halcyon days of childhood. Even then I was fretting about one thing or another. My guardian angel must have been frustrated at my failure to trust him to keep me safe or help with my school work and other problems. Other than praying to him in the morning and evening I probably ignored him much too often.

During my teen years I commiserated about so many things, it's a wonder I managed to finish school or have any friends. I worried about being too tall until I realized that I was probably never going to reach more than five foot, two inches. Then I wondered if I was too short. There were always several things on my list including worrying about my grades not having someone to take me to the prom, being hit by a car and ending up in a wheel chair, wondering what career I would have in the years ahead and on and on. God must have been exasperated about my fretfulness because I obviously did not trust him.

As a young mother I began to rely more on God and my guardian angel but I was still in the top

Don Bosco's Madonna

ten list of worriers. I had four children within five and a half years which kept me extremely busy but with my vivid imagination I had the time to see perils where they didn't exist. If there was the slightest chance of a tornado touching down in our area I'd have the kids in the basement before a warning was even issued. It's good the children loved all the exploring they did down there while I peered out the window waiting for the storm to subside. Despite their tumbles as toddlers, their illnesses and operations (two had to be operated on for pyloric stenosis when they were six weeks old) the allergies of my oldest son who developed asthma when he was only three and other troubles, with God's help I managed quite well.

As my children became entangled in the teen years, my times of worry were so numerous that they melted into each other. I nearly succumbed to a tidal wave of anxiety and apprehension. I sought God's help more and more in order to survive. "Keep me sane, Lord for just awhile longer," was my frequent plea. I also found comfort and strength in several words from Matthew's gospel which state "Can any of you, for all his worrying add one single cubit to his span of life?" Matthew 6: 28

So their turbulent teens were dealt with through prayer and trust in God. I'm sure that St. John Bosco was also watching over my children and shaking his head now and then! Problems fuelled by seething hor-



mones, outbursts of temper, and ever changing emotions became more easily solved if I relied on Jesus to help me solve each hurdle. A sense of humour also helped all of us survive. When my husband and I would be upset with each other over some minor thing, such as the long hair my son felt was attracting the girls, one of us would ease the tension by saying "Alright, let's get a divorce but you get the kids!" the other would reply "No way! You deserve them!"

When they were out on dates, at school or attending special events I asked Jesus to look after them and keep them safe. When they were driving somewhere I pictured Jesus holding them in the palm of his hand. One evening when several of them were in my husband's van they did get into an accident which could have been deadly since two did not have seatbelts on. My youngest son had a slight fracture of the spine but he completely recovered, thank God! Eventually all four passed into adulthood relatively unscathed and hopefully believing in the principles my husband and I had tried to instill in them. Worry had contributed nothing to make their passage any easier. By the way I escaped bringing up four

July 2017

5

Don Bosco's Madonna

teens with my mind intact and I'm still savouring sweet feeling of relief one feels after surviving an exciting but treacherous journey.

When my sister who was several years older than I am, was diagnosed with a progressive heart condition, she took the news very well. Her faith had always been strong and she knew that God would ease her through her illness. At only fifty two, the specialist gave her only five years to live. But she survived for fifteen years. It was a miracle that the progression of her illness came to a halt a few years later and though she was weak she made the most of the years she had. She was there for her husband when he died of cancer and helped her son who was diagnosed with testicular cancer. Her moral support was there during his chemotherapy treatments and he survived. Helen inspired us to treasure each day and live in the present. And her faith became even stronger! Towards the end when her condition had begun to get worse she assured me "Jeanette, I am ready to die whenever Jesus comes for me. I can't wait to meet Him!"

I am now enjoying a period in life when I have more time to pray, think, read and ponder about life. And now I can fulfill my lifelong ambition to write. One of my favourite authors is the late Henri J.M. Nouwen whose books on spirituality have helped me to become more intimately acquainted with God. In his book "The Only

Necessary Thing...Living A Prayerful life" he states concerning worry: "worrying causes us to be 'all over the place,' but seldom at home." In others words we know where we belong but are still yanked in different directions to the point where we feel we have no home. He says that Jesus realizes how busy and disconnected we are and wants to bring us to a place where we belong. That is why He tells us not to worry but to set our hearts on His kingdom and then all the necessary things will be given to us as well.

As I have grown older I have learned to not take anything for granted. Recently I heard that my brother was diagnosed with cancer. Another sister suffered a severe heart condition and the list goes on and on. As we age our family and friends are struck with illnesses or undergo traumatic incidents such as the death of a child or spouse, things over which we have little control. We learn to treasure life's joyful moment and deal with the hardships through prayer and relying on God. And hopefully we will realize that life must be cherished and that fretting does nothing more than fragment our lives and rob us of peace.

The act of obsessing over so many things out of our control did not prevent my son's suicide which happened a few months ago. He was in the prime of his life and had so much going for him. The people under his management at work cared for and respected him for his kindness



and patience. Our family tried to help him in every way we knew how, but his clinical depression was not touched by our efforts or those of his doctor and therapist. Since his death my husband and I along with his siblings have dealt with this tragedy with prayer, grief therapy and the knowledge that he is in God's loving and merciful hands.

Time goes on and we must realize that so many events are completely beyond our control. It is extremely difficult to keep trusting God when devastating

things happen but whenever I have been overwhelmed with grief I cry out to God "Please give me the strength to go on!" I feel relief. Doing things to take my mind off feeling guilty for not doing more for Scott (we did everything possible) soothes me into a peaceful state. I cut squares for the quilts we make for the missions or colour in an adult colouring book meant to ease stress. I take each day as a gift from God and have grown so much stronger than that small child, the sensitive, wary teen, the over protective mom.

And please don't let anxiety about the past or future rob you of savouring life's moments in the here and now! One iota of worry won't change our lives. As writer Macrina Weiderkehr states "Whether we are living or dying, what counts is being there. If we've set up permanent residence in the past or the future, the pain and joy of the present can't bless us." □

NOUWEN ON WORRY

Henri Nouwen reflecting on Matthew 6:25-34 had this reflection to make: "What would happen if we stopped worrying? If the urge to be entertained so much, to travel so much, to buy so much, and to arm ourselves so much no longer motivated our behavior, could our society as it is today still function? The tragedy is that we are indeed caught in a web of false expectations and contrived needs. Our occupations and preoccupations fill our external and internal lives to the brim. They prevent the Spirit of God from breathing freely in us and thus renewing our lives..."

Jesus responds to this condition of being filled yet unfulfilled, very busy yet unconnected, all over the place yet never at home. He wants to bring us to the place where we can belong. But his call to live a spiritual life can only be heard when we are willing honestly to confess our own homeless and worrying existence and recognize its fragmenting effect on our daily life. Only then can a desire for our true home develop. It is of this desire that Jesus speaks when he says, "Do not worry...set your hearts on his Kingdom first...and all these other things will be given you as well."

Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996) in Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life (New York: HarperCollins, 1981) 28, 37.

WHERE IS THE PROMISED LAND?

by Melanie D'Souza

You've heard this multiple times; the world is indeed facing its largest humanitarian crisis since World War II. War, starvation and suffering continue to plague several parts of Africa and the Middle East - and well, danger continues to threaten Latin America and elsewhere. Truth be told, we can't keep waiting on the aid of the seemingly 'richer' Western nations.

While you're reading this, probably physically and emotionally miles away from the situation of such conflict, it isn't too difficult to become complacent of how the walls are crumbling down in the worlds of total strangers. So, let's think about this again as Christians, as Roman Catholics. We know we're called to be *charitable* - and therefore being *selectively charitable*, is not an option - it is an oxymoron. In other words, as put bluntly as possible, we don't choose to help our Christian brethren over our Muslim brethren. Why? Because they're all still our *brethren*. We were all created in the image of the one Lord whom we believe in.

It's that simple - the test of *mercy* towards all those created by the same God and therefore they all have the same rights to

this beautiful, brilliant Earth.

Our Bible constantly reiterates how we must be charitable to whom we consider the 'least of us': "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all, and richly blesses all who call on him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved". (Romans 10:11-13 NIV)



Okay, so maybe you're not totally desensitized by the media. You keep abreast of how bad things are. Have you mentioned to your friends and colleagues, about how helpless you feel? How you wish you could do something but financially and politically you cannot help? Well, that's not completely true, thank goodness.

Here's an opportunity to educate your fellow Catholics about their *charitable priorities*. While the 'pro-life' agenda may have unfortunately taken on an electro-

nal narrative in my current home of North America, the unwavering stance of the Catholic Church is this: "We recognise the image of God in the migrant at the border, the prisoner on death row, in the pregnant woman and in the hungry child." And it has always been that way, as Pope Francis reminds us, "Every life is sacred" and so we "defend human life at every stage of its development".

So if you're concerned about the life of an innocent unborn child, think again why you believe so. Is that innocent life any different from the innocent life of a poor Sunni father whose life and property has been destroyed by terrorists?

Exactly! This is also an opportunity for us to **overcome prejudice**, something that you and I and the average Joe aren't free from. Prejudice exists in all forms, from the economic privileges to socio-cultural discrimination to religious and political differences. Perhaps we were raised a certain way by the ones we love, to uphold certain values. But God continues to teach and mentor us by the knowledge and the people he places in our lives at optimum times.

Last year, when I helped mentor high school students in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, who were Confirmation candidates at the Archdiocese of Atlanta, I was challenged with changing my teaching style from what I was used to earlier: a completely different demographic of Confirmation class from the more rural college town of Lawrence, Kansas, in terms of race, national origin and economics. These factors automatically shape the chil-

dren's faith and relationship with the God who created them. Not only did this influence my teaching, but the Catholic social teaching that was incorporated into the curriculum, brought us in contact with volunteers from detention centres (where illegal immigrants are detained), who educated students and us, mentors alike, about the centres' existing deplorable conditions. Not surprisingly, a good number of my students (Hispanic, low-class, Atlantan) were actively involved in situations with family members in these conditions, thus experiencing a strife that my previous class demographic (white, upper-middle class, Kansas) was comfortably unfamiliar with.

Perhaps you've encountered a similar change, with a new move - perhaps a move you wanted to make. Unfortunately, our refugees brothers and sisters, do not make this move of their own accord, but, out of desperation. Yet, they have the essential human rights to this world, as you and I; so why hesitate to share this land with them? One thing we can do as we consider our stances more deeply, is to meditate on the paramount **Matt 25: 35-40**; here is an excerpt for now: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" While you actively look for a way to help these less fortunate brothers and sisters, through securing donations or fundraising or the like, let's note that every land is 'mission territory'.

The Promised Land belongs to us all. □



VINCENT CIMATTI

1879 - 1965

A true native of Romagna-Faenza he comes from a family of saints: of the three surviving children, he is venerable; his sister, Sister Maria Raffaella, of the Congregation of the Hospital Sisters of Mercy was beatified on May 12, 1996 and his brother Louis, a Salesian Lay Brother, a missionary in Latin America died in the odor of sanctity.

Vincent was born at Faenza on July 15, 1879 to James and Rosa Fasi, extremely modest and thrifty parents. He lost his father when he was just three. That was the year when his mother, lifting him up in her arms showed him Don Bosco who was in Faenza at the Parish church: "Vincent, look, see Don Bosco!" That providential meeting remained in the mind of Vincent Cimatti for the rest of his life. He entered the Salesian school at the age of nine he proved to be an excellent student. He remained there for the next seven years and then chose to become a Salesian.

He was ordained by Monsignor Cagliero in March 1905. In tandem with his religious formation he took care to include in his vocational training several other disciplines: a diploma in teaching choral singing at the Royal Conservatory of Parma (1900), a degree in Natural Sciences at the Royal University of Turin with a major in agriculture (1903), a de-



gree in philosophy and pedagogy also at the University of Turin (1907). While preparing himself for his ministry he was given the responsibilities of director of music, director of the oratory of St. Aloysius in Turin (1912-1919, teacher, director of music and composer at the college of Valsalice. Later he was made the rector of the community. He was hailed as "Maestro" by generations of clerics.

He always dreamt of going to the missions. He earnestly sought this "grace" from the Rector Major, Fr. Philip Rinaldi - today "blessed." "Find me a place in the poorest, most difficult and most abandoned mission. I am not looking for any kind of comfort." At the age of 46 years he was sent as expedition-leader with five priests and three laymen to found the Salesian Mission in Japan where he worked there for 40 years conquering the hearts of the Japanese

by his sensitive temperament. The musical concerts he conducted received much acclaim and especially his goodness to those who were most deprived, children, the sick and the elderly. He opened orphanages, oratories and technical schools. He set up a publishing house in Tokyo. Being extremely versatile he left copious notes on pedagogy, agriculture and hagiography. 6,138 of his letters have been collected. He was an extraordinarily prolific musician having conducted about 2000 concerts in Japan, Manchuria, North and South Korea. His first opera in Japanese was entitled "Hosokawa Grazia" in three acts and also 48 operettas.

He started the first Salesian house at Miyazaki and became its first rector. Three years later he was appointed the superior of the newly formed delegation. In 1935 when the mission of Miyazaki-Oita was made into an Apostolic Prefecture he was nominated as the Prefect Apostolic with the title of Monsignor. "But why do you poison me?" He immediately wrote to Turin. "Let me work peacefully and without any frills. Can you imagine Don Bosco with all these frills and fancies?" To his friends who sent him the trimmings of a monsignor which he returned, he wrote back: "Sell it and send me the money for my poor people." He ceded his position to a Japanese Salesian for political reasons in 1940. During the war he went through extremely difficult times enduring numerous sacrifices while he was in a parish in Tokyo. Only at the age of 83 was he completely relieved of all positions of responsibility. He died as a patriarch on October 6, 1965.

I want to die here so as to become a Japanese." His remains were exhumed in 1977 and found perfectly intact and they now rest in the crypt at Chofu.

His life among the Japanese was a marvellous example of enculturation: "He adapted himself as water takes the shape of a vessel into which it is poured," is what was said about him. One day, having eaten his "bento" (a kind of packed lunch) on a train he heard a fellow passenger say: "From the way I saw him eat the 'bento' I realized he loved Japan." He used much of his music for evangelization. It was never too late to compose music in Japanese! On the occasion of the 2600 anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Empire he was invited to compose a sonata to be broadcast on the radio. In the aftermath of that broadcast *Asahi* the most popular newspaper in Japan assessed his composition as the most Japanese of the Japanese ones.

With his many talents he was still very humble! "With all his talents he still seemed to look like a beggar." Once when visiting a community of sisters, the sister who was concierge, didn't recognize him. She refused to let him enter thinking he was a beggar. Everyone was in agreement that his life was a constant drive towards the "better." His most famous aphorism was: "We must do everything we can...and a lit-tle more." Monsignor Cimatti is undoubtedly one of the most complete, sensitive, compassionate and harmonious Salesians. He could be considered the master of harmony! He was declared venerable on 21st December, 1991 □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. PETER TO ROT (JULY 7)

"If there are no more priests, it is the catechist who must be the good shepherd of Jesus Christ's sheep!" said the catechist, Blessed Peter To Rot, when a missionary was arrested in 1942. He himself would die a martyr in 1945, at the age of 29, for having rejected polygamy. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on January 16, 1995.

Peter To Rot was born in 1916 in Rakunai, in what is now Papua New Guinea (Oceania). An island larger than France. New Guinea is surrounded by numerous archipelagos. The region was evangelized by French and German missionaries starting in 1890. Peter To Rot's father, To Puia, was the chief of a village. A well-respected Catholic, he himself taught his son the basics of the catechism, while his mother taught him how to pray. The village school was run by missionaries. At school, the child showed himself to be a hard worker, with a lively interest in religion.

At school, the young Papuan was mischievous, but he was completely honest, a rare virtue among the Tolai, the ethnic



group to which he belonged. In 1930 Father Laufer, who ran the parish in Rakunai, asked the child's father to allow Peter to be sent to the catechist school in Taliligap. The adolescent then left for this school where chosen young men studied to assist the missionaries, so few in a vast field for evangelization. Daily Communion, frequent Confession, and recitation of the Rosary

were his strength against temptations.

In 1934, having given complete satisfaction, Peter To Rot received from his bishop the catechist's cross, and was sent back to his native village to help Father Laufer. He kept discrete watch over the Christians, encouraging the lukewarm to attend Sunday Mass, preparing sinners for a serious confession, and leading the lost sheep to the Good Shepherd's fold.

In 1942, Japan, in a war against the Western powers, invaded New Guinea. The Japanese had scarcely landed in Rabaul before they were imprisoning priests, monks, and nuns. Father Laufer was soon arrested. From then on, Peter To Rot endeavored to make up for the priest's absence as much as possible, baptizing newborns, assisting as a witness at weddings, and presiding over burials. Every Sunday, he led a prayer meeting in the church during which he urged the faithful to persevere. Because of the many spies, he typically made his visits to Christians after dark. He often went to Vunapope, a remote city where a priest gave him the Blessed Sacrament, which he could then distribute to the dying and the sick, by virtue of special permission from the bishop.

Peter always held a great respect for the sanctity of marriage but the Japanese encouraged the return to polygamy, which had been practiced in the country before evangelization. Out of either lustfulness or fear of reprisal, many men took a second wife. Peter To Rot was unable to remain silent in the face of this

scandal. His faith and his responsibilities as a catechist forced him to speak, whatever the consequences might be.

To Metepa, an already married Catholic policeman employed by the Japanese, lusted after Ia Mentil, a Protestant's wife. Her father and To Rot prevented him from taking her. One of them would later testify, "Without him, I would have taken a second wife. To Rot was a saint, concerned only with the salvation of souls. He had no fear whatsoever of the rich and the powerful." Peter's own brother, Tatamai, left his wife to "marry" another. Refusing to listen to To Rot's reproaches, he denounced him to the Japanese. However, soon after, moved to repentance, he returned to ask his forgiveness. After the war, he would rebuild the church in Rakunai with his own money, as a sign of repentance for his betrayal.

No one could dissuade the catechist from continuing his apostolate. As a result, he received increasingly direct threats from some Japanese who hated Christianity, which they considered responsible for Japan's military setbacks. Questioned by the Japanese police about his feelings toward the occupying force, To Rot replied, "The Catholic Church desires peace, but it is not her fault if you are not victorious." - "Silence!" shouted the police officer. "We forbid all religious gatherings." - "Jesus," Peter calmly replied, "taught His disciples that it was better to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)." And he continued to gather Catholics every Sunday. From then on, he was spied on by

traitors trying to catch him in the act of praying.

"I know," Peter confided to his mother, "that they will kill me. But don't worry - I am ready to offer my life for JESUS CHRIST." Imprisoned in a tiny, windowless cell, Peter only went out to tend to the pigs. His mother and his wife brought him his food. One day, in the presence of their two children, his wife begged Peter to tell the Japanese that he would give up his occupation as catechist, and that he wanted to live from then on as an ordinary man in his village. She thought thus to have him freed, with the intervention of some of the village leaders. To Rot answered her gravely: "This is not your business. I must," he added, making the sign of the Cross, "glorify the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thereby saving my people." He then asked his wife to bring him his catechist's cross, which he would keep with him up to the end. The same day - in June 1945 - he confided to his mother: "The police told me that, this evening, a Japanese doctor will come to give me some medicine. Surprising, since I'm not sick! Go quickly back to the house and pray for me." The next day, a policeman arrived in Rakunai and announced, "Your catechist is dead." Overcoming his emotion, the village chief asked, "What have you done? He was still in good health." - "He fell ill and died."

The fruitfulness of one death

Soon, Tarua, To Rot's uncle, was sent to the prison, accompanied by Commander Meshida, to identify the body and take it

away. The martyr lay curled up, his body still warm, face turned towards Heaven. He had cotton, in places red with blood, in his nose, eyes, and ears. A red scarf was wrapped around his neck; the back of his neck was swollen and bore wounds. A needle mark was clearly visible on his right arm. He had been injected with manioc (a compound containing cyanide), judging from the odor in the room. Seeing that the poison was slow in doing its work, the soldiers strangled their victim and struck him on the back of the neck with a beam. Peter To Rot was buried in the cemetery in Rakunai, where his grave became a pilgrimage site. Far from discouraging and intimidating Christians, To Rot's death was for all a powerful incentive. Since 1945, the village of Rakunai has given the Church no fewer than twelve priests and women religious.

Blessed Peter To Rot was chosen to be one of the patrons of World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney, Australia. The example of blessed Catechist Peter To Rot encourages us to deepen our Faith and live in perfect conformity with it, in keeping with Pope Benedict XVI's request to Christians on May 18, 2008: "Take care of spiritual and catechetical formation, a substantial formation that is more necessary than ever to live the Christian vocation well in today's world. I say to adults and young people: foster a thoughtful faith that can engage in profound dialogue with all, with our non-Catholic brethren, with non-Christians and with non-believers." □

With inputs from the monks of Abbatte Saint-Joseph de Clairvaux.

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Let me be prepared

Vinita: (Visiting grandma's house): "Grandma, if I was invited out to dinner should I eat pie with a fork?"
Grandma: "Yes, indeed, Vinita."
Vinita: "You haven't got a pie in the house that I could practice on, have you, Grandma?"

There's plenty out there

Little Janet, aged four, who was spending a week with her aunt in the country, had developed a great fondness for milk. One day, having drunk as much as her aunt thought good for her, she was informed that she could not have more.
"Pshaw!" exclaimed the little miss, "I don't see why you want to be so stingy with your old milk. There's two cowfuls out in the barn."

All play and no work

Two little boys were talking. One said to the other: "Aren't ants funny little things? They work and work, and never play."
"Oh, I don't know about that," replied the other. "Every time I go on a picnic they are there."

Lack of skill

Mother: "When that naughty boy threw stones at you, why did you not come and tell me, instead of throwing them back at him?"
Junior: "What good would it do to tell you? You couldn't hit the side of a garage."

Nobody around

"Are your father and mother in?"

asked the visitor of the small boy who opened the door.
"They was in," said the child, "But they is out."
"They was in. They is out. Where's your grammar?"
"She's gone upstairs," said the boy, "for a nap."

Quite original

The sweet little Rani had a violent tussle with her particular chum. Her mother scolded her and concluded by saying, "It was the devil who suggested to you the pulling of Smita's hair."
"I shouldn't be surprised," Rani replied thoughtfully. "But," she added proudly, "kicking her on the shins was entirely my own idea."

Between you and me

Hostess: (at the party): "Does your mother allow you to have two pieces of pie when you are at home, Renu?"
Renu (who has asked for a second piece): "No auntie."
"Well, do you think she'd like you to have two pieces here?"
Renu: (in a whisper and very confidentially): "Oh, she wouldn't mind. This isn't her pie, you see."

No problem at all

Mother (teaching her son arithmetic): "Now take the Bansali family - there's mummy, daddy and the baby. How many does that make?"
Bright son: "Two and one to carry." □



WHO IS MY MOTHER?

Pier Luigi Giudicci

Introductory Notes

The pages of the Gospel were not written to “blow you off your feet.” The events narrated recount how the Word of God continually strives to communicate what is Eternal and Salvific.

This important emphasis needs to be understood when reading for example the episode narrated in the three synoptic gospels describing the Jesus-Mary dynamic that, the casual reader might define as distant rather than filial.

It therefore calls for a review of the entire dynamic in question.

Mary's Visit

Matthew's text (12,46-50. Cf also: Mark 3,31-35; and Luke 8,19-21) reports this interesting episode. Mary, along with some relatives (called according to the custom “brothers”), approach Jesus while he is busy teaching.

There are several people around the Son, listening to him, so the party decide on a practical solution. Not wishing to interrupt the teaching, they simply inform Jesus of their arrival.

The message reaches Jesus but he turns and responds in a peculiar fashion: “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” Then pointing to his disciples he says: “Here is my mother and here are my brothers; anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Hold on to this response is necessary while we extrapolate some other data.

The first striking element is the **historic location** of the reply. Mary is described as one who does not remain at home but rather as one who follows her Son sharing his missionary zeal.

This means that the Mother does not attempt to selfishly capture the limelight from her Son's specific vocation but is rather a desire to be involved in his life's work; an exhausting exercise. In such a context the Son's reply is that of one who knows his mother well (cf e.g. John 2,1-5; and 2,12). She appears as if directed to become a kind of pedagogical aid to the group of listeners.

It is therefore necessary to delve

into the **pastoral positioning of this reply**.

Jesus is developing, through his many encounters a teaching that has an unambiguous conclusion: those who choose the Kingdom must accept in totality an adherence to the heavenly Father.

This statement plays a key role in the formation of the disciples. In fact, Christ will gradually change their way of thinking till it changes their way of acting.

From a triumphant vision of the Kingdom we need to be led to the idea that this earthly experience is only a “passing” phase. And this temporal period will soon come to be known as the way of the Cross.

Jesus therefore must necessarily be strict. The disciple must learn to bear witness to the full gospel meaning of the grain of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit. And to achieve this preparatory stage one needs to internalize the consequences of every vocational “yes.”

We thus return to focus on the logic of the Incarnation and within this logic the role of the Mother who does not insist that the son gives her public recognition but she is simply one who affectionately knows how to be “on the sidelines.” (Mt 12, 46).

The Mother is therefore not one who dominates but she is one who is present at some salvific moments, even in a brief message that is secretly able to touch the heart.

The Filial Context of the Reply

At this point then, understanding the passage from Matthew acquires a dimension of truth that this is a teaching for everyone.

The mother demonstrates a

totality of sharing. It began with an Annunciation and was carried through right up to a Church on a journey.

Christ responds with a finality that is authentic because it is marked with a sense of autonomy.

The mission of the Son represents concretely the very obvious expression of detachment. But along with this there exists a profound union.

Since the first unitive rapport is not born of a declared love but through the ‘inner’ stirrings within her heart they are actually much more precious. They may sometimes go undetected because such sentiments do not lend themselves to obvious demonstrations. They are first of all present in the spiritual fecundity of the union.

Mary is in ‘Life.’ She knows that the presence of the Son is always present. Because of this, one day, she will not need to go to the tomb to ascertain the authenticity or otherwise of certain Words of the Son (cf e.g. John 20,1 ss.).

Summarizing Comments

The passage of the Evangelist recorded here concludes with a dynamic flourish: doing the will of the Father is the unifying element of all Christian experience and therefore of the great family of Jesus, who will be the Church.

It is not an individualistic message that leads once again to the characteristic Good news: “Everything” is written for the benefit of all. “Everything” is transmitted because it remains clearly the universal and salvific mission of Christ. □

Quiet Spaces

ON THE BLANK PAGES OF THE GOSPEL

On Saturday, 30th July, 2016, the fourth day of the papal journey in Poland, opened with a stop at the shrine of Divine Mercy in Lągiewniki, where the Pontiff heard several confessions of several young people. Afterwards he visited the Shrine of St. John Paul II, where he presided at Mass with priests, men and women religious and seminarians. The following is an edited version of his homily on that occasion

The words of the Gospel we have just heard (cf. Jn 20:19-31) speak to us of a *place*, a *disciple* and a *book*.

The *place* is where the disciples gathered on the evening of Easter; we read only that its doors were closed (cf. v. 19). Eight days later, the disciples were once more gathered there, and the doors were still shut (cf. v. 26). Jesus enters, stands in *their midst* and brings them his peace, the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins: in a word, God's mercy. Behind those closed doors there resounds Jesus' call to his followers: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (v. 21).

This call is also addressed to us. How can we fail to hear its echo in the great appeal of Saint John Paul II: "Open the doors"? Yet, in our lives as priests and consecrated persons, we can often be tempted to remain enclosed, out of fear or convenience, within ourselves and in our surroundings. But Jesus directs us to a one-way street: that of going forth from ourselves. It is a one-way trip, with no return ticket. It involves making an exodus from ourselves, losing our lives for his sake (cf. Mk 8:35) and setting out on the path of self-gift. Nor does Jesus like journeys made halfway, doors half-closed, lives lived on two tracks. He asks us to pack lightly for the journey, to set out renouncing our own security, with him alone as our strength.

In other words, the life of Jesus' closest disciples, which is what we are called to be, is shaped by *concrete love*, a love, in other words, marked by *service* and *availability*. It is a life that has no closed spaces or private property for our own use, or at least there shouldn't be. Those who choose to model their entire life on Jesus no longer choose their own places; they go where they are sent, in ready response to the one who calls. They do not waste time planning a secure future, lest they risk becoming isolated and gloomy, enclosed within the narrow walls of a joyless and desperate self-centredness. Finding their happiness in the Lord, they are not content with a life of mediocrity. They love to take risks and to set out, not limited to trails already blazed, but open and faithful to the paths pointed out by the Spirit.

Secondly, today's Gospel presents us with the one *disciple* who is named: Thomas. In his hesitation and his efforts to understand, this disciple, albeit somewhat stubborn, is a bit like us and we find him likeable. Without knowing it, he gives us a great gift: he brings us closer to God, because God does not hide from those who seek him. Jesus shows Thomas his glorious wounds; he makes him

touch with his hand the infinite tenderness of God, the vivid signs of how much he suffered out of love for humanity.

For us who are disciples, it is important to put our humanity in contact with the flesh of the Lord, to bring to him, with complete trust and utter sincerity, our whole being. As Jesus told Saint Faustina, he is happy when we tell him everything; he is not bored with our lives, which he already knows; he waits for us to tell him even about the events of our day (cf. *Diary*, 6 September 1937). That is the way to seek God: through prayer that is transparent and unafraid to hand over to him our troubles, our struggles and our resistance.

What does Jesus ask of us? He desires hearts that are truly consecrated, hearts that draw life from his forgiveness in order to pour it out with compassion on our brothers and sisters. Jesus wants hearts that are open and tender towards the weak, never hearts that are hardened. Disciples do not hesitate to ask questions, they have the courage to face their misgivings and bring them to the Lord, to their formators and superiors, without calculations or reticence.

The final verse of today's Gospel speaks of a *book*: it is the Gospel that, we are told, does not contain all the many other signs that Jesus worked (v. 30). After the great sign of his mercy, we could say that there is no longer a need to add another. Yet one challenge does remain. There is room left for the signs needing to be worked by us, who have received the Spirit of love and are called to spread mercy. It

might be said that the Gospel, the living book of God's mercy that must be continually read and reread, still has many blank pages left. It remains an open book that we are called to write in the same style, by the works of mercy we practise. Let me ask you this, dear brothers and sisters: What are the pages of your books like? Are they blank? May the Mother of God help us in this. May she, who fully welcomed the word of God into her life (cf. Lk 8:20-21), give us the grace to be living writers of the Gospel. May our Mother of Mercy teach us how to take concrete care of the wounds of Jesus in our brothers and sisters in need, those close at hand and those far away, the sick and the migrant, because by serving those who suffer we honour the flesh of Christ. May the Virgin Mary help us to spend ourselves completely for the good of the faithful entrusted to us, and to show concern for one another as true brothers and sisters in the communion of the Church, our holy Mother. □



CHARITY GOES NEXT DOOR

From Fr. Ian Doullton's collection of stories

This is a story of people you might recognize and of a question to which you might like to have the answer. It starts in the home of Howard Adams who's talking to his son Jimmy: "Jimmy, when did you say your mother went over to see Mrs. Lewis?" "A long time ago, daddy, four o'clock!"

It was five-thirty and she had been gone for a good half hour. Howard was feeling peckish. He nudged Jimmy and asked: "Let's go make us a sandwich, eh?" But Jimmy remembered what Kate's mother had told him: "Nothing before dinner. Just as father and son were heading to the kitchen they heard the door open and in walked Kate. She seemed to have hurried home from next door: "Howard? Oh, Howard, there you are. I'm sorry I'm late, but I just stopped in for a minute to see Peg Lewis on my way back from the grocery and she talked and talked..."

Jimmy whined: "Mother I'm hungry." She was getting dinner organized while Howard slid back into his armchair and hummed to himself as settled down to the crossword he was doing. He heard Kate say: "Oh, Howard, I'll get dinner as soon as I catch my breath."

He couldn't get his mind on the crossword. He wondered what these women had to talk about; what kind of a national emergency was it? As they sat down to dinner Howard couldn't help his curiosity: "What were you discussing for so long?" "Well, this time it is a national problem...it's

really international. We were talking about refugees!" The world's full of refugees. Who was Kate referring to? She went on to say: "Peg read a piece in the paper of a whole parish of them crossing the border together and they were from St. Thomas Parish, same as ours only its Tomeschko or something like that..." She thought it would be a good idea for them to adopt the parish. Howard raised his eyebrows: "Who? You and I with two children and a five room house or she and Bob and the baby in their three room...?"

That was not what Kate meant nor what Peg had understood; Peg thought it would be a great idea if the ladies study club at the church could organize a dinner this year and send that money to the refugees over there." Kate seemed to feel proud of the 'inspiration.' Howard thought it was impressive and magnanimous. "Do you really think so?" Kate eagerly added. "Why I certainly think so. I think it's noble and unselfish and not just because at the present moment I can sympathize with every starving man and woman in the world either..."

Kate was still a bit hesitant and knowing how she used Howard as her sounding board she went on: "I don't think the ladies would mind giving up the dinner and the bazaar would not be too much work..."

Howard had no idea that the idea had already matured so much. They were thinking of a bazaar and a dinner. He rolled his eyes and leaned back from the table: "So I become a bazaar

widower again...as long as it's for a good cause."

Howard was amazed, the two ladies had it all figured out. They were off to the Parish Priest, Fr. Leonard, the next morning to get his permission.

The next morning Kate and Peg knocked on the presbytery of St. Thomas church and were ushered in to see Fr. Leonard, who was presently busy with his building contractor. When he had finished he came out: "Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Lewis how are you? Sorry to keep you waiting but I got tied up..." They decided to take just a few minutes. Kate, taking the lead began: "Oh we know you're busy Father. This will only take a few minutes. You know the annual dinner of the Ladies Study Club for the members every year..." Fr. Leonard listened intently while Peg Lewis sat with her hands on her lap and looked out of the window. "Father, suppose we don't hold the dinner this year, suppose we send that money to those refugees..." Kate went on "It's a special group of refugees, Father. There was a piece in the paper..." She emphasized that the parish bore the same name as their parish: St. Thomas Parish. "The paper said all the people from one parish over there crossed the border together and it was St. Thomas Parish like ours. Don't you think it would be a good idea if the Ladies Club adopted those people...sent help to them regularly?"

Fr. Leonard was further impressed with how forward-thinking the ladies were. They were thinking of another bazaar. But before the Parish Priest could even object Kate went on: "The Club will take

care of the whole thing father. I'm the new entertainment chairman, you know."

It would be a lot of work but the ladies assured their pastor they were ready for it. All he could say was: "I admire your spirit Mrs. Adams, go right ahead. I'll give the bazaar all the publicity I can." Both Kate and Peg rose: "Thank you so much Father. Well, we know you're busy so we won't take up any more of your time. We can work out the details later."

As they got into Kate's car Kate proudly said: "There Peg, didn't I tell you there wouldn't be anything to it? Get into the car on the other side the curb is so high I can't get the door open. Look out for the other cars." Peg was already sounding a bit off-colour. Kate, oblivious of it all went on: "Now all we have to do is tell the other members. They'll have to vote on it but that's just a formality. He was wonderful about it, wasn't he?" Peg seemed to sound rather hurt and simply gave monosyllabic replies: "Yes."

"Do you think we ought to call a special meeting of the Club?"

"Well you can do whatever you want to."

"Peg, what's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter."

"Then what are you mad about?"

"I'm not mad."

"Well, something's the matter. All of a sudden you seem to have lost interest in this bazaar. It was your idea, in the first place you know."

"That's not what you told Fr. Leonard."

"What do you mean?"

"It was all my idea, you didn't even read that piece in the paper. You didn't even think about doing anything for the refugees until I

mentioned it."

"Well then, why didn't you speak up? You just sat there like a bump on a log."

"You didn't give me a chance to get a word in edgewise."

"Oh? Well as long as we have the bazaar it doesn't make any difference whose idea it was."

"Of course not, as long as you take all the credit for it."

Kate was furious at Peg's attitude. "What?"

Peg simply cut short the conversation: "You let me out at this corner, if you please?"

"With pleasure!" was Kate's reply as she dropped Peg off.

Later that evening Howard saw Kate at the sofa, phone book in her lap and dialing numbers: "Hey what are you trying to do? Call up all the 'Smiths' in the phone book?"

"Howard, it's the Ladies Club. I have sixty members to call and all of them want to talk and talk but they are talking to somebody else and I can't get them."

There was the entertainment committee and they could share the burden of contacting the sixty odd members. He was puzzled: "I thought Peg Lewis would be helping."

Kate simply said: "I'm the Chairman, this is my job" and went back to dialing.

A few evenings later Bob was busy watching basketball on TV. It seemed very quiet all of a sudden. Then he asked: "Say, Peg, I've been meaning to ask you how's the old charity bazaar doing, you were all wound up about it the other night when Kate was over here. But I haven't heard anything about it since." Peg simply added:

"I have other things to think about."

Bob had been talking to Howard he told Peg: "Kate's making a federal project out of it." Peg did not look up from her magazine: "I can imagine..." she mumbled.

Kate seemed to be rather upset. Nothing seemed to be working, no one seemed to be interested. "It's just that they expect me to think of everything. They don't have any idea what kind of decorations they want, what we should have for the dinner or anything."

Howard was surprised. They were organizing a dinner too? "Yes, there has to be something to eat at a bazaar." He suggested that Kate ask Peg and he added: "She always has good ideas." There was that reply Howard had heard several times in the past few days: "I'm the chairman, I'll take care of it."

There was nothing happening at the Lewis household and so Bob decided to ask Peg if she wanted to go to the movies. "No, Bob, I don't feel like it." There was something not right but Bob couldn't put his finger on it. Why was Peg feeling 'under the weather'? She hadn't been doing any work on the bazaar these last few days. He thought he had a bright idea when he suggested: "Say? Why haven't you? I thought you were Kate Adams' right hand." She hadn't seen Kate for three weeks. That was quite something, Bob knew there was something wrong. He pushed ahead: "What's with you and Kate, anyway, why aren't you working

on the bazaar?" Then out came out "I wasn't asked."

Jimmy's little brother was playing contentedly on his high-chair while he was playing video games nearby. Suddenly the chair tipped over and the baby fell. Jimmy ran to his screaming little brother. Howard had just come in from work when he heard: "Daddy! Daddy come quickly!" Jimmy was all shaken and almost in tears. Howard picked the screaming little child and held him up while he examined a slight bump on his head. "Jimmy where's your mother." Howard asked: "I don't know...she went out right when I got home from school. She told me to watch the baby. I was watching him - I saw him fall off his high chair..." Turning to the still screaming little brat: "He's not hurt badly and nothings the matter with his lungs anyway."

Sometime later all was quiet once more and Howard was writing on his scratch pad in the living room when Kate walked in all hot-and-bothered. "Howard? Oh, I thought I'd never get back. Jimmy and the baby in bed already?"

"Yeah. Had a little excitement. The baby fell out of his high chair."

Kate looked upset and wanted to know if he was alright. Howard assured her that he was fine...all patched up and fast asleep. "Everything's under control." Shaking her head she said: "I can't step out of this house one minute than something doesn't happen." Then she looked over and found Howard writing on his scratch pad. "What are you writing?"

"Oh, a Want-Ad" He read it aloud: "Wanted: Housekeeper; must be

good cook, fond of children. References: Mr. Howard Adams, Cleveland 4706."

Kate didn't seem amused, but Howard hadn't meant it to be a joke. He looked up and smiled: "Every motherless home needs a housekeeper. I have to get the Pastor's permission before I post this notice on the church notice board but I'm sure he'll understand." It hadn't yet sunk in for Kate. "Howard I'm too tired to appreciate your distorted sense of humour." Then, in a more serious manner he went on: "Kate I am not trying to be funny. I am serious. You've got to stop trying to run this bazaar single-handed."

"It's not my fault. I can't get anybody to do things right."

"Or the way you think is right. You have the idea that nobody on the committee is intelligent or efficient except yourself." He came across and sat beside his wife, putting his arm around her shoulder he went on: "Kate, I'm all for helping the refugees but not at the cost of a nervous breakdown you're going to have when this thing fails; and when you add the loss of a friend like Peg Lewis."

Kate seemed to think it was all Peg's idea and she seemed hurt that Peg hadn't contributed anything at all. "Actually she hadn't even asked Peg. She expected Peg to know: "She knows I'm working my head off. She hasn't even offered to help." Then Howard suggested: "Why don't you phone her. Bob was telling me... Peg does nothing but mop around the house. Kate, go ahead phone her." He tried to persuade her.

"No, I have some pride" she said. Now he was getting irritated:

CHARITY...*continued on Pg. 32*

DON BOSCO AND THE "GENTLEMAN"

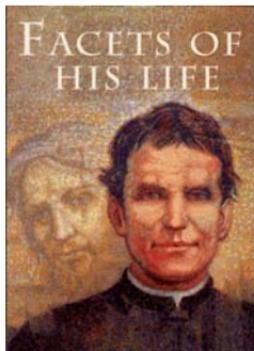
Natale Cerrato

Almanacs and lunar charts

Almanacs, with their astrological, medical, religious and agricultural information functioned for centuries as the annual handbook, the ready-reckoner for all classes of people. It contained all kinds of lunar calendars to regulate human life for various nations of the world, from China to Italy and beyond. These books appealed to the prince and the pauper alike, the learned and the illiterate, rich and poor, Christians and Jews too.

In Turin, from the XVIII Century, they came to be printed with curious titles. In 1720 Francesco Antonio Gattinara published for the first time "The Great Clairvaux Fisherman" which included information from the major courts of Europe, the calendar of Saints and Feasts, the dates of the forty-hour exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and predictions for each month. In 1722 the press of Giovanni Battista Fontana printed the "The Green Palm" ("Palm-averde") that would become the most celebrated almanac in Italy. In 1752 the presses of Zappata and Avondo came out with "The Celestial Sybil" (*La Sibilla Celeste*) and so on. A surge of new publications surfaced intended perhaps for particular classes of people such as "The Informed Farmer" printed by Giammichele Briolo from 1786.

The first almanac that contained material that would interest the Piedmontese public was "The Almanac of Health" (*L'Almanacco*



di Sanità) by Maurizio Pipino published in 1783. Later, the famous "*Parnàs Piemontèis*" was published in 1831 by Alliana Publishers. It contained very beautiful Piedmontese prose and poetry of the time.

"The Gentleman"

In fact, towards the end of 1853 Don Bosco published the "Catholic Readings," (*Lecture Cattoliche*) a periodical for popular religious education and in defence of Catholic Doctrine together with the almanac "The Gentleman" (*Il Galantuomo*) a kind of New Year complimentary to the subscribers.

Actually, it seems that the initiative of the "Gentleman" was an initiative of an associate of Don Bosco who was captivated with the idea of good popular publications that were encouraged by the Bishops of Piedmont. He was Francesco Faà Bruno an ex-army conscript who was engaged in the social apostolate. Don Bosco himself instantly enthused chose the name for the almanac. It

was to be called the "Gentleman," while his collaborators would have preferred to have the title "True Friend of the Home" or perhaps, "The People's Almanac."

In fact the very first issue of the "Gentleman" bears the imprint of the organizational skill of Faà di Bruno. He was the one who collected the material, sourcing famous almanacs from France published by the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul for workers, apprentices and students and obtaining translations and articles too.

By the end of that year the "Gentleman" was published - the National Almanac for 1854 - Turin 1853 - printed by P. De Agostini - Via della Zecca, n. 23, Casa Birago."

The introduction which we presume is Don Bosco's, explains his choice of the title: "Don't be shocked, dear readers, if I call myself a gentleman before you know my strengths and my virtues. It is not pride, but only that I may point out at the very outset that though we are not yet gentlemen we still strive with people around the world to become gentlemen."

On page 8ss (ss = and following) we find the list of movable feasts and the calendar which includes the Feast of the Holy Shroud in Turin (4th May), the miracle of Blessed Sacrament (6th June), the feast of Mary, Virgin of Consolation, called the "Consolata" because of her role in the victory at the liberation of the siege of Turin (7th September).

From pages 21ss one finds compiled statistical information - which I know from the documents of Faà di Bruno contain for example, that from the beginning of 1854 the population of the



Don Bosco's desk: still found at his brother Joseph's house at Becchi. Page after page of his manuscripts were written on it.

States of Savoy was 5,053,000 and that of Turin, according to the census of 1848 was 143,157; and that in that year US dollar was equivalent to 5.34 francs and the British Pound was equivalent to 25.21 francs.

Pages 26ss provide interesting hints for the cultivation of silkworms. It was probably the contribution of Alessandro Faà di Bruno, Francesco's brother who furnished him with twenty odd pages of agricultural hints. We offer these to our readers:

"They should be fed three, four, five or six times a day depending on the circumstances, more or less according to how much they consume at such times. Temperance is one of the surest means to ensure the health of the silkworms!"

From page 48ss there are various views on meteorology usually illustrated by Faà di Bruno, always anonymously, with helpful explanations of the various phenomena that produce rain, snow, dew, frost and hail. Then there are poems and songs, one of these on pg. 57 is a set of well-known sextuplets bearing the title: *In the Shadow of the Oak*. He imagines himself lying under the venerable tree

enjoying the breeze and the song of the birds while thinking about “those who ignore these facts turning their noses up to others,” or fleeing from the countryside, running to breathe the “Mecca air” (referring to Turin) with its odors of asphalt and pollution in the hope that maybe they may end up in a sanatorium like poor Pasquale, reduced to distributing the “Gazzetta del Popolo” and then dying like a dog. The tragic irony is that the song ends with Pasquale “rendering his soul to his Divine Maker” leaving his guts to Rosa, Govean and Borella.” In fact, Norberto Rosa, the poet and deputy collaborated with “Gazzetta del Popolo” whose founders were precisely G.B. Bottero, Felice Govean and Alessandro Borella.

Following on pg. 71ss are six discourses of a respected Simon who leaves some admonitions to his children in his will concerning “why not to trade a farmer’s jacket for a seamstress’ blouse” and then on pg. 96ss there are nine anecdotes. Here is one from among them: “A gentleman made a large purchase of precious stones. He goes to his curate to show him his wealth. The good priest looks at them and says: “I have seen your stones carefully and you too and I see you can do nothing but guard them carefully.”

The anecdotes have the following moral maxims:

- The body is sustained by food and the soul by good deeds.
- A good book is a friend that will not reveal your secrets and will give you wisdom.
- Idleness is like rust it consumes most of your work. The solution is to always keep yourself occupied.

These discourses, anecdotes and moral maxims, were nothing but translations and adaptations from articles that Faà di Bruno found in the French Catholic Almanacs mentioned above.

The “Gentleman” for 1854 ends with a list from pg. 111ss of principal State Fairs to serve as reminders for those in the Province of Turin such as the fairs at: Carignano, Casalborgone, Chieri, Chivasso, Cirie, Gassino, Leyni, Moncalieri, Orbassano, Piobesi, Rivarolo, Rivoli, Venaria Reale and Viù.

Unfortunately in 1854 Francesco Faà di Bruno left Turin for further studies at the Sorbonne and so he suspended his collaboration with the “Catholic Readings” and the “Gentleman” which he had humbly and zealously promoted. It is good that we know this because most have ignored this fact. He was associated with Don Bosco from the beginning and he later renewed his association after he left the chair at the university and founded a Congregation of the Little Sisters of Our Suffering Saviour. He would later be ordained a priest.

The “Gentleman” from 1855 to 1862

The contents of the “Gentleman” from 1855 are typical of an almanac: the names of the members of the Royal Family, the four seasons, the eclipses, movable feasts, ember days, the calendar, state fairs, markets, new rates, recipes, anecdotes and finally a “song” in Piedmontese.

The title of the song was: “*Meist Michèl ël sarajè*” (Master Michael, the blacksmith). In 29 spirited quatrains the author describes a

hardworking and helpful craftsman, liked by everyone, assiduous in his religious practices and always cheerful; truly a model of professional honesty and the Christian life. A comment: “*L’ è un darmagi ch’ Tòm as frusta - la salute pi robusta - mach pensand dai cop an su*” (Great pity that the man’s health diminished just thinking about his place above without raising his eyes).

This would be the first of a series of dialectal songs that would appear every year in the “Gentleman” till 1862. The one that appeared in 1856 was against the addiction to gambling; and that for 1857 tells the story of a certain Thomas a pastry chef who had a roaring business but ended up in ruin. For 1858 Don Bosco offered a “prediction” for better times to come through the intervention of Mary. The 1869 issue published two songs, one to stigmatize the dissolute (*Ij desbauc*) who ruin their lives through gambling, quarrels and drunkenness and the other is against the desecration of feast days. For the 1860 edition he directed his verses at bosses who got work done on feast days, inviting them to let their employees refrain from work. Not missing in this issue is a pithy sonnet about Gianduja and his little tail. Finally, in 1862 (there were no dialectal songs in the 1861 issue) he published a long new song in two parts on the vice of drink. We see that it was a widespread plague among the working class of the time.

Was Don Bosco really the author of these dialectal songs? It would see he was. In reading them, one notes the pen of the same writer, although some are simpler than

others and more good-natured, others are richer in language and style and they bear a certain similarity to the poems of Don Bosco who from his youth proved to be an adept impromptu poet. While still a student at Chieri he was already composing sonnets which he continued at Valdocco in the midst of his other duties. For example the verses at the blessing of the Church of St. Francis de Sales are his: “As a falcon from branch to branch – looks for a place to lodge, nest, and quietly rest...” It has as many as 21 verses which suggests that it was also a song like “In the shadow of the Oak” that appeared in the first issue of the “Gentleman.”

The “Gentleman” a publishing enterprise

Whatever the case, the “Gentleman,” which had a long life reaching our times, remains one of the most popular and characteristic ventures of Don Bosco. It gives us a clear idea of the problems, the interests and the dangers of positioning itself against the anti-religious propaganda and growing secularism.

Note also its intention to distract people from abandoning the countryside to look for better prospects in the city. In Piedmont of those years it was thought that development of agriculture and the attachment to an agrarian lifestyle always guaranteed real progress in freedom from revolutionary ambitions.

Today, in the face of the relentless progress of technology, we may also have different ideas but the nostalgia for the country life has not disappeared. Time is also a Gentleman! □



THOSE WHO LISTEN

by Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero

Mary belongs to humankind as one its most resplendent treasures and at the same time she belongs to God as the greatest and most sublime gift He could ever give humankind.

It was Mary's listening to the Word of God that turned into the Incarnation. The eternal Word of God was listened to and welcomed and entered human history, becoming Man.

Jesus is born of Mary's listening

Listening means opening oneself to become available and to consent to become the sanctuary, the temple of God's Word. And the "Fiat," that is the consent that Mary gave, was informed by God, not as part of a household. God in fact, nurtured her and lived in her; God lived in her as in a mother.

To eternity's Word's "here I am" she responds: "behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1,38) in time. Jesus "assumes the condition of a slave" (Phil 2,7) and Mary becomes a slave. It is God's service in humility where Mother and Son come together.

Mary is transfigured in her "Fiat" (be it done to me) without

diminishing herself she unites the solitude of a virgin to the communion of a mother. In her life everything is extremely simple. As a mother she wants to teach us that the essentials are always simple. What is essential is that the Lord comes and must be welcomed. Mary's warning seems to be: when saying "yes" to God no time must be lost; we must act immediately. Time isn't long enough to thank him; you will never cease saying "thanks."

"My mother...is one who hears the Word of God and practices it" (Lk 8,20).

Does Jesus seem to rebuff Mary with these words? In fact, he defines her, he proposes her as a model listener. For her, the words of Jesus are true and even when they are not understood they enlighten and strengthen her faith. In the simplicity of her listening, she wants to teach us that the words of Jesus are not the satisfactory answers that men need, they are the words of Jesus.

Mary is not a diaphragm between us and the Lord.

Nothing she does overshadows

God; she lives only to place in relief his glory and she disappears into the light.

The Virgin lives the mystery of the Son as the mystery of salvation; Jesus who inexhaustibly gives himself from the very depths of his love and his passion right up to Calvary where she is present at the foot of the Cross not to defend him but to offer him.

She introduces us to her immaculate life, not a life of solitude and renunciation but a life of communion.

She teaches the Apostles gathered around her in the Cenacle waiting for the Spirit that:

- there is no divine action without the Holy Spirit,
- there is no Holy Spirit without prayer,
- there is no prayer without charity,
- there is no prayer and charity without Mary.

Without condemning the first man Adam after the first sin, God lights up the world with the light of hope: Mary. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he will bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15) "When the fullness of time had come" (Gal 4:4) God sent the Woman whom everyone was waiting for. In her was embodied the desires of all the Patriarchs and the Prophets. In her immaculate waiting, hope is transformed and blossoms into the Saviour. However, Mary's hope doesn't end with the birth of the Redeemer it progresses right up to Calvary where she stands as the only hope alight in the world. At the foot of the Cross she witnesses to the reasons for her hope



which are not found in the temporal affairs of history but in the mysterious promises of God.

The Apostles in the Cenacle waiting for the Holy Spirit are gathered around the only creature who knows how to hope without doubting: Mary.

Our society today lives at the "sunset" of hope. We should anchor our witness to Mary's commitment of our witness to be like her, torches of hope in order that it be kindled in the world.

As believers we must bear witness that hope is a tension of the spirit, a desire of the heart that drives us to God to seek his face. It sets alight joy in tribulation rendering suffering as salvific. Borne with hope, the wood of the Cross is not carried, not fractured, not withered but it is strengthening and life-giving. □

NEWSBITS

VATICAN

The ceremony at the Vatican, a gesture repeated on several other occasions was an intimate ceremony, without protocol or official photographers. There were only eight guests. And so it was, the latest baptism celebrated by Pope Francis, last Saturday, August 8, in the chapel of St. Martha's House. Two young Argentines received the first sacrament, and one of them is the newborn daughter of an old friend. It is neither the first nor the last of these gestures, because Francis has shown that, despite being at the head of the universal Church, he has not lost the habits of a pastor.



The stage? St. Martha's House. Lucas Schaerer and Ana Laura De Abreu arrived, where they presented Simona Libertad (a little more than two months old) and her sister Charo (9 years old). The Pope received them and he himself prepared the ceremony and, in the end, turned off the candles and said: "I still have the habits of a pastor."

Schaerer forms part of "La Alameda," an Argentine organization that fights against trafficking and slave labour. Its leader, and now parliamentarian, Gustavo Vera, introduced them to Bergoglio few years ago, when he

was archbishop of Buenos Aires. Whenever all three of them met, they would comment half-jokingly and half-seriously, "Lucas will be a priest." He just laughed. But their journeys are very different, and today he is a parent, the head of a family.

When Francis received a letter with the ultrasound image of Simona, he told Vera he wanted to baptize the baby. And that's what he just did during a brief but meaningful liturgy.

"It was a very emotional moment, he did everything for the christening, like a simple priest. He also made the official certificate and we signed it. He explained the steps of the christening and, at times, played around a bit." It was all very cheerful. Then we went into a small room next door and we all talked. It's obvious that he likes to baptize and evangelize - continuing to baptize, explaining the sacrament, talking about the compromise that we have as parents and godparents," said Schaerer to Vatican Insider.

And then: "It was very human and the friendship was clear, not only in the occasion itself, but also in the time that passed: we were an hour, more or less, in the room, beyond the time of baptism. He spent a lot of time and I think it is a gesture both to the family of 'La Alameda,' and for the people who work for others; was an evangelization for the people who are risking their life every day for a city without slavery - neither labour or sexual - without trafficking of people. This is the message." (La Stampa) □



walking with the Church

The Angelus, Confession and Communion

From St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *What is the explanation for the number of times the Angelus bell rings? It tolls three times, pauses, then another three times, pauses, then another three times and ends with nine tolls.*

A. The Angelus prayer had its beginnings sometime during the Middle Ages, but cannot be pinpointed exactly. The present day Angelus would seem to have been formulated around the first half of the 16th century. From the beginning the triple stroke of the bells repeated three times seems to have been the custom, with a pause between each group of three to allow the recitation of a 'Hail Mary.' The bells were rung to remind the people that it was time to honour Mary the Mother of God. A bequest to a Church in Oxfordshire in 1512 mentions the thrice - daily Angelus. The bequest was made on condition that the bell tolled at six o'clock in the morning, at twelve o'clock in the afternoon. Sometime later the four o'clock bells rang at 6 pm. Some would say that the triple stroke of the bell followed by nine strokes was a measure of time for the people to pray the Angelus also enabling it to be distinguished from the mass bells and bells rung as at a funeral

procession proceeds to or from the church.



Q. *For some years I have given up going to Confession and Communion but I still go to Sunday Mass. I have a problem with my mouth and cannot speak clearly because of this I fear the priest might not understand me so I do not go for Confession or Communion. What advice can you give me?*

A. I am sure that if you make an appointment to speak to the priest privately at his presbytery or elsewhere and explain your problem to him he will arrange for you to go to Confession and Communion. There are thousands of people who receive Communion with physical or other problems - think of all the sick and handicapped at Lourdes and Fatima and other shrines who receive the Sacraments. □

CHARITY...continued from Pg. 23
"Just try putting your pride in a box and shipping it to the refugees. It just might keep them warm and fill their stomachs."



Things were still tense at the Lewis household. Bob had just answered the door and came back to the living room: "I was hoping it was Kate and Howard." He said looking at Peg. He received no response: "I said I was hoping it was Kate and Howard."

"I heard you."

Bob thought he had a brilliant idea. Why don't they go over and visit the Adams? But Peg was in no mood. He realised that Kate and Peg must have had quite a scrap if she didn't want to visit the Adams. "You go ahead if you want to." She was simply hurt that Kate had stolen her idea and so she was angry. Bob smiled: "Is that all? Women, women...I'll never understand women." Peg seemed angry and turned on Bob: "Men are just as bad. Look at that fight you had with that man, that Don Williams. You wouldn't speak to him for...how long and just because he made some remark about the way you kept score when you played golf." He admitted he was wrong but they had ironed out their differences and had moved on. Then he added: "Don and I are very good friends now. Men don't hold grudges. It takes a woman to do that."

Then he added: "Maybe now and then you meet someone who's smart enough and big enough to get over it. But most of them I've known would rather let the best project in the world go down the

drain rather than say: 'I'm sorry.'"

Peg refused to accept the criticism. Then Bob almost challenged her: "Then why don't you phone Kate." She wouldn't agree. Exasperated, he added: "Women, women, women...they're all alike. They say one thing..." and suddenly the conversation (if you can call it that) was interrupted by the phone. It was Kate Adams and she wanted to speak to Peg. This was going to be interesting: "Why sure Kate...just a minute, she's right here." Peg became uneasy, almost nervous: "I don't know whether I want to speak to her." Putting his hand on the receiver Bob came over and said: "I sure admire Kate, she's big. I guess I'll have to tell her you don't want to speak to her." Peg grabbed the phone from Bob and said: "Hello Kate." "Peg, I thought I'd call you." "How are you?" "Fine, how are you?"

"Fine, how's the bazaar coming?" "Fine, only nobody can agree what to have for the dinner. Mrs. Rogers wants ham and Mrs. Thompson wants chicken... what do you think Peg?" Peg sounded like her old eager self: "Why don't you have both and spaghetti and meatballs and maybe a fruit salad? Some people hate ham and chicken."

The ensuing conversation would make any eavesdropper smile: "That's an idea. Why don't you come oven tonight? Wait a minute, Howard wants to say something. He says his dinner's burning up in the oven. I'll call you back later. I'll have to go feed him. You know how these men are..."

Peg shook her head: "Yes...I know how these men are...they're all alike." □

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 grandson had 104° fever. We were very worried as it would not come down for a long time. I prayed the Three Hail Marys continuously and went on placing cold presses on his forehead. The fever came down gradually. Though the fever lasted for some days, it did not go to 104° again. He is alright now. I thank Mother Mary for curing him and pray to her for his good health.

M. A. Cardozo - Mumbai

With a heart full of gratitude I give thanks to the Blessed Trinity and Mother Mary for immediately granting the favour of a job to my daughter-in-law. Thank you very much Mother Mary, I will never cease praying the Three Hail Marys. Maria Goretti Fernandes, Mumbai
Thank you Mother Mary for all the graces received. I always said the Three Hail Marys since childhood and I eagerly wait for the Madonna each month, mainly to read about the miracles. The Three Hail Marys Devotion has helped me since school days to overcome the silliest of troubles and the major ones too. As decades passed by, I stopped saying the Three Hail Marys as I used to, but Mother Mary, I know you never wanted me to stop saying them and hence you found a way to remind me of this beautiful prayer through another book.

Preety, UAE

I was travelling from home to a place 6km away when my bike suddenly skid and I fell on all fours. It was only by God's grace and Mother Mary's protection that I escaped. I had prayed the Hail Mary before leaving the house. I had only a few bad bruises on my knees and elbow. I was fine and my bike too was not damaged. I really thank God and Mother Mary who surely interceded on my behalf. Thank you Mother and your Son Jesus.

Gabriel, J. Lobo

My heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart, Mary Help of Christians for Wilfred John's safe removal of a bladder tumor and all the other graces and blessings granted to me and my family. May the Lord Jesus and Our Blessed Mother protect and cure my brother Wilfred John completely and bless and protect us all.

Juliet John, Mumbai

Thanks to Mother Mary and her loving Son Jesus and all the saints for granting my petitions through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys.

Ms. C. D'Mello, Mumbai

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Loving, sweet Mother, thank you so much for all the strength, courage, wisdom and for keeping me fit throughout my son Christopher's wedding. Thank you for my husband's normal report too. I always thank you for all the gifts you gave me. Bless and protect my children and keep us always under your mantle.

A Devotee

Thank you dear Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for all the favours received including a positive pathology report, Maya's academic success, Hemant's professional progress, our family's safe travels, for not letting Satan triumph in my life, my sound physical health, my mother's overall health and for restoring my health during troubled times.

Natasha Samagond, USA

My sincere thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for being with my children, husband and myself in every moment of our lives, for the countless blessings and protection received and fulfilling our hearts' desires. A special thanks for being with my older daughter while she was studying in the US and for blessing her with a good job, after which she was absorbed in the company. Thank you for blessing our second daughter with a good internship and my husband with a new assignment. Thanks Mother Mary for your intercession without which none of the above would be possible.

A Devotee

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

Heartfelt thanks to the Most Holy Trinity, Our Lady and all the saints for all the graces received and especially for curing my wife's illness. Do continue to bless us always. *Glenn D'Souza, Mumbai*
I am grateful to the Infant Jesus, Blessed Mother Mary, St. Joseph, St. John Bosco and all the saints for the numerous favours received especially for healing me fully from my knee surgery which I underwent early in February 2016. *Jossy Sequeira, Bangalore*
My wife recently underwent surgery which involved the removal of the uterus and a large ovarian cyst. The test reports after the surgery showed normal values. We were guided by God to the right doctors and the right hospital after many consultations. Thankfully with our limited resources we were able to meet the costs of the surgery and hospitalisation. All of this was possible thanks to the continued grace of Almighty God and the Infant Jesus and the ceaseless intercession of Mother Mary. *Thomas Jerome Fernandes, Mumbai*
I was disturbed when I was unable to contact my niece by phone. After several attempts I began to get worried. I prayed to the Holy Spirit and to St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. I tried again and got a favourable reply. I am immensely grateful for their intercession.
Josephine David

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



Most Blessed Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio we are most grateful for the numerous favours received: for good health and the safe delivery of a healthy baby. Do keep us under your protection at all times. We will continue to pray and ask for your blessings. *H.N. Australia*
My sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco. I had many complications during my pregnancy, but by the powerful blessings of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio I had a safe and normal delivery of my child.

Milena Chougule

I am grateful to the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours granted to me. Please continue to bestow your miraculous blessings on us.

A. Mendonza and Family, Pune

I praise and thank you all the saints for coming to my aid. I praise and thank the Heavenly Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours granted. I pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us and be by our side forever. My dearest Holy Mother, thank you so much again for answering my prayer, and for listening to my problems and for never failing to help me. Thank you Blessed Mother Mary for hearing and graciously answering my prayers! You have never let me down. Thank you Mother Mary from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for me, for listening to me, guiding me and interceding for me. I love you Mother Mary, O Most Holy Mother, Blessed Virgin you have helped me in all the facets of my life, especially in time of trouble. Thank you Blessed Mother of Mount Carmel for helping in having my request granted. And thank you for all your assistance throughout the years for all the favours received.

Mrs. Ramona D'Costa, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY 2017

Lapsed Christians

That our brothers and sisters who have strayed from the faith, through our prayer and witness to the Gospel, may rediscover the merciful closeness of the Lord and the beauty of the Christian life.

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MARY WAS THERE

My Baby girl Brynelle turned 3 on September 6th, 2016. Since she was 6 months old we kept taking her to doctors as she wasn't able even to hold her head up. Thanks and praise to Jesus and Mother Mary - today Brynelle is walking and running like a regular kid. She is not yet talking, but I know Jesus will not leave us. On January 1st, 2017- I believe that Jesus granted us a very big miracle. We clicked a few pictures and we saw a huge ray of light passing through Brynelle's heart. For 3 years we were doing 2D echo tests and there was a 9mm hole in her heart. In Feb 2017 we had to do another 2D echo test and this hole had closed miraculously. I praise and thank Jesus and Mother Mary for all that they are doing in our lives. I completely entrust my baby to them.

Rebecca Dsouza, Mumbai

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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