

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
Moaning and Groaning.....3

Church's Mission to Parents
- *Ian Pinto, sdb*.....4

Youth on the Move: The Will of God,
This Mystery!
- *Luca Garbinetto*.....8

Salesian Saint:
Elia Comini.....11

Vocation Promotion:
Dn. Rudolph D'Souza, sdb.....12

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
Bl. Antonio Rosmini (1st July) 13

Lectio Divina: Fatalism and the Spirit of
the Gospel - *Ian Pinto, sdb*.....16

Quietspaces: The Strength in Our Weakness
- *Pope Francis*.....18

Man of Mystery
- *Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection*.....20

Don Bosco And His People: Chapter III
The Tenacity of Don Bosco
- *Natale Cerreto*.....24

Reflecting on Mary: Marian Devotion of
Youngsters
- *Bernardina Do Nascimento*.....28

NewsBits.....30

Walking With the Church: Masses on Saturday
Evenings - *Fr. Edward McNamara*.....31

The Ultimate Sacrifice...*Kathleen Easton*.....34

In a Cheerful Mood.....32

The Devotion of
the Three Hail Marys.....33

Loving Children to their
Loving Mother.....33

They Are Grateful to
Our Lady & Don Bosco.....34



Through
the intercession of
the glorious Virgin Mary,
may we be
so fortified
as to reach
the mountain
which is Christ.

From the Collect of the Mass
of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

From The Editor's Desk

MOANING AND GROANING

I'm sure you've come across people in your line of work...or your social group that seem to stand out for all the wrong reasons. Now, don't get me wrong. They're nice people, but somehow...in their ability 'to be perfect' (*forget being like the Heavenly Father for a moment*) they can make your life miserable...and you can never satisfy them...Have you noticed? A group simply disperses without any signal with the entrance of one such person. They have brought moaning and groaning to a fine art and they wear it as a badge very proudly. They call it being critical! At its worst, it has become second nature to them and they aren't aware of the depressing effect their negativity has on people around them. By their whining (read *criticism*) you shall know them: "This is not right. You could have picked a brighter colour. They just don't get it." They go on and on in that vein and you want to say to them, "Will you, for God's sake, stop that whining. You haven't been appointed judge of any contest." Others whine differently: "Nobody cares if I'm left out. I'm never informed when there's a party. Nothing good ever comes my way." They go on and on and on. And you want to say to them: "Will you come down off that 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're redeemed but you don't look like you're redeemed!"

Now I'm treading delicately...pointing a finger at others I know I end up with three fingers pointing back at myself. With this in mind, I'll 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, no matter how hard you try, you're never going to please them, you just can't win. Nietzsche was right, "they make you sick!" They drain the life out of you. As Christians we're life-givers, not life-drainers. Let those around you see how much you enjoy being alive.

Life has to be enjoyed, cherished and celebrated. And this is 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."

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

CHURCH'S MISSION TO PARENTS

by Ian Pinto, *silb*

The Identity of the Family

This may raise a few eyebrows but in fact the Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises. I had never thought of the Bible in this way before and come to think of it, it's true! From the very first book of the Bible to the very last, we have numerous stories, from Adam and Eve to the unity of God's family in heaven in Revelations. The early chapters of Genesis present the human couple in its deepest reality. They tell us that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (1:27). Right at creation, God created man within the context of a family. The "image" is in which he made them is his divine creative nature. Thus, he allowed the human family to share in his divine creative act.

The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon capable of revealing God, the Creator. In this way, love becomes the symbol of sharing in the life of God. St. John explains it in his epistle: "Let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love comes to its perfection in us. God is love. The one who lives in love, lives in God and God in him" (1 Jn 4:7, 12, 16). The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection. St. John Paul II had this to say in this

regard, "Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love."

Significantly, the word which appears most frequently in the Old Testament after the name of God, "YHWH" is "child". Children expand and complete a family. They are considered to be a blessing from God and within Jewish culture it was degrading for a couple not to have a child. You might recall the words of some of the famous figures of the Bible on their bareness: When God promised Abraham a son through Sarah he fell face down and laughed, saying to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? And can Sarah who is ninety have a child?" (Gen 17:17) Sarah herself laughed when Yahweh foretold her imminent pregnancy (Gen 18:9-14). Rachel was still barren while Leah had given birth and out of jealousy she threatened Jacob, "Give me children or I'll die" (Gen 30:1). Hannah, the mother of Samuel was mocked for being barren (1 Sam 1:6). Zechariah met the angel's announcement of John's birth with disbelief (Lk 1:18-20).

In the Apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, St. John Paul II wrote, "in the countries of the so-called Third World, families often lack both the means necessary for survival, such as food,

work, housing and medicine, and the most elementary freedoms. In the richer countries, on the contrary, excessive prosperity and the consumer mentality, paradoxically joined to a certain anguish and uncertainty about the future, deprive married couples of the generosity and courage needed for raising up new human life: thus life is often perceived not as a blessing, but as a danger from which to defend oneself" (FC #6). It is quite surprising that in the old days people wearied from being childless while nowadays couples prefer not to have children. Mind you, this apostolic exhortation was written over 30 years ago. It only goes to show that people's attitude towards begetting and nurturing children hasn't improved very much. This is a sorry situation. Since "children", in the words of the psalmist are "a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. They are like arrows in the hand of a warrior... happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (Ps 127:3-5)!

The Mission of Parents

The genesis of the family lies in the coming together of a man and woman in love, committed to each other and to their duties to one another. It is almost unthinkable to talk of a family without parents. They are the source of the family and the channel which keeps it flowing and active. The parents are responsible for one another as well as for the children, who are the fruit of their union. The Church invites parents to become aware of the seriousness of their roles and responsibilities

and to take them up courageously, wholeheartedly and steadfastly, notwithstanding the inevitable difficulties, trials and sufferings that will come their way.

I would like to point out just three things the Church expects from parents. In my opinion these three are among the most important characteristics of the vocation of parenthood and therefore worthy of mention and explication.

1) The Church desires that parents be **HOLY**. One of the greatest gifts that parents can give to children after life is faith. Only someone who has something can give it to someone else. For parents to share the faith with children they must possess it themselves and for this reason the Church urges parents to prepare themselves for the important task of sharing their life of faith with their children: "The Lord is entrusting to them the growth of a child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a member of the Church" (FC #39).



Gianna Molla (1922-1962) was an Italian pediatrician who was

brought up in a deeply religious family. Her medical career was guided by the teachings of the Church and she resolved to follow her conscience while coming to the aid of others who required assistance. She dedicated her time and energies to charitable work among the elderly besides taking active part in the Catholic Action movement as well as the Saint Vincent de Paul association.

She happily married Pietro Molla in 1955 and they had three children together. In 1961, during the second month of her fourth pregnancy, she developed a fibroma on her uterus. The doctors gave her three choices following an examination: an abortion, a complete hysterectomy, or the removal of the fibroma alone. The Church teaches that life is sacred and therefore anything that threatens life like abortion must be avoided. Keeping this in mind, Molla opted to remove the fibroma alone since she wanted to preserve her child's life; she told the doctors that her child's life was more important than her own. Her baby was delivered via a caesarean section but unfortunately, she died a week later due to septic peritonitis. The daughter she died giving birth to is still alive and has become a doctor specialized in geriatrics. The Church recognized the holiness and heroic sacrifice of Gianna and declared her a saint in 2004.

Like Gianna there are many other men and women, fathers and mothers who live lives of solid faith and virtue. The Church wishes that all her children would

live lives like these – lives of holiness, spent in the service and love of God and neighbour.

2) The Church desires that parents be **LOVING**. It is quite difficult to imagine parents who are loveless but nevertheless parents, and in fact all Christians, are called to live lives of intense and unconditional love.

A young man applied for a managerial position in a big company. His resume looked impressive and he was asked to meet the director for an interview. The director was impressed by the lad's excellent CV and asked him who had paid for his education. The man replied that his parents had done so. The manager inquired about their profession. The young man slightly blushed as he disclosed that they were daily wage labourers. The director requested the youth to show his hands. The youth showed a pair of hands that were smooth and perfect. "Have you ever helped your parents in their work?" the director asked. "Never", came the reply, "my parents always wanted me to study and read more books."

The director asked the youth to go home and clean his parents' hands and then come back the next day. The young man was slightly confused but went back home and asked his parents to let him clean their hands. They hesitantly showed their hands to their son and as he cleaned them tears rolled down his cheeks. It was the first time he noticed the wrinkles and bruises on his parents' hands. Then he realized that these hands that worked

hard every day enabled him to study and progress in life.

The next day the director noticed tears in the young man's eyes when he inquired about the assignment. The young man replied, "I now know what appreciation is. Without my parents, I would not be who I am today." The director proudly announced, "This is what I am looking for in a manager. You are hired."

This touching story resonates a strong message. Love is not selfish and does not look for its own gain. Love, if it is true, is ready to sacrifice everything for the good of the other. Parents are generally motivated by this intense love for their children and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their future. Johann von Goethe summarized the responsibility of parents towards their children beautifully in his quote, "There are two things children should get from their parents: roots and wings." Both of these are results of love and therefore parents should essentially give their children love.

3) Finally, the church expects parents to become **EDUCATORS** of their children. *Familiaris Consortio* says, "The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God's creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development, parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life... The right and duty of parents to give education is essential... it is

original and primary... irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others" (FC, #36).



Daniel Ibanez, CNA

Pope Francis succinctly spoke on this issue during a general audience: "Today we consider the vocation of families to educate their children, to raise them in the profound human values which are the backbone of a healthy society. This educational mission, essential as it is, nowadays encounters a variety of difficulties. Parents spend less time with their children and schools are often more influential than families in shaping the thinking and values of the young. Our children need sure guidance in the process of growing in responsibility for themselves and others. Christian communities are called to support the educational mission of families. They do this above all by living in fidelity to God's word, cultivating faith, love and patience. Jesus himself was raised in a family; when he tells us that all who hear the word of God and obey are his brothers and sisters, he reminds us that for all their failings, our families can count on his inspiration and grace in the difficult but rewarding vocation of educating their children." □

THE WILL OF GOD...THIS MYSTERY!

by Luca Garbinetto

In life there are moments in which we are called to make choices. It is then that our sincere relationship with God leads us to call on him and ask: "Lord, what do you want me to do? What's your will for my life?"

What, in short, is the will of God?

To answer this question we need to step back and ask ourselves: What are we talking to God about? Of God, as of any person we come in contact with, each of us makes our own image and starting from this image we tend to relate to him. This image of God is internalized from the ideas we have learned about him, the emotions gathered from the various religious experiences we have lived through, from habits, and the ways we have acted to express our faith.

Let us identify *some vignettes* (May the Lord forgive us!) that may summarize the main ways we imagine God. Each of these ways corresponds to a way of understanding God's will. Let us say already that only the last one corresponds to the truth: in other words, the God presented in the first vignettes does not exist! Therefore some images of God are wrong. However, we can decide to journey to interiorize the true

image of God and to live in such a way by only doing His will. That is the way of conversion!

So, there are some who think that God is some kind of a watchmaker. He would have created the world, equipped it with everything necessary for its existence and functioning and then he would withdraw into his Heaven, to observe, like a spectator, the unfolding of events on the earth. Creation and, in it man would then work according to a precise and already established set of laws, like a perfect clock for which man himself would be responsible. Man would have to study and know the rules so as not to make any mistakes that would ruin the proper functioning of this "toy." In this sense, every event of nature that escapes man's control is interpreted as an expression of a preconceived plan of God which would have been foreseen even as catastrophic and calamitous events.

Even the vocation is understood as a design already scripted, like a readymade suit into which the person has only to fit, trying to perceive the signs that are manifest in history thought by God in a mechanical way.

Instead, there are people who conceive of God as a kind of great

puppeteer. God would not be indifferent to the events of the world and its history that he himself created. On the contrary, God continues to intervene in guiding events, and the affairs of humankind as well as nature according to a simple principle: every effect has its direct cause, and this cause is God. This concept of God is summarized in the adage: "Not a leaf falls without God permitting it!" This vision reduces the ambit of man's freedom to its lowest, so the Will of God is understood as an unpredictable sway of interventions of the Almighty in history and the only possible attitude is to passively accept the decisions of a very intrusive and capricious God. God becomes the one who rewards or punishes people according to their behaviour: sin is thus a sure source of condemnation and damnation, and to get to heaven there is instead need to sweat to subdue oneself and this has its own merits.

In this logic, vocation becomes the struggle to adapt as perfectly as possible to the needs of a God who is difficult to understand and interpret coupled with the constant fear of "making a mess." But there is also the possibility of interpreting the "signs" of the will of God according to one's preference and inclination without an objective criterion.

Finally, there are people who have travelled a serious faith journey and have come to understand that God is a **good and merciful Father** who wishes to interact with adult children. One who has established a relationship of trust and confidence with God, perceives him as a loving presence that takes care of him and allows him

to make free and responsible choices. He understands slowly that the Will of God is not a pre-established programme to which one must conform or an uncertain succession of capricious and demanding directives of a severe and threatening God.

The believer discovers that the Will of God is love. The creator God is also One who accompanies his creature in a progressive process of maturation so that s/he may become what is called a subsidiary.

This fascinating journey takes place in a constant dialogue through which a person learns to recognize one's inner movements as the place where one hears the voice of God.

This training takes place in a patient, daily, personal and community encounter with the Word of God, illumined by the secular experience provided by the Church.

The believer thus discovers that God's Will coincides with God's loving gaze on him/her. The Will of God is his constant and tireless presence in the events of history, even when suffering and fear, sin and death seem to mark the passage of an inevitable separation from Him.

Instead, he places himself there once again, next to his wounded child, to help him get up and start again, because the Will of God is that everyone should "have life and have it to the full" (cf Jn 10:10). In other words, God wants all of us to be happy and to do this he makes us gradually capable of free and responsible choices illumined by reason, discerning what is good by the thrust of a heart passionate for the Kingdom. □ (Se *Vuoi 58/1*)



**SALESIAN
SAINTS**

**ELIA COMINI
1910 - 1944
Salesian Priest
Servant of God**

He was born in Calvenzano di Vergato (Bologna) on May 7, 1910. His parents, Claudio, a carpenter and Emma Limoni, a seamstress, prepared him for life by educating him in the faith. He was baptized in Calvenzano and received his First Communion and Confirmation at Salvarodi Grizzana. From a very early age he showed great interest in Catechism and the services in the church, singing beautifully, and he possessed a very friendly disposition. The archpriest of Salvaro, Monsignor Fidenzio Mellini, as a young soldier frequented the Oratory of Valdocco and had met Don Bosco who prophesized that he would become a priest. Monsignor Mellini admired Elia immensely for his faith, his goodness and his singular intellectual capacity and so he prompted him to become a son of Don Bosco. That was why he directed him to the small Salesian seminary of Finale Emilia (Modena) where Elia attended middle and high school. In 1925 he entered the Salesian Novitiate of Castel De'Britti (Bologna) and made his religious profession there on October 3, 1926. From 1926-1928, as a cleric, he completed his Philosophy at Valsalice (Turin) and was also in charge of the



tomb of Don Bosco. It was there that Elia began a demanding spiritual journey that was documented in a diary he kept until his tragic death. They are revealing pages of a deep interior life which was not perceived exteriorly. On the eve of his renewal of vows he would write: "I am happier today than I've ever been on the eve of this holocaust. I hope this will please you. Receive me as an expiatory victim and even if I do not deserve it, pardon my past sins and help me to become a saint." He completed his practical training as an assistant teacher at Finale Emilia, Sondrio and in Chiari and graduated in Literature at the University of Milan. On March 16, 1935 he was ordained priest in Brescia. He wrote: "I asked Jesus: death rather than failing in my priestly vocation and a heroic love for souls." From 1936

to 1941 he taught literature at the Aspirantate of "San Bernardino" in Chiari (Brescia) proving he was an excellent teacher and extremely attentive to the youngsters. Religious obedience transferred him to the Salesian Institute of Treviglio (Bergamo). He particularly embodied the pastoral charity of Don Bosco through his Salesian kindness, goodness and his smile.

His habitually affable temperament and his heroic dedication to his priestly ministry shone out brilliantly during his short stay with his mother, remaining alone at Salvaro and near his adopted Parish church where the Lord would ask Fr. Elia to offer the ultimate sacrifice. Sometime earlier he had written in his diary: "The thought of having to die persists. Who knows! We must be like the faithful servant always prepared for the call, ready to render an account." We're in period June-September 1944 when the situation between Monte Sole and Monte Salvaro was very dangerous, bordering on a direct confrontation between the German troops and the Allies. This had brought the population to the brink of total destruction. Till September 1944 Fr. Elia helped the aged parish priest: he taught catechism, conducted retreats, celebrated Masses, preached, admonished, sang and kept the situation as serene as possible trying to prevent the worst. Then, together with the late Father Martino Capelli a Dehonian priest, Fr. Elia continually rushed out to comfort, help, administer the sacraments

and bury the dead. In some cases he even managed to save some people by bringing them into the rectory.

The triduum of the passion of Fathers Elia Comini and Martino Capelli began on Friday September 29. The parish church of Salvaro was full of illegal refugees and news came that after a struggle with the partisans, the terrible SS had captured 69 people among whom were those dying and in need of comfort. Fr. Elia celebrated his last Mass very early in the morning and then he rushed to rescue the wounded, the fallen and those arrested.

In Credda di Salvaro the two priests got themselves arrested. They were used "like beasts of burden," forced to transport ammunition and in the evening they were locked up in Pioppe di Salvaro stable. On Saturday September 30, Fr. Elia and Fr. Martino spent all their energy comforting the numerous men locked up with them. The Prefectural Commissioner Emilio Vegetti (who did not know Fr. Martin but knew Fr. Elio well) managed to secure release of the latter but Fr. Elia heroically replied: "Either all or none." The two priests continued praying and consoling the others. The following day around twilight, the German machine guns mowed down 46 victims in what history would term "the Massacre of Pioppe Salvaro." Fr. Elia's body with those of the others killed was disposed off in the river Rhine. □



DN. RUDOLPH D'SOUZA

A Salesian Student of Theology at Don Bosco, Koregaon Park, Pune

My earliest memory was actually to become an Electronics Engineer or a Scientist. Those were the days when the computer was still considered a thing of the future. As I look back at my early days, it is hard to identify any single moment or encounter which implanted in my heart a subtle desire to also be a priest. But I believe it was always there; alas, I was too shy to express this desire to be a priest.

After graduation it was time to get to work. The work was pure night shifts but the pay package was excellent. Life seemed good for some time. But then my father retired. A sense of directionlessness came over me and I asked myself: What am I doing with my life? One day, while at home, I just picked up a copy of the *Don Bosco's Madonna* and came across the page which had the contact of Fr. Brian Moras SDB, the then Vocation Promoter. Something made me call him immediately. After a brief meeting, he referred me to the Provincial, Fr. Ivo Coelho SDB who, in his wisdom, suggested I be counselled by Fr. Godfrey D'Sa SDB. The next step for me was informing my parents. It was difficult because they had no clue. Even with Fr. Brian visiting my place, they could not tell that I was serious on taking this step. With my father still reluctant, I attended the vocation camp and was selected. I submitted a notice of resignation at my workplace. I was 25 and completely aware that I would have to give up everything. It was a risk, nonetheless, worth



taking. Till a day before I could leave for Lonavla, I was still at work but once at the Aspirantate at Lonavla, I never looked back. Initially, it looked stupid, hanging around with boys almost half my age. But the appreciation and respect I received from my superiors and peers (despite my inability to keep up) was overwhelming. I discovered a new me. I started to pray and seek answers in prayer. I learnt about the amazing person that Don Bosco was and a whole world of possibilities that existed for a Salesian who worked for the youth. Every year in the congregation, gave me the impetus to move forward. Today, as I look back at the story of my life, I see how all things had to be as they were, carefully organized according to the divine plan. I can confidently say now that I am happy; there are no regrets, no hesitations, no procrasti-nations... only, *"Here I am... send me."* ☐

**Witnesses
in & for
Our Times**

**BL. ANTONIO ROSMINI
(1979-1855)
(JULY 1)**



To God with Reason and Faith

The famous opening words of the Encyclical entitled *Fides et Ratio* of Pope St. John Paul II in 1998 are: "Faith and reason are like two wings with which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth. It is God who has placed in the heart of man the desire to know the truth and ultimately to know him." It is a document that grapples the centuries-old problem of the relationship between faith and reason. The problem experienced for centuries, but even more vehemently after the Enlightenment precisely because it proclaimed human reason as the zenith of man himself (who liberated himself of every subordination and therefore also from God) to the detriment of revelation.

In this age-old debate Antonio Rosmini stands out in great relief.

He is certainly one of the most eminent and significant figures (even today) of Italy in the 1800s. In the cultural landscape of that century he stands alongside Manzoni (his great friend), Leopardi and Foscolo. He was in fact



a cultural giant, not just a philosopher but also a pedagogue, a jurist and a political theoretician.

Even he worked (not only Cavour, Garibaldi, Mazzini...) for the *Risorgimento* and for the unification of Italy. The unity (not only Gioberti) that he had in mind was better than that of a federal state. He was also a prophet, an apostle of faith and a

mystic. Some of his insights concerning the Church appeared a hundred years before Vatican II.

Not only was Rosmini a man of great culture (according to the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar he was "one of the last universal geniuses of humanity"), but he was also a saint in his way of thinking and acting, in his living and in his dying. And that was why the Church endorsed his sanctity by proclaiming him Blessed on November 18, 2007. Cardinal José Martins said: "His holiness will certainly help to restore the friendship between reason and faith, between religion, ethical behaviour and public service to Christians... Abbot Rosmini lived a theological life in which faith implied hope and charity with a trusting dialogue of confidence, trusting love in Providence."

It is true that time heals everything even if it sometimes takes very long. In fact, our Blessed was beatified on November 18, 2007, exactly 175 years earlier on November 18, 1832 he had begun to write his famous, much discussed (and condemned) volume entitled "Of the Five Wounds of the Church" a very prophetic book that was not immediately understood then...but only much later.

His mission: intellectual charity

Antonio Rosmini Serbati was born at Rovereto on March 12, 1797 into a rich family of which he was to become the universal heir. He was intellectually brilliant and was soon convinced that man's true greatness lay in God, that is, in knowing him and in devoting all his strength to his glory

and working for the salvation of his neighbour.

He imposed on himself an ascetical life with the objective of constant purification of the soul of evil and the acquisition of the good, that is, the love of God and the love of others. This, for him primarily shaped his intellectual activity: illuminating his reason and instructing Christians (yesterday and today). He became a priest in 1821 and just two years later Pius VII himself encouraged him to study philosophy for which he had an extraordinary capacity and inclination. And shortly thereafter Pius VIII gave him almost an official mission: that of "intellectual charity." What was that? According to the Pope, Rosmini had to continue studying and writing with the sole aim of "leading men to religion through reason."

So, he took this mission entrusted to him by the bishop of Rome seriously and he carried it out with total commitment to the end of his life. The works that followed as a result of this commitment earned the enthusiastic approval and even the admiration of other men of culture who excelled in the academic landscape of the time such as Galluppi, Tommaseo, Manzoni and Gioberti.

Friend of Don Bosco

Rosmini was not only a great scholar and author of weighty volumes of philosophy, he was also a founder of religious orders such as the Institute of Charity (in 1828), a new religious family that was his brainchild and later in 1832 the Sisters of Providence. These two religious families were especially committed to scholas-

tic discipline, that is, "intellectual charity," which began to considerably develop.

But he not only found time to study and write he also cultivated several friendships. Very important among them were his relationship with Manzoni and Don Bosco. Don Bosco and Rosmini not only just met each other, they also appreciated one another. In short, there was a sincere friendship between the two. He even came to Turin-Valdocco to visit Don Bosco, and the latter returned the courtesy by going to Stresa (1847 and 1850) where the abbot preferred to reside.

Both worked for the "glory of God," one principally worked on philosophical and political themes, the other helped give employment and a little hope to so many young ragamuffins of Turin in the 1800s that was just entering the Industrial Revolution. Two different paths, different methodologies but just one goal: the love of God and neighbour.

Both "made" Italy, helping Italian society regenerate itself intellectually, professionally and socially.

Rosmini and the Rosminians were very generous with Don Bosco: without their help the Salesian work of Valdocco would have developed very differently and probably at a much slower pace. An example: the first printing press (which still works today) was set up with the direct help of Rosmini.

Defended by Don Bosco

But from 1841 difficulties seemed to dog him. These came in the form of harsh criticisms

about some of his works, certainly not understood in depth at the time. Don Bosco for his part defended him when his friend came under much pressure. And when it came to reprint his *History of Italy*, someone suggested that he expunge the flattering eulogy of Rosmini, Don Bosco refused affirming his esteem for his friend. For him, Don Bosco had always the highest esteem and he wrote: "To me he did nothing but good and materially, it was his donations and support which was a source of edification to me and my boys."

So great was the esteem he enjoyed that Pope Pius IX (himself Blessed) wanted to appoint him cardinal and Secretary of State. Nothing happened. Indeed, soon afterwards his troubles began with the condemnation of the famous manuscript of "the Five Wounds of the Church." The book was not understood; in fact he was a prophet who looked into the future. Indeed, some of his insights would be rediscovered and resumed at Vatican II more than a hundred years later.

Rosmini never protested the sentencing but submitted to the judgment of the Church and the condemnation of men (less intelligent than him) and retired to Stresa devoting himself entirely to study and prayer and to guide his religious families. To Manzoni who assisted him at his deathbed he recommended three tasks almost like a spiritual testament: "To worship, Silence and to Rejoice." It was the total offering of his life to the designs of Providence. He died on July 1st 1855. □



FATALISM AND THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

by Ian Pinto, sdb

Every human being is born in a family. Traditionally, a family meant a husband and wife, at least, besides parents, in-laws, siblings, children and so on. Nowadays, even though the traditional sense is retained to a certain extent, situations like single-parents and separations have become common.

Despite all this it still makes sense to say that every human being is born in a family. This family not only brings the child into existence but also nurtures him/her physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. This nurture is vital since it shapes the child to face life and its challenges. The socio-cultural-religious character of the family plays a big, though perhaps unpronounced role in the character development of the child. The family in a certain sense can make or break a person.

Take for instance a person born in a family of alcoholics. The child is likely to become de-

pressed or violent, scared or brutish. Though this may not universally be the case, it turns out to be in most situations. In India, we had the caste system which was rigorously practiced. Even today, vestiges of it exist. This was simply a socio-religious construct designed to facilitate the division of labour in society but it ultimately turned out to become an instrument of domination and discrimination. People with a 'lower' birth, that is, those born in castes placed low in the caste hierarchy were deprived of certain privileges and even sometimes considered little less human than people born in 'higher' castes. This however, was not endemic to India alone!

Within every culture there exists, at least in vestige, a concept of fatalism. In India, it is caste, elsewhere it could be religion, class, race or even gender, whereby a person's life is determined by his/her birth in a specific context. You can imagine the gossip if a labourer's child as-

pires to become a doctor or engineer or if the municipal worker decided to educate himself/herself and get a better job, say as a clerk in a bank or an accounts office!

The situation in Jesus' time was pretty much like this. He came from a family of labourers: Joseph was a carpenter by profession (Mk 6:3). Mary was probably a housewife like most women of the time, so the family income was limited and unsteady. Jesus, the Bible tells us stayed at home till about the age of thirty (Lk 3:23) and only after that did he embark on his salvific pastoral ministry of preaching the good news of salvation, healing the sick (Mt 4:23), raising the dead (Mt 5:21-43; Lk 7:11-17), exorcising demons (Mk 7:24-30; Lk 11:14-23), and performing miracles (Jn 2:1-11; Mk 6:45-53). Little wonder then, that when he came back home people began to talk. He came from a simple family but when he began to teach in the synagogue with erudition and diction, they were naturally surprised and exclaimed, "How did this come to him? What kind of wisdom has been given to him, that he also performs such miracles?" (Mk 6:2)

The skepticism of the people is quite natural. For thirty years, he ate, played, danced and worked among them and all of a sudden, he begins to wield supernatural power and display uncanny wisdom! They just couldn't get their heads around this fact. "Who is he but the carpenter", they said for they knew not what else to say. The fatalism of the

culture comes to the fore here. It is clearly visible that they did not expect too much from carpenter stock. If the priest's son did things like these then it would have been an entirely different story but no! It wasn't the priest's son but the carpenter's who astonished them with his wisdom and power. One day he was sawing and chiseling wood and the next he was cleansing lepers and raising the dead to life. It was simply fantastic and unthinkable as I imagine for Jesus' townsfolk to accept him and his new status. There is no reason to point fingers at them and accuse them of rejecting God's salvation; aren't we all guilty of stereotyping people or playing down their importance? If it is extremely easy to brand the people of Jesus' time as being people of little faith and wisdom but aren't we quite the same in our own time? Despite professing open mindedness, don't we either vocally or internally judge people and pigeon-hole them?

Jesus rises up to the criticism and challenges the people to change their mindset and attitudes but their apathy was so repulsive that he was shocked at their unbelief (Mk 6:6). He could perform no miracles there, but only healed a few people by laying his hands on them. Jesus confronts our attitudes and mindsets, he invites us to avoid fatalistic views and approach individuals not so much as so and so but as children of God. Such a shift of mindset and perspective is imperative if we are to become inclusive and apostles of peace and unity, for such is the spirit

Quiet Spaces

THE STRENGTH IN OUR WEAKNESS

Morning Meditation of Pope Francis in the Chapel of
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Thursday, 18 June 2015

Weakness, prayer, forgiveness." These three words remind us that without God's help we cannot go forward in life. Pope Francis offered this reflection at Mass in the chapel at Santa Marta.

In the collect prayer of the day's liturgy, he began, "We asked for help from the Lord, who is our strength." We prayed: "In our weakness, we can do nothing without your help". These words express our "awareness that we are weak." It is "this weakness that we all have, after the wound of original sin: we are weak, we slide into sins, we cannot go forward without the Lord's help."

Francis stated, "recognizing and confessing our weakness is truly indispensable." Indeed, "one who thinks he is strong, who thinks he can do it on his own, is at least naïve and, in the end, is a man defeated by so many weaknesses which he carries within himself." Instead, "weakness leads us to ask the Lord for help," since, as recited in the collect prayer, "in our weakness, we can do nothing without your help."

The Pope continued, "we cannot take a step in Christian life without the Lord's help, because we are weak." And "a person who is standing must be careful not to fall because she is weak, also weak in faith." Remember, he said, that father who, after the transfiguration, "brings his son for Jesus to heal him. And Jesus says that all is possible for those who have faith." The father responds: "I have faith, but make it grow, Lord, for I am weak!"

"We all have faith, and we all want to move forward in the Christian life. But if we are not conscious of our weakness we will all end up defeated." This is why, he added, "this prayer is beautiful: 'Lord, I know that in my weakness I can do nothing without your help.'" And "this is today's first word: *weakness*."

The second word is "*prayer*." The Apostles asked Jesus: "teach us to pray as John did with his disciples." He teaches the disciples how to pray and advises them not to be like pagans who waste words. "They think that they will be heard for their many words." Francis repeated the words of the Lord to the disciples: "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Then the Pope referred to a passage from the First Book of Kings: on Mount Carmel "the 400 prophets of Baal shouted and cried aloud; and the Prophet Elijah mocked them a little," saying that perhaps their god "is asleep and doesn't hear you". But "this is how pagans pray." But instead, Jesus recommends: "Don't do this! Pray simply, the Father knows what you need, open your heart before the Father." Do precisely "as that woman who was in the temple of Jerusalem, the mother of Samuel: she asked the Lord for the grace to have a son, and she moved

only her lips." Thus, "the priest who was there watched her," became convinced that she was drunk, scolded her and pushed her away.

However, that was her way of expressing "sorrow before God: she moved only her lips because she couldn't manage to speak, she was asking for a son." Thus, the Pope affirmed, "this is how to pray before the Lord." And "since we know that he is good and knows everything about us and knows what we need," Francis offered, "we begin speaking that word, 'Father,' which is a human word, of course, which gives us life, but only in prayer are we able to say it with the strength of the Holy Spirit."

Before the Gospel the antiphon, taken from the Letter of Paul to the Romans (8:15), reminded us: "you have received the spirit of sonship, through whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" It is the Spirit, the Pontiff explained. And thus "we begin to pray with the strength of the Spirit who prays in us." We need to "pray this way, simply, with the heart open in the presence of God who is Father and knows the things we need before we ask for them." And "this is the second word" for today: prayer.

"There is a condition for praying well," Francis then advised, "which Jesus takes up in the very prayer he teaches to his disciples." And this is the third word: *forgiveness*. The prayer that Jesus teaches us says: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive who trespass against us." And "then Jesus takes up this idea," saying "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

For this reason, the Pope explained, "we can pray well and say 'Father' to God only if our heart is at peace with others, with our brothers and sisters." To one who justifies herself saying: "this person did this to me, this one did this and that to me..." there is only one response: "forgive, forgive as He will forgive you!" And "thus the weakness we have – with the help of God in prayer – becomes strength, for forgiveness is a great strength: one needs to be strong in order to forgive, but this strength is a grace that we have to receive from the Lord because we are weak."

In the Eucharistic celebration, the Pope concluded, "he too makes himself weak for us, he becomes bread: there is the strength. He prays for us. And he forgives us: let us learn from him the strength of trust in God, the strength of prayer and the strength of forgiveness.□

(L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 26, 26 June 2015)

MAN OF MYSTERY

From Fr. Ian Doullton's collection of stories

In every corner of the world and most probably right in your own neighbourhood, there is a man of mystery. Those who believe the same way he does, call him: 'Father.' They wonder sometimes just how he feels about being a priest; everybody, whether they agree with him or not, would like to know.

Once there was a boy who asked his father that question, by way of an answer his father said down and wrote him a letter and he said:

"Dear Tony, I'm writing this letter to you because you asked me a question tonight and I couldn't really answer it. We'd been sitting around the dining table after dinner, you and I and your brother Mike (who is Father Michael now). He had been telling us all about his new parish way up in the North. When he left, you looked at me with a funny expression and asked: 'Dad, what's it like to be a priest?'

"Well, Tony, your brother and I were pretty close and he's told me a lot about the way he feels, so I'm going to pass it on to you in writing. I can make it clearer



July 2018



for myself that way and you'll have this letter to keep (if you want to). A lot of people think a man must be just a bit odd to want to be a priest, but that's not true. I knew one priest who played cricket for his school before he entered the seminary; another played the piano for a symphony orchestra; Father Julian Ferris captained the football team of his college that won the National College Football Championships. The New York City Police Department boasts ten priests who were ex-cops. In England there was even an ex-CEO who became a priest. Yes, Tony, there are guys in the Seminaries now who climbed, hiked the trail to the foothills of the Himalayas and sweated out Jungle Fever in New Guinea and walked into the ruins of Syria. It wasn't a pretty walk and not many pretty boys made it.

Some people think a priest is a fellow who never did like girls and probably hates babies. But he isn't, Tony. He wouldn't be much of a priest if he hated anybody. Let's take one young fellow and see what being a priest meant to him. He's your own brother, when he was fourteen

20

Don Bosco's Madonna

he wasn't any different from you. When he was a little older he saw two paths open: both were good; one led to marriage and children; one led to the priesthood. Either way he had to give up something. Either way he got something big. He certainly wasn't a Cherub with his hair parted in the middle and a heavenly smile on his face. He knew how to play football better than anyone else in his class before he knew what a Latin verb was, and he knew a lot more about football than he ever knew about mathematics.

"One day a priest said to him: 'God needs men; he needs men who are willing to sacrifice everything they want to help him make this world a better place. Anybody can apply; have you ever thought of that Mike?'

Well, your brother thought it over. One day he went to church, knelt down in front of the altar. 'Ok Lord, I've had a lot of fun so far in my life and everything I have, you gave to me. Well, the time has come when I want to be almost as bighearted as you are. I want to give it back. Please make my gift worth its while.' Then he found out what he needed for a vocation. He doesn't remember any mystic call. All he really needed was the desire to go. He had to have the ability, physical, intellectual and spiritual. That was all. He started to wonder why everybody made such a fuss over a vocation.

Mike recalled hearing the announcer on the railway platform announcing the arrival of the 6.05 train in ten minutes.

"When it came time for him to

July 2018

leave home, he certainly didn't feel much like a hero. He walked into every room in the house and touched each wall. We all went to the station with him. You aren't old enough to remember Tony, but you were there, so were the other boys who were going with him and their parents and relatives. We all stood together in a tight little group as though we were on an island with all the other hurrying people flowing past.

On the platform Mike said rather nervously as they waited for the train: "I thought I'd never get ready. I had lain awake all night and then just fell asleep at the last minute." Sean, his companion laughed and wondered why it was he couldn't sleep. Of course he too was nervous and he looked around too and said a little above a whisper into Mike's ear: "I've got a perfectly good ticket here for a trip up to the seminary. The way I feel like right now, I'll sell it cheap; in fact, I'll give it away; any takers?" Everyone heard this and laughed ... a nervous laugh. He went on rather profoundly: "Ha, ha! Oh, no you don't! We're all in this together." His father overheard him say: "It might be the gate of heaven, but where in the world did St. Peter get a voice like that?" He turned to his



21

Don Bosco's Madonna

mother who put a gentle hand on his shoulder and whispered: 'I'll pray for you.' He assured her that he would be alright and then he said: 'Oh, please don't cry. This is a time to be happy.' Looking up he saw me: 'Goodbye, dad.' I gave him a gentle blow to his arm as I tried to brave a smile: 'Look, you do your best, or I'll break your neck. Goodbye son.' The rest of the gang got on the train that was hooting a signal for departure. They were waving from the windows and the door while my wife and I stood by with the other parents and I heard Emily say: 'May God bless them, everyone.'

His father went on: "It was hard alright, harder than he expected. Your brother used to lay awake many a night wondering if he wasn't crazy for even trying. There was a sound of a music system a way off in the distance and sometimes when the wind was just right he could hear it. He heard the dance tunes he used to love. He used to say, over and over to himself: 'Listen pal, there are 40,000 priests, they made it and a couple of them must be dumber than I am.' You see, Tony, he wanted to be a priest and that was enough.

He read about saints, going into chapel and getting a warm feeling of consolation, of happiness from their prayers. He never remembered anything like that happening to him but somehow, he always found the strength to keep going; to stick it out. At first all the other fellas were duds or drips, not one of them was worth knowing - he thought. He had to work, scrub floors, pots and pans, peel potatoes, cook and serve the meals. His studies were tough, very tough; philosophy, and sci-

ence and languages. You don't know what those things are yet, Tony but you will, one of these days. He didn't get nights off for a show and he saw us only on Visiting Sundays. He used to play basketball, volleyball and football and then after a while things became quite a bit better. The boys weren't all duds and drips; they suddenly seemed to become pretty good guys. The music system on silent nights when the wind was just right, didn't sound half as it used to, in fact it was rather tinny and very far away - as if it came from another world entirely, a world that wasn't nearly as warm and wonderful as this.

The years flew past, thirteen of them. Buddies he used to run around with; girls he used to date before he entered the seminary were getting married and having children. He studied the Bible and a little bit of Hebrew and the Sacraments and Grace and the Church History; at nights he and the others talked about very weighty and important matters, very weighty indeed. They discussed the latest scores of the visiting football team and then they listened to the latest news about the war in the Middle East. That was the only time they were free, before lights out.

Studies never got much easier and going down to the same kind of meals and getting up before the sun and going to chapel for prayer or spiritual reading and sitting at the desks studying; they never were easy, but somehow, they were very worthwhile.

Then Tony, one day, not so



long ago, your brother went to the Cathedral with some 20 others like himself. Some of them good-looking, some of them homely, some smart, some slow, some good talkers, some good athletes, some rich and some poor; all of them knelt before the altar. Somewhere along in the ordination I forget exactly where, the bishop: 'You are a priest forever.' You are a priest forever!

Then your brother's hands were anointed with oil and wrapped with a linen cloth and he went back and knelt down at his place. At last the ordination was over and then together with the other 20 odd companions he gave us his first blessing. 'May Almighty God bless you: In the name of the Father...' You are a priest forever! I had tears in our eyes. And darned if that big lug of a brother of yours didn't start to blubber a bit right there at the altar, but it was alright because the same thing happened to all the other young priests but none of them were really sad. They were all just so happy; so grateful and their

hearts were so full that they just couldn't help themselves. The next day he said his first Mass and as he said the words: **This is my body**...he shook like a leaf and he was scared! Tony, that was God he held in his hands; that was God he was calling down from heaven! In the months to come he sat in the Confessional and people came to him and told him their poor sins and their failures. He counseled them kindly; he raised his hand over all of them and said: "I absolve you of all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." When your brother walks into the youth group in the Parish Hall the youngsters say: 'Hello Father,' 'Hi Father.' Old men nod their heads and old ladies smile and say a prayer in their hearts that he'll be a good priest all the days of his life. At night before he climbs into bed he gets down on his knees and he says: 'Thanks Lord, thanks. Help me to be worthy of all this you've given me.'

So, that's the way it is Tony. The priesthood is not for everybody but a priest gets the most wonderful gift given to a man on the face of this earth at least that's the way your brother feels about it. I'm just quoting him.

I think that's what it's like to be a priest, Tony. I hope it's clear to you now. It took me nearly thirteen years - all the time your brother was in the Seminary - to figure it out. You'll understand in time. And you if ever come to me and say: 'Dad, I think I'll try the seminary too.'

'Then Tony, I'll understand.' □

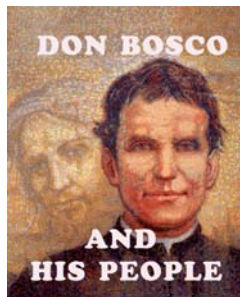
THE TENACITY OF DON BOSCO

Natale Cerrito
CHAPTER III (Ed.)

Born and died in Turin (1810-1861), Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, was, of course, a multi-faceted and baffling personality, the subject of high praise and downright condemnation because he was not always cautious but his work was performed with indomitable tenacity.

We don't dare to express here our judgment, however insignificant, on Cavour. Rather we wish to reflect on his tenacity. Massari recounts that one day Cavour was talking to Dominic Cerruti on the freedom of the Church. "Either he was tired or because he had already spoken a lot or because some of his difficulties seemed very serious, he did not go into discussing them in particular, but took a pen and placed it on the table and then he said: 'I see a straight line up to this point; if in the middle of a journey I reach an insurmountable obstacle on my path, I will not approach it head on but I will not turn back. I will look left and right, not being able to follow the straight line I shall take a detour and not let the obstacle hit me in the face.'

It is interesting to note that Don Bosco's biographer attributes to the saint words of a similar tenor: "Whenever I am faced with difficulties, even grave ones, I do what a hiker does in finding his trail blocked off. If I cannot shove the obstacle out of the way, I either go over it or around it. In some cases, I



even temporarily lay that project aside so as not to lose time, and I tackle something else until things settle down and difficulties are smoothed away."¹

Don Bosco possessed the typical Piedmontese tenacity of Cavour. It was already identifiable when he was a youngster. The difficulties he encountered when he began his studies were disconcerting. A less tenacious boy would have ended up getting discouraged, as if after that first elementary school in Capriglio there was nothing more to do. The family was very poor; his step-brother was very hostile. John endured it but never gave up. Compelled to hire himself out as a farm-hand to the Moglia farmstead, he did not forget his studies and was able to take lessons first from the vicar Fr. Cortino and then from Fr. Moglia. On returning to Becchi he had that providential meeting with Fr. Calosso and began studying in a more systematic manner, dividing his time between his books and the hoe so as not to hurt Anthony's feelings. Then came the happy

months in Morialdo but they were very brief. They ended with the sudden death of his benefactor. But John did not give up. The decade from 1826-1835 was a test of fire that he overcame with precocious tenacity. In October 1835 he was finally able to enter the seminary.

Another proof of Don Bosco's tenacity was seen in Turin after three years at the Convitto. The obstacles in the two-year period 1844-1846 were such that his friends, seeing him so determined to continue, began to doubt his sanity. The nascent Oratory was evicted from the premises of the Hospital of the Marchioness Barolo and then from the cemetery of St. Peter in Chains and then from the Moretta house and finally from the field of the Filippi brothers. Don Bosco did not give up. So, in April 1846 he still found a place to conduct his Oratory: a poor shed in the Valdocco area.

Let him tell us himself: "There was a long shed; one side of its roof leaned against the wall of the house, and the other ended about three feet above the ground. If it were necessary, it could be used as a woodshed, but not much else. To get into it I had to bend my head so as not to bump against the ceiling. [...] I ran right back to my boys. I gathered them round me and began to shout in a loud voice, 'Great news, my sons! We've got a place for our Oratory, a more reliable one than we've had till now. Sunday, next Sunday, we'll go to our new Oratory, which is over there in Pinardi's house.' And I pointed out the place.² No one would ever evict him from there again.

Further confirmation of Don Bosco's character is the founda-

tion of the Salesian Society. During the years 1854-1859 the idea of a religious society was maturing in his mind. This society would give stability to his works. But a law of May 29, 1855 decreed the suppression of religious communities and the forfeiture of their properties. Don Bosco did not lose heart; he studied a way of getting around that law.

The first official act of the Salesian Society dates back to December 18, 1859, its final approval on May 1, 1869 and that of the Constitutions on April 3, 1874: a journey of fifteen years. They were hectic years, of talks and exhausting journeys in order to overcome the obstacles that gradually accumulated. He managed to receive from the Minister Rattazzi himself the suggestion on how to adapt his institute to meet the new needs of the times; he resorted to Rome to obtain the approval of the Church. Don Bosco's desire for autonomy was a spanner in the works; so many questions, so many reasons to investigate him prior to the approval of the Congregation and its Rules. People, who until then had admired him as the apostle of abandoned youth of Turin began to consider him stubborn and presumptuous.

In a confidential letter dated March 14, 1868 to Cardinal A. Quaglia, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the Archbishop of Turin, Monsignor Alexander Riccardi wrote, among other things: "Indeed, I see it as a betrayal of my episcopal duty if I were to endorse a congregation which, approved in its present status, could only bring very grave harm to the universal Church, to our diocese and to our clergy."³ In-

formed of such correspondence, who would not throw up his arms? But Don Bosco went forward carrying his cross.

On that journey to Rome in 1874 (the eighth) after three months of the Way of the Cross, dispelling doubts regarding the Society and the Constitutions, they were finally approved. Pius IX in the audience of April 8, of that year welcomed him with the words: "This time it's all over!" Don Bosco simply replied: "I'm happy, Holy Father."⁵ We would imagine those words on the lips of Don Bosco. But that was not so. Writing from Rome to Fr. Rua, with his usual calm he gave him the good news before all the other business and then he added, as if nothing had happened: "Our Constitutions have been definitively approved ...but don't make any noise about it."⁴

When Don Bosco put his hand to an enterprise, in one could stop him midway. Once a decision was made, he went on undeterred and no one could sway his intentions. One day he confided to John Cagliero, the future Salesian cardinal: "I never shrink from any undertaking which I know is good and necessary, no matter what the difficulties."⁵

Those who wanted to prevent him from publishing his *Catholic Readings* were aware of this. Bans and threats were futile. Even attacks on his life were of no avail. At all costs he was to be silenced but he went on his way quietly.

He had received a notice from the minister Farini when, in 1860 a sectarian press campaign was launched against Don Bosco and

his work which alerted the government authorities. Don Bosco, concerned about the possible consequences, repeatedly asked for an audience with the Minister of the Interior, without obtaining it. Then he walked around the obstacle but contacting the Secretary General of the ministry Cav. Silvio Spaventa. He was finally given an appointment with the Cavalier at 11am in July 14. At the appointed time he went to the ministry on *via Palatina*. Spaventa, perhaps regretting having given his word, informed him that he was very busy and that it would be difficult to have the meeting.

- I'll wait! replied Don Bosco, "Till the Secretary will see me." Determined to see the Secretary, he stayed on till six that evening, unruffled, despite the heat, hunger and thirst. During those seven hours a steady flow of all sorts of people were ushered into Chevalier Spaventa's office, but Don Bosco's turn never came. Late in the afternoon, after having waited for seven hours, the Chevalier, ashamed for having treated a citizen in that manner, and a priest no less, admitted him in. The conversation at first was difficult and the audience was scheduled for the following day. It was a frank meeting in which Don Bosco justified his work highlighting the groundlessness of the accusations and the arbitrariness of the persecutions. The dispute ended there. The tenacity of Don Bosco won out once more!⁶

The decades-long controversy between Don Bosco and the Archbishop of Turin, Monsignor Lorenzo Gastaldi, his onetime

friend and benefactor is well known. A learned, austere, and authoritarian person, the archbishop came to doubt the humility and the obedience of Don Bosco and his motive for founding a religious society. We find this curious judgment in a letter of the Jesuit priest Fr. Luigi Testa a good religious who tried to mediate between the two. He went to a Fr. Felice Caprignano asking him what he should do but Caprignano was a close associate of Gastaldi and known to Don Bosco. Testa asked him to use his good offices to mediate but he objected saying: "You realize that we are dealing with *two saints*, adamant in their stands" and then he interrupted and said: "You mean stubborn, like all Piedmontese."⁷

He had a point. The bishop of Southwark met Don Bosco in Rome in May 1887. He wanted to dissuade him from opening a house in London, but he didn't succeed. On his return to the diocese one of his priests who went to meet him, congratulated him for having been able to deal with a saint.

- With a saint? ... And who might that be?

- With Fr. John Bosco of Turin!
- Him, a saint? A saint he may be, but after his own fashion. He is so obstinate in his ideas...⁷

The judgement of Fr. Antonio Cinzano, who knew Don Bosco from his youth and who gave him the religious habit in 1835, was more humorous: "Don Bosco like all saints was always individualistic and headstrong."⁸

In 1889, an elderly priest, who, first as a boy, then as a cleric, spent many years at the Oratory,

gave us his impressions of Don Bosco in writing: "Don Bosco was an enlightened judge of his contemporaries and his times, a priest of firm character, unwavering purpose, unerring foresight, incomparable tact and boundless trust in Divine Providence. Don Bosco brought to reality - almost magically - every plan he conceived, despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles believing that God would provide. Apparently, the word "impossible" was unknown to him as to Napoleon, though latter's aims and means were quite different [...]. If I may be allowed the comparison, I would say that the slight sway in his walk suggested that good friend of the farmer - the ox - whose meekness, strength and constancy in pulling the plow through rough and rocky soul he seemed to imitate."⁹

With suavity in his manner and inexhaustible patience, but also with indomitable tenacity, "he was able to overcome all the obstacles that life set in his path."¹⁰ The supernatural virtues and gifts of the Spirit, evident in his works did not erase but strengthened the qualities that he inherited from his people.□

(Footnotes)

¹ EBM 7, 271

² MO 256-267

³ BM 10, 789

⁴ E 1193

⁵ EBM 6, 384

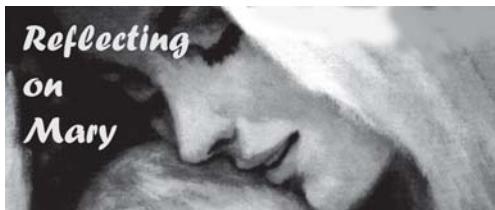
⁶ Cf EBM 6, 380-382

⁷ Cf EBM 13, 264

⁸ EBM 4, 199

⁹ EBM 6, 2

¹⁰ EBM 1, 72



MARIAN DEVOTION OF YOUNGSTERS

by Bernardina Do Nascimento

Little Atheists Growing Up

The sociologist Franco Garelli recently published a book dedicated to the Faith of Youngsters entitled: *Little Atheists Grow Up*. It contains updated researched data on the faith of young Europeans. It turns out that in France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium, 65 percent of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 declare themselves either atheist or agnostic; 37 percent of young Spaniards profess to be atheists followed by 28 percent of Italians and then the Portuguese, 20 percent. Crossing the Atlantic, 18 percent of young Americans claim to be either atheistic or agnostic. Despite these percentages, many today consider possessing a religious faith plausible because even in today's advanced society fundamental questions of human existence, the meaning of life and death, the reality of evil and suffering are not resolved. Reason doesn't seem to have answers for everything. Even today, faith frees man to accept life and death and the meaning of pain and suffering.

July 2018

MARY'S ROLE

In all religions the role of a maternal figure is fundamental. Even among modern youth the "mother" continues to be the fulcrum of existence. Where motherly love is expressed problems might not be eliminated but a point of resolution is within reach. Where it is lacking, the emptiness that ensues reveals infinite problems of all kinds. In the Christian faith the desire to know the Mother increases only if one enters into friendship with the Son. It is not possible to be devotees of Mary without being in love with Jesus. With this perspective in mind, Mary's life becomes the paradigm of believing in Christ. You might not believe in the Madonna but you love her like the Madonna.

THE FAITH OF MARY

The witness of faith that the young woman of Nazareth offers us is very modern and very timely. Mary's belief is free from all forms of mysticism. Being the mother of the Son of God, she is not wrapped in ecstatic contemplation "of the fruit of her womb." Her relationship with Jesus is like

28

Don Bosco's Madonna

that of any mother. She is not ecstatic but surprised, frightened, fatigued, restless with misunderstandings, pain, despair and death. Her existence is not flooded with the miraculous except those instances that are the fruit of love and absolute dedication, relying on rolled up sleeves and enlightened by the certain awareness of always being under the mantle of Providence. In the context of the family of Nazareth, the Virgin does not assume a passive, quietist, resigned and contemplative attitude. She does not relinquish her responsibility, pulling up the oars with a sterile whimper; rather, she is active, demanding, reactive, not resigned and always seeing certainty. Her historical figure is not mystical, but prophetic. That is how she should be perceived in our devotion even today.

WHAT ABOUT APPARITIONS?

The apparitions cannot distort the prophetic piety of the Madonna. The fundamental experience of prophecy is characterized by an enormous will to live; by a constant desire for affirmation; to be strengthened and exalted by lively feelings; captivated by the tasks and virtues and a passionate

desire and aspiration to realize one's vocation. Marian messages and appeals must not be reduced to a sterile denunciation of evil and sin or a vague and ethereal call to conversion. Rather, Marian apparitions are an invitation to Faith in the Son who, from poverty, sin and the depths of despair will always lead us to a firm will to be converted to the true faith, goodness, and an unshakable trust steadfast as rock. Lourdes is not famous for its "miraculous," water but for the hope that it illuminates in the darkness of the universe of sickness and suffering. Medjugorje is famous not for its solar phenomena but because many find there the desire to bring order back to their lives. For Don Bosco, the Madonna becomes his "partner" not because of the miracles she worked but through her continual presence punctuated with dreams, protection, assistance and enlightenment in his search for benefactors to support the daring realization of his projects. Her presence is not that of Pinocchio's fairy but that of a mother; just the kind of mother that young people expect close to them so that they don't lose their way in today's "fluid" society. □



July 2018

29

Don Bosco's Madonna

CHINA

The next Catholic synod on young people has already begun, and it has begun in China. In the archdiocese of Taiyuan, in the province of Shanxi, two thousand boys and girls of the region paraded through the streets of the city last Thursday in a procession, carrying large icons of modern saints: Mother Teresa, John Paul II and St. Gregory Mary Grassi, the apostolic vicar killed in 1900 in the Boxer Rebellion (and canonized by Pope Wojtyla). This is how "the Year of young people" began, launched by the local Church with the declared intention of "walking together with the Universal Church, according to Pope Francis' indications, towards the 15th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops".

The "special" times of Pope Wojtyla

In 2004, when John Paul II announced his intention to proclaim the Year of the Eucharist, the reports by *Fides*, an agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies, based in Rome, attested that the Pope's decision was already made known in Chinese churches by the Sunday Masses of 13th June. Four months later, at the beginning of the special time dedicated towards the sacrament of Communion, in the masses of the Beijing Parishes the priests explain the reasons for the Year of the Eucharist by commenting the Apostolic Letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*. A few months later, on the death of John Paul II, in Beijing alone, thousands of faithful participate in the solemn mass of suffrage for

the Polish Pope, along with dozens of priests and hundreds of seminarians.

Tenacity of a contrasted affection

In the reigning Pope's years, the Chinese Catholics' desire to savor communion with the universal Church in following the ordinary Magisterium of the Pontiff has found fulfillment beyond any expectation during the Holy Year of Mercy. With multitudes of faithful crossing the holy doors of cathedrals. And droves of bishops circulating pastoral letters so as to re-launch the words of Pope Francis on mercy. Even in the Chinese accounts of the Jubilee of Mercy, the condition of catholicism in today's popular China emerges in some of its traits. And one recognizes the taste of savouring communion with the Pope and with the universal Church. A clear sign that the contrasts suffered in the past decades have only made the Chinese Catholics' affection towards the Successor of Peter stronger and more poignant. Thus, without fanfare and without having to show off any "alignment" with real or presumed Vatican curia consortiums, China treasures the daily ecclesial experience of the suggestions found in the "ordinary" magisterium of the bishop of Rome. With all due respect to the invading floggers who continue to overthrow millions of Chinese Catholics with suspicion of cowardice and accusations of doctrinal "surrender", while gaining some visibility.

GIANNI VALENTE, *La Stampa*



walking
with
the Church

Masses on Saturday Evenings

Fr. Edward McNamara

Masses on Saturday Evenings

With respect to the Saturday celebration of Sunday Mass, a reader from Malta asked: "Please refer to your reply on the obligation of Sunday Mass and how to spend the day on Sunday. My wife and daughter work as nurses on a shift basis, and on some Sundays they are obliged to work. I am sure that they are excused in respect to the Sunday obligation. My difficulty is the following. Why does the Catechism of the Catholic Church not mention the situation of those that are required to work on Sunday, at least in that part which you referred to in your reply?"

Canon 1247 states the obligation to assist at Mass on Sundays, while No. 1248 Sub-section 2 says that if assistance at Mass is impossible due to the lack of a minister, or for some other grave cause, then it is recommended that the faithful assist at the Liturgy of the Word if this is celebrated in the parish church.

The sense of canon law is clear. Assistance at Mass is obligatory, except for a "grave cause." The use of the expression "grave cause" indicates that the obligation is a very serious one. For obligations that admit more readily to exceptions, canon law usually uses expressions such as "a just cause."

These norms apply the canonical and moral principle "*ad impossibilia nemo tenetur*" (nobody is obliged to do the impossible): When an objective impossibility exists, then the consequent obligation disappears. For this reason the Church recommends, but does not oblige, that Catholics sanctify Sunday in some other way, such as assisting at a Communion service, following a televised Mass, or praying at home.

An objective impossibility need not always be a dramatic situation. Examples of objective impossibility could be age, illness, the need to care for a sick relation, or seasonal variations which make leaving home a hazardous task. Catholics involved in necessary Sunday occupations such as police, medical personnel and flight attendants are also exempt while on duty.

It is not always easy to judge what is objective, as conditions vary from person to person. However, Catholics should not be too light in assessing their difficulties and should be willing to make reasonable sacrifices to assist at Mass. They should, if possible, attend a Saturday evening Mass, or at least strive to sanctify the Sunday in some other way. □ Zenit.org

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Solitaire Suspense

The police suddenly raided a card game and found four men seated around a table. The policemen took the men one at a time.

"Okay," they said to one man, "you're breaking the law gambling." "Who me?" the man said indignantly. "I just sat down here to talk baseball."

"You're breaking the law gambling here," the policeman said to the second man. "Who me?" the man retorted. "I'm a stranger here myself."

The third man was dragged out and over. "You're playing cards, too," the cops shouted.

"What's all this about cards?" the man yelled. "I'm waiting for the taxi to take me to the train." But the fourth man had a deck of cards in his hand when they brought him in. "Anyhow," the policeman said, "You're playing cards." "Me?" the guy said. "Playing cards? With who?"

Hope and Hopeless

The millionaire's wife hovered at her husband's sickbed, as the doctor conducted his examination. Afterward, in the hall, she asked, "Is there any hope, doctor?"

"That depends," said the physician. "Just what are you hoping for?"

Dedicated Detachment

Mrs. Busybody was pestering the local doctor about the demise of the town's richest man. "You knew him well," she cooed. "How much wealth did he leave?"

"With a tip of his hat, the old doctor replied, "All of it, madam, all of it."

Power-full Gift

A wife in Delhi called her husband, "Last year we sent mother a chair. What do you think we ought to do for her this year?" The husband called back, "Electrify it."

Sense of Touch

"What's the matter?" yelled the pedestrian at the driver.

"Are you blind?"

"Blind? I hit you, didn't I?"

A Higher Power

A stern employer was reprimanding an employee. "Mr. Smith, I understand you've been going over my head!"

"Not that I know of, sir," ventured the timid employee.

"Humph," snorted the boss, "Isn't it true that you've been praying for a raise?"

Carnal Entertainment

A lady was entertaining the small son of a friend. "Are you sure you can cut your own meat, Tommy?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes, thanks," answered the child politely. "I've often had it as tough as this at home."

Nuts of Glass

The employment interviewer asked him, "And where have you recently worked?"

"I was a psychiatrist in a porcelain factory."

"I never heard of such a job," said the interviewer. "What did you do?"

The peculiar gleam in the man's eye was in tune with his answer. "I took care of the cracked pots." □

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.

Thank you, Holy Mother Mary, for granting me innumerable favours, big and small through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys. My admission into IIT, a home of my own, a loving family, a senior job in the Government, an extension after my retirement, a placement for my son and daughter after graduation.

Francisco Dias, Goa

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I want to immensely express my heartfelt gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for the numerous favours received. For the happy marriage of my daughter Tanya Anne who is blessed with numerous accolades in her career. I am also grateful for the gift of a pretty baby girl Chloe Rose, to my elder daughter Cheryl Sara, the baby is already 1^{1/2} years old. For the good health and happiness of all my family members.

Mrs. Margaret Pinto, Goa

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY 2018

Priests and their Pastoral Ministry

That priests, who experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work, may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their brother priests.

HOLY WATER FONT

It is good to remember what we do, perhaps unconsciously, when we enter Church. We dip our fingers into the Holy Water Font. It is a miniature baptismal font. Each time we dip into the water and bless ourselves, we are renewing our baptism. We are reminding ourselves that we belong to God. We are declaring publicly that no one will be allowed to take that identity from us, diminish it or make us feel apologetic.

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

Eternal thanks and praise to the Most Holy Trinity, Our Lady and all the Saints for deliverance from all adversity and for continuing to bless our home. Protect us always. *Glenn D'Souza, Mumbai*

My heartfelt thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and the saints for saving my life when I was trying to board a running bus. I am also grateful to Mother Mary for granting me a very difficult favour. *Mark W. Dodd, Pune*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and all the Saints for granting us 25 years of blissful married life and also for many favours received through their intercession. May they continue to shower their blessings on my family always. *Mrs. Fay Lobo & Mr. Lloyd Lobo*

My sincere thanks to The Divine Mercy and Our Lady for helping my son Glenn to find a good life partner in February 2015. I also thank St. John Bosco and St. Anthony for their help and for granting me many other favours. *Maximino Pereira, Mumbai*

Dear Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio thank you for the gift of a baby girl Gabriella and the normal and safe delivery of my daughter Christina. *Angela Mascarenhas, Pune*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Sts. Dominic Savio and John Bosco for the safe and normal delivery and for the gift of a healthy baby boy Tyler and baby girl Teeegan. Please continue to shower your abundant blessing on them, keep them always under your mantle. *Travis and Josette (Australia)*

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

by Kathleen Easton

One of the most cherished sayings of Our Lord is the statement, 'No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends' In 15:13. Most people interpret this as the ultimate sacrifice of dying to save another person, such as might happen in a war or perhaps during some shared hazardous or very dangerous adventure. I have always thought of it in these terms myself, until recently.

As I age, some of my lifelong friends have less time to spend on social activities than before. One would think that, after a lifetime of working, they would have time and be free to explore and enjoy activities denied them during their working years. For many

people that is so, this is what happens on their retirement. However that is not the case for everyone. A number of these friends of mine have elderly parents or older siblings who require different levels of care. For these, caring for a relative has become a fulltime occupation.

Carers

Although different levels of social services are available in several countries, many people choose to care for their relatives themselves rather than let strangers come into their homes. More often, the dependants themselves refuse to be treated by strangers, leaving their adult children no choice but to do the job. This puts



tremendous strain on the carer, especially if they labour alone. In some families, just one person - usually a woman! - shoulders the burden of caring while other siblings enjoy the carefree life of the older middle-aged. In others, the carer may be an only child with no hope of familial support, meagre or otherwise.

This situation has become so common that few think about what it really means. In a real sense, a full-time carer is sacrificing his or her life for another. They may not die in one glorious act of martyrdom, but they offer up each day, a task which is completely open ended.

There can be few other occupations which demand such sacrifice. Even bringing up children inevitably has an end: the children grow up. But looking after an elderly parent, and especially an older sibling, could stretch on for decades. When their dependent eventually dies, I should imagine that there are those who while they grieve also experience a great sense of relief. Their conscience is clear. Now they are free to travel and to do the things they always wanted to do.

Too late for some

However it may be too late for some, those whose identities have become so absorbed by the one single occupation that they are unable to think of or are in-

capable of doing anything else. A mutual dependency can also develop. In these cases carers themselves become dependent on those they care for and when their dependent dies or is taken from them, their own life becomes empty of purpose and they can feel quite lost. Their sacrifice is rarely remembered by others, yet it is just as meaningful as the hero who sacrifices his or her life to save the life of another.

Unhealthy situation

There are those for whom this level of sacrifice becomes a real burden. Resentment can build, especially against absent siblings if they exist, or even against the dependent person. Sometimes, the dependent may manipulate their younger relative's emotions, making them feel guilty if they do not "run round after them" as the dependant might feel they should.

This situation is not healthy for either party. If it becomes clear that some form of compulsion is involved, the carer should not be slow in seeking assistance from others, including palliative-care professionals, to ease the burden on themselves. Carers also need to be cared for so they should not feel guilty about seeking assistance. Christ does not test us beyond our limits, and those who have sought to share the load with others whilst they themselves are still engaged in caring for someone, may rest easy when their dependent dies. Like those who "do it all", they will feel tremendous peace in the knowledge that they have fulfilled Christ's will in the most selfless and generous way. □

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;
Postal Regn. MH/MR/North East/089/2018-2020
posted at Mumbai Patrika Channel Sorting Office
on 1st & 2nd of every month

Subs: (one copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland Rs. 200p.a.**; **Airmail: Rs 500 p.a.**

MARY WAS THERE

I had a miraculous escape from certain death which I believe was due to the protection of Jesus Christ and the merciful intercession of our Mother Mary: I am a Merchant Marine Officer serving on board Passenger Sailing Ship "Sea Cloud." We had called at the port of Durres in Albania in August 2017. As usual, I visited the small Catholic church there and recited the Rosary in front of a beautiful statue of our Mother Mary. When I was hurrying back on board, at the entrance I found a container truck coming out of the port. As I was crossing the lane, the automatic barrier, which I had not noticed, fell in front of me with high speed just few millimeters away from my nose. I could feel the displaced air of that heavy steel bar on my face before it rested on its holder which was at waist level. If I had been a little quicker, my skull would have been crushed and I would have died on the spot. I do believe that was my Mother's miraculous help that protected me without even a scratch. Security personnel rushed to the site dumbfounded seeing I was still alive. It is inexplicable! My heartfelt thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary.

J.C. Raphael, Kerala

Don Bosco's Madonna, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay.

The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (*Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail*). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors.

Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

Rs 5000/-, 10,000/-, 15,000/- for a boy studying for the priesthood:

But any amount, however small, will be gratefully received.

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

MO/PO/INTL MO/BPO/Bequests, Wills, Perpetual Burses, all favouring Don Bosco's Madonna or Bombay Salesian Society or Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, (Trustee).

Please address all correspondence to:

**Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,
SHRINE OF DON BOSCO'S MADONNA,
Matunga - MUMBAI - 400 019 - INDIA**

Phone/Fax: 91-22- 2414 6320, email: dbmshrine@gmail.com