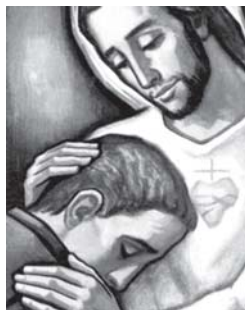


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*Grant that we,  
who glory  
in the Heart  
of your beloved Son  
may be made worthy  
to receive  
an overflowing measure  
of grace  
from that fount  
of heavenly gifts.  
Through our Lord Jesus  
Christ, your Son.*

*From the Mass of  
the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*

## From The Editor's Desk

WHY, WHY, WHY?

*It is not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.* In the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's gospel Jesus notices a man who is blind. His disciples began to speculate that either he or his parents must be particularly sinful to deserve this form of punishment, they decide but Jesus stops them and says that their explanation doesn't quite fit. Perhaps he even talked about how blind most of us are to the marvels he brought as the Son of God. But what he says is pretty simple: *It is not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.*

Why do people suffer and die? Why do babies come into the world with debilitating diseases or disabilities? Why do young people die years before their years... at a more appropriate time? Why do natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods take so many innocent lives? Why is it that someone we love dies unexpectedly? Why?

Perhaps you've been through a tragic circumstance or death of a loved one and had people offer explanations to you about what you've gone through. We hear that it was God's will or that God needed that person in heaven. Do any of those explanations quite 'do the trick'? The question lingers: "What does that mean for us? If we're going to suffer and die, what's the point anyway?"

That's the age-old question the disciples put to Jesus: "So what's the point Jesus?" In effect Jesus tells the disciples that they are to watch and see what happens. He will heal the man born blind but Jesus surely is asking them to watch more than just this one particular moment. *Pay attention to each moment, Jesus may be saying. Watch how suffering and tragedy do not defeat the grace of God. Watch how the very worst things in life get turned into the very best things.*

That's the remarkable thing about the life that Christ reveals. It's not that good things always come to those who are faithful. Rather, as we are faithful we see the things that are so bad get transformed into goodness. When we stumble through difficulty and find our very lives transformed, we pass through things temporal and get a glimpse of things eternal. There we can see a little of God's immeasurable power. Nothing can defeat God from bringing good. The things we know will stop our world completely are somehow healed. We are sustained in our sufferings. And then our suffering becomes part of our experience of healing.

How often have those things that you wished with all your heart would not happen become the experiences where your faith in God has been formed? "Why do these things happen, Jesus?" we might ask like the disciples do. "Don't get stuck in that question" Jesus may be saying, "but watch and see what God does next!" That's the transforming power of the incarnation and resurrection of our Lord.

Watch and see what God does with those things you can't explain.

*Fr. Ian Doulton SDB*

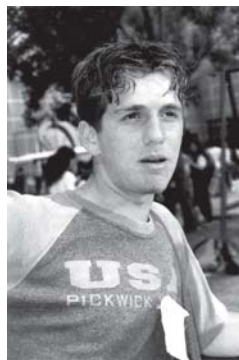
## DEALING WITH THE TEEN YEARS

by Jeanette Brimmer

When our children were teenagers in the nineteen eighties our older friends who had grown children remarked, "We are so glad that we don't have to face bringing up teens in this modern world with all the violent movies, rampant drug use and disrespect for authority." Well it has become more of a challenge than ever to raise teens today!

My husband and I obviously survived our children's tumultuous teen years but at times it was tough and go. During that time we had four teens, since we had our children close together and our home was flooded with the seething hormones of young people whose moods ranged from effervescent joy to the deepest doldrums and to anger...in a matter of minutes. We sent them to a Catholic school which was fairly strict, we impressed on them the need to rely on God in times of trouble, we said Grace before meals and went to Sunday Mass with them as well as on Easter and Christmas. But I think it was easier then, when more families went to church along with their children. Times have changed! And not for the better!

At a youth conference Bishop Paul Andre' DeRocher stated, "Most of our students do not learn religion in our Catholic schools! They are just not interested. They only memorize what they have to learn for an exam."



Maybe that is because many of them do not attend Mass nor do many of their parents or teachers. In the world today cell phones, video games, the internet, and many other distractions seem to take precedence over God, just when we need Him the most.

While teens are slowly maturing into full-fledged adults they need to express themselves in innocuous ways to show their individuality. As parents we allowed them to choose what they wore to school as long as they were modest and stayed within the schools mode of dress. We often discussed topics at the dinner table including politics

and religion which certainly made our family meals anything but boring. Of course, to them we were old people who were unable to comprehend the new world that was their domain. So, often the conversation would be interrupted with exclamations such as "You just don't understand, mom and dad. Things are different now!"

We needed a sense of humor when our daughter would go change her outfit if my husband or I said she looked nice. If her parents liked it, it was obviously a write-off! And we became used to the fact that if we said something was white they would insist it was black...In other words it seemed we could never win!

But the hardest lesson we had to learn was that our kids, despite our efforts to teach them good morals, and responsibility could sometimes let us down. One evening I was entertaining my two much older sisters-one a nun, when two burly policemen knocked on the door. They were accompanied by my two shame faced boys. "They have been drinking underage," the huskier one announced. They got into your older son's beer when he left them alone in his apartment for a short time. No charges will be laid but let this be a warning to them." As soon as they left, my boys slunk upstairs. I returned to my sisters red-faced, but they didn't seem shocked, especially the one with six children who had already weathered the teenage years. "Things like this happen now and then, despite all your efforts," she said soothingly. My sister, the nun, added, "Just

put them in God's hands and all will work out in the end." She had the optimism of someone who had never been a mom, I thought to myself!

Nowadays it's even more difficult to raise teenagers, for there are more external influences to deal with, like the uncensored internet, violent and offensive video games, and slack moral attitudes regarding sex before marriage. The media today promote material values and undermine the morals that many, well-intentioned parents, churches and schools are trying to instill. Today's teens have to deal with more temptations and without a doubt are affected by the scandalous behaviour on the part of some authority figures such as sexual impropriety, lying and cheating to become rich and swindling people out of their hard earned money, with their targets being mainly seniors.

But there are so many uplifting stories about teens that are great examples for their peers. A young man on a talk show one evening spoke about how he brought his three siblings up almost single-handedly since his father had abandoned them and their mother became a drug addict. His courage and intelligence as well as perseverance were praised by viewers who sent him donations so that he could attend college when his brothers and sister were able to be on their own. One teen tutors his peers in math and science for very little money since many of his pupils are not very well off. And several teens in our area

visit people in nursing homes in their spare time while others sing in their church choir.

Sometimes I miss those hectic days jammed with high school concerts, driving lessons and cramming for exams as well as the joyful times when they and their friends filled the house with music and laughter and ceaseless chatter. And I even feel a tinge of nostalgia for their noisy outbursts, their sulky moods and complaints. But most of the time I savour the peace and quiet my husband and I now enjoy. And I feel very grateful that I did not have to work outside the home so I could be there for them. It meant going without a car but it was worth it!

Since recent research tells us that the frontal cortex of the brain in a teenager is not fully developed it means that they are not always able to reason logically, control their impulses all the time or be always capable of making rational decisions. Their parents have to be prepared for occasional impulsive and seemingly irrational behaviour during their growing up years. Adolescents will benefit if parents realize how many pressures their children are under, such as getting good marks, fitting in with their peers, having to put up with bullying at school and on Facebook and on and on. If parents are there to listen to their problems or worries without passing judgment or offering unwanted advice, their children will realize that they have a safe place to go to when their lives get too complicated. Remembering



their own teen years will help parents show more empathy with their teen's difficulties.

If the parents have taught their children about God's love for them and urge them to seek His help during tough times their teens will be armed with trust in a God who loves them unconditionally. Parents can also show their love in many ways by complimenting their teens for little things like keeping their room tidy, being kind by cleaning an elderly neighbour's snow off her drive way for free, or for trying their best at school even though their marks may not always be good.

Teens seem to enjoy arguing about seemingly inconsequential things so parents must try not to rise to the bait every time they are riled. Letting them choose a decent time to come home from a gathering or deciding what bedtime would be reasonable on school nights makes them feel that they have some control in their lives. Then there will also

be less contention in the family.

Of course establishing boundaries for teens is important and if they break them they need to suffer the consequences. For instance if a teen comes home late after curfew they might have to forgo the next event they are invited to. Teens feel more secure when they have rules to obey which can also help when peers try to talk them into unacceptable behaviour. They can blame their parents for having to be home on time or refusing to drink under age.

If parents welcome their teens' friends into their home they can learn about them as well as provide a supervised haven where everyone can have fun. When our kids were teens we often had an extra person or two at the dinner table on weekends and sometimes friends stayed over. One boy who was an aboriginal taught me how to make bannock - a tasty bread fried in a pan. Another pal shared stories about his life on a farm and brought us goat milk to taste, which his family preferred over cow's milk. Another friend jokingly called me his psychiatrist because I would listen to him talk about his problems when he visited after school.

Teenagers can teach us so much. We hone our tolerance skills when we find them being too moody or noisy or clumsy. They teach us to have patience when we are teaching them how to drive the family car or how to cook or organize their homework habits. Telling them we love them and writing them little

notes saying how much they mean to us, helps us strengthen their self-respect and teaches us the power of love.



Parents can never be perfect in raising their children but if they try their best and seek God's guidance they will remember this even if children chose different values to cling to when they grow up. When a couple marries and embarks on raising a family they will hopefully realize there will be good times and sometimes, seemingly insurmountable difficulties. But they must start somewhere. For as Cardinal John Henry Newman once wrote "Nothing would be done at all if a person waited till he could do it so well that no one could find fault with it." This reminds me that the most prominent virtue that we can learn when bringing up teenagers is humility. They will find more faults in us than we'd care to admit and then some more. But hopefully in their twenties they will start actually liking us despite our faults and might even be grateful for the love they received while travelling the scary but exhilarating journey through adolescence and hopefully emerging relatively unscathed. □

## THE STUDENT YOU CAN BE

by Melanie D'Souza

Once again, it's that strange time of the academic year. Depending on your school or college, you're either starting or ending a new academic year or semester - or perhaps you're already bracing up for another summer break from school!

Whatever it is, you're either feeling highly accomplished and/or are ready and refreshed and you are already thinking of ways 'to do much better next time'. Perhaps you're still good about it - I mean, good about starting with a prayer before you begin to swallow large chunks of study material before that evil Exam - or maybe you just forget. Maybe you thank the Lord afterwards instead. In essence, our spiritual habits are as unique as our study habits.

But one thing remains. No matter how consumed we can get with our project deadlines, the seemingly impossible teacher or professor, the dreadful exam series which sometimes can really be just a memory test, know that God takes care of every school or college student, if we let Him. If we offer up that

tired brain - while we still respect the temple of the Holy Spirit through sufficient sleep and healthy food (I am also sometimes guilty of not doing so.)



No matter what your grey-haired folks tell you, remember that this integral part of your life involves a culture of learning that goes beyond academic studying! (Take the hint!) So when the grind of the semester hits rock bottom again, here are some faith habits we can adopt, to spice things up a little bit:

### 1. Music for the senses:

This does work for a select group of subjects. Ever tried playing your favourite band or praise & worship music while practising math and science problems? Or taking a study break to play your

instrument? Keeps you sharp!

2. **Reward yourself:** Find events that help you enjoy the glory of life and to be thankful after a rigorous week of working hard - dances, musical events, picnics or family dinners, whatever. Don't forget your social life.

3. **Use your talents:** This is a tricky one. In a competitive world that makes you think that it is 'every man for himself', think again. Your Lord is really 'our Lord'. So don't be selfish and shy away from helping your peers or mentoring fellow colleagues. If anything, think of it as a personal test of your knowledge of the material and your academic charity!

4. **Be thankful:** Just as you may start your studying ordeal with a prayer, don't forget to thank your Lord for your progress, no matter how sad it may seem. Another way to show that gratitude, although more indirect, is through random acts of kindness, to other students or roommates, your teachers, your parents or whoever is helping your race against time run smoothly.

5. **Get out, relax:** Nature is stimulating. Go for a prayer walk; pray a decade (of the Rosary) as you bolt from class to class. Attend a silent retreat; take some low-profile breaks. Finish off the day's studying with a Rosary/bible study that transitions you into a restful last few hours of the day. And keep to it.

To reiterate, these are the most formative years of our life for reasons that go over and above preparing for a career. Not only



do we learn to have a decent work/study-life balance, but we master finding meaning in the things we do. As students of the Faith, we strive to be less quick to pass judgement in an era of learning that involves meaningful mistakes. Our student role models like St. Dominic Savio show us that. And his teacher Don Bosco reminds us, "The school was not the end; it was rather the instrumental means for improving the way of life."

Meanwhile, save this phenomenal Student prayer from one of our most loved teachers, St. Thomas Aquinas: (Good luck!)

*Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, True Source of light and fountain of wisdom! Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance. Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease in learning, the lucidity to comprehend, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man, living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever. Amen. □*



## SALESIAN SAINTS

### DOROTHEA DE CHOPITEA 1816 - 1891

**D**orothea de Chopitea was born in Santiago, Chile on June 5, 1816 to Don Pedro Nolasco Chopitea and Isabella Villota who had come from Spain and was extremely wealthy. Dorothea was one of the last of eighteen children. Three years later, when Chile gained independence from Spain, Don Pedro brought his family back to Barcelona. Dorothea was a lively and enterprising child and possessed a heart of gold. At 13 she chose Fr. Peter Nardo as her confessor and spiritual director and he would accompany her for the next fifty years, educating her with gentleness yet firmly teaching her to "detach her heart from riches." Throughout her life Dorothea considered her family's wealth not as a source of amusement and dissipation but as a great means bequeathed by the providence of God for the welfare of the poor. Several times Fr. Peter Nardo read to Dorothea the Gospel parable of the rich man and Lazarus. She received a good education and at the recommendation of Fr. Nardo she married an excellent young man Joseph Maria Serra, at the age of 16. He was a merchant and a banker. They lived as a happy and fruitful married couple for 50 years which caused Joseph to exclaim: "Our love grew everyday." From that marriage was born six daughters: Dolores, Anna



Maria, Isabella, Maria Luisa, Carmen and Gesuina who would all grow up to become exemplary mothers. It was not surprising considering that the atmosphere they breathed in that family was one that could have suggested that it was a "religious community."

She was a woman of great faith, a lively piety and arduous penance. Dorothea's main concern was to live truly for God and she nourished her piety on daily Mass, Holy Communion and the Holy Rosary. Each year she took part in a retreat. It was during one of these, that she took the following resolutions: "I will not interrupt meditation or spiritual reading without a serious reason [...] I will make twenty mortifications each day. I will wear a hair shirt for two hours every morning." The virtue that outshone above every other was charity. She gave up all she had in Barcelona which was unlike anyone else in Barcelona

in her day. On her scale of values she placed her love for the poor right on top of her list: "The poor will have my first consideration." She accompanied her husband on his travels, was received by Pope Leo XIII who treated her with great deference. Thirty foundations arose through the generosity of her husband and herself: kindergartens, schools, hospitals, workshops... Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the third successor of Don Bosco, today Blessed, knew her personally and testified: "I have seen with my own eyes the cases of children she had helped, the widows, the elderly, the unemployed and the sick... I heard again and again that the Servant of God performed the most menial tasks for the sick. He spoke, for example, of children affected by repulsive suppurating boils on their heads that she secretly cleaned and maternally medicated. "In whatever she did she trusted her husband's cooperation. When he died she was able to devote herself completely to her favourite mission.

At this time there was born and grew a rapport with the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. She was a woman still full of energy, spending herself for the poor. She wrote to Don Bosco on September 20, 1882 requesting that a college be built on the outskirts of Barcelona. "I would like to start an institute for young workers and the orphans of the suburbs." The college would start in Sarrià and would become the mother-house of Salesians in Spain. Two years later, another house would be started by the daughters of Mary Help of

Christians. In 1886 after repeated invitations, Don Bosco reached Spain and was welcomed by his many admirers. He must have been aware of the achievements of this great benefactor. After the death of Don Bosco it turned into the college of St. Dorothy. In order to buy the house they ran short of 7000 pesetas: the sum she had set aside for her old age but she gave it generously exclaiming: "God wants me to be really poor and I will be." She led a begging campaign on Good Friday 1891 during which she contracted pneumonia and in a space of seven days she was at death's door. On hearing of this Don Rinaldi spent quite a long time at her bedside. He wrote: "During the few days that remained she thought of nothing evil except the poor and her soul. She wished to say something specific to each of her daughters and to bless them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit like the patriarchs of old. While we knelt around her bed Dorothea arose and closing her eyes she softly breathed her last," it April 3, 1891. In 1982 her remains were transferred to the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Sarrià. The revolution of 1936 desecrated and scattered her remains. These were partially re-composed and buried again in the same Shrine.

Dorothea Chopitea was the first Salesian Cooperator to be raised to the honours of the altar, a wife and mother of six daughters. Although she only briefly formed part of the Salesian Family she was one of the very few people Don Bosco addressed as "mamma." □



# Witnesses in & for Our Times

ANTONI GAUDÍ



**A** church is the only thing worthy of representing the soul of a people for religion is the most noble aspect of man," according to Antoni Gaudí, the architect of the Basilica of the Holy Family in Barcelona, Spain.

Antoni Gaudí was born on June 25, 1852, in Reus, in the province of Tarragona, Spain, the fifth child of Francesc Gaudí Serra and Antonia Comet Bertran. He would know the sadness of the premature death of all of his brothers and sister. This succession of deaths most likely explains Gaudí's serious temperament. From childhood, Antoni suffered from rheumatism. This illness constrained him to remain for long periods in the solitude of a small property his family owned in Riudoms, outside Reus. There, his eyes captured the Mediterranean light and the purest images of rocks, plants, and animals; he would always admire nature as a wonderful teacher.

## The sole aim

During the 1868-69 school year, the young man moved to Barcelona to study at the Upper Technical School of Architecture. He received his degree in architecture in 1878.



Gaudí never wrote a book, although he left behind many notes on architecture and decor. Nevertheless, one could say that he was one of the best writers in history – not on paper but in stone. Passionate about aesthetics, he examined the enigma of beauty, and understood that it is because of Beauty (i.e., God Himself) that beautiful things are beautiful. He held that "beauty is the splendor of truth. Without truth, there is no art. Everyone is drawn to splendor—that is why art is universal."

## Awakening hearts

The nineteenth century was, for Spain, a century of profound social upheavals. An anticlerical frenzy raged, and the Church was persecuted. Joseph Bocabella, a bookseller who had a great devotion to Saint Joseph, received the inspiration to build a church consecrated to the Holy Family of Nazareth. Construction began immediately, but soon a serious difference of opinion arose between Bocabella and his architect, and the architect abandoned the project. One night, Bocabella's aunt had a dream – she saw the architect who would make the Holy Family rise from the ground. It was a young man with blue eyes. Attaching no importance to this dream, Joseph went to an architectural firm. Opening the door, he found himself face to face with a young man whose blue eyes gave him a start—for in fact, in Catalonia blue eyes are rare. This young architect was named Gaudí. Although Bocabella's taste tended towards a strict classicism, he came round to Gaudí's loftier ideas without hesitation.

## All have a place

Gaudí designed the church of the Holy Family as a synthesis of Catholic doctrine. In it there would be represented the Creation of the world, the work of man on earth, the passage from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light, the mysteries of the life of Christ, the seven Sacraments, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Beatitudes, death, Purgatory, Final Judgment, Hell, and Heaven ... This "cathedral", about 100 metres in length, would be built in the shape of a Latin cross, with

five naves and three facades. Gaudí's work would be open to everyone: "The portal must be large enough because all have a place in the heart of their Creator."

On the Holy Family's enormous construction site, Gaudí established a wonderful feeling of brotherhood, social security did not yet exist, and workers worked until the end of their lives. In his foresight, the architect established a system of mutual aid by which a small portion of each man's salary was deducted to pay the salary of the worker who fell ill. The workers loved him so much that they called him "Father" when they spoke of him; Gaudí would never know of this. His kindness was proverbial. One day, a sculptor came to the construction site after a sleepless night. The architect told him, "When the body needs sleep, the first thing to do is to rest." "Yes," replied the sculptor, "I will do it when I get home." "No," answered Gaudí, "you must do it now." And the sculptor had to obey. In cooperation with the parish priest, he designed and paid himself for a school to be built for the children of the bricklayers and of other poor families in the neighbourhood. "The poor," he would say, "must always find a welcome in the Church, which is an expression of Christian charity."

## Close to him

One day, during a visit to the hospital, Gaudí, accompanied by a sculptor, was introduced by a Sister to a poor dying man who had no family. The two men stayed beside the ill man, whispering prayers in his ear until he very

peaceably breathed his last. "This dying man's devotion," the architect would say, "made me think that the Holy Family was beside him. I had the idea of representing the scene in the cloister of the church." On the spot, he created the sketch: the Child Jesus in the arms of His Mother leaning over, smiling, to caress the dying man, and Saint Joseph at the foot of the bed contemplating the scene.

#### A step which cost him!

After his young niece's premature death in 1912, followed by the death of his father, Gaudí remarked, "I no longer have anything. Now I can give myself completely to the church of the Holy Family." He lived alone in his house in Park Güell. Then in October 1925, he moved onto the Holy Family construction site. He dressed shabbily. His frugal diet consisted mainly of dried fruit and goat milk with lemon. He poured all his fees into the work of the basilica. One day, as he was waiting under a balcony sheltering himself from the rain, a passer-by mistook him for a real beggar and gave him alms of two pesetas.

Every day, Antoni attended Mass and immersed himself in reading the Gospel, from which he drew the inspiration for the figures which adorn the Holy Family. When he quoted the Gospel, everyone was impressed, even unbelievers. For him, "The man without religion is a mutilated man. To do things well, one must first have love, only then technique." When he guided visitors through the building's construction site, his explanations constituted an excellent exposition of Christian doctrine. A number of

people from different religions, notably Buddhism and, Shintoism, were converted to Catholicism after contact with Gaudí or his work.

#### According to his wish

On the evening of June 7, 1926, about 6 pm, Gaudí was hit by a streetcar as he was leaving the construction site. Taken for a beggar, he was brought to the Hospital of the Holy Cross, run by nuns who served the poor. There he received Extreme Unction. When his true identity became known, the most expert medical teams, offered their help, but it was too late. On June 10, Gaudí died, in poverty just as he had desired, after speaking these last words: "My God, my God!" His funeral was an occasion of great public mourning, where civil and ecclesiastic authorities rubbed shoulders with the most simple people. He was buried in the crypt of "his" Church, in the Chapel of Our Lady of Carmel. The process of his beatification is underway, and many graces have been received through his intercession.

Gaudí never believed he would finish the work himself. "I would not want to finish the construction of the Church. That would not be fitting. Building the Church is a prayer in time. We must leave to future generations the opportunity to praise God in its construction, and using other styles. And he often said, "It is Saint JOSEPH who will finish this Church." In fact, the Holy Family, which Pope Benedict XVI has elevated to a minor basilica, is still unfinished. □

(With contributions from the monks of Saint Joseph de Clairval Abbey)

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

#### It really hurts

*Joey's aunt:* "Won't you have another piece of cake, Joey?"

*Joey (on a visit):* "No thank you!"

*Joey's aunt:* "You seem to be suffering from a loss of appetite."

*Joey:* "It ain't loss of appetite, Auntie. What I'm sufferin' from is politeness."

#### Can't figure it out

*Uncle Bob:* "Well, Frankie, what are you going to do this vacation?"

*Frankie:* "Last year I had mumps and chicken-pox. This year I don't know what I'm going to do."

#### It will serve him better

A gentleman meeting a neighbour's boy who had just come out of a fight on New Year's Day with a fearful black eye, put his hand on the boy's head and said:

"My boy, I pray that you may never fight again, and that you may never receive another black eye."

"That's all right," said the boy.

"You go home and pray over your own kind. I gave him two of 'em."

#### Striving for peace

*Passer-by:* "What are you running for, sonny?"

*Boy:* "I'm trying to keep two fellers from fighting."

*Passer-by:* "Who are the two fellers?"

*Boy:* "Timothy and me."

#### Cherished memories

"Madam," shouted the angry neighbour, "your little Reginald has just thrown a brick through our window-pane!"

"Oh, would you please bring me the brick?" beamed Reginald's

mother. "We're storing all the little remembrances of his childhood in a beautiful showcase."

#### As good a reason as any

"Mamma, I've got a stomach-ache," said Tina aged 6.

"That's because you've been without lunch. Your stomach is empty. You would feel much better if you had something in it." That evening the pastor called, and in the course of conversation remarked that he had been suffering all day with a severe headache. "That's because it's empty," said Tina. "You'd feel much better if you had something in it."

#### Not so precise

*Father* (teaching his little daughter to tell time): "These are the hours - and these are the minutes - and these are the seconds."

*Little girl* (still puzzled): "But where are the jiffies, daddy?"

#### Riches galore

*Visitor:* "And what are you going to do when you grow up, dear?"

*Preeti:* "I'm going to raise mint."

*Visitor:* "Yes, that's where Daddy says all our money comes from."

#### Cause for trouble

*Little Benny* (running home): "Mummy, mummy! There's going to be trouble down at the grocer's."

*Mother:* "Why?"

*Benny:* "Mrs. Shah has got a baby girl."

*Mother:* "So?"

*Benny:* "For the past week Mr. Shah had a sign in his window saying, 'Boy wanted.'" □



## THE HOLY NAME OF GOD

Carlo Broccardo

**T**he Book of Exodus recounts the events that we perhaps all know so well, and why not? Thanks to the many films that have been made of Moses. The facts of the life of Moses lend themselves well to being narrated in one form or another. We are at the end of the book of Genesis when Jacob and his children and their families go down to Egypt. There is a terrible famine in the land of Canaan and they no longer have anything to eat. Thanks to Joseph, Pharaoh gives them a piece of fertile land on which to live.

Then the years pass, generations follow generations one after another and the family of Jacob grows numerous. They become so numerous and strong that the new Pharaoh (who did not know Joseph) decides to reduce the risks drastically. He forces them to work for him as slaves. He passed a law that required midwives to kill all male children as soon as they were born. In short, he made their lives hell. The people then cried to the

Lord and had he did not remain silent. We read from the Book of Exodus: "The sons of Israel groaned under their slavery; they cried to God for help and from their bondage their cry ascended to God. God heard their cry and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites and was aware of their situation (Ex 2, 23-25).

God intervenes to help his people. How? Through Moses, who was saved from the waters



*The Lord gives the Tablets to Moses and Moses shows them to the people. (Fresco by Cosimo Rosselli (1439-1507) Sistine Chapel, Rome*

and who grew up in Pharaoh's court; he then fled into the wilderness, there God commanded him to set his people free. And it was at this point that films unleash their imagination when it comes to showing all the prodigious actions with which Moses tries to convince Pharaoh to let his people free; and the highlight of the ten plagues of Egypt was the final act of liberation: the crossing of the Red Sea.

Thus far, I think we know all the facts. But we are only at the fifteenth chapter of the book of Exodus that is not even half way through the book. What then? The many chapters that follow might be a bit boring, from a narrative point of view, because they speak of Moses going up the mountain and receiving from God the tablets of the Law, not just the Ten Commandments, but the whole series of rules that were to be observed.

Unfortunately, the story does not have a happy ending because while Moses is on the mountain with God, the people with Aaron had built the famous golden calf. Moses came down the mountain and saw the treason that the people had committed and he destroyed the tablets of the Law. Finally we've reached today's passage. He has to go up the mountain once more to receive the Law of God again.

However, before giving him the Law God answers a request of Moses: "Show me your glory" (Ex 33, 18). Before explaining what must be done, God presents himself, revealing his name. He is "merciful," it is difficult to translate this Hebrew word into English which is a word derived

from the noun "uterus" calling it a very profound love that is physical and life-giving. "Compassionate" is synonymous with "patient," saying that it is the attitude of one who loves even though the other is not deserving of that love. "Slow to anger" has a curious Hebrew original, because it would be, possessing "wide nostrils." God is one who, before unleashing his wrath breathes deeply, one who thinks the better of it and forgives. And finally: "abounding in love and faithfulness." The love and faithfulness of God are expressed in a unique merging of two words which define a single concept which means that his love is faithful and he loves us forever as the Psalm repeats: "Eternal is his love for us" (cf. Ps 136).

Notice the beautiful end of today's passage: if this is your name, Moses says to God then I am not afraid to ask you to continue to walk with us. Yes, it is true, we are sinners and we will continue to make mistakes; but the love of God is even greater than sin.

Then before giving the commandments once more, God recalls all that he is and all that he was and will be for his people: one who loves them deeply and forever. A Jewish scholar, Pincas Lapide writes: "People operate thus: first they have a designation, then perform the task and finally they receive a reward. God acts in reverse: first comes the reward, then he performs his task and himself and with unparalleled patience, he still waits for our fulfilment."□



## UNITY DOESN'T COME FROM GLUE

*Notes from the Holy Father's Homily on Thursday 21 May, 2015  
based on John 17:20-26*

Unity in the Church was at the heart of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass on Thursday morning in the chapel at Santa Marta. Reading the day's passage from the Gospel according to John (17:20-26), the Pontiff gave particular emphasis to the comfort which comes from hearing the words: "Father, I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word". These are Jesus' words as He bids farewell to the Apostles. At that moment Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples and he "also prays for us".

Francis pointed out that "Jesus prayed for us at that time, and He continues to do so". In fact, we read in the Gospel: "Father, I pray for these but also for so many others who are yet to come". This seemingly insignificant detail might escape the inattentive reader. However, the Pope emphasized, "Jesus prayed for me", and this "is precisely the source of faith". We can imagine "Jesus before the Father in Heaven", praying for us. And "what does the Father see? His wounds", or rather, the price that Jesus "paid for us".

With this image the Pontiff got right to the heart of his reflection. Indeed, he asked, "what does Jesus ask the Father in this prayer?". Does He say: "I pray that they will have a good life, will have money, will all be happy, will want for nothing?". No, Jesus "prays that they all be one: 'as thou art in me, and I in thee'". At that moment He prays "for our unity. For the unity of his people, for the unity of his Church".

Jesus is well aware, explained Francis, that "the spirit of the world, which is really the spirit of the father of division, is a spirit of divisiveness, of war, of envy, of jealousy". It is also present "in families, even in religious families, even in dioceses, even in the Church as a whole: it is the great temptation". For this reason, "the great prayer of Jesus" is to bear "likeness to" the Father: "as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee", in the "unity which He has with the Father".

Now, one could probably ask: "Father, with this prayer of Jesus, if we want to be faithful, we cannot gossip about each other, can we?". Or: "We cannot label this one as..., this one is this way, that one is...?". And "that other one, who was branded as a revolutionary...?". The Pope responded with a resounding "No". Because, he added, "we have to be one, one single thing, as Jesus and the Father are one single thing". This is precisely "the challenge for all of us Christians: to leave no room for division among us, not letting the spirit of divisiveness, the father of lies enter us". "We must,

the Pope continued, "always seek unity". Naturally, each person "is how he is", but must seek to live in unity: "Has Jesus forgiven you? He forgives everyone".

The Lord prays that we succeed in this. The Pontiff explained: "The Church has such need, so much need of this prayer for unity, not only that of Jesus; we too must join in this prayer". After all, since the very beginning the Church has demonstrated this need: "If we read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles from the beginning", Francis said, "we will see that quarrels, even deceit, begin there. One deceives the other, consider Ananias and Sapphira...". Even in those early years we find divisiveness, personal interests, selfishness. Building unity truly was and is a veritable "struggle".

Above all one needs to realize that we cannot achieve unity on our own: indeed, "it is a grace". That is why, the Pontiff pointed out, "Jesus prays, He prayed that time, He prays for the Church, He prayed for me, for the Church, for me to take this path".

Unity is so important that, the Holy Father noted, "in the passage we have read", this word is repeated "four times within six verses". However, unity "is not assembled with glue". There is no such thing as a "Church built with glue": the Church is made one by the Spirit. Thus, "we have to make room for the Spirit to transform us, as the Father is in the Son, one single thing".

To accomplish this objective, Francis added, Jesus himself gives this advice: "Abide in me". This word too is a grace. Jesus prays: "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am", that they may "behold my glory".

This meditation gave rise to some advice from Pope Francis: to re-read the Gospel of John, Chapter 17, verses 20-26, and consider: "Jesus prays, He prays for me, He prayed and prays for me still. He prays with his wounds, before the Father". He does this "so we may all be one, as He is with the Father, in unity". This "should spur us not to judge", not to do "things that work against unity" and to follow Jesus' advice "to abide in Him in this life so that we may abide with Him in eternity".

These lessons, the Pope concluded, are found in Jesus' discourse during the Last Supper. In the Mass, "we relive" that supper, and Jesus repeats those words to us. Therefore, during the Eucharist, "we leave room so that Jesus' words may enter our hearts and we all may be capable of being witnesses of unity in the Church and of joy in the hope of contemplating the glory to Jesus". □

## GOD SPOKE TO EVAN RICHARDS

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

**T**here was Evan Richards. He was poor and sick; had no work. He prayed to God long and hard, for help and for work. He got neither. Then Evan Richards stood up and he said to God: "I'll never pray to you again! You look down and you see what we're going through and you don't do anything! You're God! You're safe and warm and you're in heaven and what do you know of how we feel?"

And God spoke to Evan Richards: "Show me, Evan Richards what I do not know."

Then Evan Richards went into a city; into the darkness of the slums, along the alleys where people wear the wind for a coat and hunger sits down first at every table. And he said to God: "You own the sky, the land and the sea. You've got the gold of the sun, the silver of the stars. What do you know of the empty stomach, the bare back and the floor for a bed?"



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Then God spoke: "Look yonder, Evan Richards, tell me what you see."

It was getting dark and Evan Richards looked around and said: "I see a hill with the trees bare so it must be winter. There is house under the hill and along the path from the house come a man and a woman. They must be poor by the way they are dressed and they walk tired. They are stopping at the house. The man speaks a few words and points to the woman. Then the door has been slammed in his face. Now the man is taking the woman by the arm and helping her. They are walking around the side of the house where there is a cave in the hill. There they go, creeping into the cave. The cave has no door and I can see inside. This is a stable where cows and donkeys are kept. Now I see the man and the woman again. They're bent over a cattle manger and there on a pile of



straw is a baby."

Then God sent an Angel who came and stood by Evan Richards. The Angel had a book in his hand and he read:

"And Joseph went out of Galilee out of the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David which is called Bethlehem together with Mary his espoused wife who was with child and she brought forth her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn."

But Evan Richards turned away and ran. He went out into the road where the homeless, the refugees stumble in rags and in tears from the terror in the homeland to the loneliness ahead. Then Evan Richards said to God: "You always had heaven for your home. There's no power that can turn you out. What do you know of the despair that comes from standing with nothing but the clothes on your back; with no hope of going home, with nothing ahead but begging in a land of strangers?"

God said: "Look, Evan

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Richards, along this other road. Tell me what you see."

"I see a man trying to hurry a tired donkey. There's a woman riding on the donkey and she's holding a child in her arms. There's fear in the man's face and he keeps looking back over his shoulder."

Then the Angel that God sent from heaven read from the book: "Behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph saying: 'Arise and take the child and his mother and flee into Egypt and remain there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the child to destroy him. So he arose and took the child and his mother by night and fled into Egypt.'"

So Evan Richards went back into the city across the rails, the grime and the clamour of the factories where men raced to feed machines that sucked



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Don Bosco's Madonna



strength from their arms, hope from their hearts and he said to God: "You built the world out of nothing but only a word. It took only one breath to put life into man. What do you know of work, the sweat, the strain?"

Then God said: "Look over here, Evan Richards, and tell me what you see."

"I see a man at a work bench putting down a hammer to take up a saw. He's working on a beam now. Dust is in his hair and sweat on his face. Now he's holding out his hand for the price

of his labour. The hand is calloused and blistered and all it receives is a few pennies." Then the Angel read to Evan from the book: "And when the Sabbath had come Jesus began to teach in the synagogue and many when they heard him were astonished at his doctrine saying: 'where did he get all this?' and 'what is this wisdom that is given to him and what means such miracles wrought by his hand? Is this not the carpenter?'" But Evan Richards turned away and ran.

He searched until he found a hospital and he went in. Every man there breathed in groans and Death sat waiting by this bed and that. Then Evan Richards said to God: "You're a spirit with no flesh that can be torn, no blood to run out. What can you know of man's fear of dying; of the chill that stops the heart; fighting of the body against the



pain that's ripping loose the soul?"

Look out on that hill Evan Richards, and if you can bear it...tell me what you see."

"It's dark out there but I hear a hammering of nails going into wood; now I hear a groan like all the suffering of the world. Now I see...there a hill and a cross; and a man they've fastened to the cross with nails. There's a crowd around with guards to hold them at a distance. A few women are crying. Some of the men look afraid. But the rest are mocking and they laugh to see the man struggling against the nails. "Eli, Eli, lama sabactani!" That is his death cry...hard enough to split the rocks. And that woman by the sight of her grief is his mother." Then the Angel read from the book once again: "But Jesus, Pilate scourged, delivered him to be crucified and the soldiers stripped him; put on him a scarlet cloak and plaiting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head. And when they had mocked him they took the cloak off him and put on him his own garments and led him away to crucify him. And after they had crucified him they divided his garments. And there stood by the cross Mary, his mother. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land but about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' And he again cried out with a loud voice and gave

up his spirit."

Then Evan Richards stood silent but God spoke again: "Tell me now Evan Richards, what I do not know of poverty and of exile, of suffering and death?"

Then Evan Richards looked down and thought awhile and said: "There is still one thing. "What is it?" God was curious. "You've always had the angels to sing your praises and even since you made man you've had saints that lived and died for you. You've never known what it is to have nobody to love you." Then God, with a deep sigh said: "Neither have you, Evan Richards. For, why did my Son who is God lay aside the garment of his glory and take up the rags of flesh like your own except that he might be with you in all things, even death? You have read this in the book for yourself but you have never understood.

Listen...and the Angel went on "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the world and the world was made through him and the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..."

Then Evan Richards fell on his knees before the Lord and through his tears he mumbled: "God, O my God...how could you love me...who am a fool?" "I am Love!" ☐

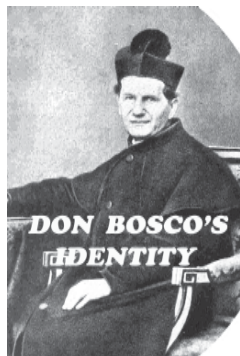
## THE ILLNESSES AND SAINTLY DEATH OF DON BOSCO

by Fr. Elias Dias

**D**on Bosco was seriously and even critically ill numerous times during his life. In a long and fairly detailed passage of the biographical Memoirs, Fr. Lemoyné speaks of Don Bosco's life-long fight against illness. (Biographical Memoirs Vol. 2, pp 380f). Referring to his practice of reading late into the night when a student at Chieri, Don Bosco himself writes without further explanation: "This practice so ruined my health that for some years I seemed to have one foot in the grave" (MO pgl08). But the episodes of 1846 and of 1871, both of which nearly proved fatal, are well documented.

The illness of 1846 climaxed a protracted struggle against the condition characterized by symptoms associated with the respiratory system; weakness, chest pains, blood-stained sputum, intermittent temperatures. This was during the trying time of the wondering oratory. It finally developed into that near-fatal bronchopneumonia which forced him out of Oratory work for several months. The most serious relapse since the illness of 1846 was the Varazze illness of 1871-1872, a period of nearly two months.

After that there were many other relapses in 1875, 1878. In February 1884 there was a serious crisis in Don Bosco's health. The Salesians close to Don Bosco were very alarmed; he himself apparently did not expect to recover. On February 8, he included in his



Spiritual testament list of outstanding benefactors, with messages to be delivered to them after his demise. He was suffering from severe bronchitis, with extreme weakness, chest pains, blood-stained sputum, weakened heart/heartbeat and low pulse. The doctors insisted on bed rest. After the bed rest Don Bosco recovered and visited France. During his stay in Marseilles, on March 25, 1884, he visited a renowned Dr. P.M. Combal who gave him very severe report.

He was prescribed especially vacation from occupational pressures. Don Bosco did follow the advice at the same time due to his nature and responsibilities he could not oblige to put into practice all his prescriptions. However he recovered from the crises and undertook extensive journeys to France and Spain, both to procure funds for the church of the Sacred Heart Rome and also

to strengthen the works in these countries.

Finally on April 20 1887, he made his last journey to Rome for the consecration of the church of Sacred Heart. Pope Leo XIII received him with love and affection. On May 14, 1887 the Church was consecrated. His Eminence Parocchi, Cardinal Vicar of Rome embraced Don Bosco and thanked him for his stupendous work for the church. On that occasion Don Bosco offered Mass at the altar dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. During the mass Don Bosco paused and broke down more than fifteen times.

Don Bosco got back to Turin in a greatly deteriorated condition and the doctors ordered him to rest. In spite of that he attended farewell function for missionaries who were departing for Quito (Ecuador). The sorrows of departure found compensation in the joy of return. Next day Bishop Cagliero arrived from South America. Don Bosco was so pleased to see his beloved son among the others who came to visit him.

Don Bosco's last illness was really no new illness, but a recurrence, with aggravated symptoms and various serious complications, of the same chronic cardiopulmonary condition. Thus, when he returned from his ride on the evening of December 20, 1887, and took to his bed never to leave it again. Don Bosco entered the last and fatal episode of the illness.

The news of Don Bosco's critical illness of December 1887-January 1888 brought thousands of people from near and far to his bedside. Don Bosco's illness and death were neither sudden nor unexpected. He had been suffering from

serious chronic ailments for a long time. The illness plagued him since 1846 even traceable perhaps back to his student days.

One afternoon (22 Dec. 1887) after taking the soup, he joked and said to his secretary, "Viglietti give me some of that iced coffee and make sure it is good and hot."

In his last illness many great personalities visited him. His Eminence Cardinal Alimonda was a regular visitor to Don Bosco. On one occasion Don Bosco said to him "I commend my soul and congregation to your prayers." And he began to cry. With encouraging words His Eminence spoke to him of conforming with the will of God and of trust in God, reminding Don Bosco that he had



*This photograph was taken on the very day of Don Bosco's death. The crucifix and the armchair are still to be seen in the corridor outside his room.*

laboured hard and long in God's service. He said "I have done all I could, now may God's will be done...Your Eminence, I have been through hard times... But the Pope's authority!...I have told Bishop Cagliero here to tell the Holy Father that the Salesians committed to the defence of the Pope's authority..." There was a fiery vehemence in his words. Bishop Cagliero who was standing by the foot of the bed, replied: "Yes my dear Don Bosco rest assured that will deliver your message to the Holy Father." Don Bosco then insisted on having the cardinal's blessing; and on leaving, the cardinal deeply moved, embraced and kissed him once again. (*Cerruti Memoirs*, pg 4 Dec 30,1887FDBM 963 A11)

A few days before his death the Duke of Norfolk called on Don Bosco. The newspapers had been speaking of him as Queen Victoria's envoy to the Pope. On seeing Don Bosco, he knelt at his bedside. The Duke pleaded for the establishment of a Salesian house like the Oratory in London and of mission in China. He accepted messages from Don Bosco for the Holy Father. Then he received Don Bosco's blessings and left.

There was an illusory recovery from sickness of Don Bosco. Doctors believed that his health was improving. At the same time the doctors decided to operate on Don Bosco and remove fleshy growth at the base of the spine. Dr. Vignolo performed the operation. One day Don Bosco said to Father Sala: "See to it that you have a place ready for my burial, because if it is not ready well before I die, I will arrange for the corpse to be put in your room."

Negotiations were in progress at the time to obtain a lot in the Turin cemetery exclusively for the burial of Salesians. Fr. Sala promised Don Bosco that he would attend to the matter in earnest. As a matter of fact Fr. Sala after intense negotiations obtained permission for Don Bosco to be buried at Valsalice. It seemed that Don Bosco had known beforehand that he would soon have to leave this world (*Enria Memoir* page273, FDBM 937 B 8).

Don Bosco's condition was getting progressively worse. He was in great pain. Fr. Sala said to him "Don Bosco, I can see you are in great pain." "Yes" he answered, "but all things pass away and so will the pain." He joined his hands deeply moved and began to pray. After a while Fr. Sala said to him, "it must be a source of great satisfaction for you to know that, after a life of privation and toil, you have established the Salesian work in practically all parts of the world." After a pause he added "Our congregation is under divine guidance and under the protection of Mary Help of Christians. (*Sala Memoirs* pp 6f FDBM 1222 C 10 f).

Throughout day and night he was often delirious. They heard him cry repeatedly: "They are in trouble!" Or "Forward, always forward!" To Bonetti he said: "Tell the boys that I shall be waiting for them in paradise." And to the sisters he said "If the sisters observe the rules they have received, their eternal salvation assured." (*Viglietti Original Cronicle Voll VIII pp33-36 Jan 28, 1888,FDBM1227 D4-6*).

It was January 29, 1888, feast of St. Francis de Sales the patron of

the Salesian Oratory, Don Bosco entered into agony. By Monday morning January 30 his right arm was completely paralyzed. He still spoke occasional words to Fr. Rua, to Bishop Cagliero and to others who were present around him. Then he whispered "May God's will be done in all things," adding repeatedly "Mary, Mary! Pray, pray!" Those were his last words. Throughout the day an uninterrupted procession of people, passed through the room all wanted to kiss his hands last time. Bishop Basilio of Biella, his confessor Fr. Giacomelli, Bishop Cagliero and members of the general council were around him. At about 1:30 AM Tuesday 31 Jan 1888, Don Bosco entered in last agony. All gazed at the face of the saintly father. Seizing the opportunity Fr. Rua turned to Don Bosco and said: "Reverend Father, we are gathered here, a good number of your old sons, priests and brothers and we ask for your blessings Please bless us, and bless also all your children scattered throughout the world and in the mission. Since you cannot move your right arm, I shall rise it for you, and shall pronounce the words of blessings. Follow them in your mind and bless all our Salesians and our young people."

At about 4 A.M his breathing was no longer normal, and beads of perspiration were appearing on his face. Around him the bishop was praying the *Proficiscere* (Depart oh Christian soul). Then without being aware of it, while all kept their eyes fixed on that saintly countenance, Don Bosco fell asleep in the Lord. It

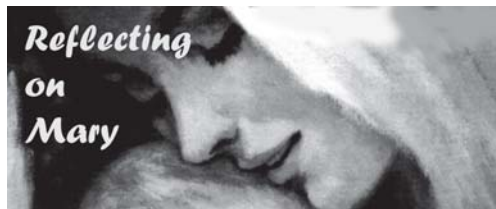
was 4:45 in the morning, January 31, 1888. He seemed asleep but his soul had already flown to heaven to receive in God's beautiful paradise the reward prepared for his heroic virtues and labour.

At his death everyone was crushed with grief. In the midst of sadness Fr Rua said: "We have lost our loving Father on earth but we have gained a powerful protector in heaven. He will intercede before the throne of God and of Mary Most Holy for all his beloved orphaned children here on earth. Let us keep his spirit alive and let us impart it also to our young people. If this is done, God will cause our Father Don Bosco to live among us till the end of the world (*Enria Memoirs* pp 276-282, FDBM 937 B ii-C5)

Don Bosco's "humanity" is revealed at every step of his life. He achieved much in his life time and has received recognition, even to the point of adulation, from all quarters. Here was a man who in utter truthfulness, came to terms with his limitations, humbly acknowledged his helplessness and need, and trustingly gives himself over into the care of others. In return the devoted and unstinted service rendered to Don Bosco by his spiritual sons was remarkably amazing. He died a saintly death by loving and being loved by others. □

(This article is based on Arthur J. Lenti sdb: *Don Bosco's Last Years, His Last Illness and Saintly Death From Eyewitness Accounts. Journal of Salesian Studies* VolV No 2 Fall 1994 pg 23 Institute of Salesian Studies Berkle California USA.)





## MARY OF NAZARETH: A VOCATION STORY

Enrico dal Covolo

All human beings are called: to life, to faith, to grace... In particular, an outstanding quote from the Second Vatican Council says: "Everyone in the Church is called to holiness" (*Lumen Gentium* 5, 39).

It is true that every vocation story is, in some respects, unrepeatable: Mary of Nazareth's story is absolutely unique in the economy of Salvation. Yet Mary of Nazareth remains one of us, and alluding to her can give new vigor to our faith response.

At the moment we shall be content to identify five traits of Mary's vocation as we reflect on the passage of the Annunciation (Luke 1, 26-38).

### 1. The Call of God

"The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin called Mary."

This is step one of the story, the call-election which is absolutely God's initiative. He is the real protagonist of the story. He is the one who sends Gabriel; He fills Mary completely with grace giving her an extraordinary experience. Among other things, this

illuminating meeting determines in her the "moment of truth" about herself. Mary discovers the "handmaid" the servant, radically limited. But her encounter with grace brings her to her knees, because she is filled with the "great things" of God.

Before this divine initiative each of us is called to give our assent in faith. Only in the light of grace will we be able to understand ourselves and decipher the story of our vocation.

### 2. The Person's Response

Before the gratuitous intervention of God, Mary concludes her discernment with a word of total availability "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word." She recognized God and recognized herself, the humble servant in whom grace was doing great things.

Here is the second part of the biblical account of a vocation: the response of the one called.

Mary's response is totally positive: empty of herself, the virgin is full of grace. But the response of the one called may also be negative: think of the rich young man.

He refused to empty himself of his riches, leaving no place for grace, and he went away sad.

Everyday of our lives each of us is given the possibility to respond like Mary or like the rich young man.

### 3. The Mission

"You have found favour with God," the angel goes on, "You will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus."

This is the third step in the story of a vocation: the mission. Mary is called to be a mother, the mother of the Son, and in him the mother of all humankind. But it is a mission that she will discover gradually over the course of her life, fully grasping its meaning only at the foot of Jesus' cross.

In this lies an important lesson for our lives: even we, when we make space in our mission we will discover our more fertile areas on our pilgrimage of faith and like Mary along the way of the Cross.

### 4. The Doubt

"Mary was greatly disturbed with these words... 'How can this be possible?'"

We've taken the fourth step on the story of a vocation: the resistance, the trials, the temptations of the one called. Encountering doubts and questions is normal in biblical vocation stories. Doubts in themselves are neither culpable nor moral deviations but a necessary step in our discernment towards making a response. However, we must ensure that the doubts do not turn into convictions.

But doubt cannot be our last word: permanent doubt ends up

clipping the wings of faith, paralyzing the possibility of a generous response to the Lord.

### 5. God's Response

"Mary, do not be afraid!"

Here finally is the last part of the story: the reassuring response of God. A divine phenomenon appears on our creaturely horizon and usually produces two opposing feelings: fear or love. God presents himself as a fascinating and tremendous mystery, terrible in his majesty and fascinating in his goodness. When God's light first shone on the soul of Augustine he "trembled with love and fear," and even after his contact with God he "shivered and burned" at the same time (*Confessions* 7, 16, 11, 9).

But God himself invites the one called to let love absolutely prevail over fear so that in the spiritual experience of the one called the fear of God gradually dissolves into love till - without any fear - he will contemplate God "face to face." "There is no fear," says John, "because perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

"Mary, do not be afraid!" Do not be afraid, you who hear the call of the Lord: he is with you.

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The story is over... But it is a story that is re-offered to us everyday.

We will return to meditate on each of these five traits that we have identified: God's call, man's response, the mission, doubt and God's reassuring intervention.

We will compare our story to the story of Mary: and if we empty ourselves of our selfishness, we will discover that we too are "full of grace." □

ITALY



May, the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the ideal time for communions and confirmations. Eucharistic rules of etiquette require that particular attention be paid in cases involving divorced parents. Timings for the celebration of the Christian initiation sacraments and the paths that lead up to these vary.

Organisers have to get church decoration, lighting and sound regulation down to a tee.

It is appropriate to use one of the three Eucharistic prayers during the mass held for the little ones and for acclamations to be sung. Confirmation takes place between the ages of 12 and 13. In this ceremony, children confirm the vows that were taken on their behalf by their godparents and parents during their baptism.

The "Don Bosco" Evangelisation and Catechetical Centre (CEC) advises the following: "Parents should get involved in the decisions and preparations for the celebration of the sacrament. They should be guided along a parallel path that is suitable for Christian adults. This is the task of the catechists, but at the beginning, it is

the parish priest who should show a positive attitude towards them to involve them and give them a sense of responsibility. This is a magnificent opportunity for the parish priest and catechists to live out their missionary vocation among the numerous families that often have weak links with the Church community."

Furthermore, "By having more cordial and frequent contact with the Church community, some families that do not have very strong ties with their parish have the opportunity to discover a different side of the Church - one that is more welcoming and friendly." There are user-friendly information sheets available that can help parents learn more about the sacrament.

The parish priest or the catechist should go through these with parents and suggest ways to use them. "Particular attention should be paid to divorced parents who often do not feel at ease for fear of being excluded or pushed away."

Salesians draw attention to John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on the Family (1981), in which he says: "Together with the Synod, I earnestly call upon pastors and the whole community of the faithful to help the divorced, and with solicitous care to make sure that they do not consider themselves as separated from the Church," (Familiaris Consortio 84). "Many parents like to take communion with their children. A separate event should be organised in order to allow them to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation." (La Stampa) □



# walking with the Church

## Fear of dying, Candles, Fortune-Telling, Feasts of Our Lady, Christian Spirituality, Guardian Angels

From St Martin's Messenger, Ireland

**Q.** I have a great fear of dying and the more I hear of sudden and tragic death the more afraid I get. I worry a lot about not being totally prepared to meet my Maker. Can you help me?

**A.** Thank you for your letter. Having read it I can only say to you that you are trying to do all that God asks of you and that you should not worry. God does not ask for perfection in this life. He asks for effort, and persevering effort until the time when He comes to take us to Himself. Always remember that God loves all of us and that He desires our salvation. His son died for the salvation of all people. We are all sinners in one form or another. But God is a loving and forgiving God and readily forgives our sins and failings if we acknowledge our sinfulness and ask His mercy. If we are faithful to prayer and the reception of the Sacraments as you are, then we will experience His saving and healing power. There is no need to be afraid. Trust in His great love for you. The following is a prayer to St. Joseph for a happy death which I recommend to you to say:

*St. Joseph, guide me on my way, Protect my soul from harm. And if this journey ends today, please come with Mary and her Son to take me to your home to stay.*

**Q.** Why do we use lighted candles for Mass?

**A.** The General Instruction about the Mass in the Roman missal tells us that candles are used 'to express devotion or festivity.' Although Christian use of candles was taken over from the Romans who used them for big civic and religious occasions, the practice of candles goes back a long long way. From time immemorial a living flame was recognized as a symbol of life, hope, joy, and everything that mankind considered good and beautiful. Pagans lit lamps at the tombs of their dead. It was an expression of their belief in a vague form of continued existence for their loved ones who had died. Our Easter Candle symbolizes Christ 'the light of the world' and indeed we can look on all lighted candles on or around our altars as pointing to the risen Christ our life, our light and our hope.

**Q.** Can people foretell the future? Can we believe fortune tellers?

**A.** The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives very clear answers to this question in numbers 2115 and 2116 of the Catechism. (2115) God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian

attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future, and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it. Improvidence, however, can constitute a lack of responsibility.

(2116) All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honour, respect and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

**Q. Why are there so many celebrations and feasts of Our Lady throughout the year?**

**A.** Mary is the Mother of God and our mother and it is only right for us, as her children, to show our love for her with these various feasts which are mostly centred on one of her many appearances. Furthermore all of these feasts teach us how to live in response to God's love for us. They challenge us to become what God wants us to be - they are all meant to bring us closer to God. The great shrines and the great feasts of Mary have very clear messages of love, hope, prayer, penance, and forgiveness - which if we practice will bring us closer to God.

**Q. What is Christian Spirituality? Are there different versions of spirituality?**

**A.** In reply to this question I quote from an article written by N. Egan some years ago. This is just a partial extract taken from the article. "The great forms of Spirituality are Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Muslim... The Jewish, Christian and Muslim spiritualities share a lot, especially the belief in a transcendent God, even if they understand God differently. Christian spirituality differs radically from the others in that it sees Christ as the son of God 'the way, the truth and the life.' The Christian's purpose in life is to have the mind of Christ, to see, judge and act as Christ would and to grow closer to the Father. Christian spirituality is a set of beliefs and practices about Christ and God and what it means to live as a human being called to an intimate life with God. It specifies worship of God and a life of prayer by which we achieve that intimacy. It also calls for closeness to our fellow humans. The identifying characteristic of the Christian from the earliest times is that he or she is a lover capable of mercy and forgiveness."

**Q. Do guardian angels exist?**

**A.** Yes. It is a long tradition in the Catholic Church that everyone is given an angel to guard him or her through life. It is our conviction that God has a personal 24-hour-day concern for our good. It is a Catholic doctrine based on evidence from the Bible. One example is found in the words of Jesus when he was discussing little children. In Matthew 18:10 he speaks of 'their angels who look on the face of the Father in Heaven.' □

## 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 sincere thanks to the Holy Trinity and Mother Mary for keeping my daughter safe during her delivery. Thank you Mother Mary for the gift of a grand daughter after nine years of my daughter's marriage, through the recitation of the three Hail Marys.

*Daisy Dias, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for interceding for us and blessing us with a baby girl after nine years of marriage.

*Randell and Tanya Mendes, Goa*

We are deeply humbled and grateful for all the blessings and favours of our Lord and Our Blessed Mother and we continue to trust in your protection.

*Annie & John, Canada*

My grateful thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for answering my prayer and for granting my daughter employment and for being with my son-in-law also during a difficult time.

*V. D'Sa, Mumbai*

Our belated and heartfelt thanks to the Blessed Trinity and Mother Mary for healing my skin allergy and curing me of a viral fever. Please continue to protect us and shower on us your blessings.

*B. Lobo, Vadodara*

Thank you Almighty Father, Holy Spirit, Jesus and Mother Mary for the many favours and blessings bestowed on us and for your constant protection.

*D. Monis, Mangalore*

Thank you and praise and adore you Most Holy Trinity and Mother Mary for all the favours granted us and for keeping us in good health and united to Christ.

*M. D'Souza*

My sincere gratitude to Our Lady and Don Bosco for healing my son who was not well because of a shoulder fracture and frequent body pain and is now healed through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

*Dayaseelan Paulas, Navi Mumbai*

I thank Mamma Mary for saving my great grand daughter Kyra who was 10 months old from a major accident. Her hand was jammed in the cupboard when I inadvertently closed it after I had taken out my keys. I put it in ice and when we examined it there was no fracture. She is back to her usual self.

*Rose Teresa Gonsalves*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for all the numerous blessings bestowed on me and my family through the recitation of the three Hail Marys and for helping my son Shelton secure a good job.

*Royston & Corrine D'Souza, Trichy*

### LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

On January 29, 2017 I had viral fever and it was only after doing a blood test I came to know it was typhoid. The doctor suggested five days of treatment with complete bed rest for the next ten days. I prayed to the Lord Jesus and His mother, Mary to heal me of this sickness. I followed the doctor's treatment for just two days and without any bed rest I resumed my office. The typhoid vanished. A week later my blood test showed no signs of typhoid. All praise to the Lord Jesus and His most Holy Mother. *Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai*  
My belated but heartfelt thanks to the Holy Trinity and Mother Mary Help of Christians for her help and protection over my family all these years. *V. Mascarenhas, Goa*

On October 9, 2015 as I was travelling with a friend on his scooter we were returning from work. I was sitting behind. I found the scooter being pulled to the right side of the road and we landed in a gutter and I was knocked down. My upper jaw was bleeding. I was taken the hospital for stitches. I always wear the scapular and have the rosary around my neck. Our Lady has protected me during such moments. I am sorry I delayed in publishing my thanks.

*Mrs. Immaculate Fernandes,*

*Goa*

Thank you dearest Jesus, loving Mother Mary and all the angels and saints for the gift of a baby girl.

*A Devotee*

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

I was married in the year 2011 and after a lot of difficulty I conceived but the doctors were not confident that I would come to term. During this time the relics of Don Bosco came to Goa and I prayed to the holy saint for the gift of a child. In the following days I had a dream and I conceived a second time. Today I have two sons and I am grateful to Don Bosco for the safe and normal pregnancies and deliveries of both my sons. *Osmand, Sharon, Daniel & Aaron*  
Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the blessings on my family and for continual good health. *Mrs. Glynis Saldanha*  
Thank you Mother Mary and all the saints for arranging the second marriage of Sema and Constancio; for granting a life partner for my niece Roselle and Elroy and my nephew Ruben and Cinusha; and for curing Mercy Tarcedo's leg. *Theresa Soares, Mumbai*  
We thank Our Lady for her protection at an accident which occurred on May 3, 2016 when my daughter-in-law skidded over a speedbreaker. She escaped being run over by a truck that was not far behind. The timely help of a police van assisted and took her to hospital where she received the necessary treatment. We are extremely grateful for Our Lady's protection.

*Maria Lawrence Mascarenhas, Goa*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Holy Family, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio and all the saints for all the favours granted to us. *Ivy J. D'Souza, Vasa*

On September 24, 2016, my grand son Struan met with an accident and was saved. It was a miracle. Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary and St. John Bosco and Dominic Savio, for all your blessings.

*M.M. Pereira, Mumbai*

Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe deliveries of my daughter and my three nieces and for many other favours.

*V. D'Sa, Mumbai*

I prayed that the Lord show me the way to help my son pursue his studies and he received a chance. Our sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for interceding for him and for all the favours received. *Flavia, Mumbai*

I thank the Blessed Trinity, Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of our second child. *Mrs. Cleeta Gonsalves, Mumbai*  
My heartiest thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe and normal delivery of a baby boy and many other favours granted. *B. V. Rodrigues, Goa*

Our sincere thanks to our Heavenly Mother and St. Dominic Savio through their intercession my daughter is alive today after a very difficult delivery. The baby girl had a tumor and was operated three days later. Both were in intensive care. Both are now home and fine.

*Maureen Hobkirk, Australia*

Thank you Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a healthy baby boy at the age of 41. Thank you for protecting me during my pregnancy and for conceiving after 11 years after my first girl.

*Cynthia Xavier D'Mello*

My grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and all the saints for helping my son clear his studies and granting him a work visa and for all the other favours received. *Mrs. & Mr. Peris, Vasa*

## APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JUNE 2017

*National Leaders*

*That national leaders may firmly commit themselves to ending the arms trade, which victimizes so many innocent people.*

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#### MARY WAS THERE

My daughter could not have a baby but God heard my prayer and gave us a beautiful baby girl from the Mother Teresa orphanage in Bombay. The nuns named her MOMI-THA and we christened her second name as Teresa. She was 16 months when she was brought to the UK. She is now 22 years old and she is a kind and loving young lady. She loves Jesus and she made her first Holy Communion when she was 8 years old and then she became an altar server and she still serves and studies very hard. She graduated from UNI. Thanks to Almighty God and Mother Teresa she has a job at an occupational therapy clinic and she works for the old and the young. When she was 9 years old she was hit by a car and was rushed to a hospital. I thank Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints for the favours received. We pray the Rosary always.

**Don Bosco's Madonna**, has developed its present form from *Don Bosco's Madonna* 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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