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**O God,
who prepared
a fit dwelling place
for the Holy Spirit
in the Heart
of the
Blessed Virgin Mary,
graciously grant
that through
her intercession
we may be
a worthy temple
of your glory.**

*From the Proper of
The Immaculate Heart of Mary*

From The Editor's Desk

BEFORE AND AFTER

I sat with a young man I have known for much of his life. But life has been a struggle for him, especially the past few years. Hard and unavoidable circumstances, joined with some personal mistakes and bad judgments, had landed him in situations more difficult than I've ever had to face. We've been out of contact, though I've offered more fervent prayer for him than most anyone else I've known.

He called out of the blue to ask to see me for a 'chat.' He sounded very different. When he arrived I was taken aback by his demeanour. Something powerful had happened to him. He was in a new place. For the first time I saw him accepting what life had dealt him rather than bucking against it. And for the first time, perhaps, he had asked me for help. As a result, the whole world looked different to him. The old anger and hurt were gone. He expressed hope and excitement about the future. "For the first time, I'm making plans," he said, "and if those don't work out, something else will." He recounted an experience of the 'Holy' assuring him that things would be alright. His eyes showed a new sensitivity. He was beginning to come to terms with his life. He seemed to know that life would keep being hard, but accepting that fact helped life suddenly become easier. The future wouldn't be completely free of pain, but I have a sense that this young man will never "unknow" what he had now come to know.

St. Paul had a dramatic before-and-after experience, a time where he came to accept how he had been living and he came to see new possibilities and a warm assurance came over him that things would be alright. His story sure sounded like the one I had heard earlier that afternoon. And Paul's story is really each of our stories. We go through life with various situations and struggles. Then, at some point, we have had enough. We accept that life is what it is. That's usually a very painful experience. And we begin to let go.

St. Paul's story is very much like ours also, in that when we reach that point of acceptance and letting go and a brand new light floods into our lives. Suddenly the anger and resentment lifts and a new sense of hope emerges. We see that the world is actually much kinder than we imagined. There is help for us out there as soon as we see we need some help. How quickly grace pours in from that moment on!

Hope emerges. We see a plan developing and even if this plan doesn't work, something else will. Before and after. We all have those moments. They are remarkable evidence of God's abiding grace, proof that we have been accompanied through all our struggles even when we were totally unaware. God has been with us just waiting for the opening. It doesn't take much of a crack for that light to come into our darkness and change everything.

Accept who you are and what life has given you. Watch grace come in and transform it all. Before and after times reveal that we are dependent on God and that God only is dependable.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

LOVE FORGIVES

by Don Giampaolo Dianin

Every couple would need a notebook writing down the many beautiful things they went through and browsing through it and reading together when times get tough, to find strength to forgive one another and begin again.

In a little drawer each of us keeps a notebook to write down all the little wrongs that have been done to us. Sometimes we manage to forgive him/her, at other times the memories evoke a bit of bitterness which time seems to wipe away but in that notebook everything remains written down and when times get tough we might take it out and present a well-preserved account to the other.

This happens especially among couples because the wrongs and hurts are more painful since the bonds couples share are stronger and unite them for life. There is some truth in the phrase: "I forgive you, but I cannot forget," and it translates as follows: "I forgive you but I cannot erase the scars that your hurt has left." It is not malice, its human nature. It's our way of forgiving which is always fragile and imperfect.

Pope Francis comments on this common experience of all spouses in articles 105-108 of *Amoris Laetitia*, dwelling considerably on the words of St. Paul: "Love keeps no score of offences" (1 Cor. 13:5). The image of the notebook is not mentioned randomly because that's just the meaning of the quotation: "Love does not take note of the hurt experienced."

Let us first try to imagine the

role of the notebook. It is inevitable that we hurt one another. Spousal love goes through small and not so small conflicts. Even when two people love each other they are still very different persons. Often a little conflict goes wild, one's imagination kicks in and works up dramatic scenarios and the reaction is accompanied with harsh words and equally hurtful responses. Often the partner becomes the scapegoat of things that went wrong which may have involved me as well and for which I could have been equally guilty but now it is easier to throw the blame on my partner.

Every couple has their own way of managing conflict: there is the "temporary" style of those who blurt everything out and then make peace; there is the "wintery" style of those who remain silent and go on pouting and sulking for hours, even days; then there is also the "lightning" style of those who make accusations and pass judgments that hurt. The "ironic" style describes those who make cruel and nasty jokes perhaps in the presence of others which are so humiliating. After this everything goes into the notebook; seemingly noted down and ready to be pulled out at the first opportunity.

The Pope suggests another course of action which is not easy

but that's what Word of God addresses to couples. Above all, it is a question of trying to understand the other and his/her mood which could be the result of a weakness or simply exhaustion. Love requires understanding, tolerance and above all a willingness to forgive. Finally, it is a matter of distinguishing the sin from the sinner: "You love me even if in this situation, you've hurt me."

This is possible only if we look at ourselves in the mirror and realize that we are all too fragile, we too may be wrong, we too get nervous, lose our patience and get angry. We should recall the many times we have been forgiven, tolerated and loved. God never ceases to treat us in that manner. His is an unconditional love, not based on our merits, skills or weaknesses. The Pope writes: "We need to pray

with our own past, to accept ourselves, to know how to live with our own limitations and even to forgive ourselves so that we may have the same disposition towards others" (AL 107).

Forgiveness also exists among spouses because there is pain that we inevitably inflict on one another. Forgiveness is necessary because we are immature and we have our limitations, resistances and certain hurtful traits. Forgiveness is necessary because there's always a debt we owe to the other: we have promised one another the gift of life but sometimes we don't live up to it and at times I put your short comings before mine.

Forgiveness is the greatest gift I can give you. In love, to forgive is to embrace the other without taking into account the hurt. It is another way of telling you that you are greater than the wrong



you've done. Indeed, since I know I'm too am weak and I've hurt you so many times, I cannot, not forgive you.

Love keeps no score of wrongs and love should be able to write down the many beautiful things we've lived through in difficult times so that when we read it

will find goodness in our lives and have the strength to forgive each other and move on. Is it possible to forget? It is possible to make it a choice, a decision even if we carry the scars within us. Our forgiveness is always the forgiveness between two human beings, we're not God. □

STAYING TOGETHER

IN THE DAILY RUN OF THINGS

by Maria Chiara Bregolin

St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, describes Love as the supreme gift. God does it to us and through us and through the words of the Apostle he tells us that we can do it to others through forgiveness.

Reading the beautiful reflections of Don Dianin for my part, my mind immediately went back to a betrayal and how difficult it was to forgive him.

I read once that preventing betrayal is possible: just don't get married once, but several times and possibly to someone different each time!

This is not a joke: the person we marry is the one we have around us and s/he changes and in the course of time even our marriage covenant undergoes a change. In order not to lose everything, we need to redefine our goals, rediscover new reasons for loving and for renewing our marriage bonds.

We need the strength and the desire to keep our relationship alive: enthusiasm follows. It comes because this path may get tiring but there are hidden moments of deep union and joy.

I speak of outright betrayal... but might betray someone or be

betrayed by others several times over.

We need a detox every now and then; looking into the eyes of our spouse, letting go of old goals and sharing new ones.

And then don't be afraid to argue and discuss, letting the disappointments and missed opportunities surface. All the pain that has accumulated creates wounds. Even I let you down when I fail to keep our secret agreements; when I don't recognize the values we share; when "for the sake of peace" I let things slide and refuse to face the problems as they come. How many friends around us have separated because they did not want to face confrontations or conflicts in the face of problems? When we don't talk and discuss little concrete things, we distance ourselves, don't we ignore one another? It is at that moment that a "third" person can fill the vacuum that was created. And when that third person enters our sphere of intimacy things get complicated and hurtful and betrayal can turn into an illness which can be lethal for the couple.

Psychotherapists claim that

betrayal is hard to forgive, but not unforgivable. Usually this process requires a lot of time and work... It's the real pain that requires the help of a professional in order that it can be processed.

The couple may be reconciled but I am convinced that it needs more than this: they need to rediscover the enthusiasm, rekindle the passion, to rediscover the desire to invest everything to save their union and to be content to live faithful but unhappy. There are many reasons for betrayal. The pain that is generated does not change: even in the 'fling' there are profound and irreversible consequences both for those who are betrayed but also for those who betray. Because, first of all they fail themselves and then because the love between the man and the woman

require exclusivity, totality and uniqueness.

No one is immune to betrayal. 'It can happen' say most. But you can resist it and prevent it. Taking care of 'us,' our partner and all that binds us and avoiding entry of third parties into our sphere of intimacy. However friendship, collaboration, the 'feeling' for others... must remain. Every bit of energy needs to be directed to one's spouse, doubling one's effort when the other is in trouble, letting him/herself be guided by him/her when we are.

It's not always downhill, but it's still wonderful, that's what marriage is. We admit we are fragile but strong together. Because united we can be the expression of Love as the Supreme Gift. □

He needed me

A nurse escorted a tired, anxious young man to the bed side of an elderly man. "Your son is here," she whispered to the patient. She had to repeat the words several times before the patient's eyes opened. He was heavily sedated because of the pain of his heart attack and he dimly saw the young man standing outside the oxygen tent.

He reached out his hand and the young man tightly wrapped his fingers around it, squeezing a message of encouragement. The nurse brought a chair next to the bedside. All through the night the young man sat holding the old man's hand, and offering gentle words of hope. The dying man said nothing as he held tightly to his son.

As dawn approached, the patient died. The young man placed on the bed the lifeless hand he had been holding, and then he went to notify the nurse. While the nurse did what was necessary, the young man waited. When she had finished her task, the nurse began to say words of sympathy to the young man. But he interrupted her. "Who was that man?" he asked. The startled nurse replied, "I thought he was your father." "No, he was not my father," he answered. "I never saw him before in my life."

"Then why didn't you say something when I took you to him?" asked the nurse. He replied, "I also knew he needed his son, and his son just wasn't here. When I realised he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, I knew how much he needed me..."

Author Unknown

GOD TEACHES US TO DREAM

by Roberta La Daga

Look up on a summer evening and see the sky. See the stars and give yourself a few moments to dream. You've got to learn to stay in that moment. You will surely have noticed that if you allow your eyes to find all the stars you can find so many of them. Allow yourself time to focus and recognize them individually. Earlier those stars were lost in the night sky.

Bright stars take no time to be seen, they almost dominate the darkness but there are those imperceptible little ones which cannot immediately be perceived. They are basically interwoven into the infinity of the firmament and even though you've set your heart on looking at them they easily escape your gaze. Stars teach you to yearn, to desire more. And that's when the scenario changes; you become the sky and you bring yourself into the scene. Full of great and clear desires you are now filled with a host of little ones too, perhaps they were concealed because of some discouragement or they were never really 'read into' for lack of time.

Yet life, to be worthy of the name, sooner or later, asks you to

cross that immensity which bears your name.

I'm sure, as you will have noticed: this set of inconsistencies and dreams are you! That's your story, they speak of your desires; not just yours but even God's.

But how do you recognize those desires that really bear your name and that are endorsed by God? Big deal, of course, this is serious stuff.

The stakes are high. You have to take yourself seriously...God takes you seriously enough to put your life into your hands, trusting you to "write" it.

Desires are impulses that begin in the heart and thanks to the fact that you cling to those genuine dreams you will stir up the courage to risk, to struggle forward once more. Today there is no lack of desire, there's just a lack of courage, to listen to them (the desires) because you don't know whether it's worth something that you will never achieve. But then you'll remain where you are, empty, meaningless, like a bottle of mineral water that's been poured out. It doesn't quench either your thirst or that of anyone else's.



Can you call that life?

So, the first step is to shut up this rush and put it into a drawer and throw away the key and GIVE TIME to yourself.

Exactly, give yourself time to look at who you are. Try tracking down those often unreported dreams which are important indications of what you really want. It is the way we live the details of every day that shows us where we are heading.

And then basically you know if you're happy with your life or not. You cannot bluff yourself all the time, blaming it on unhappiness or misery. And if there's any uneasiness mixed with some dissatisfaction maybe it's because God also knows that you can aim higher; that your stars can shine brighter...I can tell you that.

That's why it's necessary to go ahead and ask a rather serious question: Is what you are choosing today something you really want? Because if it is not, you should stop immediately! You owe yourself the possibility of a broader horizon that you are really aware of!

Yes, I know it's dangerous, it's scary; your back is to the wall and you have to make a choice. Yet you're worth this risk, do you believe that? History is full of mediocre people who preferred to "grow old" rather than make a difference, not

just for others but for themselves.

The thirst for Truth that you carry within you is a flame that moves the heart; it never stops. It doesn't burn out but lights up your path allowing you to be creative with the steps you take and the new trails you blaze.

Your call is to be an explosion of life. You are in the heart of God who dreams about you; now grow up and dream with Him.

The Lord never asks you to throw away everything. He hopes you make use of these longings of your heart like a brick to build a life that is really you.

He is also revealing himself to you to reveal you to yourself!

He loves you for who you are, walking with you into your story and he wants nothing but a full life for you, and do you know why? He wants it so that if you are alive you can bring life around you.

Look inside yourself...discover your sky, scrutinize your mysteries, learn to pause and look, start from a single star. We can dream, we can desire, God has taught us this! □

Another Step...

- Look at the stars and assign a desire to each of them.
- "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 7, 26-38)
- Write these words of a piece of paper and place it in a place you'll see it very often.
- Read some extracts of the sermon of Pope Francis at the Angelus of August 11, 2013.



SALESIAN SAINTS

FRANCIS KESY AND HIS 4 COMPANIONS + 1942

Oratories have always occupied a privileged place in Salesian Ministry. Even in Poznan (Poland) on Wroniecka Street near the Salesian house, in the true Salesian fashion of Don Bosco, paternal care and an active love for the youngsters was practiced to an exceptional degree. Those were the years of Nazi occupation when the German army entered Poznan on September 11, 1939. Every evening, when they had a little free time as they did before the war, the boys gathered in the conference hall of the Salesian Oratory. Among the seniors of the group were the five future martyrs.

Czeslaw Jozwiak was born on September 7, 1919 at Lazyn near Bydgoszcz. His parents Leon and Maria moved to Poznan and lived near the city centre. They had four children, two boys and two girls. During the German occupation Czeslaw worked as a painter and attended high school (1938-39).

Edward Kazmierski was born on October 1, 1919 at Poznan. His father Wincenty was a cobbler and his mother Wladyslawa took care of the home. Edward had five sisters. When he finished primary school his uncle



suggested that work in a shop belonging to a Jew named Jakub Abramowicz.

Edward worked as an apprentice for a month and then, thanks to the help of a Salesian, Wladyslaw Barton, he was able to get a job as a mechanic in a workshop. He remained there even during the war.

Franciszek Kesy was born on November 13, 1920 at Berlin-Wilmersdorf. His parents Stanislaw and Anna came back to Poland in 1921 and settled in Poznan and had five children. His father was a carpenter and worked in a power plant in the city. Franciszek already expressed his desire to enter the Salesian seminary at Lad and was preparing himself as an aspirant. During the German occupation he worked with Czeslaw Jowiak.

Edward Klinik was born on July 21, 1919 at Poznan. He was the son of Wojciech and Anastazja. His father was a mechanic. Edward had an older sister Maria who would become a nun and a brother younger than him, Henryk. During the scholastic year 1936-37 he finished his studies at the Salesian school at Oswiecim and in the year 1938-39 he passed his matriculation examination at the school of Berger in Poznan. During the German occupation he was working in a construction company.

Jarogniew Wojciechowski, was the youngest of five, born on November 5, 1922 at Poznan. His Father Andrzej worked at a drugstore. Being an alcoholic he abandoned the family. Because of this Jarogniew had to give up his studies. His only elder sister Ludoslawa took care of his mother Franciszka and his brother. Jarogniew attended the local trade school and worked as a clerk at a grocery store.

These youngsters, both after school and work, spent their free time at the Salesian Oratory where they actively participated in the various activities. The cultural environment that thrived there taught them several life-lessons and was instrumental in the formation of their characters. They developed a sense of sensitivity and good humour. Their smiles merged with their prayer, games with reflection and above all Don Bosco was looking down on them from heaven. The souls of these lads were being formed through their

personal contact with God. This was the atmosphere in which they grew and developed their faith and their personality. Czeslaw Jozwiak was the president of the Sodality of the Immaculate. Edward Kazmierski and Franciszek Kesy took turns being president of the Sodality of St. John Bosco. These were small associations in the Salesian system of education.

The five of them were all amateurs in the oratory.

During the war the Salesian house on Wroniecka was occupied by several dozen German soldiers who turned the entire building and the church into a military warehouse. Even so, the youngsters continued to gather in the gardens outside the city. We cannot ascertain how these five boys were involved in these movements but it is only known that in September 1940 they were all arrested and accused of belonging to an illegal organization.

They were all taken to the "House of the Soldiers" which because of the cruel interrogation was called "the Gestapo" of Poznan. After 24 hours of interrogation they were transferred to Fortress VII where Edward Klinik probably already was. The boys reached there on September 24 where they were subjected to checks and were stripped of all their personal possessions. The jailers found their rosaries, which they always carried on their persons. They ended up in the trash but it took only a moment's distraction of the guards and the rosaries were

back in their pockets. From then on the rosaries accompanied them during the long months of prison suffering and raised their spirits when they were frustrated.

In November 1940 there was a new transfer to Wronki and to solitary confinement. This was even more painful because these young men were so used to supporting one another; but it was also to be a time of grace.

At Wronki our youngsters celebrated the feast of Christmas by trying to sing songs but they were abruptly stopped by the guards. At Easter they were transferred to a prison in Germany, first in Berlin and then on to Zwickau. It was another year in prison, full of hope but also full of faith. The rhythm of work was broken by the rhythm of prayer which sustained their spirits. They were concerned about their families as we can gather from the famous *gryps* sent in varied ways to their homes. They were like boys everywhere, they were full of plans. They imagined themselves working, living in a little house with a family they would bring up. "We, with Edward, dream of a little house with a garden near the city" was what Franciszek Kesy wrote in a *gryps*. "But what plans we have! If only we are freed, we can roll up our sleeves and get down to work."

Meanwhile, the date of the trial was fixed: "August 10, 1942, at 9 am, before the extraordinary court of Poznan in a separate session at Zwickau. The young men

informed their families of the date and pleaded for a special prayer on that day and they waited. On August 10, they presented themselves to the court. They stood and listened to the indictment. After all, they knew it by heart: the formation of a coup to flush out the German Reich. The process was brief and the consultation within the courtroom was even shorter. The sentence of conviction struck the young men like lightning out of a clear sky: for all five of them it was "the death penalty!" The young oratory boys spent their last 24 days together in the cell of death, No. 3 in the Courthouse in Dresden. They did not give in to despair but prepared themselves for the hour of their death with the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. We can understand their noble sentiments reading passages from the last letters they wrote to their relatives, simple words, full of love; truly a treatise of their heroism.

Their sentences were carried out on August 24, 1942. Posters appeared on the walls of Poznan the next day. They were condemned without due process, without the possibility of defence and in any case, for reasons that do not justify the death penalty. They gave a heroic example of faith and the Christian life. They were members of the Salesian Oratory of Poznan and from there they drew the strength to accept with serenity "the will of God," to the point of forgiving their executioners in the most genuine spirit of the Gospel. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MAXIMUS OF TURIN (+ 420)

The First Bishop of Turin

JUNE 25

DO WHAT CHRIST DID

Hail and salvation to you all! I am Maximus of Turin. I was asked to briefly introduce myself and I gladly accepted, though I am convinced that the best words that a person can pronounce are his actions for the good of others and the greater glory of God. I hope that what I am about to tell you concerning what I did during my life will serve to make you love the Lord God even more and his Son Jesus Christ whom I have known, loved, preached and always served.

Let's start with my name. When you read something about me in your beautiful encyclopedias, I am always called Maximus of Turin. That's why so many in Turin (and elsewhere in Italy) bear the name 'Massimo' in my honour. God bless them all. I will continue to kindly watch over them.

If I'm so called, I owe it to a certain priest named Gennadio who paid me the honour of inserting my name in his book *De Viris Illustribus* (of Illustrious Men) where he calls me Maximus of



Turin and where he speaks humbly and truthfully about me as someone who was well versed in the Scriptures and who loved to preach to the people with some success; but more about this later, because that was the very centre of my life as a bishop.

Gennadio called me Maximus of Turin, but I am not a native of this city; I am called this because I had

the honour of being the first bishop of that city.

He could have also called me Maximus of Vercelli (or the surroundings) where I was born but that was not amenable since there was already Eusebius of Vercelli (283-371 who was a great man, the first bishop of that city and the whole of Piedmont which was just one diocese and he was even one of the first to preach the Gospel in that region.

Eusebius was a native of Sardinia who had studied in Rome and was then sent here to preach. I met him personally and admired him immensely.

It was he, through his words and example, who had a powerful influence on me. I became his disciple. He suffered greatly for his fidelity to the Christian faith, against the Roman emperor. We consider him a real martyr.

Another event that I witnessed as a young man was the martyrdom of three bishops who had preached the Gospel in Northern Italy: their deaths made a huge impression on me and at the same time charged me to zealously follow my faith.

The First Bishop of Turin

I'm sure what interests you most is the period of my episcopal service in the city of Turin from 395 onwards.

The first difficulty I encountered and one which I fought against all my life was the people's strongly-rooted pagan customs and religious rituals. Before preaching the Gospel and even while preaching I had to plough through the soil of their hearts and their mindsets and weed out their pagan traits which were irreconcilable with

Christianity. This was my constant preoccupation. Sometimes this exaggerated my anti-pagan zeal.

Like when I teased them in one of my sermons, rather steeped in sarcasm; during the lunar eclipse they returned to their propitiatory rites. Truthfully, I went a bit too far, but on the other hand I did it all for their spiritual wellbeing!

As I also exaggerated (ladies forgive me!) a certain misogynistic view: as if all our ills came (original sin) from the presence of Eve in Paradise. I was also a child of my time and therefore not exempt from a certain "prejudice." Call it so, I'm not offended.

However, take into account the historical context and the culture of the time. I had to fight a lot against greedy, corrupt officials and against big landowners; their corruption which, as far as I can gather, was a rather bad weed which I believe (unfortunately) is still present today. I was struggling against all those people who had no interest in the common good or to serve the community. It was and continues to be a ruinous moral misfortune (a serious social sin) which brings such harm to one's city.

You might read this in the numerous sermons I preached as bishop that have been handed down. I made three main points: the first was the importance of knowing Holy Scripture. I loved to repeat: "Whoever wants to try to fathom the mystery of Christ cannot come to him except through the mystery of the Gospels." And I pointed out repeatedly that it is the person of Christ who illuminates and gives meaning to all of Scripture and that its

purpose is the moral edification of the Christian for his daily life.

Do what Christ did

I have always firmly maintained that the Word of God is current for each of us. One of the many refrains in my Homilies to the people was: "If you want to be a Christian you have to do what Christ did." He must be our guide and model, always. You might say that my preaching is Christo-centric and you would be right: Christ is at the centre of everything I did and thought. And it must always be so. This was my second point.

The third was the liturgy. I took a lot of care to teach and prepare those who were receiving the sacraments. I insisted especially on the idea, you might call, "existential actualization." I constantly affirmed that the mysteries and the Sacramental action of Christ did not belong only to the past (to my time) they also possess and always will possess the strength and the ability to renew and reinvigorate the Christian at the present moment. So, in my preaching I argued that every liturgical celebration we were celebrating was not a memory, a piece of history, it was a new intervention of God and of Jesus Christ today and therefore a harbinger of new joy, grace and salvation.

As you can read in my Sermon 102, "The miracles of Christ do not fade over time, they invigorate us through grace." And truly, by the power of God, nothing is abolished, nothing is past, but because of its greatness all things are present to us, everything takes place "now."

Don't sin and you will save the city

I want to conclude with another quote from one of my sermons (82, 2): "Cease to sin and the city won't go to ruin." In all the cities of today (not just in Turin) and for all time, we complain that there is too much evil and crime, macro and micro-criminality, and we often blame God for the state of affairs. He is all goodness and eternal; to him alone be the glory and from him alone comes only goodness to-day and always. I recommend to my faithful and to people of all time: We must respect the property of others, avoid greed and avarice, violence and usury, corruption and extortion. In other words I attach great importance to all the virtues you call 'social.'

As you can see, I was not just preaching Christ but also a strongly social dimension and I repeat that to everyone even today: stop living dishonest lives bereft of God and the law, be ready to sacrifice everything.

In short, I preached a very concrete faith, linked to daily life where we must keep in mind the commandment of love of God and our neighbour.

Be, therefore, good Christians and also good citizens, sensitive to our duties (since today you talk too much about your rights, which are much more numerous than in my time).

Live well, do good, respect everyone and everything and you will see that the city will prosper. You will live with less fear and with much more joy with one another. This was what I wished the faithful Turinese of my time and also those of today, naturally extending my wishes to all. Amen.

□ *Mario Scudu*



SURRENDERING TO GOD'S WILL

Ian Pinto, *sdB*

SEARCHING FOR A CURE

In Capernaum, there was an official whose son was sick. We are not told what he was suffering from but it was probably something deadly. The local doctors were unable to diagnose and consequently treat the boy and all their efforts seemed in vain as he approached death's door (Jn 4:46-47). The father being a man of means spared no effort to get the best help available to care for his beloved child but once again the efforts seemed futile and hardly any change was noticeable. He was going to lose his son to sickness.

Most of us will be able to empathize with his situation. Everyone has known suffering of some kind at some point in life; some might be suffering now! We all know that the most important thing is obtaining the cure. People tend to become blind to the process of healing, that is, the cost of treatment, the side-effects, the procedures, the place, the time involved and so on. Why does this happen? The long and short of it is because

suffering makes us desperate, particularly if the sickness is malignant, undetectable or untreatable. Pain is an unpleasant experience and it is natural for us to resist it. Our instinct is to seek pleasure and avoid pain and therefore, the experience or even the sight of pain is unwelcome and triggers a counter-reaction. It sets us on a desperate search for a cure.

THE TEST OF FAITH

Life is not a stroll in the park. The only place perhaps where life ever was like that was probably in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8-9, 15-25) and that's just a myth! After the Fall, Yahweh informs Adam and Eve of their fallen nature. He indicates how their sufferings will increase and how life will become tough for them (Gen 3:16-19). However, he did not leave them without any hope; throughout history He has made His will known to humankind. He has made covenants with us, thereby giving us hope and grace. He has not abandoned us to ourselves. He has not left us orphans (Jn 14:18).

God was aware that under all the bravado that human beings display; under the drive for autonomy and independence, there was still that primeval filial attachment to Him. He was well aware that while the things of the world could satisfy all the other human needs, there was nothing that could satisfy this innermost desire of a person, save for a relationship with Himself. St. Augustine best expressed this intuitive knowledge when he said, "Our hearts were made for you, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you."

While this desire lies within each of us, it's through faith that we can understand, channelize and ultimately fulfil it. Sickness is perhaps the strongest channel God uses to wake us to the reality of our frailty and dependence on Him. Don't get me wrong, I don't think God is the cause of sickness, but He probably allows it to afflict us (Job 1:12).

Sickness is a harsh reality. It drives us to the wall. When we find ourselves at the end of our rope, faith takes over. Suffering is the litmus test of faith and it's sad that many people lose their faith at this crucial juncture. It's probably because they never had any faith in the first place. They put their faith in some kind of magical genie who is moved by a litany of prayers or promises, and grants whatever one desires or asks. This is not faith! Not by a long shot.

Faith is ceding total control to God, trusting that He knows best, even when things don't always work out favourably (Rom 8:28). Jesus saw such faith in the official and brought about God's will for His son by healing him. What's

extraordinary here is not the miraculous healing of the boy, but the faith of the father.

TESTIMONY

The passage goes on to say that the official and his family became believers (Jn 4:53). We might be led to think that the official and his family began to believe in Jesus after the miracle. This is untrue. It was faith that guided them all along. If not for faith, would the official have made the long journey on the slight chance that he might win an audience with Jesus? And after all his troubles, what if Jesus declined? This is what makes this passage stand out as a journey of faith.

Here I would like to raise an important question, the answer of which will determine the type and quality of one's faith: Do we have faith because we achieve a goal or do we achieve the goal because we have faith? Take a moment and allow the question to sink in. Answering this question is vital to our lives and our spirituality.

Faith does not always merit the achievement of our desires. For many of us, more often than not, we do not get what we desire, no matter how strong our faith is. On such occasions, we are likely to feel discouraged and perhaps even disillusioned. We might be tempted to give up our faith. But before we take any further action, let us make it a practice to stop and ask ourselves this question: Why do I believe? Do I believe so that I can get what I want? Or do I believe because I know that God will always give me what's best for me, even if that means the exact opposite of what I think is good for me. This is the testimony of faith we are all called to give. □

Quiet Spaces

ADVICE FOR THE WEEKEND

*Pope Francis' morning meditation in the chapel
of Domus Sanctae Marthae on Friday, 9 June, 2017*

The Holy Father suggested reading the Book of Tobit “this weekend.” It requires only “a quarter of an hour” to read, but it is worth the effort because the Book of Tobit “teaches us how to behave on life’s journey,” both “in the many beautiful moments” and “in the many unpleasant moments.” Pope Francis observed that the reading “also teaches us to discern,” so as not “to allow ourselves to be tricked” by the “fireworks” of life nor by the deepest despair, which should be faced with prayer, patience and hope. He suggested the parallel stories of the two biblical characters of Tobit and Sarah — the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law presented in the Book of Tobit, as an occasion for a personal examination of conscience.

“The Bible is the Word of God, and God speaks to us when we read and meditate on the Bible,” Pope Francis said. He noted that “these days, until tomorrow, the liturgy has us reflect on the Book of Tobit: a narrative that, I would say, is a normal story, just like the stories of many people,” the Pope explained. “Above all, it is the story of two people: Tobit, the father of Tobias, and Sarah.” It is “the story of a father-in-law and a daughter-in-law; a story which makes us reflect,” And “it would be lovely” the Pope suggested, if “each of us were to take up this Book of Tobit today or this weekend; it’s short and can be read in a quarter of an hour — and see how the Lord moves the story forward, leads the life of people forward, even our own”.

“In [the lives of] these two people — Tobit and Sarah, father-in-law and daughter-in-law — there are awful moments, beautiful moments, as in all of life,” the Pope explained. Above all, “there are unpleasant moments: Tobit is persecuted, he is mocked, he is insulted.” He is even “insulted by his own wife,” Anna, who clearly “was not a bad woman; she worked hard to keep the household going because he had gone blind.” It is “an unpleasant moment which cannot be explained,” the Pope continued. And thus both Anna and Sarah were suffering, because “she too had been insulted” and, even though she was still very young, she nevertheless wanted to kill herself. “Both of them, in those terrible moments, asked to die” and Tobit, too, had done the same when he noticed that all had become “black, dark, gloomy”.

“All of us,” affirmed the Pope, “have gone through terrible, intense moments: not as intense as this, but we know what it feels like in a dark moment, in a moment of suffering, in a moment of difficulty.” But “Sarah thinks: ‘if I hang myself, will I not cause my parents to suffer?’ and she stops and prays.” Meanwhile, the Pontiff continued, “Tobit says: ‘this is my life, let us go on,’ and he prays.” This is precisely “the attitude which saves us in terrible situations: prayer,” the Pope explained. And also “patience, because they are both patient in their

own pain.” Tobit and Sarah are also encouraged by “the hope that God hears us and these horrible moments will pass.” And thus, “in moments of sadness,” whether “few or many; in dark times,” we must always remember to turn to “prayer, patience and hope”.

But “there are also beautiful moments” to be found in the story of Tobit and Sarah, the Holy Father observed. In fact, their story “as we have heard, ends well.” Certainly “it is not the ‘happy ending’ of novels, no.” However, it is “a lovely moment: after their suffering, the Lord comes close to them and saves them.” Therefore, the Pope continued, “there are beautiful, authentic moments, like this one: not those moments with counterfeit beauty, that are all artificial, a fireworks display, this is not the beauty of the soul.” And “what do these two do in the beautiful moments? They thank God, opening their heart in a prayer of thanks.”

Tobit’s and Sarah’s attitude inspired Pope Francis to propose a personal examination of conscience. “I ask myself, and us all, this question: do I, in terrible moments and in beautiful moments, know how to discern what is happening in my soul? What is happening in the awful moments, do I know that this is the cross and that there isn’t an explanation and it can also appear to be a curse?” Precisely “in these moments,” the Pope continued, “do I manage to pray, to have patience and to have at least a little hope?” And also: “in the beautiful moments, do I allow joy to enter my heart, but that joy which is from God, that urges me to thank God? Or do I fall into vanity and do I believe that all of life is like this? Today is this way and tomorrow will be different, no?”

It is a fact, the Holy Father maintained, that “in our life journeys between bad times and times of weakness the Lord is always there.” The Pope then continued with an examination of conscience: “Do I know how to discern the Lord’s presence, to turn to him in prayer? And then in praise, in the beautiful moments, the praise of joy, to thank him for what has happened?”

In conclusion, the Pope renewed his earlier recommendation to read the story of Tobit and Sarah “this weekend”, to take the Bible in hand and find the Book of Tobit. “This story teaches us how to behave on life’s journey, with many beautiful moments and with many terrible moments, and it also teaches us to discern.” [...] Pope Francis concluded with the following advice: “as we read this book this weekend, let us ask for the grace to be able to discern what is happening in the bad situations of our life; and how to keep going, and what happens in the beautiful moments, and to not be tricked by vanity.” □

(by L’Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 27, 7 July 2017)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

From Fr. Ian Doullton's collection of stories

Uncle Pete told me this story and it's like all Uncle Pete's stories. It might sound fantastic but if I can tell it to you like Uncle Pete you will believe it. We were sitting in the balcony of our flat, I was reading the paper and he was just smoking away on his pipe. I happened to mention to Uncle Pete how bad conditions were getting around town. I told him that the papers reported that crime was up 25% and juvenile delinquency up 50%. There were twice as many divorces as last year and sadly the funding for the senior citizens' home had dried up. He simply looked up and said: "Well, they have plenty of smooth and level heads on the Council; what do they recommend in their great wisdom?"

I was upset and told him they were out of any suggestions and I added: "They don't even have one new idea."

He smiled and put his pipe down and said: "Maybe they should start looking over at the old ideas. There's one mighty good original plan that's hardly had the dust knocked off it for a long time. Well see, there was a little town over and yonder from here; a pretty little town, but things were mighty bad down there, mighty bad. Everybody was hollering for law and order. They were breaking the rules faster than the town council could write them down. Finally the town council called a special meeting which started at 8 in the evening and at 2 o'clock in the morning they were still sitting there. The air was thick with smoke, bad words. But there was

nothing in the minute book but doodling. Most of the members had nothing left in their heads but an empty feeling. Few of them though were still giving off a little 'hot air.' They kept screaming: "Now, let's vote for something or let's go home." After all that back and forth an elderly Father Francis stood up in the midst of all that noise: "Brother Chairman, I know of a plan." There was a sudden hush and the Chairman said: "Yes, Father...of course, you've just come into the Council and this is your first meeting but if you have something really good to suggest." The priest went on: "This is a very good plan, you see. It was made up by an expert." He didn't raise his voice. The Chairman smiled and simply said: "We've tried a lot of that expert stuff. It's alright until you try to make it work. What did your expert ever run?" The Council all started snickering. One of them raised his voice: "Let's not get fantastic. You better go home and sleep it off."

Father Francis was more firm and he looked straight ahead at the Chairman and went on: "Oh no, gentlemen! You can't sleep this off. The trouble is, you've been sleeping too long that's why everything seems like a nightmare. What I'm talking about is the original order, plan: the one that God drew up when he made us. It's simply the Ten Commandments."

Again the Chairman interjected: "The Ten Commandments? Well, I thought you had something new; that stuff's old fashioned. It was thrown out a couple of hundred

years ago. It doesn't work Father!" "Has the town ever tried it, Mr. Chairman?" asked Father Francis. "Of course not!" came the quick reply. "Then how do you know it won't work?"

Uncle Pete went on: The Council was getting impatient. But Father went on talking, very calmly and quietly and you know? The Council closed their mouths and listened. First time, in I don't know how long, they stopped talking long enough to hear what somebody was saying. And before they went home at 3.30 they had done something more than make a commotion. Yes, they had drawn up a plan. It just took up one page of legal-sized paper one side with double space and a wide margin. In short it said: they were going to enforce the Ten Commandments which left nary a loophole to crawl through nor a hedge to hide behind. When people got over laughing they began to like it. There were just ten things to learn. A crime was called a sin from now on. It wasn't only an offence against society it was an offence against God.

Take the case of Kenneth Parker whose favourite exercise was bending his elbows until the muscles in his arms were stronger than the ones in his head. He poured himself out of a cocktail bar one night as was his custom and started to drive home but... the officer on the beat asked him to pull over. "What's the matter officer, I haven't done anything? You can't arrest me?" The officer could smell the alcohol and said: "My natural common sense tells me you're doing something that should be wrong according to the new law..." Kenneth wasn't in a mood to listen to the new rule

book that the officer took out of his pocket. Riffling through the pages he said: Let's see... frightening pedestrians.' Kenneth didn't think he was doing anything of the kind: "Here we are... look at this...see here, the Fifth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill." Again Kenneth demonstrated: "Well, I never killed anybody. I didn't even hit anybody tonight." "You were driving your car in an intoxicated condition weren't you?" The officer was firm. "I had to drive I was too drunk to walk" said Kenneth still sitting in the car.

The officer turned another few pages: "Yeah, very funny. Subsection 2 article 1: The Fifth Commandment forbids the putting of the life of another in danger namely pedestrians. Subsection 2 article 2: forbids endangering your own life. Have you ever been arrested before?" Kenneth admitted that he was arrested three times last year and for the same offence. Kenneth pleaded: "I had a little too much... but I had only two real accidents. The two pedestrians I hit were only in the hospital a month and the next time I only broke my arm."

The officer went on: "According to appendix I section II: He who willfully, habitually and without cause frequents the occasion of sin is guilty of the sin." Kenneth couldn't believe he was listening to this: "Come again?" The officer explained: "The occasion in your case is being in cocktail bars. Here is your appointment with the judge. Now lock your car buddy and I'll help you find a hotel room so you can sleep this one out."

Uncle Pete hadn't finished his story, he had yet another up his

sleeve: "And then there was the case of K.L. Philips a contractor. He specialized in building quick houses for senior ex-servicemen. Of course the prices were high, but they were houses and many a veteran handed over his savings and bonds and ran up his debt to get his dream house. Two years later the dream turned into a nightmare. The plaster fell off the wall if you sneezed. Doors wouldn't open and windows would close and the foundations floated if there was heavy dew. The complaints got to the Council and the Council got to K.L.

The Chairman addressed the contractor: "Mr. Philips, we've been doing a little checking. Even for those times, your prices were sky high. We understand that the down payment was accompanied by a 'floating charge.' Now, what might that be?"

K.L. was a bit nervous: "Well, er, well, it was something incidental." "A bonus?" suggested the Chairman. K.L. shot back: "I never called it that."

The Chairman wasn't deterred: "There is a law against what you did. The exact statement was buried under a lot of words until a few months ago but it was there." K.L. was so sure that he had covered all his bases and his lawyers had checked every statute and ordinance before he put up the first house. The Chairman only smiled and added: "By some odd and unhappy circumstance they missed the Seventh Commandment: Thou shalt not steal." K.L. was offended and simply said that he hadn't stolen anything in his life nor pointed a gun at anybody to take money.

Again the Chairman kindly

added: "You used your own type of weapon on the desperate need of those people. You really said to those ex-servicemen, 'if you want to get your families out of rented accommodation. If you want save your marriages and even the lives of your children you will have to pay anything I ask.'" K.L. was nervous and simply said: "I didn't force them to buy my houses."

Looking through his notes the Chairman, without looking up simply went on: "You had another way which brings up another point: the material that went into those houses, it was defective in the first place." K.L. said that materials were hard to come by in those days and he added, "Everybody had to take chances with the quality."

This was getting rather awkward but the Chairman ploughed on: "That isn't what you said when you sold the houses. I have here some of the advertisements you ran in all the papers, listen: *'Build the home of a lifetime in Happy Valley honest estimates, best construction, finest materials all yours at lowest cost. We will build you the house your grandchildren will be proud of.'*"

K.L. didn't think anything was wrong with those advertisements. "There's a law against that too Mr. Philips!" the Chairman went on. This surprised the contractor. "A law against lying, yes...the Eighth Commandment says: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; which also means you have no right to injure him by misrepresenting the truth. Did you tell your customers that you were using defective material and poor workmanship?" He was embarrassed because he was put

on the spot: "Am I crazy? I wanted to see the places." While the Chairman closed a file and took another from the pile nearby he said: "It might interest you to know that we also summoned your advertising manager and your copywriter. But there is another thing; the way you got that tract of land in the first place."

K.L. said he had bought it fair and square from Sam Barentz and the Chairman added: "For exactly half of what it was worth. He had to sell because two of his biggest creditors started pressing him when he was short...oddly enough and poor old Sam had to get out from under. Those creditors just happened to be your customers, didn't they? You did a lot of favours for them, I believe." This was a fact that K.L. couldn't deny. "I don't know where you're getting all these laws. I never heard of them." Finally rising from his seat the Chairman added, looking down at K.L. who had his head in his hands: "We got you this time on one called the Tenth Commandment. It says: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods or his land."

Uncle Pete had made his point and added: "Well, things went on like that for years. Everything in the town quieted down and got orderly. There were no murders only a couple of robberies. The sinners, the people who used to be called criminals got discouraged. Every time they got caught, they were asked to amend their lives. No more getting off with a fine and a couple of months in jail and no publicity either. The kids stopped admiring characters who no longer got their pictures in the papers. Well next time the Coun-

cil had a special meeting someone remembered that it was Father Francis who suggested the plan in the first place and so they called on him to make a speech. When the Council came to order he rose and in a soft voice addressed them: "My brothers of the Council you see now how wise and strong are the commandments of the Lord. They order all things for our good. He made these laws when he made us. So that by obeying them we might live together in order and in peace. You know how well you have obeyed, how happy you've become. There is one more thing I would say to you, brothers of the Council: God has made you through the consent of the people, ministers of his law. You share in his power. I counsel you to watch yourselves that you observe most carefully the commandments of God. If you, the ministers of the Law do not respect it, what regard will the people have for the Law? God will be your judge. How you've led the people along his path and according to his commandments."

I was impressed: Well, that's quite a story Uncle Pete, I don't quite know how to take it. But there's one thing I'd like to know. "Just ask me, son" said Uncle Pete kindly.

"What happened to this man?" "That was the last Council he attended after which he left town" said Uncle Pete.

I thought he was from the town. "Oh, no, he said he came originally from some place in the Middle East" said Uncle Pete and he added, "He had a tanned look about him. There was something foreign about his accent too." □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 4

by Michele Molineris

13. The "mastiff" (1833)

"From the time he was very young Don Bosco had to go back and forth from Chieri to Buttigliera and to his fields, several times a week. Because life was tough at his mother's house he brought a few clothes that would last him until Wednesday evening, when he would come back home to re-stock himself to last until - this especially in the summer.

Imagine how many adventures he must have had! In fact he told us about the funny and delightful ones, but also some that made us suppose that he even encountered the devil. I want to tell you about that.

I always imagine that day; it was in the evening when I alone was accompanying Don Bosco who had raised us on stories of his experiences. We met an old man with a hoe on his shoulder. He stopped in front of a mulberry tree which stood on the side just off the path on which he was walking. He stopped and asked that good man if the crop had been good, if the cocoons would bring him good fortune after the recent storm.

Then he said to us: "I was your age, when after the harvest I was coming from Chieri on a Wednesday on my way home. I had just reached there, where we now find ourselves and I saw a huge dog running in my direction.

It seemed he was heading directly for me. He kept his head down and so was his tail. His eyes

were blazing - and I feared he was angry. As I looked up I wanted to avoid him trying to double the distance between us, but he was almost on me. What was I to do? Fleeing was no longer possible because he ran even faster. He reached me shortly so I had to decide what to do without wasting time. He stopped in front of a mulberry tree which stood on an embankment off the footpath.

After conversing with that good man asking him if it had been a good harvest, if it had been profitable, if a storm had recently come by, Don Bosco stopped once more just near the mulberry tree and said: - I was your age when, after the harvest I was returning from Chieri one Wednesday evening on my way home. I had just reached here when I found a huge dog running along the path.

It seemed to be coming right at me. His head was down and his tail was down; his eyes were full of fire and I feared he was angry. I looked around for a way to escape him, quickening my pace, but he was already very near. What was I to do? It was impossible to flee. So I ran as fast as I could as the space between him and I grew slimmer. There was no time; I needed to take a quick decision.

I looked around and saw a row of mulberry trees; the ones you see there. So I skipped over the ditch and, like a squirrel I climbed up. It was a wonder I managed it so quickly. Because he was at my feet and attempted to bite at my shoe which had slipped off.

He did more; two or three

times he trotted around the tree trying to use his claws to try to climb up but after two or three attempts he fell back, growling and barking in a frightful manner. I clung on crouched in fear waiting for the formidable animal to leave. But that was not about to happen. It was like telling this wall to move.

Finally, after I had recommended myself to my guardian angel and to the Madonna...I saw in the distance a man like you on his way to the countryside to work. I shouted to him as loud as I could to call the dog away. I wondered if he had heard my screams; but I feared that since I was hidden by the leaves he might not have heard me. After stopping to find who had called out to him, he went about his business.

Meanwhile, it was getting late and my imagination seemed to hasten it. I prayed more fervently to Our Lady and called out more loudly for her help. At that the same man stopped and turned back, and as if he had seen me he came straight to the foot of the mulberry tree where I had clung on pale as death.

The huge mastiff did not move but only turned and bared his teeth towards the man waiting to see what he would do. After the peasant had tried to scare him away with stones and shouts he resolutely raised his hoe and the beast grunted in fear and slunk away.

We stopped to look at the enemy fleeing; me in the tree that had been my refuge and the man with his hoe. The dog turned around once or twice but then with his head down and his tail

between his legs left the area.

Eventually I descended and took back my shoe which without realizing I had always carried in my hands and went on my way.

The man could not make up his mind about the mastiff; he muttered between his teeth something about the dog. Who knows who the dog belonged to! Who knows what harm he could have done? Would it be alright to put me on his trail? Yes, yes, he thought I should go after him, so saying he went on his way paying little attention to the thanks I heaped on him for having done me that great service.

I didn't want to say anything to anyone that evening. I came home with a fever, so I told my mother, who watched me all night.

Ah! Said Don Bosco, if I was grey as I am now, that would have been great. Every time I pass that way even now, I remember that incident with some anguish; the danger into which I had stumbled, without wanting to. I look to where the dog came out from and I can almost see him running towards me as he did that evening.

Even the old man, who was listening to us, seemed to be taken by the adventure and when we were about to part ways he wanted to kiss Don Bosco's hand and ask for his blessing and recommend himself to his prayers.

Meanwhile one of us said: It must have been the devil.

- Shut up! Said another, I hope no one hears you! And what has the devil to do with it? (Francesia, *Don Bosco and his Autumnal Walks*, pg 24)

Priest yes, friar no! (1834)

In Don Bosco's memoirs mention is made of the fact that he took the entrance examination for the Franciscan novitiate. "As Easter drew near, which in 1834 fell on March 30 I applied for admission to the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins."

I told no one of my intention. Yet one fine day, while awaiting their reply, a schoolmate, Eugene Nicco, with whom I had a nodding acquaintance, asked me: "So, you've decided to become a Franciscan?" I looked at him in amazement: 'Who told you?' He showed me a letter. 'They've written to tell me that you're expected in Turin, to take the examination together with me, because I, too, have decided to join that Order.' So I reported to the Convent of St. Mary of the Angels in Turin and took the examination. I was accepted in the middle of April.

The Franciscan Fathers [archives in Chieri] still contain the following document, of which they kindly gave us a copy: "Anno 1834 receptus fuit in conventum. *Mariae Angelorum Ord. Reformat. St. Francisci juvenis Joannes Bosco...* In the year 1834 was accepted at the Convent of St. Mary of the Angels of the Order of the Friars Minor of St. Francis. [John Bosco, a young man born in Castelnuovo d'Asli, baptized on August 17, 1815 and confirmed, endowed with desirable and necessary qualities, was accepted in the monastery of St. Mary of the Angels of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (in Chieri) on April 18, 1834. This information is gathered from Volume II of the records of young applicants who were accepted into the Order from the year 1638 to the year 1838.



Franciscan Monastery, Chieri

I was all ready to enter the monastery at Chieri known as the *Convento della Pace*, when a few days before, I had a very strange dream. I seemed to see a multitude of these friars, clad in threadbare habits, all dashing about helter-skelter. One of them came up to me and said: 'You are looking for peace, but you will not find it here. See what goes on! God is preparing another place, another harvest for you.'

"I wanted to question the friar, but I was awakened by a loud noise and saw nothing more. I told my spiritual director this dream but he totally ignored it. 'In such matters,' he insisted, 'everyone must follow his own inclinations, not the advice of others.' (EBM 1, 226-227)

15. Always on the subject of exams (1834)

The end of a term is synonymous with evaluations and ex-

aminations. Frequently at such times there is much trepidation due to insufficient preparation caused by lightheadedness and sometimes a lack of material. At this time it is natural to seek the assistance of someone precisely with the view that the situation may be resolved in a positive way. Here I am not speaking of the usual requests accompanied by financial emoluments, I'm speaking of the intercession of the saints who in this field could use their influence and bring about some unexpected solutions which could serve as a rescue in such a situation.

Moreover, a saint in such circumstances may have had his moment of fame, but his past may not justify invocation and/or intercession except for certain isolated incidents that the biographer - out of concern - may have collected but which may not be really enlightening. However, what happened in Don Bosco's case was that in addition to his natural ability to study which was anything but normal he was also credited with an above average and extraordinary academic performance which to this day earns the admiration of all. In fact, it was enough for him to read something once for him to retain it and communicate it with the precision of a sound recording produced by a tape recorder. So it was with sermons and conversations to which he might have added some descriptions of place and circumstances as appendices. This left even those least inclined to admit certain exceptions to common rules, perplexed.

It happened when John's third year of high school was drawing

to a close in August 1834, a Professor Lanteri came from Turin for the final examination. John went to see him at once.

"What can I do for you, my friend?" Lanteri asked him. "Just one thing: give me good grades!"

"Well, I must say you are very frank!" Lanteri said with a smile.

"Of course," replied John. "I'm a good friend of Professor Gozzani's." "Is that so? Then we'll be friends too!" said Lanteri.

"I would 'like that,'" John said, "but you should know that Professor Gozzani did give me good grades."

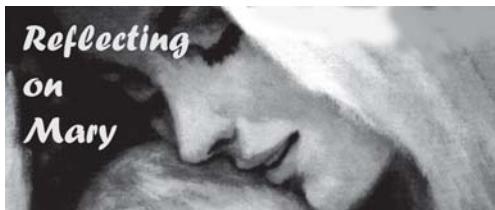
On the day of the examination John was very well prepared. He replied brilliantly to the professor's questions on Thucydides. Then Lanteri picked up a volume of Cicero. "What shall we select from Cicero?" he asked. "Whatever you like, sir," replied John. Lanteri opened the book at random and his eyes fell on the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.

"How about translating this?" "If you want me to, and if it's all right with you, I'm ready to recite them from memory." "Really?"

Without further ado, John began with the title and continued from there. Professor Lanteri was astounded.

"That's enough!" he cried after a while. "Let's shake hands. Now I really want to be your friend." And he passed on to speak affably of matters totally extraneous to the examinations.

So, there is much more that is needed for students to recommend themselves for good grades in exams. It may be that you need to change your idea of conduct and application. (EBM 1, 245) □



PRAYER TO MARY (MEDITATIONS ON THE HAIL MARY)

by Roberta Forà

Mother of God

As soon as Mary entered Zachariah's house and greeted Elizabeth who was pregnant, the elderly lady, filled with the Holy Spirit exclaimed:

"What a great thing this is for me! Why does the Mother of my Lord come to visit me? As soon as I heard your greeting the child in me moved with joy. Blessed are you for having trusted the Lord and believed that He could do for you what he said he would" (Cf. Luke 1, 43-45)

At that moment Elizabeth demonstrated a deep faith. She did not welcome her cousin with the normal gesture of affection that befits a relative she combined love with a deep respect because she recognized Mary as the "Mother of God."

Mary: the Mother of Christ, because God chose her to give birth to his beloved Son, but also as the caring, affectionate and extraordinary mother for every creature in this world.

It is such a beautiful and comforting thought to become aware of this extraordinary and precious presence so close to each of us.

June 2019

Mary, Mother of God and our mother, from heaven mysteriously watches over our life's journey, praying and interceding for us with the Father.

As our days go by one by one at such a hectic pace it is sometimes easy for us to forget this wonderful 'gift' from God because of which we fail to even greet Mary.

We have to try to perceive the Madonna more as a 'mother' because probably the most common mistake we make is to consider her as a 'divine creature' worthy of respect and devotion and for that reason she seems too far from our human experience, detached from the day-to-day events of our life.

Don Bosco taught us to call her our 'helper' and 'the Help of Christians.' That means that in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit we have Mary's help as we encounter the many obstacles we face along life's paths, the little and large crosses of everyday life.

Her 'help' is great and powerful because she is the one being very close to God. She is able to make of her life a constant hymn

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Don Bosco's Madonna

of praise to Him, abandoning herself completely to His Will, always obedient to the mysterious plan that the Lord unfolded in her life.

We pray you O Lord, to help us discover Mary's maternal presence in our human lives.

Knowing that we have a "Mother in Heaven" protecting and comforting us easily stimulates and urges us not to succumb easily to the difficulties and temptations that lead us to abandon our practice of the Faith.

Watch over us from Heaven, O Mary, and help us to find the beauty of this life.

Walking everyday and knowing that we have "so special a mother" by our side will help us to live our lives fully so that we will be able to cherish every gift that the Good Lord, in his immense goodness showers on our hearts and our lives.

Prayer for us Sinners

"Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone..." That was what John wrote in his Gospel in chapter 8 and verse 7. "Hearing these words, they left one by one."

That's right! None of us lives this earthly experience without sin. Evil stalks us every day and despite our best intentions that we more or less constantly renew, temptations are strong and we frequently fall. In all humility we can only recognize that we are fragile and in need of God's mercy, in short, we are sinners.

At this point it's nice to be able to reflect on Mary's presence on our journey of faith. She, the pure and only one "conceived without sin," "the Immaculate Conception," watches over us and above all, prays for us.

June 2019

It is a great gift to us to have a Mother in Heaven who intercedes for us with the Father. She prays for us and helps us in our time of trial when we consciously or unconsciously slip into sin.

Sometimes we do not know how to recognize the gifts that God in his immense goodness pours out on us.

His grace pervades our lives giving us irreplaceable strength to start over again with joy on our spiritual path after the dark night of sin. And Mary is the 'help' that will never abandon us to our fate as poor sinners. She constantly prays that we will rediscover God's grace once more.

"Pray for us sinners," is a phrase full of meaning; it is a powerful invocation that we should never tire of repeating.

With trust in the silent but amazingly real presence of Mary we can journey on our spiritual path with renewed enthusiasm knowing that we can cope with evil using the powerful weapon of her prayers.

We thank you Lord, for having given us the sweet Virgin Mary who tirelessly prays and intercedes for us.

May we experience this precious assistance in our daily lives where temptations to sin are always lurking and we risk falling into sin.

We thank you Mary, Mother of the Lord and our Mother who never tires of turning to God in prayer for us.

With your constant help we really desire to fight evil and walk with joy and the grace of God along the mysterious and unpredictable paths of life. □

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NEWSBITS

VATICAN CITY

"To heal the wounds of the past and create a new dynamic of encounter and coexistence," it is the fruit that Pope Francis hopes will be born from the beatification today, in Oran, of the 19 martyrs of Algeria: Bishop Pierre Claverie and other religious, including the seven monks of Tibhirine, massacred in the dark years of Islamic terrorism in the North African country, brought to its knees by a bloody civil war.

The words of the Pope - who had already commemorated the newly blessed at the end of the day's Angelus, as "humble builders of peace and witnesses of Christian charity" - are contained in the message to Algerian Catholics read at the end of the celebration in the shrine Notre-Dame de Santa Cruz presided over by Cardinal Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which is attended by hundreds of faithful, pilgrims, brothers of the same orders, authorities and even some imams.

In the text Francis also addresses gratitude and prayer intentions to the "sons and daughters of Algeria who, like the martyrs, became victims of the same violence for having lived with respect for others and fidelity towards their duties as believers and citizens in this blessed land." For the Pope, through the beatification of "our nineteen brothers and sisters, the Church wishes to bear witness to her desire to continue to work for dia-

logue, harmony and friendship," in the firm conviction that such an unprecedented event will attract "a great sign of fraternity in the Algerian sky for the whole world."

The Pontiff also recalled the roots of the Algerian Church which "knows that it is the heir, together with the whole Algerian nation, of the great message of love offered by one of the many spiritual teachers of your land, Saint Augustine of Hippo." Today we need to spread this same message, "at a time when all peoples are seeking to advance their aspiration to live together in peace."

In his homily, Cardinal Becciu, moving his reflections from the book of the Apocalypse that reports the image of the multitude of chosen ones, who experienced the "great tribulation and washed their clothes, making them white in the blood of the Lamb," stressed how "the pain, the rigorous commitment of the witness, the renunciation of oneself do not generate death but glory, do not produce failure but life and happiness."

This glory came to Algeria thanks to the 19 religious who are now elevated to the honours of the altars, killed between 1994 and 1996 in different places and times but in the same turbulent context. "In this land - the cardinal said - they announced the unconditional love of the Lord for the poor and marginalized, testifying to their belonging to Christ and the Church until they were martyred."

"Coming from eight different Institutes, these brothers and sisters of ours lived in this country carrying out different missions and were strong and persevering in their service to the Gospel and to the people, despite the threatening climate of violence and oppression that surrounded them. In reading their biographies one is in fact struck to learn that, Becciu stressed, "everyone, though aware of the risk that besieged them, bravely decided to remain in their place until the end; in them a strong martyr spirituality developed rooted in the perspective of sacrificing oneself and offering one's life for a reconciled and peaceful society."

Contemplating these new Blessed we are invited then "to rejoice and exult, because in them we see shining the mystery of the eternal holiness of God" that they "witnessed to the point of shedding blood," said the Prefect of Saints. "We remember them as faithful disciples of Christ who

were lovers of poverty, sensitive to suffering, caring with the abandoned, sharing in the anguish and affliction of their brothers and sisters. These heroic witnesses of Jesus' love have gone as far as the root of people's experience of their own limit: humiliation, weeping, persecution.

Their death, tragic and brutal, "is a seed sown in difficult times, fertilized by suffering that will bring fruits of reconciliation and justice," Becciu assured. "The Christian community in this country sows small but significant seeds of peace. From this Beatification," he concluded, "May the Christian community feel strengthened in its presence in Algeria; from these 19 martyrs may it be strengthened in the conviction that the precious presence among this people is justified by the desire to be the light and sign of God's love for the whole population." □

La Stampa, Paolo Pettrini



Beatification Ceremony at the Shrine of Notre Dame de Santa Cruz

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

On Fire with Love

Sitting at home, having a quiet evening, were two spinster sisters. Suddenly one looked up from the paper she was reading and commented: "There's an article here telling of a woman's third husband. She has had all of them cremated."

"Isn't that life for you?" said the other. "Some of us can't even get one husband while others have husbands to burn."

A Fair Wind

The two fighters did nothing but circle each other, not a punch was thrown and the fans weren't pleased.

A bored silence settled on the arena. Then a spectator yelled, "Hit 'im while you've got the wind with yer!"

Sheer Self-Respect

A lady in a bus stared with disgust at a ragged urchin beside her. At length, unable to restrain herself, she said: "Have you a pocket handkerchief?"

"Yes'm," the ragged urchin sniffed, "but I ain't allowed to lend it."

Point of View

Joe took his wife to the doctor's one night. The doctor came out and said, "Frankly, I don't like the way your wife looks." "I don't either," said Joe, "but she's good to the kids."

Prospective Assets

Rejected suitor departing in a huff: "If I had all the qualities you want in a man, I'd propose to somebody else."

Fervent Strategy

The salesman walked up to the boy sitting on the steps of the house and asked, "Is your mother at home?"

"Yes, sir," the boy said.

The salesman began knocking on the door. He knocked again and again but there was no answer.

Then he turned to the boy and said, "I thought you said your mother was at home."

"She is," said the boy, "But I don't live here."

An Eye for a Choice

"Did the girls admire the engagement ring, I gave you?"

"Better than that. Two of them recognized it!"

Executive Memory

Busy executive: "Now, what in the world did I do with my pencil?"

Secretary: "It's behind your ear."

Busy executive: "Come, come, You know I'm a busy man...which ear?"

Unexpected Marvels

A small girl who lived in a remote part of the country was receiving her first Bible instruction at the hands of her elderly grandmother, and the old lady was reading the child the story of Creation. After the story had been finished the little girl seemed lost in thought.

"Well, dear," said the grandmother, "What do you think if it?"

"Oh, I love it. It's so exciting," exclaimed the youngster. "You never know what God is going to do next." □

POPE SAINT JOHN XXIII AND THE CRUCIFIX

Jack Quinn

Most people will agree that Pope John XXIII was one of the most admired popes of all time. There were many stories told and written about Pope John XXIII, about his life and about his teaching.

My story here about him happened in the last few days of his life.

He became ill and after a short time it was obvious that he had not much time left in this world. The Vatican officials prepared for his death, because the death of a pope is not only very important religiously, it is very important politically as well. Everything had to be absolutely correct.

While all this was going on, he lay in his bed. He had lapsed into a semi-coma. Although he did not speak, he seemed to be conscious of what was going on around him.

Various dignitaries, both of church and state, came to visit his room. He gave no sign that he noticed any of them. Then one day

when a few of them were standing around his bed, he suddenly became agitated. Nobody could understand what the problem was, and no one knew what to do.

Then one of his staff who was in the habit of looking after him, saw what was wrong. One of the visitors had gone to the end of his bed and was standing there.

There was a cross hanging on the wall behind his back. He did not realize he was standing between the pope and the cross, with the result that the pope, who never seemed to take his eyes off the cross, could no longer see it. His own words in his *'Journal of a soul'* help us understand his agitation at not being able to see the

crucifix; 'I feel ever more strongly a love for my Lord's cross and '... The life still left for me to live here below must draw its strength at the foot of the Cross of Jesus crucified.' The habit of a lifetime of prayer at the foot of the cross was not to be denied in his dying moments. □



APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JUNE 2019

Evangelization

That priests, through the modesty and humility of their lives, commit themselves actively to a solidarity with those who are most poor.

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for the successful operation of the lump in my breast and for the negative reports and for the gift of a baby boy, David and for the safe and normal delivery of our daughter Melissa.

Balbina Fernandes
I sincerely thank our Mother Mary for all the favours received through her intercession and for the successful bypass surgery of my brother.

T. Pimenta, Mumbai
My heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christians for blessing us with a precious gift of a baby boy and we implore her continued blessings on the baby and our family.

A. Fernandes, Goa
Thanks dear Mother for all your timely help.

Mr. Everaldo Bosco Gominides, Goa
My sincere thanks to our Dearest Mother Mary Help of Christians for the help and cure of my wife Sarita from all the tough times of sickness.

Terrance
Thank you Abba Father, thank you Jesus, thank you Holy Spirit and thank you Mother Mary for bringing us out of our problems and hardships in 2018. Please bless us with good health and a holy life ahead and keep my brother and sister in good health too.

Sofia Frances Lobo, Pune
Our grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians for a successful operation of a fibroid and also confirming that my daughter's fallopian tubes were open.

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, St. Anthony, St. Jude and St. Teresa of Kolkata for a successful operation of my brother Ignatius. We ask you to heal him completely.

Sebastian Couto, Mumbai
Our gratitude to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping my daughter and me to get a good job and keep us in good health.

Mrs. Seema B. Gurav
My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for a speedy recovery from a stroke and in 2015 I prayed to Jesus and Mother Mary for my children: for my elder daughter to conceive and she delivered a baby girl. My son secured a seat for advanced medical education in the USA. Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary.

Lizzie Fernandes
In September 2018 my brother-in-law had climbed the roof at a height that is almost up to the second floor to replace some tiles at our house in Goa. He slipped and fell and damaged his ribs and his spinal cord. I thank Jesus and Mother Mary for saving his life. This is a great miracle. Please bless him and heal his back so he can walk like before and thank you for the successful wedding of Philip and Reena Carneiro. *Theresa Soares* May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, adored and glorified and eternal thanks to the Holy Trinity, Our Lady and the saints for deliverance from all adversity. Please protect us always.

Glenn D'Souza and Family Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My heartfelt gratitude to the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary, Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for all the graces and favours received.

Philomena Cordeiro, Goa
Heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the numerous favours received through their intercession.

J.R.C.
Thank you Jesus, Mary Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for delivering a baby boy "Reuel" in safe care. Jesus and Mary Help of Christians keep our family in your care.

Wilfred Dias, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for granting us many favours recently.

In October 2018 it was an emergency, in which I had to be hospitalized for a major surgery of my intestine. The miraculous scapular of St. Dominic Savio was along with me. He was there protecting me and the operation was a success. I need your help St. Dominic Savio and all my saints to cure my husband's eye which is just watering for the last four months and no medicine has helped him.

Effie Cabral
Our heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for giving our daughter a healthy baby boy.

Lionel Pereira

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.

Mother Mary has blessed me and my family abundantly as I devoutly pray the 3 Hail Marys. Please continue to keep us in your special care.

A Devotee
Our sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for saving me from a severe heart attack in 2016. Sacred Heart of Jesus continue to protect my family and me always.

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MARY WAS THERE

On October 19, 2018 we were on our way to Karnataka from Bangalore by our car. My son was driving. We were nearing Hasan when a motorcyclist, to avoid a dog took a swift turn and hit the back door of our car; my son avoided the hit of the motorcyclist and swung to the curb with a big crash in the front. We were saved with no injury and so was the motorcyclist. The ambulance was called and we had all the help to move the car to Hassan for major repairs. Mary was there as a major mishap was averted. We miraculously escaped. Through the intercession of Mother Mary and our prayers all of us were safe.

Peter Rey, Chennai

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).

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