

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
Fast Facts On Fasting.....3

The Ego Hears But Love Listens
Ian Pinto.....4

Youth on the Move: A Cold And Ideological Faith
- *Giuliano Palizzi*.....8

Salesian Saint: Attilio Giordani
1913 - 1972.....10

Vocation Story: Cl. Nelson Mudaliar...12

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
St. Matilda of Germany.....13

Lectio Divina: The Seed That Dies to Give Life - *Ian Pinto*.....16

Quietspaces: How We Are Changed
- *Pope Francis*.....18

Stairway to Nowhere
- *Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection*...20

Don Bosco and His People: The Virtues of His People - *Natale Cerrato*...24

Reflecting on Mary: The Lord is With You
- *Gianni Sangalli*.....27

NewsBits.....29

In a Cheerful Mood.....31

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

Loving Children to their Loving Mother.....34

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

Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio.....35



*Father,
as your Son was
raised on the Cross,
his mother Mary stood
by him, sharing
his sufferings.
May your Church
be united with Christ
in his suffering and death
and so
come to share
in his rising
to new life.*

*(From the Opening Prayer of
Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows)*

From The Editor's Desk

FAST FACTS ON FASTING

Jesus said, "Take care! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired, because then you will lose your reward from your Father in heaven. And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I assure you, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in secret. And your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." (Matt. 6:1, 16-18, *New Living Translation*)

Fasting, one of three spiritual disciplines commended by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount (almsgiving, prayer and fasting) may be the least understood and practiced spiritual discipline. Perhaps a better understanding of this particular spiritual discipline will encourage you to consider its practice as a Lenten spiritual discipline or habit.

What is the motivation for fasting? Motivation is an issue Jesus addresses in Matthew 6 about almsgiving (giving to the poor), prayer, and fasting. For Jesus, the motivation issue focused on seeking attention and recognition from other people instead of seeking a deeper relationship with the Father. A wrong motivation for fasting in our modern world might be "a slimmer trimmer you." Yes, fasting may lead to weight loss, but the primary motivation for fasting, or any other spiritual discipline, is a more significant relationship with the Lord.

How can fasting enrich and strengthen my relationship with the Lord? So much of our social time is lived around food; we're always taking someone out to dinner or lunch or a coffee and there's no shortage of places to 'hang out': look at the many eateries around our city and more are springing up everyday to cater to every palate - grocery stores, convenience stores and restaurants. With food so readily available we can take for granted the gift of food and God's providence. But fasting in Lent - or any other time - might make us cherish God's generosity much more.

The hunger pangs we experience in fasting one meal a day can be a tangible reminder of those who experience hunger constantly and who fast because they have no other option.

If fasting enhances our vertical relationship with the Father it can also enrich our horizontal relationship with our neighbour. When your stomach starts rumbling don't run to the fridge or to your wallet to go and order a takeaway; rather see if you can find some way to feed a hungry person. The spiritual disciplines of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting can become a three dimensional, tangible way to live Jesus' command to love God and neighbour.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

THE EGO HEARS BUT LOVE LISTENS

by Ian Pinto, silb

Two old acquaintances who hadn't seen each other for years, were walking down the street together, reminiscing old times.

"Just a minute," said one, "I think I hear something," and turning a loose paving stone over, he liberated a cricket which was chirping merrily away. "Why, that's astounding. Of all the people on the street at this hour, hurrying from work, you alone heard the cricket above all the traffic noises."

"My friend," said the first. "I learned a long time ago that people hear in life only what they want to hear. Now, the noise of traffic has neither increased nor decreased in the past few moments, but watch." And as he finished speaking he let a silver half dollar fall from his pocket to the sidewalk. Everyone within an amazingly large hearing distance stopped and looked around.

Each of us has been blessed with two ears which enable us to connect with the world around us through sound. You would think that hearing comes naturally to us. It does to some extent. However like in the story, many of us reduce our capacity for hearing. We adopt an attitude called selective listening, wherein we hear only what we want to hear and become deaf to things that don't appeal to us.

The ability to hear is vital for a healthy relationship. So often

you hear people saying to one another, "Just hear me out!" Everybody likes to be heard but not everybody is willing to listen. This is a sad situation that we are facing today. We don't have time to talk and listen to one another, and then we find ourselves wondering why our relationships aren't working out. While this is true of all relationships it is specially so for families.

Listening takes time, and in our rushed world we feel we haven't got that sort of time. When one person approaches another and says or indicates, "I've something I want to talk about", the listener isn't going to do much good if she says "Well, hurry up, because I have washing to do and the beds to make." Yet, this is just the sort of reply many parents give their children when the child badly wants the comfort of an understanding listener.

Perhaps he came home early from school because the other boys wouldn't play with him, and his mother says, "Well, don't mind them. Go out and play with Joe." Within him, the little lad's heart is crying out "But they don't want me. Why do none of them ever want me?" But his mother has gone out of the room at this stage. She is too busy to listen. She hasn't tuned in to him. She loves him, oh yes, but she is too busy to listen, so he feels lonely and unloved.

HEARING AND LISTENING

Livestrong.com published a crisp article that lucidly distinguishes between hearing and listening. It succinctly brings out the features of hearing and listening and helps clarify the two concepts. When a person responds to your words by saying "I hear you," you may sometimes wonder if he is truly listening to you. Perhaps you find your mind wandering off when someone is sharing her thoughts with you. Hearing and listening have quite different meanings: Hearing is a passive occurrence that requires no effort. Listening, on the other hand, is a conscious choice that demands your attention and concentration.

Everyone wants to be heard and understood, but at one time or another most people don't listen and fail to understand the meaning of another person's words. It's a human desire to have your feelings acknowledged, whether or not someone agrees with you. Listening creates an intimate connection and makes you feel cared about.

Developing good communication skills is critical for successful relationships, whether parent, child, spouse, or sibling relationship. We all have had experiences where we have felt heard and understood and we've all had experiences where we have felt misunderstood and even ignored. Generally, when we feel heard, we are less angry, stressed, and more open to resolving problems than when we feel misunderstood. Feeling heard and understood also develops trust and

caring between people.

You can hear someone speak without listening to the words. Hearing defines only the physical measurement of the sound waves that are transmitted to the ear and into the brain where they are processed into audible information. Hearing occurs with or without your consent. When you merely hear someone's words but are not listening to what's being said, it can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities, regrets and repentment.

Listening goes far beyond your natural hearing process. It means paying attention to the words that are being spoken with the intention of understanding the other person. Your personal perceptions and prejudices can affect the quality of your listening skills. For example, if you feel that the other person is crying over what you perceive to be trivial matters, you are less likely to listen to her. This is a strong tendency especially when dealing with children. What may seem like a big problem for the child may in fact be something small and insignificant but it is imperative that a parent or elder takes the trouble to listen to the child and give her/him an impression that she/he is heard and that her/his problem is acknowledged. Even though this may seem unimportant and tedious, it is important to the child and hence must be taken seriously. The self-esteem of the child is affected by the reactions of her/his parents and elders to the child's talk.

There are four basic levels of



hearing and listening, according to Toast Masters. You can easily fall into one of these categories in different conversations. A non-listener is totally preoccupied with his personal thoughts and though he hears words, he doesn't listen to what is being said. Passive listeners hear the words but don't fully absorb or understand them. Listeners pay attention to the speaker, but grasp only a part of the intended message. Active listeners are completely focused on the speaker and understand the meaning of the words without distortion.

Some of the things that prevent us from listening well are:

1. When we assume we know what others are thinking, or that they should know what we are thinking.
2. When we focus on what we want to say while others are talking—instead of listening to them.
3. When we bring up other problems and issues unrelated to the topic at hand.
4. When we assume we know what is right for others and try to convince them of this.

All of these things either keep us from sending a clear message

or keep us from receiving the message the other person is trying to send.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Communicating well takes practice and effort. It is not something that comes naturally for most of us. Below are some keys to good communication. These skills and techniques may seem strange and awkward at first. But if you stick with them, they will become natural in time. Active listening is a way of listening to others that lets them know you are working to understand the message they are sending.

- Make sure your body language conveys to them that you are interested and listening. You can make eye contact with them, turn your body toward them, and nod as they are talking to let them know you are listening.

- Reduce any distractions that will keep you from focusing on their message. Try to stop whatever you are doing that may distract you from their message—such as watching television or trying to read while the person is talking to you. You may need to tell them, “I will be better able to listen to you once I am done with my work.” Trying to listen while doing other tasks usually does not allow one to clearly hear the message.

- Listen for the content and the feelings behind the words. Do not just listen to the content of what is being said. Listen for the feeling that the person is trying to convey to you. Are they expressing joy, sadness, excitement, or anger—either through their words or body language?

- When the person has finished talking, paraphrase back to them what you heard them saying. “What I am hearing from you is...” “It sounds like... was very upsetting for you.”

- Do not offer advice to the person. When we offer advice (especially when it was not asked for) it often shuts down communication. The person first needs to know that you have understood them and that they have sent their message clearly to you.

You will be surprised at how your conversations and relationships change when you focus on listening to the other person—rather than thinking of your next response.

Children too, need to be taught to listen. One of the first steps in educating them in this regard is for us to listen actively to them. When we actively listen to children, we are letting them know that they can send a message and that their message is important to us. As noted before, it is important that we give them our full attention—listening for the feelings as well as the content of their message. We must restrain from offering advice right away.

Second, we need to actively teach children how to listen. The child needs to focus on the person who is talking—eliminating as many distractions as possible. This may mean turning off the television, asking them to look at you, or having them come in the same room with you while you talk with them. Just as we give them our attention, we need to teach youngsters to give their attention to others. To be sure

they have understood your message, ask youngsters to repeat back to you in their own words, what they heard from you. In this way, you are teaching them to paraphrase what they have heard. If the child does not repeat the message back clearly, this offers a time for clarification and another opportunity to teach that good communication takes effort—and that we sometimes don't get it right the first time. Finally, children learn the most by communicating with us and by watching how adults communicate with each other.

The sort of listening that is really loving, is a sort where one gives oneself with total concern for the other person—with an assurance of complete confidentiality. Each member of our families needs to be so loved. How wonderful it is if within a family everyone feels accepted and trusted by everyone else. Whether or not we give them time, our children will grow physically, but they will not grow emotionally or spiritually to their full potential unless we give them time as individuals to talk to us about themselves and in such talking, to learn, as well as to teach us more about what is happening to themselves.

Listening is an art that is developed over a period of time with repetitive, conscious effort. Our lifestyles make it incredibly tough for us to listen. Yet, we all desire to be listened to, and hence it is only right that we 'do to others what we expect them to do for us' (Mt 7:12). □

A COLD AND IDEOLOGICAL FAITH

by Giuliano Palizzi

"Would a spiritual electrocardiogram be flat-lined because the heart is hardened, unmoved or emotionless?" Pope Francis

The Church today is often accused of losing everything that's concrete in the explicit question: "Where is the Pope taking us?" All those who have rarely read a page of the Gospel but have been stuck to those four questions they learned as children in Catechism class in preparation for their First Communion or Confirmation and have never made the choice for Jesus Christ and trusting him to be the foundation of their Faith (not just his doctrine), they feel lost when they don't hear "doctrinal language" but only "Gospel language," which is typical of this Pope. They have grown up (or better remained children) thinking that to be a Christian it was enough to just fulfil the Sunday obligation, to make sacrifices during Lent (those incredible mortifications to reduce a few kilos!!!), to make their Confession once a year, more or less, when they can... enroll in a distance-adoption programme maintaining a child for about • 1.00 a day and then one day, showing off to the neighbours the photograph of that lad while placing it near that



of Padre Pio.... (on the family altar) and sometimes not eating meat on Fridays. Then here comes this Pope who says that for the Church to be poor it has to be the Church of the poor; better a sick Church but one that goes outside its walls to the existential peripheries, than a Church that is closed in on itself like the disciples on Easter Sunday evening, when in order to enter, Jesus must get through walls; a Church that follows a merciful God who always for-



gives even before one repents (how is it possible?) We were taught to confess our sins and mention the number of times we committed them!!! But if everyone is forgiven, then everyone does what s/he likes; this is why we don't confess anymore! It must be a Church that welcomes migrants who "could be" Jesus (those migrants driven out of their homelands and become terrorists here); a Church that welcomes everyone (even the divorced and the remarried)...!!!

Man for the Sabbath?

"I have not come to abolish the law," so said the famous Galilean, "but to fulfil it." That is exactly what the Pope is doing. From the Law as an end, Jesus and Francis have gone to making the Law as a means, putting man at the centre. "Not man for the Sabbath but the Sabbath for man." And this is the fulfilment which gives value to the Law, which is not a function in itself (I went to Mass, so I'm fine) but a service to humankind. A law that is not for man does not come from God (binding heavy burdens...) A fast that does not urge me to love others (depriving myself to help others) does not come from God. A Sunday obligation that does not lead me to incarnate the Word that I have

heard (putting into practice the Word heard on Sunday? When we leave the church do we stop to comment on it...or does everything end there and we rush about our business?) Is it a precept which is an end in itself, something we have to do, a tax we've got to pay...is this what God wants?

The ECG

The Pope said (Santa Marta 29 May, 2017): "If people were to get a "spiritual electrocardiogram would it be flat-lined because the heart is hardened, unmoved and emotionless?" "In the Gospels, there were those who believed in God, they knew all the commandments, but the heart was closed, immobile, they didn't let it become troubled," the pope said. "One must also receive God's gift of the Holy Spirit and let him "trouble" the heart. "Am I able to listen to him? Am I able to ask for his inspiration before making a decision or saying something or doing something? Or is my heart serene, without emotion, an immobile heart, much like the doctors of the law had," he asked. The pope asked people to reflect on their relationship with the Holy Spirit and pray that the Spirit guide them in the choices they make.

"I ask that he give me the grace to distinguish the good from the less good because good can be distinguished from evil easily," the pope said. The one who does not have "these movements of the heart; does not discern what happens, is a person who has a cold and ideological faith. His faith is an ideology, that's all." Lord increase our faith! □



ATTILIO GIORDANI 1913 - 1972

Attilio Giordani was born in Milan on February 3, 1913 and he died at Campo Grande (Brazil) on December 18, 1972. He was a husband, an exemplary father, an animator of the oratory, a catechist, a missionary and a Salesian Cooperator.

At the age of nine he began frequenting the Salesian Oratory of St. Augustine in Milan. He knew how to use all the educative skills and the Preventive System to animate youngsters. He was proficient in animating the liturgy, training them and being present with youngsters, playing with them and being an inspiration to them during their recreation. He trained them to stage plays; he organized walks for them; composed songs, skits, conducted charitable lotteries, parish treasure hunts and the Youth Olympics, never forgetting for one moment to infuse his activities with Christian charity and Christian joy. A particular trait of Attilio Giordani was his ability to incarnate in a simple and convincing manner the specific method of evangelization that Don Bosco suggested which was to evangelize by educating.

Attilio began his period of military service at the age of 21 on July 23, 1934 and it ended on September 8, 1943. For this he left Milan and went to the Greco-



Albanian front and from there to the mountains of Lecco as a member of the passive resistance. Discipline in the barracks at that time was harsh, the schedule rigid, authority was undisputed, punishments were severe, training was tough and the language used in the barracks was coarse, blasphemy was easy and speaking about one's Christian faith was difficult. In that environment, "Giordani" the soldier - as he liked to call himself - spread serenity, engendered harmony and peace; he organized cheerful get-togethers and composed poems and songs. This earned him the respect and acceptance of everyone. They accepted his Christian values which wasn't always easy. "I have come to the conclusion: no verbal spats, I'll accept all the insults and indignities like a Christian and for the love of Christ" (April 11, 1943). Attilio kept a 'War diary.'

They were pages of hope, realism, plans, and a desire to give to everyone God's peace. "When I ask my companions to pray no one refuses. But I say: 'Remember guys the Lord is always here, even when the danger has passed and you are at home' (January 31, 1941).

His marriage to Noemi in May 1944 was not just an event but above all, a sacrament of Christ through which he strove to express its sanctity and indissolubility by a life lived everyday educating his children. The family remained united because Attilio and Noemi sustained themselves through prayer and the practice of charity.

Attilio was Don Bosco-in-the-flesh! In his cheerfulness, being with the boys and even in his piety which was simple. His day began around 6am and at 6.30 he was in church taking part in the Mass and receiving Communion. If there was no altar boy he was not ashamed to go up even when he was 58/59 years old he served Mass. Then he spent time in meditation. He returned home and listened to the latest news on his little radio and then went to work. He returned home around midday. After lunch he went to the Salesians at St. Ambrose's in Milan. Everyone knew him from the provincial to the last dear blind Salesian who had come from Bethlehem. And when someone was in pain or being left out, he was there. He greeted all the Salesians, and everyday he made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

His life can be understood by his death. At the age of fifty-nine Attilio Giordani, his wife Noemi, their eldest son Pier and his daughter Paolo left for Mato Grosso (Brazil). He told his parents: "If

we want to and we must share the vocation of our children in order to understand them, then we have to make some important and exemplary choices. We must be willing to follow them and support them in their trials, judging what they know by the reasons for doing what they do." "In life, it's not so much the things we say, but what we do. There's no need to preach about what must be done, we need to show by our lives what we believe in. Living is preaching." His whole life was a race, with youngsters. And he reached the finishing line at a sprint, showing that the permanent vocation of a Christian is to lay down his life! That is what it means to be young till your last day. Several times Attilio said: "Death must find us alive!" He was so alive in the ordinary things of everyday, in joy, in compassion, even his final encounter with the Lord and then he was ready to continue to stand with the youngsters in the Salesian garden in heaven. Death met him while he was speaking at a missionary conference in Campo Grande (Brazil) when, feeling faint, he placed his head on the shoulder of don Ugo De Censi, and whispered to his son: "Pier Giorgio, you take over."

His testament was the enthusiasm of a life given for others: "Our faith must be alive" and "The measure of our faith is manifested in our being." Attilio Giordani is the vivid incarnation of the Salesian Spirituality in its lay dimension. This aspect has aroused a particular admiration especially among consecrated Salesians, who have felt the providential presence of such a model and never failed to go to him for his counsel. □



CL. NELSON MUDALIAR,

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

God works in ways we know not. Hailing from a simple village in Tamil Nadu, growing up in Thane (Mumbai) I can surely say that God attracted me, called me, and is now walking with me and leading me. Where to? I don't know. But as long as Jesus is with me, I will have a safe and adventurous trip ahead; being formed and touched by people's lives I have become the one He wants me to be. I am not alone, He is always with me.

God has planted a seed and I'm pretty sure that that seed was nurtured and looked after by my parents. They are saints. They taught me to pray and live a Christian life. Our daily rosaries, small and meaningful prayers boosted my love for God. This practically helped me to become an Altar Server. It was there (Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran) that a gentle word from our Sacristan - Sebastian Uncle led me to the Salesians. The happiness that I witnessed and experienced from the Salesians and the outgoing nature of Fr. Brian Moras (my Vocation Promoter) carved out a niche for Don Bosco in my heart. I joined Don Bosco, Lonavla as a student in Std IX. I grew in faith and was also exposed to the reality of the world. My journey since then has been wonderful, quite adventurous, I would say; taking responsibilities, speaking with people and doing things beyond my imagination, much more than I thought I could. It is only because of



Mother Mary's constant guidance that I have grown in my vocation. Oh yes! She is present strongly in my life. I would share everything with Her in my moments of prayer and solitude. Her motherly presence comforted me, especially in times of misunderstanding and loneliness. I found my strength in Her, in fact She has a lot to do with my relationship with Jesus. To sum up, my Vocation is a fruit of my parents' holiness, a gentle word and Mary's continual presence in my life.

As a response to His call, I've realized, He wants just three things from (me or) us: a loving heart - that reaches out to all especially the poor; a daring dream - to let God work through us in ways unimaginable; and a passionate self (Da Mihi Animas: Give me souls)- that seeks the good of others and wants at all times to contribute to society and the world in general. ☐

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MATILDA OF GERMANY (895 - 968)



It is generally seen that saints appear to be "a clerical product," i.e. monks, nuns and religious and some happy exception to the rule. Non-religious ones are rare. Can the Holy Spirit, the principal author of holiness, not perhaps stir up saints from beyond the clerical field? Of course! This fact was created and it embedded itself into the imagination of the Christian faithful that the idea of sanctity is a "clerical affair," as if the Church of God was mainly comprised of the Pope, the bishops, priests and nuns.

On the other hand according to the definition of Vatican II, the Church is the entire People of God in which the clergy feature. Indeed, the task of the clergy is precisely that of being at the service and therefore of working for the whole other (immensely greater) part of the People of God labouring to assist the sanctity of everyone, because sanctity remains the task of every individual of the Church.

However, something is changing. Already during the pontificate of John Paul II, a process was initiated that would 'de-

clericalize' the Book of the Saints, in other words, there is an attempt, and very justifiably so, to look for saints even among the laity. No one doubts that there are.

It doesn't take a university degree in psychology to know that the mother of a family or a professional, with "lay" task in the world in addition to being a father or mother, is more easily identified with some saints who have lived that same vocation of marriage and family, rather than a monk or a nun who lived out their sanctity (certified by the Church then) within the four walls of a convent. Msgr. Edward Nowak, the head of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in an interview said: "John Paul II insisted on the laity. They constitute exemplary models for the

Church: the blessed, and the saints (lay) point to concrete paths of holiness. Their life is a life of witness to Christ. Today we are given the person of the new evangelization and to the person of our times."

While waiting for greater decentralization of the liturgical calendar, I would like to present to you a lay person: Matilda, a princess, a happily married responsible mother of a family and children, not without her problems (and herself!), a Queen of Germany and declared a saint by the Church.

Matilda was born around 895 into an aristocratic family in Westphalia, North-Eastern Germany. According to the customs of the time, her parents Count Dietrich of Westphalia and Reinhild of Denmark placed the child in a convent with her paternal grandmother the abbess of Eufurt. A document of that time revealed that Matilda was placed in the convent not to become a nun but to acquire an education and an intellectual formation equal to her status. As was the custom, in 909 she was married to Henry of Saxony. They had five children, all destined to have brilliant careers: Otto I called the Great, Gerberga, a future queen of France, Hedwig, Henry the Younger and Bruno would become the archbishop of Cologne.

For Matilda, her first real difficulties came with the death of her consort in the year 936. He left her a considerable legacy. She was not very pleased with the succession to the throne by her firstborn son Otto. She preferred to have Henry, who in her opinion was more worthy since he

was born when her husband had become king. The two brothers came into conflict and despite the mother's support, Otto was victorious. He quickly annulled the family dispute over his succession. In 955 he defeated the Hungarians putting an end to their looting in many parts of Europe. With his imperial crown he obtained the full reconciliation of his family with Rome in 962.

It is interesting to note (and this indirectly confirms Matilda's sanctity) that around the years 938-941, at a certain point the two brothers Otto and Henry, already in discord about the succession of the throne, were instead in agreement to remove their mother because (and this might cause you to smile) they accused her giving much money to the Church and the poor. They forced her to renounce her property and put her into a monastery. Her rights were restored to her only through the intervention of Queen Edith. This however weakened her influence within the family for some time.

Matilda overcame even this hard trial. From 946 until her death she reigned and regained all her authority and influence, continuing her work for the Church and the poor. In fact, she created monasteries for men in Poelde and Quedlinburg and abbeys for women in Enger and Nordhausen. During this period she was honoured and respected as queen and she had the joy of receiving the homage of her family during the assembly of dynastic succession held in Cologne in 965 where she was honoured as a symbol of family

unity. She died three years later in Quedlinburg on March 14, 968, and was buried next to her husband Henry.

Matilda's life was active, to put it mildly, as mother and queen. Her life was brilliant through her virtues, even in an ambient of wealth and luxury. Her holiness was immediately recognized in the surrounding country thanks especially to her two biographies even if her ecclesiastical patrons did not immediately recognize it.

Her liturgical cult began in Quedlinburg. Matilda came to be mentioned in some compilations of the martyrology dating back to 15th and 16th centuries until it came to be included in the Roman Martyrology and her sanctity came to be recognized outside Germany.

It is interesting to note that hagiographers of Queen Matilda could have offered a conventional image of her holiness: perhaps insisting on her pious widowhood and her association with monasteries and abbeys. Instead, her sanctity is presented as something that developed from her choice of family life. Matilda is a saint because she lived a saintly life as a wife, a mother and even a queen with all these duties and roles. We could say that her sanctity is a royal, married and family sanctity. Her biographers have shown us a genuine sanctity acquired day after day in the bosom of her family with its joys and sorrows and all that it entails. Thus a new model of holiness has been proposed, one that was different from what was lived out in monasteries and abbeys.

Of course, her husband Henry assented to her way of life. One

of the biographies responds to the rumour circulating around that Henry had married a nun who was obsessively devoted to prayer. "At night Matilda would rise and without her husband's knowledge she would leave the royal chamber and spend time in prayer and return to God whom she purely loved and served with unhesitant faith. Who would have doubted if the king knew it or not? In fact he noticed it but pretended to ignore it, knowing that Matilda's actions were good and useful to both of them. He therefore gave his consent to everything she wanted."

A final very significant remark: As soon as Henry died, Matilda asked the first priest to fast and pray for her late husband. She gave him a bracelet saying: "Use the gold from this gold object and sing masses for the souls."

This seems to be one of the first examples of prayer in suffrage for souls. The widow Matilda never ceased to be spiritually united to her husband even though he was dead. She still felt "responsible" for him because she still loved him and wanted the salvation of his soul. Even after the death of a spouse, a Christian couple remains a small community, linked by an eternal and indissoluble love.

One's prayers served (and still serves today) for the salvation of the other. In this way marriage was seen as an authentic and important means for the salvation of the spouses. Furthermore, it is important to note the astonishing positive vision of Christian marriage. It was seen as a genuine "place" for the circulation of God's grace. □



THE SEED THAT DIES TO GIVE LIFE

by Ian Pinto, *sdb*

It is quite commonplace for a speaker to make allusions to nature to emphasize a point. Many poems while appearing to be about nature actually hint at anthropological realities. These become evident upon deeper reflection and study. Jesus was an exceptional public speaker. Part of his charm laid on his intuitive ability to draw on examples of mundane realities to teach the people about religious truths. The Gospels record a number of such illustrations made by Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus would not teach except through parables (Mk 4:34).

He compared the Kingdom of God to a treasure (Mt 13:44), a pearl (Mt 13:45), a fishing net (Mt 13:47), seeds (Mk 4:26;30), yeast (Lk 13:21); he spoke of faith as a mustard seed (Mt 17:20). Among all of Jesus' natural examples there is one that he is particularly fond of and repeats in various contexts to drive home different messages – the seed. The seed is a highly potent illustration of birth and life, but it also an equally potent illustration for dying and death. Jesus uses the example of a grain of

wheat to refer to his imminent death. “Truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

SUFFERING

Suffering is part and parcel of life. There is nothing whether in the human world or in the natural world that does not have to face suffering of one kind or another. Suffering is all around us. The media continuously flashes stories of suffering in different parts of the world. On the one hand, it is a fact of nature which cannot be denied or escaped, and on the other hand it is a creation of human lifestyle and choices. The seed too must suffer being thrown onto the land, braving the forces of nature; it must fight to nestle in the soil and grow roots. It's journey to fulfill its potential is tough. Numerous challenges await it but if it never leaves the sower's it risks growing impotent on a shelf.

Who is to blame for the suffering in the world? Some people blame God, some pin the responsibility

on human beings and some are confused. There are others who don't bother with the “who is to blame?” question and focus on dealing with suffering.

Suffering challenges us. It has the ability to make or break our character. Some people throw in the towel in the face of suffering while others brave it to the very end. Job is an interesting character. When tragedy struck his family, he responded with startling faith, “Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be his name!” (Job 1:21) but later on in the book we find him slowly losing his faith to despair (Job 30:16-23). Suffering uncovers the innermost core of human nature and reveals a person's true character. Jesus faced suffering with courage and faith and desires that we do likewise.

DEATH

Another fact of human life is that it ends. Death is perhaps the most certain fact. People are free to doubt anything but death is beyond all doubt. Death however is not a full stop in the human story. It is only a comma or a semi-colon. Our faith teaches us that death marks the end of physical life and at the same time marks the birth into eternal life. Jesus makes this point when he says that the seed must die if it is to give life. Every flower or fruit is born as the result of a death.

Death is not a fruitless event. Skeptics and non-believers are wont to think that death is a tragedy or an absurdity. It violently neutralizes life. Jesus gives death new meaning. Death isn't a neutralization of life nor is it total liberation as many other faiths hold; rather it is a springboard to greater life.

Jesus showed by example that life though beautiful is not something to be clung to. “Anyone who loves his life will lose it, while anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:25). This does not mean that we despise life and wait for it to end, or worse still, end it ourselves, it is a metaphor for detachment. A Christian ought to live so detached that even his/her life ought never to be the object of possession or attraction.

GLORIFICATION

The story of the seed is not merely a story of suffering and death, it ends with hope. The story of Jesus did not end with his passion and death. The Gospels bear testimony to the Resurrection. The disciples went to the corners of the earth not to preach and bear witness to the suffering and death of Jesus, the Son of God, but to the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity. St. Paul was clear when he said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain” (1 Cor 15:14).

The Resurrection is the fruition of life. It subsumes the trouble of suffering and the fatality of death. It is a Divine gift for human effort and not a trophy to be won after death. Without the Resurrection the story of Jesus is a story of failure and defeat. However, on that first Easter morning, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was found empty. By his Resurrection he has opened the doors of eternal life to us. Like the seed that dies in order to bear fruit, Jesus died and rose so that you and I could live abundantly, not just here on earth but also hereafter in heaven. □

Quiet Spaces

HOW WE ARE CHANGED

*The Pope's morning meditation at the Chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae
on March 16, 2015*

We are the “dream of God” who, truly in love, wants to “change our life,” through love. He only asks us to have the faith to let Him do so. And thus “we can only cry for joy” before a God who “re-creates” us, Pope Francis said on Monday morning during Mass at Santa Marta.

In the First Reading, a passage from Isaiah (65:17-21), “the Lord tells us that He creates new heavens and a new earth, that is, He re-creates things,” Francis explained, also recalling that “we have spoken many times of these ‘two creations’ of God: the first, which was done in six days, and the second, when the Lord ‘re-makes’ the world, destroyed by sin, in Jesus Christ.” And, the Pontiff emphasized, “we have said so many times that this second one is more marvelous than the first”. Indeed, he explained, “the first is already a marvelous creation; but the second, in Christ, is even more marvellous”.

In his meditation, however, Francis paused “on another aspect,” beginning from the passage of Isaiah in which “the Lord speaks about what He is going to make: a new heaven, a new earth.” And “we find that the Lord has much enthusiasm: He speaks of joy and says a word: ‘I will rejoice in my people.’” Essentially, “the Lord thinks about what He is going to do, He thinks that He, He himself will rejoice with his people.” Thus, “it is as if it were a ‘dream’ of the Lord, as if the Lord ‘were dreaming’ of us: how beautiful it will be when we are all together, when we are there or when that person, or that one, or another one will walk...”

Further clarifying his rationale, Francis returned to “a metaphor that can help us understand: it is as if a young woman with her boyfriend, or a young man with his girlfriend, were to think: ‘when we are together, when we get married...’” Thus, “God’s ‘dream’: God thinks about each one of us, loves us, dreams of us, dreams of the joy that He will rejoice with us”. And this is the very reason that “the Lord wants to ‘re-create us’, to make our hearts new, to ‘re-create’ our heart in order to make joy triumph”.

All this led the Pope to ask a few questions: “Have you ever thought: the Lord dreams about me? He thinks about me? I am in the mind, in the heart of the Lord? The Lord is capable of changing my life?” Isaiah also tells us, Francis added, that the Lord “makes many plans: ‘We will build houses, plant vineyards, and eat together: all those plans typical of one in love.’”

“After all, “the Lord manifests himself enamoured of his people” even going so far as to say “I did not choose you because you are the strongest,

the biggest, the most powerful; but I chose you because you are the least of all.” Moreover, “it could be said: the poorest of all. I chose you like this, and this is love.”

The Pope indicated that “this will of the Lord continues this desire of his to change our life. And we are able to say, if we hear this invitation of the Lord: ‘You have changed my mourning into dancing’, which are “the words that we prayed” in Psalm 29. “I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me” the Psalm also says, thereby acknowledging that the Lord “is capable of changing us, through love: He is in love with us.”

“I don’t believe any theologian can explain this: it is inexplicable,” Francis remarked. Because this is something “we can only reflect on, feel and cry for joy: the Lord can change us.” He then asked spontaneously: what do I have to do? The answer is simple: “Believe. Believe that the Lord can change me, that He can.” This is exactly what the king’s official in Capernaum did, as told in the Gospel according to John (4:43-54). That man, whose son was ill, asked Jesus “to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.” And Jesus replied to him: “Go; your son will live.” Thus, that father “believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way. He believed. He believed that Jesus had the power to heal his child. And he was right.”

Faith, Francis explained, “is giving space to this love of God; it is making room for the power, for the power of God, for the power of One who loves me, who is in love with me and who wants this joy with me. This is faith. This is believing: it is making room for the Lord to come and change me.”

The Pope concluded with a meaningful annotation: “It is curious: this was the second miracle that Jesus performed. And He did it in the same place where He had performed the first, in Cana in Galilee.” In today’s Gospel passage we read, in fact: “So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine”. Again, “in Cana in Galilee, He also changed this boy’s death into life.” Truly, Francis said, “the Lord can change us, He wants to change us, He loves to change us. And this” He does “through love.” And He only asks us for “our faith: in other words, to give space to his love so it may act and bring about a change of life in us.” (*L’Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 12, 20 March 2015*)



STAIRWAY TO NOWHERE

From Fr. Ian Doullton's Collection of Stories

He, John West sits in his living room; in the living room in an empty house. He closes his eyes to shut out the sight of the vacant chair opposite his. It still doesn't seem possible that Mary won't sit there again. He can't quite believe it even after two months. He feels as if he's living in a bad dream perhaps he tends to believe that if he opens his eyes slowly, she'll be there, leaning forward a little in her chair, smiling, her head cocked to one side. The loneliness aches in her heart but there's nothing but the empty room. He suddenly hears the doorbell. His eyes fly open.

John slowly gets out of his chair and opens the door. It's Lucille his daughter:

"Dad, dad, it's Lucille. Dad, are you alright?"

"Oh yes, I'm alright, Lucille, come in."

He was supposed to visit his brother-in-law Albert but he had changed his mind. Of late he didn't seem to have the will to do anything. He just preferred to sit at home in his favourite chair by the lampstand and doze off at any time of the day. Lucille followed him as he made his way back to his chair: "You've been in the house too long. It isn't good for you."

Lucille looked around at the dining table, he hadn't eaten since morning and it was now late afternoon. "You had any breakfast or lunch?"

"I made some coffee, that's all I wanted." "Just coffee?"

He said he didn't have any

appetite. He tried to shrug off his only child...Lucille. "You don't need to worry. I'll be alright after a while."

He shook his head wearily and he mumbled that he didn't have the heart for anything. He missed his wife Mary so much. "After thirty years...we were together, thirty years..."

Lucille placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. "I miss her too, but life has to go on. You can't go down into the grave with her. After all, you had thirty years and they were happy ones. That's more than most people have. You should be thankful."

He looked up: "Thankful? That I've lost her?"

Lucille came and sat beside him. "Dad, where's your faith? You know mother's in heaven. You always told us: God was our Father, he loves us. So his plans for mother must be the best. He only took her because he wanted to make her happy."

He couldn't argue with that but he tried again to distance himself from her: "Leave me alone Lucille! I'll be alright if people will just leave me alone."

She decided to take him home with her. She just had some shopping to do before she picked up Howard, her husband. She would be back. "I can't stand by and watch you wreck yourself this way. Now, you're coming home with me tonight..."

So that was settled. He didn't have the energy to fight his daughter anymore. As he walked her to the door, with a weak smile he mumbled: "I'm sorry I worried

you but you won't have to ever worry about me again. Goodbye Lucille."

He watched her drive away then he locked the doors, front and back from the inside. He knew what he was going to do. It was the only way. Leaving this house wouldn't help. The ache of missing Mary is everywhere; on all the streets he'd walked with her; and every woman with dark hair and blue eyes; in the sound of the name Mary; his little granddaughter, she had Mary's fine black hair and many of her ways. He walked slowly into the bathroom; he opened the medicine chest; took out a bottle of white pills, the ones the doctor gave Mary for her bad nights; he poured out a handful; then his heart began to thud and his knees trembled. His hand held rigid by forces deep within him - his Faith called this a sin; the hurt to Lucille; a shock to everyone who knew him. But they would get over it, even Lucille. They would even forget him in time. One thing was certain, he couldn't face the years ahead without Mary. God knew how much he loved her. He knew he was doing this because he loved her so much. Surely he won't count that a sin.

Then, the handful of pills, the glass of water...and it was done! He walked back into the living room. He sat down to wait; it was quiet and restful. The room began growing hazy. He was drifting away...slowly...easily... then the haze began to lift. He moved onward and up through soft clouds. In the blue distance the clouds began to take form. There was a walled city, rising golden in the sun. He found himself at a gate.

There was an angel standing at the gate. He seemed to think it was Heaven. "This must be heaven?" He asked

"Yes, this is heaven. What's your name, please?"

"West...John West."

His name didn't seem to be on their list. The angel went on: "I don't think you are expected."

John was impatient. "Well...I don't care. I came to be with my wife. I belong here, with her."

The angel gave an amused smile: "So you belong here?"

The angel nodded and asked John what he saw through the gate: "There's our house!"

He was sure Mary was there. It was Parker Street. He was looking straight ahead and he exclaimed: "Mary must be there. She's waiting for me just as she always was. I know she is. You can't keep me out."

The angel simply stood aside waved his hand: "You may enter, if you think it will do you any good."

He hurried up to the door and knocked and he heard Mary's gentle voice from within bidding him to come in. So he opened the door: "Oh, Mary...oh Mary."

She seemed delighted to see him. He was so excited: "I knew you'd be here...I told him that at the gate. Just the way I dreamed: you, sitting in that chair smiling at me."

He came up to her and she looked at him with that smile he knew so well.

"Oh, how I've missed you, Mary." He said.

She too seemed so happy to see him. "Everything here is so wonderful, so glorious. John did

you ever dream there could be such peace, such happiness?" She sat down again in her favourite chair. John said eagerly: "Yes, we did have so much happiness...in this house. That first year, every time I got off the bus at the corner and saw the lights in the windows and I knew you were waiting for me, I just felt like running down the street..."

Mary agreed, because she too so eagerly looked for the bus every evening from her little kitchen window as she got down to preparing dinner for the two of them.

John remembered Christmas after the baby arrived. Little Lucille always wanted John to hoist her up so she could touch the angel with the silver hair on the top branch.

Those were such happy days. He was sure that this was going to be just like that. Sitting in their favourite chairs opposite each other looking with love into each other's eyes; then Mary asked: "John is that how you see me, is that *all* you see?"

John looked at her quizzically. "Yes, I see our house as it always was. What more could there be?"

Mary looked rather shocked: "John, this is heaven. It's like living in the middle of a rainbow."

John saw no rainbow. Where was it? He looked around.

"All around you," Mary said: "Don't you feel it John; the light, the warmth, the love? This is the presence of God; that is what makes heaven. Oh, and I thought I was happy when I first entered. I saw something in the distance - gold and glorious - like a city in the clouds."

John said he saw that city but it

was very far off.

"Then together they heard it: "The nearer I drew the more glorious it became and I heard music. Oh, if we thought we ever heard anything so beautiful on earth. I can still hear it. Listen John..."

"It's so faint I can just barely hear it." John strained his ear.

"Why John...it's like all the cathedral bells in the world and all the organs at Easter. It lifts you into an ocean of light. This light fills you and you breathe it and you drink it in. You go deeper and deeper and always you discover something new; something more glorious and the vision of God himself."

John began feeling a bit odd. He asked Mary if it was always so beautiful and then he blurted out: "Have you been this happy without me?"

She turned and faced him: "I never had the feeling I was without you; all the happiness of loving you and being loved has always been here. It's part of the joy of God's presence. It fills me, lifts me and draws me into the heart of love."

John felt nothing. Mary looked at him again: "You do look strange, John. There's something wrong. Then Mary suddenly said: "I can't stay..." Mary began to rise from her chair and she gradually began to fade away.

John began to panic. As he began to rise from his chair she moved away, growing fainter. "No, no, don't... Mary! Mary! Where are you? Where did she go?" Like a helpless little child he went running around the house looking for her... he was still in

the house but she wasn't there. "Maybe she left the house. She can't have gone far. I'll find her..." He walked out of the main door.

Then from behind him he heard this calm firm voice: "John West...I came from the gate to get you." He turned to see the angel who went on: "You have nothing here or anywhere without God. Heaven isn't a place or a house or even the one you loved."

"Well, then what is it?" snapped John, who was fuming and frightened at the same time.

The angel said: "Heaven is a reward. It's God giving himself to those who love him. Your wife loved him. She was content to die because God willed it. You came here before your time, against his will."

John shook his head and sat on the front steps of his house, head in his hands: "I couldn't bear the loneliness, not years, flat empty years! I just couldn't stand the thought."

The angel sat beside him: "Poor John West, how did you know there were to be years and years? You wouldn't trust the wisdom and the goodness of God."

He suddenly began to feel very cold. There was a chill wind cutting right to his bones.

"That wind, is the breath of eternal loneliness" said the angel. But John didn't want loneliness. He wanted to escape it.

"You poor foolish human, you didn't know what loneliness was until you cut yourself off from God..."

It felt like hell. He began to panic. What was he to do... Suddenly he screamed: "No! No, I have to go back. I'll wait. I'll wait as

long as God wants. No matter how long. I have to go back. I have to go back!"

The haze rolls in again. It blotted out the gate and the angel. He was drowned in it, lost in it. Then slowly it began to break. It started to drift away. He heard voices jumbled and far off.

He could hear Lucille's voice: "Doctor I was driving to town to pick up my husband. I kept thinking about dad. He looked at me so strangely when we said goodbye. He didn't sound like himself at all. I got so worried. I turned around and drove back here as fast as I could."

The doctor seemed relieved when Lucille said that she was almost locked out of the house when she remembered that her mother, always afraid of getting locked out left a little piece of screen loose on the side door so she could reach the latch from the outside.

Shaking his head the doctor said: "It was lucky. A few minutes more and I couldn't have done anything for him."

John seemed to get restless and he was mumbling something. "Dad...dad..." Lucille was screaming.

"Don't let me die...don't let me die." John was shouting with his eyes still shut.

"What did he say?" The doctor asked.

John opened his eyes and repeated: "I don't want to die!"

"Doctor he just tried..." Lucille was confused.

"I want to live...I want to live!" That was all John West wanted from now on. □

DON BOSCO AND HIS PEOPLE

by Natale Cerrato sdb

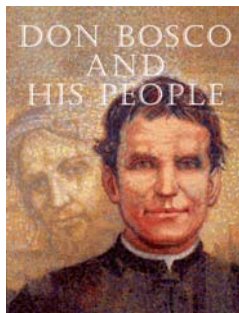
Don Bosco is known throughout the world as the "Saint" of youth and this study is not motivated by antiquated regionalism or vain nostalgia of the times gone by but because of a conviction that these were genuine Piedmontese values that existed in the nineteenth century. His treatment will be predominantly anecdotal, because it seems that anecdotes are the best way to highlight the traits of people. They will also help the reader to better understand the human qualities of a popular saint and at the same time to grasp some precious fragments of his prophetic message that are still valid today.

Chapter 1

The Virtues of His People

Every individual belongs to a specific society and reveals in his persona, in his way of thinking, of speaking and acting, a wealth of ideas, qualities and customs that characterize the components of that particular society. This world, according to cultural anthropologists, comprise the 'basic personality' that is usually formed during the first years of life.

Now, it is common knowledge that Don Bosco was born and spent his childhood in a poor Piedmontese peasant family in the early part of the nineteenth century. Piedmont, as it is known, is a fairly isolated part of the Italian sub-continent and is surrounded by mountains. The plain, the "pie-dei-monti," (at the foot of the mountains) is only a third of the region; the rest is hilly or mountainous



leaving its mark on the people of countryside which is mountainous, harsh and cold. For centuries then, work in the fields with the tenacity and sacrifices it requires and the awareness of the presence of God has been the legacy of the overwhelming majority of the Piedmontese; hence these characteristic virtues began to blossom in the rural populace. Finally, a history of invasions and looting, of struggles and intrigue, of violence and massacres have forced this small population to accept their destiny of war as a race of soldiers, especially after the unification of Piedmont under the House of Savoy.

All these geographical, ethnic and historical factors must be taken into account by those who wish to discover in Don Bosco "the virtues of his people."

It is also true that his peasant origin was the determining factor in the formation his personality and this was true of the people of the other Italian regions too. But while it would not be right to exclusively

attribute a Piedmontese character as the "virtues of his people," it should not be forgotten that the rural environment in which Don Bosco grew up was like that of the other regions too. To attribute a generic "peasant culture," virtues and values that matured very differently in other socio-economic conditions would be fortuitous.

A first summary description of the type of family in which Don Bosco is believed to have grown up is given to us by Fr. Eugene Ceria in his book *Don Bosco with God*, in which he says: "In the families of rural Piedmont at that time good Christian customs remained strong, despite the infiltration of foreign influences. Traditions were handed down from generation to generation around the fireside, a place that witnessed the sharing of simple family joys as well as the daily prayer with which these honest, hardworking people ended the day, reciting the rosary before the image of Our Lady of Consolation. The home really deserved the name of domestic sanctuary."

The late Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr. Egidio Viganò refers to this type of family when he says: "Our court of arms, *work and temperance* is rooted in the experience of the Christian families of those times, the expression of several values of that popular culture." We will therefore have to refer to the rural and domestic environment of that part of Monferrato which was Don Bosco's birthplace, and see it reflected in the life of the Becchi family whose incomparable educator was Mamma Margaret.

There is, in fact, no doubt that it was mainly Mamma Margaret



This group of houses is "The Becchi", as seen from the Serra di Buttigliera. A church tower stands above the trees. It belongs to the chapel put up in front of the house in which Don Bosco was born, on the centenary of his birth

who passed on to her son John the characteristic virtues of her people. Already Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne, who has studied in depth the figure of Don Bosco's mother once said that "it is reasonable to believe that the virtues of the mother are same virtues in the son too." Later, Fr Albert Caviglia in tracing the historical profile of the saint said: "The practical sense of things, the good-natured Piedmontese disposition, hope in the future, a little cheerfulness which speaks well of the saints, I believe was learned from his mother, Margaret Occhiena, a strong and admirable woman, who in her rustic simplicity deployed so much sense and virtue and supported the first steps of her son by her charity and her painful sacrifice of everything."

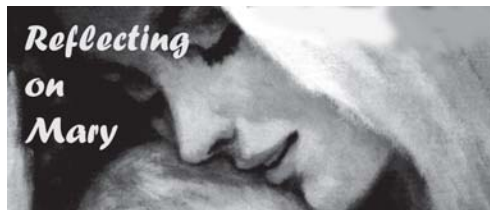
More recently Fr. Pietro Stella, when referring to the idea of God



in the infancy of Don Bosco, illustrates through the life and the words of his mother how the holiness of life permeated the rustic environment in which he was born.

From the above we can highlight the qualities that other scholars also allude to. Taking our cue then from these authoritative sources and based on our research we may begin an analysis of the main traits of that culture: common and practical sense, tenacity, industry, frugality and thrift, person of action not words, wit, good nature, sense of duty, a love of the land and a liking for his own language.

We cannot deny that our choice may seem a bit homogeneous because it includes elements of a diverse nature, that is, natural gifts such as common sense and wit, emotions and feelings such as love for one's own land and language and moral virtues, properly called tenacity and industry. We also realize that the Salesian Constitutions, in attributing to Don Bosco the virtues of his people, refer essentially to basic Christian virtues to better situate the person of Don Bosco in his cultural background which comprise of several factors that we can consider as traits that characterize a Piedmontese character. □



THE LORD IS WITH YOU, AND THE 'YES' OF THE ONE LOVED BY GOD

by Gianni Sangalli

God listens for a free response even from his future "mother"

From her birth Mary had God nearer to her than any other creature. But a total and unimaginable nearness was being prepared for her. Her immaculate body was destined to become the Ark of God, the physical home of God-made-man. Mary still did not know it. When the angel said: "The Lord is with you," she, who knew the Scriptures well, understood that those were words that preceded the proclamation of a call to the Lord's service for a mission that involved the destinies of his people.

That was how Abraham's vocation began: "Don't be afraid, I will be your shield," the Lord said to him (Gen 15:1). And to Moses, sent to set his people free he said: "I will be with you, so that you may fulfill that for which I have destined you" (Ex 3:12). It was the same with Joshua, Gideon, Jeremiah, David and many others called for a mission of salvation. God always says: "I will be with you so that

you will accomplish that for which I have destined you."

There is a plan of salvation that winds down through the centuries among the unchanging fidelity of God and the uncertainties and betrayals of the people he had chosen and loved. But there was a little "remnant" of the faithful "poor of Yahweh," who would put all their hope in God.

The fullness of time had now come. And, this time, to collaborate in the plan of his saving love, God did not call a king, a leader or a prophet, but a humble maid: Mary, from Nazareth, a little country town lost among the hills of Galilee. And because her heart did not succumb to the gravity of the announcement, help was guaranteed: "The Lord is with you."

God was already with Mary, he had already decided; he had already made his choice, making an alliance with the Daughter of Zion who "stands among the humble and poor of the Lord trustfully waiting and receiving salvation from him" (LG 55). Whenever God

speaks to a creature, he waits for a response in freedom.

Myriam: The humble girl is the "princess" God chose

"The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin, betrothed to a man of the house of David named Joseph. The virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27). Every time I hear that lovely passage read I feel distinctly that with the announcement of that name, a new history of humankind has begun.

What was the meaning of the name "Myriam" or "Miriám as Luke writes it? To the ancients, the choice of a name had a sense of foreboding, a wish to express the destiny of the man or woman who would bear it; his/her mission. Maria, Myriam, in Aramaic (the language that Jesus spoke), meant a "great lady," a "princess."



March 2018

It is more probable, however, that the name Maria is derived from the Egyptian language. In fact, the first time the name Mary appears in the Bible, is when it is used to name the sister of Moses and Aaron, who was born during the time of the slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt. Moses and Aaron were two Egyptian names: it was logical therefore to think that even their sister Mary had to have an Egyptian name, which meant "beloved of God." Such was the case of the Jewish girl whom God has chosen to be the mother of the Messiah; even her name indicated her marvellous destiny, her mission, her greatness: Mary loved by God!

We always pray as we pronounce with love that blessed name, which contains within itself the mystery of the one who gave flesh and blood to the Son of God, but who is also our mother! □

28

Don Bosco's Madonna

NEWSBITS

BELLUNO

On his deathbed, Pope Luciani "was holding three typescript sheets of paper in his hands. Of those pages I remember a quotation, the Gospel passage in which we speak of gluttons and drunkards...". Sister Margherita Marin, 76 years old, of the Sisters of Maria Bambina, is the only survivor of the group of four sisters - the others were Elena Maggi, Vincenza Taffarel and Cecilia Tomaselli - who took care of John Paul I in the pontifical apartment in the Vatican, from the end of August to the end of September 1978, for exactly 32 days. At the time of Luciani's election, she was 37 years old and was the youngest, and nobody knew anything about her until Stefania Falasca's book "Papa Luciani. Chronicle of a Death" (Piemme) went public. Here are the religious' answers to our questions.

Had you met Luciani before? I had not met him before. Two days after his election we joined his "family". In particular, I oversaw the wardrobe and the sacristy, I prepared the apartment's chapel for the morning mass celebration. But I also carried out other services when needed. Sister Cecilia was the cook, Sister Vincenza was a nurse, while Sister Elena coordinated our work, she was the group leader. Sister Vincenza Taffarel, who was also a nurse, was the oldest, she knew the Pope and had been assisting him for many years.

March 2018



There are those who speculate that he died of a broken heart, in the face of the financial scandals found in the Vatican....

I can only testify to what I have seen and I repeat: neither worried nor crushed by responsibility.

Let's talk about the last day of the Pontiff's life on 28 September 1978. What memories do you have of that day?

It was a normal day. In the morning, in the chapel, Mass was at seven o' clock. Then the Pope took a look at the newspapers and finally retired to his studio, because he had to write a document for the bishops. He spent the rest of the morning working at his desk. Then there was lunch...After lunch, there was as always, a short break. Then during the afternoon, the Pope continued to work walking around the apartment. I know this because I was in the wardrobe room and was ironing. I saw him go back and forth, holding a book in his hand and reading. Then in the evening he recited the vespers in the chapel with the secretaries. He recited them in English, to learn the language. In the evening, he dined normally. And as usual, after dinner, he came to wish us

29

Don Bosco's Madonna

nuns goodnight in the kitchen. He asked me what Mass I had prepared for the next morning. I said that the next day, September 29th, was the anniversary of the holy angels. And he said, "Good, so tomorrow morning, if the Lord wishes, we shall celebrate together". He was serene, quiet, he did not seem fatigued. He was about to leave, but stopped on the threshold and greeted us again. That evening before retiring, he spoke on the telephone with Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, Archbishop of Milan. The call lasted half an hour.

What happened the morning after? Can you tell us?

We Sisters would wake up at 5, at 5:15 a.m. we would be up. Sister Vincenza would prepare coffee for the Pope, I would wait for the groceries that would come with the elevator at 5.30 a.m. At 5.30 the Holy Father would go and take his coffee in the sacristy of the chapel and then pray until 7 am, when Mass began. That day the Pope had not come out. Sister Vincenza had seen that coffee was still there and had not been touched. I remember that we were both in the hallway of the apartment and she told me: "Come, let's try knocking on the door, the Holy Father has not yet come out". She went on to knock. No one answered...

What time was it?

It had to be about 5.30 am, more or less. She invited me to go closer. She told me: "Come, come....". Perhaps she had some sort of feeling, I don't know. Sister Vincenza went in first, and

I heard that she said: "Holiness, you should joke with me like that". She called me and I also went inside. I also saw that he was dead, motionless lying flat on the bed. The light was on and the Pope was wearing glasses. He was holding three typescript sheets, his hands were resting on his chest, as it happens to those who fall asleep while reading. He had no suffering face, he was lying down, with a slight smile, it seemed as if he was sleeping. He died without realizing it, there was no sign, it must have been something lightning quick.

Did you see the content of the papers that the Pope was holding in his hand? For decades, there has been all kinds of speculation...

I have only this memory: on the typewritten sheets, I could see a couple of lines. It was the Gospel passage where the words "glutton" and "drunkard" are quoted..."

Does it refer to Matthew 11:18-19? The passage that reports these words of Jesus: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."?

Yes, I remember that. I think he was reading to prepare for the Angelus on the following Sunday or for Wednesday's audience. □

Andrea Tornielli, *La Stampa*

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

In a Manner of Speaking

An American guest was trying to impress on the British host how vast the area covered by the United States is. "Why," he exclaimed, after several futile attempts to get his friend to understand what he meant, "You can get on a train in Pennsylvania at seven in the evening, and be still in Pennsylvania at seven the next morning!" The man seemed to understand at last and said: "Well, we've trains like that on our railways too, but we don't boast of them."

Occupational Therapy

A young draftee, in the Army just long enough to catch on to things, was caught loafing by his sergeant. "What are you doing?" barked the three-striper. "Well-uh-I'm procrastinating." The sergeant looked puzzled for a moment then roared: "Okay, just as long as you keep busy."

Creative Uses

Teacher: "What is the difference between a primitive man and a modern man?" Pupil: "When his wife talks too much, modern man goes to his club, while the primitive man reached for it."

Suite Talk

The hotel clerk was losing his patience. "Look," he said, "we don't have any rooms. We're full!" "If the President came in," the

man persisted, "You'd have a room for him, wouldn't you?" "Why, of course," the clerk admitted. "Then let me have his room. He's not coming."

Picking up Scraps

The story of a sad-faced fellow touched the merchant's heart so much that he filled a large sack with groceries and said, "These are on me - hope they help." Misty-eyed the fellow started out, then turned back. "Need something else?" asked the merchant. Came the sad reply, "How about my food tokens?"

Question of Perspective

Typist: "But professor, isn't this the same exam you gave last year?" Professor: "Yes, but I've changed the answers."

Impersonation Personified

There was the wife who complained to her husband, "Look at the old clothes I have to wear; if anyone came to visit, they would think I was the cook." The husband replied, "Well, they'd change their minds if they stayed for dinner."

Gender Economics

The difference between a man and a woman is that the man will pay two dollars for a one dollar item while a woman will pay one dollar for an item she doesn't want. □

Form IV

Statement of ownership and other particulars about the newspaper*:

Don Bosco's Madonna

1. Place of Publication: St. Paul's Press, 58.23rd Rd., TPS III, Bandra, Mumbai - 400 050
2. Periodicity of Publication: 1st & 2nd of every month
3. Printer's name and nationality: For Bombay Salesian Society
Fr Edwin D'Souza sdb (trustee)
Indian
Don Bosco Shrine Office
Matunga, Mumbai 400 019
4. Publisher's name: - do -
5. Editor's name: Fr. Ian Doulton sdb
6. Name & address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than 1% of capital

The magazine is a non-profit publication

I, Fr. Ian Doulton, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: March 1, 2018

Sd/-
Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

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.

After two and a half years of saying the three Hail Marys we got our house sold, which was difficult. I had also requested to get a single room in an aged home, and my prayer was answered. I thank Our Lady and I will always continue to pray the three Hail Marys.

Ms. A Fernandes, Mumbai
Thank You Mother Mary for all the favours granted to our sons Dr. Shane and Serville. We are grateful to you. *Innocencio D'Silva, Goa*
My belated and heartfelt and sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus and our Blessed Mother for providing a job for my husband in Mumbai after he lost his job in the Gulf due to the recession. I also thank my Blessed Mother for providing a good job for my children abroad. My younger son found his lost handbag containing important documents viz. his wallet, laptop, passport at the airport. O my Mother, I thank you for unconditionally answering all my prayers each time I call you for help. I am sorry I delayed in publishing my thanks. Please continue to intercede for my husband who is suffering from psoriasis. *A Devotee*
It was on December 11, 2016 and I was in the office and we were having a fun session and we were playing games as part of our fun activities. As we were playing I lost my balance and fell and as a result my left hand was badly injured. I was rushed to the hospital and the doctors said my left shoulder was dislocated and the bone in my fore arm was cracked. Before going to play I kissed the picture of Mother Mary on my manager's desk. So I believed Mary was with me and she protected me. My hand was paralyzed for four months and my prayers to Mother Mary saved my hand. Thank you Mother Mary.

Savina Menezes, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to you Mother Mary through your help and guidance and my faith in the 3 Hail Marys I have been blessed. You have come to my aid every time. I called to you saying the 3 Hail Marys.

A Devotee
My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for saving me from an accident. I always recite the 3 Hail Marys and ask the protection of the Most Precious blood of Jesus before leaving the house.

Gerry Miranda, Goa

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

By the grace of our lord Jesus Christ and Mother Mary I would like to present my testimony. I receive the Don bosco magazine from the past 3 years. In 2015 I was struck with severe depression regarding my job and marriage with depression coupled with OCD. (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) which acts as a deadly combination. I could not sleep at nights. I prayed to the Lord and Mother Mary for help. I was once reading through this magazine and came upon the testimonies of the devotion of 3 hail marys to Mother Mary. Also an uncle of mine advised about the same. I started this devotion and in sometime I was relieved of my Sleeping illness I did not have to take sedative prescribed by my doctor for sleep. I want the world to know about this MIRACLE and so increase devotion to Jesus and Mother Mary. *A Devotee*

My grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for the clear and normal sonography reports of Wilfred and for his complete recovery from his sickness. I am also thankful for all the other favours and blessings bestowed on me and my family. *Juliet John, Mumbai*

Sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady for the gift of a pregnancy and a safe delivery thereafter. *A Devotee*

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

My sincere thanks for all the blessings received throughout the Year of Mercy. Our thanks to all the saints through whose intercession we received so many favours. *A Devotee*

I thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus for healing me from bone marrow cancer. *Maria D'Souza, Mumbai*

I'm immensely grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco for (1) Healing the wounds on my feet; (2) Protecting me from a dog's bite; (3) Finding the car keys in a graveyard. *A Devotee*

I had a fall on August 15, 2017 and I hurt my hip. I was frightened it was fractured. I did not want to go to the doctor for an xray. I prayed to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. I am grateful that I was preserved from any major injury. *A Devotee*

Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints for saving my son Nelson from a major accident that took place last year. Dear Mother keep him safe. *Isabel Palani, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received. *L. Pereira, Goa*

Thank you dear Infant Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and St. Jude for all the favours received. Please continue to bless all of us. *Yvonne Rodrigues, Australia*

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



Our grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for keeping our daughter safe and healthy throughout her pregnancy and for the delivery of a healthy child. *Mata Lucia and Isac Dias, Goa*

It is through the intercession of Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio, St. Teresa of Kolkata that I safely delivered our baby boy Darius. We thank the Holy Trinity and our loving Mama Mary for blessing our child with good health and cheerfulness. Praise be to God for His countless blessings and protection always. *Callistus and Monica Gonsalves, Goa*

Our grateful thanks to Mother Mary, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for a safe and normal pregnancy and delivery of my daughter Candice, and for blessing Candice and Ryan with a normal and healthy baby girl born on September 24, 2017, whom they have named Hannah. Please guard, guide, bless and protect her and keep her always in good health. *Mrs. Cynthia Pinto, Podanur*

Sincere thanks to Our Heavenly Father, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and St. Anthony for bringing my daughter Antoinette and her kids Aeryn and Caelyn home after seven long years. Till the very last day it was just touch and go, with visas and EU passports and ID cards. Jennifer, Deryck and me, Maria, we are all grateful for all the heavenly assistance, may they continue to shower their blessings on us from above and on our son-in-law, Victor. *Maria, Deryck and Jennifer Fernandes, Mysore*

My heartfelt thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for granting a good job to my son (Dominic Savio Fernandes) and for all the favours received. *Mrs. Mary Francis Fernandes, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for giving my daughter the gift of a child after five years of marriage. *Filtobia Almeida, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for blessing us with a healthy baby girl in spite of complications. *A Devotee*

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

MARCH 2017

Formation in Spiritual Discernment

That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.

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

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

MARY WAS THERE

This is my thanksgiving to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the beautiful gift of "Parenthood" to Aisha and Carlton Dias, on the arrival of their son, Aaric, who was born in February 2016. Aaric is their miracle baby after 10 years of marriage. For those who are praying for children, never give up, keep praying to Mary Help of Christians and trust in her intercession. She will never forsake us. I prayed with Aaisha the Novena of Mary Help of Christians and Aaisha wore the St. Dominic Savio Scapular. We praise Jesus, and Mother Mary and we are extremely grateful for the gift of Aaric, for blessing Aaisha and Carlton.

Henrietta M. D'Sa, Australia

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

The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (*Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail*). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors. Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

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

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

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

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

Please address all correspondence to:

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

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