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**O Most Holy Virgin
Help of Christians
Grant that
through your
motherly intercession
we may be free
from all evils
and
everlasting death!**

*From the Perpetual Novena in
honour of Mary Help of Christians
composed by Don Bosco*

From The Editor's Desk

FEAR AND GRATITUDE

It happens pretty often that after the evening Mass, as our 'devotees' slowly fade into the shadows, there are, invariably one or two who appear out of the darkness to 'have a word' with me. I can see sadness, confusion or sometimes fear written large on their faces.

Recently one such young man admitted being afraid. Anxious was a word that kept popping up. He said that he found it difficult to stay home and study as there wasn't any food and no money. So he acknowledged that he was looking at the semester ahead and wondering how he was going to pay his fees. He shared with me some physical symptoms he'd been experiencing in these stressful times. He said he'd been waking up at night, anxious about his future and, how it had become increasingly more difficult to go back to sleep. The more he thought about things, the worse they seemed in the middle of the night. He said he didn't know what to.

But the worst thing my young friend admitted to was the fear that made it hard – as he said: "For me to be grateful for what I do have." Wow! That honest admission hung in the air between us for a while as we got quiet. His admission humbled me. For him to be able to admit that his fear took away his gratitude was the beginning of gratitude.

Wanting to be grateful after all, is a sign that gratitude is, at least being born. I had spent most of the day in an anxious frame of mind, worried more about the things I hadn't been able to accomplish, rather than appreciating my day as a place where I would experience God. I had looked at it as a series of potential catastrophes. I, in fact, was letting fear take away my gratitude too.

Fear is part of life. Worry and even anxiety have a positive purpose for us. Try as we like, we can't arrange never to feel those things. And, contrary to opinion, good Christian folks feel them regularly. The point of the Christian life is not to avoid fear, anxiety, and worry which simply cannot be done. But our Faith gives us wonderful tools to approach these places of fear. One tool is acceptance. Simply accepting that we are frightened or anxious goes a long way. As we name them, the feelings begin to dissipate because God generally waits for us to admit to ourselves what we are feeling before healing begins. Acknowledging the things beyond our control is another effective tool. That way we admit our powerlessness and find new freedom. Of course the primary tool Christ offers us is the assurance that there is One who is in control ultimately and that God cares for us with generosity and grace. Isn't it remarkable that these harsh times are also times of spiritual awakening? Fear and struggle do lead to a new sense of gratitude. If there are hard times in front of you, you've got to face them. Be present with God in your struggles; trust that God is present with you. In that way fear leads to gratitude.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

FAMILY DECISION-MAKING

by Ian Pinto silb

Family life requires constant decision making. The family is quite similar to a company. Decisions constantly need to be made so as to ensure smooth running and success. If decisions are not taken quickly and adroitly, the family like the company is heading for loss and eventual failure. Decision making is an important part of human life but is a skill that must be developed. Even though every one of us is capable of making decisions, not all of us are capable of making good and healthy decisions. That is why assistance, guidance and motivation are required. Simple decisions like choosing a drink at a party or washing your own plate are easily made but complex decisions like purchasing a new house or car require time and collaboration.

At a certain point in life, everyone has to make complex decisions. For example, a student has to choose a stream of study after one's 10th standard. What one later chooses to make a career depends to an extent on what decision one makes at that point of time. Tough decisions are not always left up to parents but in a family it is usually they who take up the responsibility of making decisions and for good reason since they are the ones responsible for the security and happiness of the family.

A man who had been married for over 45 years narrated an incident which happened when he was 52 years old. His wife was then 42, and they had four children,

the youngest of whom was in the 10th standard. His wife discovered that she was pregnant again. They consulted a lady doctor who advised medical termination of the pregnancy. He agreed with the doctor but his wife insisted that she would deliver the baby. In time, she delivered a healthy baby boy. She asked her husband to love the child more than all the other children in reparation for the thought he had entertained about aborting him. Incidentally, the boy grew to be the most loving of all the children and showed signs of high intelligence. The father recounts with a sense of regret that the only serious disagreement he ever had with his wife in all their years of married life was regarding the abortion of their son.

Making decision is tough, more so when your decision affects the lives of others. In families, the situation is delicate because most decisions affect every member of the family. Take for example, something as simple as purchasing a washing machine. Everybody is entitled to use the machine. The mother's work of washing the clothes is perhaps reduced but in the case of a large family, fights and disagreements about who is to use and when, can erupt. Such tensions are bound to arise and can give way to bitterness and division. For this reason, decision making in the family must be done carefully and systematically, so that everyone feels equally responsible for the

decision and for carrying it out.

TYPES OF DECISIONS

Families take decisions with regard to various aspects of life: Instrumental, affective, social, economic, and technical. Instrumental decisions are those which rest on functional issues like providing food, shelter and clothing for the family. Affective decisions deal with choices related to feelings and emotions. Choosing to get married is an example of an affective decision, also dealing with emotional problems in that family like anger issues, rejection, discipline and so on, form part of this type.

Social decisions are those related to the values, roles, and goals of the family, such as decisions about whether one parent will stay at home while the other works when the children are toddlers. Economic decisions focus on choices about using and gathering family resources. Whether an eighteen year old should get a job and contribute to the family income is an economic decision, as is investing money in real estate or stocks. Technical decisions relate to all the subdecisions that have to be made to carry out a main decision. For instance, if one member of the family requires special attention (on account of sports, academics or even physical difficulty) then the whole family needs to adopt a particular way of life that is suitable to provide for the needs of that individual.

Families use a variety of processes for actually reaching a decision. Many families have a habitual process that they use regularly whenever they need to

make a decision. Other families vary in the way they approach decision making depending on the type of decision, their mood, and their stage of development. Researchers often discuss five possible processes that families use in reaching decisions. These include appeals to authority and status, rules, values, use of discussion and consensus, and de facto decisions.

1. Authority and Status – One person in the family, usually the one with the higher status or authority level exercises it in making decisions that the other members follow. This is common among traditional families where usually the father is vested with the authority to decide on behalf of the whole family. The other members are guided by what he says is right. If a family is discussing where they should go for a family summer vacation, for instance, and the father decides that a camping trip is the best decision, the rest of the family concurs because of his authority. This method of decision making works for a family as long as all the members agree about who has the most status and authority. If the family members do not agree, they may engage in serious conflict rather than allowing the father to make a decision for them.

Many families however, have divided certain types of decisions as the province of one member and other types that belong to other family members. For example, with regards to the kitchen department, the mother is the primary decision maker while the father may be the deci-

sion maker when it comes to maintaining the family finances. In such a situation, everyone in the family might have authority over some decision-making concerns. Sometimes, the authority is given to those who display a certain expertise in that field. For example, an adolescent who knows a great deal about computers, the internet or automobiles, may be the one who decides about major expenditures in these fields.

2. Rules – Many families use rules to ease decision making. Rules in general create structures that help families to function. Some specific rules may provide guidance for decisions about dividing family resources. If multiple projects put a stress on the family finance then the family must decide which project is more necessary and urgent as compared to others and therefore requires greater attention and finance. For example, if the family home needs urgent maintenance work, the son wants to buy a new bike and the mother wants a new dishwasher then the priority ought to be the maintenance since neglecting it can have serious consequences. The son and mother may have to continue with their present circumstances till things settle enough to give attention to their desires. This process guides decision making by providing a system to which all of the family agrees.

Rules may also structure decision-making discussions. For example, some families maintain rules about equal participation in a decision-making conversation. They will not come to a decision until all family members involved have an approximately

equal say about the topic. Some families have a rule specifying that each member of the family has to say something before a decision can be reached. Other families have rules setting time limits for the process and a decision has to be reached when the time has lapsed.

3. Values – Decisions based on values are exercised in families that have strongly articulated principles. These principles may be explicitly stated or indirectly communicated, perhaps through family stories or other meaning-making practices. Some of these principles may derive from organized religion, a commitment to social justice, racial equality, or some other cherished value. For example, when parents are deciding about schooling for their children, some may choose religious education or may choose to homeschool, based on a dedication to their values. Additionally, families may choose to give volunteer time, donate money, or take in foster children as a result of their value system.

4. Discussion and Consensus – Decisions founded in discussion and consensus are related to decisions based on values. Families that use discussion and consensus as their mode of reaching a decision are committed to the principles of democratic process. It is important to these families that all members have a voice and that members feel that they contributed to the eventual decision. Families utilizing discussion and consensus often convene family meetings to discuss a potential decision. If a family wanted to adopt this process, they would call a family meeting and let everyone

have a voice in discussing the decision to be made. The process of consensus necessitates that the family would continue discussing the decision until all the members were satisfied with the eventual decision.

A family follows this decision-making process when they talk about their separate positions on a decision and continue talking until they reach an acceptable compromise. This type of decision-making process works best when the family is comfortable with power sharing.

5. De Facto – This type of decision occurs when the family fails to actively engage in a specific process, and the decision gets made by default. For example, when a couple wants to buy a new car, they discuss the decision. They find a car at a price they can afford, but they cannot absolutely agree to buy it. While they wait, trying to decide about the purchase, the car is sold, and they cannot find another that suits them at the right price. In another example, Rosario is trying to decide about taking a new job and moving his family to another state. He is unsure about whether this is a good idea, both personally and professionally. Further, he receives conflicting input from his family about the decision. If he lets the deadline pass for acting on the job offer, the decision is, in effect, made without the family actually stating that they have decided not to move. De facto decisions allow family members to escape responsibility for the repercussions of a decision since no one actively supports the course of action taken.

REVELATIONS

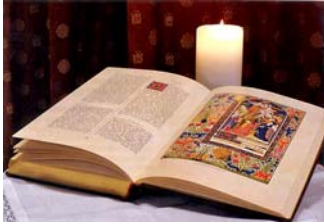
What does the process of decision-making have to say about the family? You may be surprised but in fact, it says a lot about the kind of family life that is lived in the family. The process that the family uses to make a decision reveals more about them and affects them more profoundly than the outcome. It is easy to imagine the case of Rosario. Subtly, his family makes the decision for him. This can affect him negatively as he could end up in a depression or with anger issues, or worse still, suicidal.

Some families discuss their processes and have an overt, preferred mode for decision making. Other families simply fall into one or another process without thinking about it much. Additionally, many families may say they prefer to reach a decision through a discussion of all the members, yet the power relations in the family are such that discussion only confirms what the father, for example, wants as the decision. In this manner, the family may preserve an illusion of openness while actually using an authoritarian process for coming to a decision.

How a family comes to a decision is just as important if not more, as the decision itself. Hence, cultivating a healthy decision-making scheme is vital for the overall health and well-being of the family. Each way of doing things has its own set of pros and cons but it is ultimately for each family to decide which way is best suitable to their make-up and character, so as to produce the optimal results and happiness for every member. □

A WORD THAT PIERCES

by Giuliano Palizzi



At the outset, let us reflect on Hebrews 4, 12: "The word of God is living and effective. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and judges the intentions and thoughts of the heart."

Sometimes in our assemblies we seem to "suffer" the Word. We reach late, the reading is already over; we are distracted; we don't understand why certain texts have to be read and we're not in the least bit prepared. Sometimes the reader does all he can not to be understood. Sometimes he's reading to himself and sometimes he doesn't know how to read and has not been instructed how to perform his role. In short, it's important that he finishes quickly. And the homily too...mum, the priest sometimes isn't very careful nor interested in what he is saying and what he says often has little to do with the word that has been proclaimed!

WHY ARE WE SO ESTRANGED FROM THE WORD?

Because we have scarcely made the Word our own; we don't feel it's ours but a book written very long ago for other peoples of another cultures and that's why we ask ourselves: "What does this book have to do with us? Why don't I realize that that Word was written today for me and it has value if I allow it and not just let it remain on a bookstore shelf, rarely consulted? All the episodes of the Gospel are a commentary on my life. They enlighten me on how I should act, on how I might accomplish what is described there and what others before me have experienced. Each of us is invited to savour the substance of the



message so that we can, like the apostles, respond to the difficulty to get in tune with the thought of Jesus, putting aside our points of view. For example:

THE TWO BROTHERS

One of the two, the younger, asks for his part of the inheritance because he can't bear his father anymore, the walls of the house seem so suffocating. He takes what's his, bids his father goodbye and leaves. Finally free! Fresh air! A new life and adventures galore! When it all ends he feels nostalgia for his father, for his home and he does something sensible. He knows his father loves him. He knew that he didn't slam the door on him. He read it in his father's eyes. And so he returned with several doubts and misgivings. And what kind of reception did his father give him? "When he was still a long way off, he saw him, ran to meet him, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him." Not only that but he gave orders for his son to be cleaned up and they began to celebrate; they even killed the fatted calf...

because this son of mine was dead and is alive again. And there is more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over 99 righteous ones. If we did not know the story we would say: why 'a celebration', is he 'out of his mind?' For one thing, this goes against all logic and common sense. And we think just like the other son who does not want to join the

celebration because he does not endorse the waste of a good thing on a slut like his brother. His father went out and pleaded with him but...

AND WE?

If we look at everyday life we come across people who would have done what the younger brother did and would return home. That's nice but... what will they find at home? Will their father be there or just so many brothers who can't wait to scream at them telling them that there's no place for them here? Maybe they got married and planned to live together...but then... they separated and remarried... but now they don't feel far from the father they left... they want to return but there's no room for them. How many Christians are ready to aim words like darts using the law and justice to point accusing fingers at him? Because we are better than God! But wasn't this word written just for us so that we avoid the attitude of rejecting others but standing on the side



of the merciful Father? On the cross he said to the thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" our God is great! He is much better than so many doctors of the law shut in their curial offices studying how to make life difficult for erring children of the Church, watching for the specks in the eyes of others while all the time not seeing the beam in their own! □

IGNATIUS STUCHLY

1869 - 1953

He was born on December 14, 1869 in Boleslaw in Upper Silesia. His parents who lived on a farm had an unshakable faith at a time when Catholics were exposed to harsh reprisals. Little Ignatius was imbued with this courageous faith. From the days of his elementary school he had heard of the priesthood from his excellent teacher Giovanni Kolibaj and he felt an early fascination towards this way of life. His dream only became a reality at the age of 22 when he was directed to the Salesians and it was Don Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco who called him to Turin. He began his novitiate on August 25, 1895 at Ivrea. It was his ardent desire to offer himself to the missions and it was for this that he prepared himself studying philosophy and agriculture; but one day Don Rua told him enigmatically: "Your mission will be in the North!"

Ignatius went through a series of various stages that seemed a kind of forced march. He was sent first of all to Gorizia, a city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He taught senior school students while studying theology at the same time. To these studies were added a few other tasks including supervising the construction of a house. He was



ordained a priest in 1901. While handling his many commitments he also began to speak about himself to his spiritual director.

He became a much sought-after confessor especially for the pilgrims who came to the sanctuary of the holy mount of Gorizia. In 1910 he was sent to Ljubljana (Slovenia). There too he was asked to take care of the construction of the church of Mary Help of Christians which had to be halted for lack of funds. They were difficult times and he had to feed many youngsters and support a novitiate in Radna. Like a good bursar, he succeeded in everything including completing the church of Mary Help of Christians. To provide for the youngsters he did not hesitate to go begging.

He was already looking forward to a life in which he would

have a greater presence among youngsters when he was called to Turin to take up a new obedience. He was one of the few confreres from the Czech Republic. The superiors intend to send him to Perosa Argentina to start a foundation for the aspirants from Bohemia and Moravia. He would spend three years in a situation of great poverty but he never appeared preoccupied. Especially among the youngsters he was always cheerful.

It became necessary to transfer these young people to their homeland and Fr. Ignatius was still kept in charge of them. So he left for Frystak (in the Czech Republic) where the house of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was bought for this purpose and Fr. Ignatius was the rector for six years.

The successful vocational development led the superiors to make Czechoslovakia an autonomous province and Fr. Stuchly was its first provincial in 1935. Within a few years the nascent province dramatically flourished. After four years there were about 400 confreres. When the Czechoslovak province was divided into two (Slovakia and Bohemia-Moravia) Fr. Stuchly would continue to be the superior.

After annexing Bohemia-Moravia to Nazi Germany and having made Slovakia a vassal state, on September 1, 1939, Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland, thus began the Second World War. Fearful years followed: houses were seized, Salesians were sent to forced

labour. The "grandpa" (as Fr. Ignatius was now called) was the secure reference during this general calamity strengthening the faith and the hope of the confreres and working with great solicitude with the weakest. The war ended and seventy-year-old Fr. Stuchly was asked if he wished to be replaced but the obedience still entrusted to him made him look after the difficult management of the post-war period. And what followed was a real rebirth: the Aspirantate, the novitiate, the houses of philosophy and theology were opened.

He was almost eighty years old when they finally appointed a successor to him. He could then retire to his dear home in Frystak where he dedicated himself to the ministry of confessional. The storm began once more, for him and for the society. In 1950 he had a stroke for which he needed constant assistance from the confreres. In that same year the new master, the Russians felt the presence of setting up inspectors in every Salesian house. Our patriarch reached the summit of his Calvary seeing day after day the destruction of all he had created a destruction that he had prophesied many years earlier. Many of the confreres were deported. He himself ended up in a nursing home first in Zlín and then in Lukov. Despite the storm he remained serene. A second stroke cut short his life on January 17, 1953. His remains lie in Frystak and is a place of constant visits from confreres and laity. □



CL. JEROME ARULDAS

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

God's call in my life has been something very simple. It has not been something spectacular, sensational or dramatic. I see comprehensively what has happened in my vocation thus far. When I joined Lonavla I didn't really have any ambition or goal in my mind as to what I wanted to be in life. But I sincerely enjoyed various moments of personal and community prayer which were creative and illuminating, creating space for spiritual growth. All my life I found the journey practically uncertain. Thus far it's not me who was certain but God accompanied me up to now. I had never believed in myself but rather believed in God who called me. I am really happy in my vocation today because of God who led me through the uncertainties of my own limitedness. I remember vividly when I was exhorted by my



parents and Fr. Ronald Menezes to join, my clear response was a plain 'no.' But then I did not know what compelled me to say 'Yes' and I gave the Salesian life experience at Lonavla a try. Gradually as my motives were purified I felt the pull that God was calling me to a particular way of life to save souls. I have confidently realized that in my vocation, at every stage, I have been really uncertain but God has been a true mountain of hope in all my uncertainties giving me assurance. He has led me on and I am sure that he will lead me into the future. I am in awe of this living and loving God. God has been spectacular and great during the uncertain moments of my life. At every juncture God has assisted and strengthened me in my vocation. □



"Wherever God has put you, that is your vocation. It is not what we do but how much love we put into it."

— ST. TERESA

Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is to love Jesus.

St. Teresa of Kolkata

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. ATHANASIUS, 300 - 373
BISHOP & DOCTOR

May 2

If we take a look at the Church of the fourth century we realize that it was a century full of difficulties and persecutions for the Catholic community thanks to various heresies (primarily Arianism that raged for several years) and various emperors, vested with power tried to impose this heresy. Athanasius and many other saints of the (Church) calendar and several others were victims of these persecutions. But God's consolations were plentiful.



Athanasius was able to wade through this tempestuous sea of his apostolic life remaining an example of perseverance and patience; the perseverance of faith and his courage in defending the truth about Christ and his love for Him. St. Basil the Great called him a "great apostolic soul." Gregory Nazianzen called him a "pillar of the Church" while the Eastern Church conferred on him the title of "Father of Orthodoxy." And that was said of several of the great Fathers of the Church.

The Young Deacon, already a Protagonist at Nicea (325). Atha-

nasius (which means Im-mortal) was born in Alexandria of Egypt in the year 300 to a Christian family. He was fortunate to receive not only a good cultural education but he also came to know Hellenism, philosophy and theology that was taught at the famous *Didaskaleion* of his city. While he was still a boy he had the opportunity to admire the courage of the martyrs during the persecutions against Christians, a fact that remained seared in his memory and helped him during the persecution that was levelled against him. While still young he was introduced to the world of monasticism through the charismatic monks like Pachomius and Anthony with whom he established profound

spiritual friendships.

In 319 when he was about 20 years old he became a deacon in his community at the service of bishop Alexander who at once realized the value of this young man and appointed him his secretary. That was how Athanasius was given the opportunity to accompany his bishop to the great Council of Nicaea in 325. Why was this council so 'great'?

Let's step back a bit. In Alexandria there lived, during the same period, a certain priest named Arius. He was theologically brilliant and had a vast knowledge of Hellenistic culture. But Arius wished to simplify the doctrine of the Trinity. Who exactly were Christ and the Holy Spirit? His response to this question simply destroyed the peculiarity of Christianity and of the man who was its centre, Jesus Christ. For Arius, Jesus was simply man who God himself elevated to the dignity of his Son to make him our teacher and life-guide; an exceptional man, extraordinary and as charismatic as you want, but only a man. And so, his Spirit could not be a creature, like the Christ. And so, God remained in his infinite solitude, goodness and omnipotence.

Several bishops but even Athanasius sensed the devastating and disruptive danger of this doctrine of Arius (called Arianism). The same Emperor Constantine who called the Council of Nicaea had to settle the question. Here Athanasius played a strong and decisive role in condemning the Arian theories. Jesus Christ was the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father. "Light from Light, begotten not created." True

God and true man. But Arius, even in the presence of the entire Council of Bishops refused to submit.

Persecutions and Exile

And so began the trials and tribulations of Athanasius. Dark and threatening clouds began to gather on the horizon of his future.

In 328 Alexander died and Athanasius was acclaimed his successor. One of his first pastoral visits was to Thebiade, among the disciples of Pachomius and Anthony. Athanasius wanted to strengthen their unity and not only have their spiritual support. And that was just what happened.

While he was still on his pastoral visit the first signs of a storm began to be felt and they were large. The followers of a certain Meletius accused him to the emperor for his alleged illegal episcopal election (too young!)

Other accusations came from the followers of Arius whom he did not want admitted into the Church of Alexandria. The Arians severely plotted against him and so convened a synod to which they prevented the Pro-Nicene bishops from participating. Athanasius was insulted, slandered, mocked, threatened and condemned. But he managed to escape to Constantinople where he managed to have an interview with Emperor Constantine who seemed to agree with him but just a few days later a decree for his exile to Trier in Germany was issued. The well-known accusations had struck again.

Constantine died in 337 and his successors permitted Athanasius' return. He was received triumphantly by his people of

Alexandria. The Arians however did not give up. But at the invitation of the Pope of Rome, Athanasius went to the capital to take part in a council that Julius himself convened. He remained in Rome for six years until 346 continuing his crusade against Arianism.

In 346 the Emperor Constantius permitted Athanasius to return to Alexandria where he was triumphantly received but that period unfortunately, did not last long.

The emperor declared himself avowedly pro-Arian but the Pope of Rome, Liberius defended him. Then the same emperor summoned a council at Arles in 352 and Athanasius was condemned once more. The Pope naturally did not accept the condemnation and at his request convened another council in Milan. Athanasius wrote to the learned doctor Jerome (saint and Doctor of the Church) that the world seemed to have turned Arian.

But when the imperial police reached Alexandria to solve the problem of Athanasius and eliminate him once and for all he could not be found! His faithful Christians hid him so perfectly and so did his friends the monks.

Emperor Constantius the pro-Arian had died and in came Julian (known to history as the apostate). In the first place all the exiled bishops were allowed to return to their sees. Even Athanasius was allowed to return in 362. He immediately began the work of reconciliation among the churches naturally reaffirming the faith that was founded on the Council of Nicaea. Julian, who had in mind to restore even

paganism did not look kindly on Athanasius' work and ordered "that this infamous to be sent out of Egypt" into the desert and so it was that Athanasius was sent into exile to live among the monks.

A short time later, Julian the dreamer of neo-paganism died early (363). Exit Julian and once more Athanasius returns to Alexandria to be among his people and all are happy. But not for long, because Valente, the Emperor of the East was another supporter of the Arian party and he consequently forced Athanasius into hiding. This time riots broke out in the city and Valente, fearing that he would lose favour with the people permitted the "rebel" bishop to return to his people of Alexandria who were stubbornly Christian and "non-Arian."

The indomitable Athanasius was able to once more live in peace for the last seven years of his life. He died on May 3, 373. He was admired, revered and loved by his flock (with all that he suffered for the faith and for the truth of his faith in Christ). He was respected by his enemies who were never few. He wrote letters to other bishops including the bishop of Rome and of course to his friends the monks. He also wrote works of a homiletic nature (his sermons to the people) and exegesis (explanation of scripture) and apologetics (defense of the faith against Arians) and also pastoral letters.

The Church recognized his sanctity by not only proclaiming him a saint for the troubled life that he lived but also for his firm faith and also for being a master of the spiritual life, a doctor of the Church. □



THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE FINAL PROMISES

by Ian Pinto, sdb

THE END OF MARK'S GOSPEL

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels that are included in the Canon of the Bible. It is interesting in many respects but one of the key objects of interest of the Gospel is its ending. Most scholars agree that Mark concluded his gospel with verse 8.

What follows, verses 9-20, is called the later addition to the gospel. The main reason for doubting the authenticity of the ending is that it does not appear in some of the oldest existing manuscripts. Moreover, the ending has some stylistic features which also suggest another author. The Gospel appears incomplete without these verses, and so most scholars hold the opinion that these verses were supplied during the second century. Many scholars, however, disagree that this is entirely the case and argue instead that though the longer ending is non-Markan it completes what Mark left incomplete (whether intentionally or otherwise).

APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES

The Resurrection of Jesus was not received very well by the apostles and disciples.

Early morning, on the day after the Sabbath, three women took spices to anoint the body of Jesus since it was not done properly at the time of his burial because of the Sabbath laws. To their surprise when they reached the tomb the stone was rolled away. Inside sat a man who gave them a cryptic message. With fear they ran away. Mark insists that “they said nothing to anyone” (Mk 16:8).

After this first encounter, Jesus appeared to two other disciples on the way to Emmaus, but yet the others did not believe (Mk 16:12-13). Finally, Jesus appeared to the eleven and reproached them for their lack of faith and dullness to welcome the good news of his resurrection from the witnesses (Mk 16:14). He then commissioned them to leave the security of their group and “go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mk 16:15).

He instructed them that all who believe their message and are baptized will be saved while those who refuse will be condemned (v. 16). Finally, he indicates the signs that will accompany them as they go about preaching and spreading the Good News. In the Old Testament, signs and wonders served primarily to testify to God's power. In the New Testament, signs are also used to validate the ministry of Christ's disciples. These signs are quite enchanting and I wish to dwell on each of them a little.

CASTING OUT DEMONS

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines exorcism, or the removal of evil spirits as, “When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism.”

Exorcism has a long history in Christianity. Christ himself performed numerous exorcisms (Mt 4:23-25, Mk 1:32-39, Lk 8:26-39). He handed over authority over evil spirits to his disciples and they too cast out demons in his name (Lk 10:17-20, Mt 10:1-8, Mk 6:7).

SPEAKING NEW LANGUAGES

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles and they began to speak other languages, as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4). These languages were unknown to the speakers before that day but nevertheless, were comprehended by foreigners who heard them speak in their respective languages (Acts 2:6-11). It was due to this ‘gift of tongues’ that the apostles were able to fulfill the commission of Jesus of

going to the whole world.

SNAKES AND POISON

Snakes are biblical creatures. They are mentioned no less than 28 times in the Bible. Both the first book of the Bible, Genesis and the last book of the Bible, Revelation, recount an incident involving a snake (Gen 3:1-15, Rev 12). The snake is seen as a symbol of the devil and so stands for evil that has wound around the human heart and filled humanity with the poison of sin. Against this evil, both physical and spiritual, Jesus promises protection. As the serpent that was lifted up in the desert by Moses, brought healing and relief to all those suffering from snake bite, so also will the Son of Man do when he is lifted up from the earth, that everyone who believes may have eternal life (Jn 3:14-15).

HEALING THE SICK

Just like the casting out of demons, healing the sick through the laying of hands or through contact with relics (like clothes) has been reported in the New Testament. These cures were nothing short of miraculous. In those days, medicine was in its infancy and most illnesses that are curable now-days were terminal then.

The reason I wanted to single out each of these promises is to draw attention to the fact that they were not merely for the apostles, but are also valid for us. Just as Jesus calls us to “go and proclaim”, he assures us of his continual presence and of his divine assistance. We ought to claim His word by putting our faith in Him and living out our faith courageously. □

Quiet Spaces

AS THE SPIRIT MOVES

Taken from Pope Francis reflection on John 15:12-17 on May 8, 2015

On Friday, the Feast of Our Lady of Luján, Patroness of Argentina, Pope Francis offered up morning Mass in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* for his homeland. He prayed that we know how to follow movements provoked by the Holy Spirit in each one of us and throughout the Church: movements that in appearance seem to cause confusion but instead always lead to unity.

At the beginning of the homily, the Pope remembered how “Jesus promised his disciples the Holy Spirit and said that the Holy Spirit would teach them many things and would remind them of the things that He taught them”. Thus, “from the first moment the Holy Spirit came, the very day of his coming, he began to move the waters: he began a movement in the Church”. The disciples, on their own, “were closed, out of fear, but he started a movement: they went out and Peter addressed the people for the first time”.

Peter’s words, the Pontiff explained, “were heard by each and every person in his own language: everyone in their own language”. Upon hearing them, many “were converted and went out throughout the land with this news: Jesus was alive, the Lord was risen”. Therefore, “this movement towards the world begins”. And that is what the Apostle Philip “also does with the ‘minister of the economy’ of Ethiopia, who was a Jew, a proselytized Jew: he gives him Jesus’ message, he baptizes him and goes back to his land to preach the Gospel”.

Francis retraced those first steps of evangelization narrated in the Acts. “The Apostles – he said – begin to preach in Jerusalem and, after the healing of the paralytic, begging for alms” before the door of the temple called “Beautiful”, Peter and John “are called to judgment and stoned: the persecutions begin”. And thus, “after the death of Stephen, another movement bursts onto the scene: the persecutions”.

For his part, “Paul begins to preach conversion to the pagans as well and they hear this beautiful news and convert”. However, there is a Christian group that is “closed, does not understand”, who repeat: “No, not pagans!”. They reach the point of stoning Paul and leaving him for dead. Then “they seek help among the powers of society... In Antioch they went to pious noblewomen and high-ranking men in an attempt to move them against the apostles”.

The Pope continued: “Thus we arrive at the point in Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles (22-31) where the waters of Antioch are moved, because a group of Christians, deeply tied to the Jewish law, want to impose the Hebrew ways on new Christians before baptizing them: e.g., circumcision”. But “Paul says no”. This “ignites a fight among them, the waters are moving”. One reads, in fact, that there

were lively debates going on. “They debated vigorously, because there was a great deal of movement”, the Pope explained. “How do they resolve the problem? They gather and each gives his own judgment, offers his own opinion; they discuss, but like brothers not enemies: they don’t make any outside deals in order to win; they don’t go to civil authorities to impose themselves; they don’t kill in order to profit: they seek a path of prayer and dialogue”. And those who were actually on opposing sides dialogue and reach an agreement: this is the work of the Holy Spirit”.

Chapter 15 of Acts, Francis said, tells how “the process ends”, in today’s liturgy, “with the First Ecumenical Council, the Council of Jerusalem”. They send “a letter to those who do not know how to preach to the closed ones: ‘The Apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia of Gentile origin, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind’. In effect, “they sowed discord”, the Pope added, proceeding to read the text: “we have decided to choose representatives and send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul – who were considered heretics – ‘who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth’”. In reading these words the Pontiff inserted that ultimately they came to an agreement and this even though Barnabas and Paul “were deemed heretics”.

This, Francis said, “is the way of the Holy Spirit, this is the work of the Holy Spirit”. For it is he “who moves the waters, who stirs a little disorder, who seems to throw us into a storm, to torment – think of Pentecost – and then he brings harmony, unity: he has these two characteristics”. And “a Church where there are never such problems”, he added, “makes me think that the Holy Spirit is not very present”. Certainly, “in a Church where there is always discord and where there are factions that betray their brothers, one against another, there is also no Holy Spirit”. Indeed, “The Spirit is what brings newness, moves situations forward, creates new spaces, brings the wisdom that Jesus promised: ‘He will teach you’”. The Spirit, therefore, “moves but in the end creates harmony among all people”. And in continuing the celebration, the Pope asked “the Lord Jesus, who is always present among us, to send always the Holy Spirit among us, to each one of us; to send Him to the Church and enable the Church to be faithful to the movement of the Holy Spirit”.

(by L’Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 20, 15 May 2015)

THE WORLD HAS NO WALLS

From Fr. Ian Doullton's collection of stories

This is the best kind of story that I like to recount. It's a true story and it took place in a not too fashionable district of Paris. There weren't many people like Anna, who found a new world just outside her own doorstep; the same world that you can explore and what she did, you can do.

Anna had her own private world in Paris France, in 1940. She had her house, her husband and her four children. Outside her four walls she had a narrow circle of interest with included church on Sunday and visits to half a dozen neighbours. When her children, who were in high school tried to interest her in new social action ideas, she became quite annoyed: "It's alright to give money but let them take care of themselves after that. They don't appreciate your interfering. I don't ask anybody to come and help me, why can't people be satisfied to mind their own business and leave each other in peace?"

But France in 1940 did not know peace for long. Another war and Anna's husband took his uniform out of the trunk and marched away. She tried to carry on within her own four walls remembering the last war. But this one was different. It dragged on her outside her house and forced her to spend whole nights huddled in air-raid shelters with people she had never seen before. The war made her stand for three and four hours a day in the butcher's shop line, the grocery

line, the bakery line. She talked freely to women she would have once termed as coarse and common. In the second year of the war, Anna appeared in the Butcher's shop line wearing the black dress and black veil of mourning. An old woman with a harsh red face took both Anna's trembling hands in her rough ones and looking up into her face asked: "Who is it for?"

"My husband, killed in Russia," she replied in a whisper as she almost burst into tears. The old woman looked into their hands clasped to each other and nodded: "My son is in Russia, the last time I had any word. That was six months ago. Eh, at least when they're dead you know where they are. Three of my grandsons were killed in Africa, dead, yes. They are the lucky ones." The line moved on slowly. Anna breathed a sigh and whispered: "When will this war ever end?" No one spoke loudly in the butcher's line.

It was around midday and it had begun to drizzle and the old lady looked up into the cloudy sky and said: "War or peace what is the difference to people like us? If our men aren't fighting they're out of work or on strike. There is never enough money, enough food; enough clothes. War... when you're poor you're always fighting for your life."

It was after the death of her husband that Anna began to attend Mass every morning. Now she understood the meaning of sacrifice, the offering of her

suffering to God. She watched the growing despair of the men and women who had no faith and who could only try to endure life like animals. The war was hard on everyone and days seemed to move on relentlessly without any hope of getting better.

The war finally ended but not the suffering. Anna, in the midst of endless worry about rationing and scarcity still found time to wonder about the women who had stood in line with her and how they were managing to exist.

The war had been over almost a year when one morning when she thought that it was going to be just another depressing day, her pastor Fr. Lavelle, her parish priest came over for a chat: "Anna, I need your help. Conditions in the parish were bad enough before the war. They were the same in the whole neighbourhood; people didn't know each other, they hardly spoke. I knew very few of them but now conditions are terrible." They were sitting in her apartment and Anna looked out of the window, now without curtains: "Yes Father, the war was horrible; but people were more friendly then. I could talk to anyone. Now everyone is so cold, so indifferent. I wish I could do something Father, it's a terrible world for my children to grow up in."

Fr. Lavelle looked at her and said softly: "Yes, but you can do something."

"But Father, I have four children to take care of...I have..."

"Anna you can do this: There are about a hundred and eighty families in your neighbourhood.

I want you to go to their houses, get acquainted with them; find out what help they need."

Anna didn't know these people; what if they slammed the door in her face? She was afraid. She couldn't bear the rejection. She pleaded: "Father I don't know these people..."

"Well, the only way you can get to know people is to meet them." Fr. Lavelle went on. "Most of them will be ungrateful at first. Some will insult you; some will always receive you." Then taking a breath he said kindly: "Anna I'm not asking you to do this for me or for the church or even for these people. I'm asking you to do this for Christ himself."

Anna couldn't refuse: "Well Father, I know that there are many people who need help. During the war I did much more for my neighbours than I do now. I'll try Father. But I don't think it will do much good."

Anna took one of her children's notebooks and a pencil and she started walking...a solitary figure down the long streets lined with strange houses...She climbed up a flight of stairs and rang the bell. A door opened slightly and she heard a voice from the semi-darkness: "Yes? What do you want?"

Anna hesitated: "I'd like to talk to you." "What about?" Anna went on: "What's your name?"

"Marie Durant, Mrs. Anthony Durant until the war." Anna was encouraged: "I'm also a widow since the war. I have four children." "With a slight smile Marie opened the door as she spoke: "Is that so? Well, come in then."

When Anna was away from the house she made a little entry in her notebook:

Marie Durant, widow, five children: two reported tubercular, three boys going school have no jackets or sweaters; cannot afford milk or eggs...

In the attic of #204 Vincent Landry 80 years of age, blind, no relatives; no heat in room...

#507 apartment 3, one room: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Blanchard and infant. Mr. Blanchard has been paralyzed by an accident needs wheelchair, medicine for wife and baby.

Of course it was not all open doors. "Good morning sir, I would like to..." (slammed door) Again rings bell...again...then she wrote in her book: #721 refused admission...try again tomorrow.

At the end of six months, Anna Sauret made a full report to Father Lavelle.

Father Lavelle was encouraged and told Anna that she had met practically everyone in the neighbourhood and then he asked: "Now, what shall we do first?"

"Father I don't know. They need food, clothes, everything. And the children should have some kind of training. Father, while the parents work they run the streets all day, like little wild animals."

Father Lavelle suggested that Anna get someone to help her. "Yes, only yesterday Marie Durand asked me if there was something she could do. She's so grateful because I gave her the jackets that my sons had outgrown." Anna said eagerly.

Father Lavelle was pleased

with her suggestion and added: "The three of us will hold a meeting. You will get other helpers later on but you have made the beginning yourself."

At the first meeting they decided on the motto for the group: "Lord, what would you have me do?"

Lord what would you have me do? 'Feed my hungry, clothe my naked. Visit my sick...

Anna was excited. They were in the presbytery sitting down for a cup of coffee: "Marie, now we have three farmers who will give us milk for the children..." And Marie was thrilled to add: "Anna, Anna, did you see this fine collection of clothes? You know I even found a black dress for poor Mrs. LaFrance. Now she can get out of bed before summer time."

In a matter of a month Anna came to Fr. Lavelle: "Father, now my brother wants to help us. The men are getting jealous of what we women are doing. They say they will drive cars for us; make furniture and even build houses..."

It gave Fr. Lavelle much joy to see the progress and added his mite: "If your group will bring the children to the church Anna, I will hold special religion classes for them. Next month we will start instructions for the parish; to teach and help the older children who have been so upset by the war."

Twenty women volunteered to help but at the meetings there were sometimes five or six; sometimes only Anna and Marie. Anna went to Father Lavelle in

desperation: "Father, why don't they keep up their interest? Why don't more of the men and women come to help us? They must see how much work there is to be done, if only half of them gave just a few hours a week..." Fr. Lavelle was a kindly old pastor who knew his parishioners: "Anna, someone has to be the pioneer. In every battle someone has to lead the charge and run the risk of being wounded. This time is it you."

Anna shook her head: "I can only do so much."

The good pastor looked up and with a weak smile said: "That is all God expects. Others will come when they see you aren't discouraged. Everything that was ever done for God started with his grace working in one soul."

One year later Anna came to Fr. Lavelle again: "Father, Mr. Alexander who lives in the town across the river wants us to come and start a group in his neighbourhood."

Now they were making progress but they didn't have enough volunteers but she added: "We have so much to do here. We need more help ourselves."

Fr. Lavelle was in the church extinguishing the candles and he heard Anna come in. He turned to her: "It is less than two years ago that I spoke a few words to you about the apostolate of the neighbourhood. You listened, you set out alone...now what do we have? Thirty groups, following your direction. The needs of every family in this neighbourhood known; all the children in catechism class; the church

crowded every Sunday; the sick in the hospitals and home visited every week; the men of the parish building houses for the newly married; finding work for the boys; a special group of women to take care of the young mothers and the babies; help even for men in prison and their families; all this in less than two years; and you started it."

Anna felt humbled by Fr. Lavelle's summary of the situation: "I had help Father."

"Yes, the grace of God," said the old priest.

It takes only one sun to warm the world. It takes only one solitary soul who can see Christ in every face to light the dark places of a thousand human hearts. The Church needs helpers all over the world; in every city and town, in your own there is the same unnecessary suffering. There is the same silence of despair broken only by the whisper: Of what use is the Church? You seem to think you are left behind. But the Church, the Body of Christ needs your hands, your heart, your voice, your feet. You can prove to your world that Christianity has the force to lift those who are deprived and discarded by society. You have only to ask humbly and sincerely *Lord, what would you have me do?* And the answer will come: "I would have you feed my hungry, clothe my naked, visit my sick. I would have you teach my ignorant, comfort my suffering. I would have you make the whole world pause in astonishment and cry out as once it did: "See how these Christians love one another." □

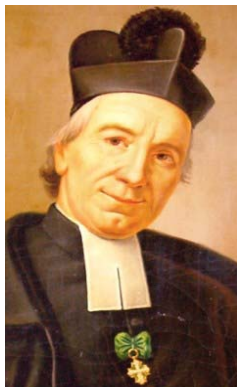
DON BOSCO'S GOOD HUMOUR

by Natale Cerrato

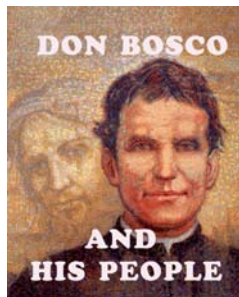
COTTOLENGO

When Cottolengo and Don Bosco met, the “good Canon” told the “Ragamuffins” Priest, “You have the face of an honest man, come to work at the *Little House of Divine Providence*, there’s no shortage of work.” And Don Bosco did really visit the *Little House* but only to ‘look’ and ‘learn.’ Then Cottolengo said: “But the cloth of your soutane is very light and flimsy. Get one that’s much tougher and more durable so that the youngsters can cling on to it without tearing it!”

Don Bosco started his Oratory on December 8, 1841. Cottolengo’s life came to a close on April



May 2018



30, 1842. He was born at Bra on May 3, 1786 and was canon of the church of *Corpus Domini* in Turin and with stunning dynamism he created a unique multifaceted charitable work. Instead of arguing, he went to work. Instead of verbally disputing he contested the facts. He wanted to bear witness to the love of God for suffering humanity and at the same time he let society know that the poor were the responsibility of everyone. Even today, work of that nature is popularly linked to one name: Cottolengo.

1. A Simpleton?

Brilliant conversationalist and casual humorist, Giuseppe Benedict Cottolengo knew how to see humour in everything. At times he gave the impression of being light-headed but he bore a very heavy burden on his shoulders that was only rendered light by his faith. In an environment of misery and pain he always had a simple and transparent smile on his lips.

To those who asked him about

his health he replied: “Oh, I’m always fine...I’ve just come from the tavern,” or he would say: “I’m drunk I can’t stand straight.” In his picturesque language words like “*cicòt*” and “*cicòtola*” (a tipsy man or woman) referred to his “ardent love for God.” The “tavern” was “the house of God” where he frequently sought refuge in order to draw light and strength for his work. To hear him one would think he was healthy but useless and unemployed. “I never know what to do,” he responded to those who praised his work. “You’re always looking for someone to play a game of *morra* or *tresette*?” Running up and down the stairs to assist the poor in their garrets was referred to as “downing a glass or having a peg.” He dodged small talk or useless confidences and he taught his Vincentians to shy away from compliments.

He never knew what it was to feel self-important. When speaking or writing or interacting with people he used the same simplicity with everyone. He joked with all sorts of people, talking about *barbera of freisa* and *barolo*, as if he were a professional drinker, as if he frequented taverns when actually (according the advocate Giuseppe Biandra) he barely took a glass of wine a month. He knew how to be witty even in church. One time he gave the religious habit to some Vincentians. When he came to one of them who seemed undecided, Cottolengo, knowing him well, found that the lad only had scruples, he gave him a knock on his head with the sprinkler and praying added: “I bless these robes but much more I bless these heads.”

2. Simplicity

To those who reproached him for not keeping a dignified and serious deportment he would tell them that that was his preference. His message was: simplicity in a sophisticated world. He wanted to feel close to the poor who were most worthy of his compassion; he called them his “good children.” He would do simple yet significant favours for them. Once he met Canon Renaldi on the via della Basilica in front of the Red Cross Bar and lowering his voice he asked: “Are we going to share a quarter?” Renaldi took him seriously and they entered the bar together. Cottolengo asked to taste some white wine and found it excellent. He then ordered some kegs for the *Little House*, telling the bartender: “As for being paid, you should ask Canon Renaldi here.” And they had to stay there because Cottolengo continued: “You



wanted to be hosted by your uncle, now you have to pay." One day he met the Marchesa Giulia di Barolo and, bold and spontaneous as he was, he kissed her hand on purpose. "What a beautiful ring, Marchesa! It's really stunning. If I could have it I could turn it into so many pots of pasta for my poor children who would certainly be so grateful to you." Spontaneously, the generous lady let it slip off her finger into the palm of his hand.

This was how Cottolengo, a man of God, revealed where he came from: by good-humour that characterized his conversations.

DON BOSCO

1. Always witty

Don Bosco shared the good-humour of his people and it featured in his conversations even though certain expressions weren't part of his vocabulary. Yet beneath a typically Piedmontese humour was hidden a profound humanity.

He gave proof of his presence of mind already as a boy. When his step-brother Anthony was tired of seeing him studying he exclaimed one day: "I have grown up strong and I've never seen these books," to which John replied: "Didn't you know that our ass is stronger than you and he hasn't been to school?" Many of those who heard him speak attested to the fact that he always had interesting and humorous stories on hand. "*His conversations were always pleasant and he willingly interspersed them with jokes and hints but they were always in good taste.*"

He was always in control of his wits, possessing a joyful and

happy deportment. His biographer says: "throughout his life he had a jovial character even in the midst of the thorniest issues and deep sorrows."

On trips to Becchi he used to point out to the youngsters certain pieces of ground, uncultivated or sandy patches that belonged to his family. "Behold," he would say solemnly, "the properties of Don Bosco!" Whenever he spoke he conferred noble titles on his lay collaborators, gifting them titles like the Count of Becchi and the Marquis of Valcappone and so on. That was how he addressed boys like Rossi, Gastini, Enria, Pelazza and Buzzetti not only at home but even when he took them on trips with him.

2. In his writings

The same humour that peppered and animated his conversations was found in his letters. Writing to the boys of the Oratory from S. Ignazio near Lanzo on July 21, 1862, he described in detail his journey in the pouring rain. Among other things he writes: "It rained torrents but far from being fit for royalty. There were several others with me. I kept two umbrellas open which sheltered those who held them in their hands but I, who was in the middle had no other benefit except to receive the water that drained from the two umbrellas. That was how we arrived at Lanzo absolutely drenched and freezing from the cold. You dear boys, you should have seen Don Bosco get down from the carriage all drenched like those big rats often seen escaping down the sewer at the far end of the playground."

Writing to Fr. John Cagliero, the

head of the first Salesian missionary expedition on October 13, 1876 he said: "I have written to the foreign minister who has promised me heaven and earth. We'll see if, leaving aside heaven and earth, he gives me at least something worthwhile." And there were several such examples.

At Turin, Don Bosco had just moved his wandering oratory to the cemetery of St. Peter in chains: "But in that place we came up against a formidable and unsuspected rival. This was not the ghost of one of the great numbers of the dead who slept peacefully in the nearby tombs. This was a living person, the chaplain's housekeeper. No sooner had she heard the pupils singing and talking, and, let us admit their shouting too, than she rushed out of the house. In a furious rage, with her bonnet askew and her arms akimbo, she launched into tongue-lashing the crowd of merry-makers. Joining in her assault upon us were a small girl, a dog, a cat, all the hens, so that it seemed that a European war about to break out."

3. Bearing his crosses

Don Bosco always kept his good humour even in his trials and sorrows. According to the testimony of Fr. Michael Rua who was with him for forty years, whenever Don Bosco seemed more cheerful than usual it was a sign that he had some big problem. If to his smile he added a joke it was certain that things were really bad. In those circumstances he would question the boys on one story or another. To one he would ask: "Tell me the story of Ganduja," to another he would say: "And you, tell me what of the to-

wer of the Town Hall?" to a third, "Is there any news of Garibaldi?"...and he would laugh.

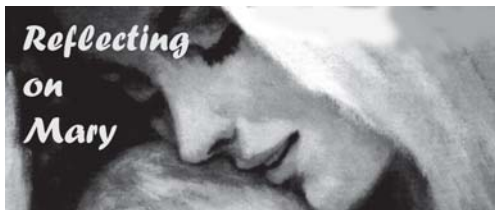
Even in his sicknesses he never lost his serenity of spirit. In fact, the Lord permitted his life to be continuously marked with silent physical suffering. It was so silent that many did not realise he was suffering. After his illness in Varazze in December 1871, seeing his skin fall like scales he smiled and said to the infirmarian Enria: "See how bad I am, so bad that I have to shed my old skin! Let's hope the new one will be tough enough to withstand the gales and thunderstorms now lashing the world. I am confident that God will guarantee the success of his work."

On the feast of Mary Help of Christians, May 24, 1886, while he was overwhelmed by the crowd, he was almost out of breath and could hardly stand up, he turned to his secretary and whispered: "Who knows, would it be all right to give them a couple of punches out of devotion?"

Some, who were less experienced, only pulled him along, hurting him instead of helping. When someone noticed that they had hurt him they anxiously would ask for his pardon, and he would answer, "Oh! Do not worry. The biggest hunk of all always sits tight!"

He was called the saint of joy. Always humorous and witty, he would visibly show young people the joy of being a Christian.

The serenity and joy of Don Bosco, as indeed that of Cottolengo, revealed his deep inner peace, but along with it the goodness, the frank wit and the simplicity of his people. □



Reflecting on Mary

FROM HER FIRST STEPS, EVERYTHING FOR GOD

by Silvio Longobardi

The very first page of the Gospel is dedicated to Mary at her annunciation when she said her "Behold me..." (Lk 1, 26-28). We have tried to investigate the oldest texts in the apocryphal tradition we have tried to find some biographical details. The community of believers felt they needed to peer into the folds of history to give face to the identity of her who brought forth the Son of God in the flesh. This evidence has been found on stones and writings, in churches that were built in the places where Mary had lived and in the apocryphal gospels the need was felt to integrate a few details specifically about the Virgin. Among them it was the Proto-Evangelium of James, a second-century document that offered a biographical reconstruction of Mary's life was given prominence. In those pages we find the names of Joachim and Anna, the parents of Mary and we learn that they were granted a daughter when they were advanced in years; when they had lost all hope of child-bearing, Mary was therefore accepted as a gift from hea-

ven, according to the author and her arrival was preceded by a celestial apparition.

This is the reason that explains why the parents profoundly perceived that their daughter bore within herself something special, even though they did not have the faintest idea of the mystery that God had concealed within this creature. It also explains why, when she was weaned, they decided to take her to the Temple of Jerusalem because she could grow in the light of divine wisdom without being tarnished by the dross of the world.

Mary's 'Yes'

From a historical point of view this piece of information seems very unlikely, even impossible. And yet, it found its place in the tradition to the extent that it needed to be celebrated as an event with a specific liturgical memorial: Mary's Presentation in the Temple. The absence of historicity did not detract from this feast which contains this proclamation by the welcoming of a special light of the Spirit. Mary, from an early

age consecrated herself to God. She chose to be only and wholly for God. Those who have faith do not have to struggle to understand this because they know that Mary, having been preserved from sin, was totally immersed in God's light and she lived in full communion with him. It was therefore not surprising that, from the very first stirrings of her intelligence, the Virgin turned her gaze on the Almighty and committed herself to live in complete obedience to his will. It was the first 'Yes' of her existence that would be driven by her "behold me." A 'Yes' though naïve was sincere, a 'yes' without any reservation.

Mary did not grow within the walls of the holy Temple but within the walls of her home, within the walls where her faith was her daily bread, a light that illuminated everything. Joachim and Anna who had waited for so many years in prayer, joyfully welcomed the child and experienced God's faithfulness and they lived in the awareness that everything that they possessed was given to them. In that humble and poor home, Mary learned to listen to the voice of God resounding through the enlightened witness of her parents and she learned the art of living in the presence of God and for God.

And we...

The extreme precocity with which Mary accepted and responded to grace found its resonance down the centuries in many other models, among them Therese of Lisieux (1873/1897) stands out. She had not yet turned fifteen when she presented herself to the bishop to ask for permission to

enter Carmel. You can imagine the surprise of the Monsignor who asked her how long she cherished that desire in her heart. With all the ingenuity of her years the young girl replied: "A very long time, my Lord!" "Come!" said the Vicar-General laughing, "it cannot be as long as fifteen years." "That is true," I answered, "but it is not much less, for I have wished to give myself to God from the time I was three." (Ms A 54a) Teresa acknowledged having received, from the very first years of her life a special grace which allowed her to perceive her call to the consecrated life and to adhere to it with her whole being without reservations or regrets. If a creature bearing within herself the stain of original sin could recognize with absolute clarity the call of God, how much more evident was this light for Mary of Nazareth who, from her immaculate conception, lived in a particular familiarity with the Holy Spirit. In this light she was able to utter her complete and irrevocable 'yes' to God that would find its seal on the day she fearlessly heard the word of the angel.

We also wish to walk the path trod by the Virgin and so we ask for the grace to live in the light of the 'yes' we utter even in the small things of life. There are those who wait for everything to be clear before making themselves available. But the good Lord asks us to say 'yes' in faith despite our uncertainties and concerns. If we can do that we are sure to have taken a decisive step forward on the path of holiness embracing all life. It is not a question of courage, just a touch of naïveté that belongs to the 'little ones' of the Gospel. □

VATICAN CITY

In order to curb the fake news phenomenon, we need a journalism "of peace" but "not the saccharine kind of journalism," what is needed is a "journalism that is truthful and opposed to falsehoods, rhetorical slogans, and sensational headlines." A "journalism created by people for people, one that is at the service of all." Francis' message for the 52nd World Day of Social Communications to be celebrated on Sunday 13 May 2018, entitled "The truth will set you free." Fake news and journalism for peace," is dedicated this year to the phenomenon of fake news which is virally spreading on the web, and intends to "contribute to our shared commitment to stemming the spread of fake news and to rediscovering the dignity of journalism and the personal responsibility of journalists to communicate the truth."

Francis notes that the term "fake news" has been the object of great discussion and debate." "The effectiveness of fake news is primarily due to its ability to mimic real news, to seem plausible. Secondly, this false but believable news is "captious," inasmuch as it grasps people's attention by appealing to stereotypes and common social prejudices, and exploiting instantaneous emotions like anxiety, contempt, anger and frustration."

Francis defines "praiseworthy" the efforts made to create educational programmes aimed at helping people to interpret and assess information provided by the media, and teaching them to take an active part in unmasking false-

hoods, rather than unwittingly contributing to the spread of disinformation." He also blesses "those institutional and legal initiatives aimed at developing regulations for curbing the phenomenon, to say nothing of the work being done by tech and media companies in coming up with new criteria for verifying the personal identities concealed behind millions of digital profiles."



But this is not enough to stem the phenomenon. The Pontiff calls "for a profound and careful process of discernment" to "unmask what could be called the "snake-tactics" used by those who disguise themselves in order to strike at any time and place. This was the strategy employed by the "crafty serpent," i. e. the devil. A "sly and dangerous form of seduction that worms its way into the heart with false and alluring arguments."

The Pope, rereading the biblical episode of Adam and Eve's temptation, observes, "there is no such thing as harmless disinformation; on the contrary, trusting in falsehood can have dire consequences. Even a seemingly slight distortion of the truth can have dangerous effects." "What is at stake is our greed. Fake news often goes viral, spreading so fast that it is hard to

stop, not because of the sense of sharing that inspires the social media, but because it appeals to the insatiable greed so easily aroused in human beings."

"That is why - Pope Francis explains - education for truth means teaching people how to discern, evaluate and understand our deepest desires and inclinations, lest we lose sight of what is good and yield to every temptation."

The most radical antidote to the virus of falsehood is "purification by the truth." The Pope recalls that in the Christian vision, "truth is not just a conceptual reality" but is the living God. Hence, Jesus can say, "I am the truth." We discover and rediscover the truth when we experience it within ourselves in the loyalty and trustworthiness of the One who loves us. This alone can liberate us: "The truth will set you free."

"Freedom from falsehood and the search for relationship: these two ingredients cannot be lacking if our words and gestures are to be true, authentic, and trustworthy." To discern the truth - Bergoglio explains - we need to discern everything that encourages communion and promotes goodness from whatever instead tends to isolate, divide, and oppose." Nor can we ever stop seeking the truth, "because falsehood can always creep in, even when we state things that are true", "even "an impeccable argument can indeed rest on undeniable facts, but if it is used to hurt another and to discredit that person in the eyes of others, however correct it may appear, it is not truthful."

Therefore, the best antidotes to falsehoods are not strategies, but people: people who are not greedy but ready to listen, people who

make the effort to engage in sincere dialogue so that the truth can emerge; people who are attracted by goodness and take responsibility for how they use language."

"If responsibility is the answer to the spread of fake news, then a weighty responsibility rests on the shoulders of those whose job is to provide information, namely, journalists, the protectors of news."

The message concludes with the invitation to promote "a journalism of peace." By that, the Pope does not mean "the saccharine kind of journalism that refuses to acknowledge the existence of serious problems or smacks of sentimentalism. On the contrary, I mean a journalism that is truthful and opposed to falsehoods, rhetorical slogans, and sensational headlines. A journalism created by people for people, one that is at the service of all, especially those - and they are the majority in our world - who have no voice."

A journalism less concentrated on breaking news than on exploring the underlying causes of conflicts, to promote deeper understanding and contribute to their resolution by setting in place virtuous processes. A journalism committed to pointing out alternatives to the escalation of shouting matches and verbal violence.

The conclusion is a rewriting of a famous Franciscan prayer: "Help us to remove the venom from our judgements.... where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity... where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety... where there is hostility, let us bring respect; where there is falsehood, let us bring truth. Amen." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Economic Moves

Mr. Jones was mowing the lawn when he saw a large moving van pull up to the door. He rushed in to his wife and asked her what it was all about.

"It's the furniture folks," his wife informed him in a whisper. "They've come for the piano." "But I gave you the money for the next installment," he reminded her.

"Yes, I know dear," she answered. "I'm going to pay them as soon as they have it downstairs. I've decided to have it in the living room."

Fair Trade

The doctor was having a polite argument with a patient over the amount of a bill.

"You must remember, Mr. Dingle," said the doc, "You were in pretty bad shape and I fixed you up. You wouldn't question a car mechanic who got your car running again would you?" "That has nothing to do with this case," insisted Dingle. "If I had a car that was in the condition I was in, I'd trade it for a new one."

Not Guilty

The Sunday school teacher was reviewing a lesson. "Who led the children of Israel out of Egypt?" she asked the class.

There was no answer, but a little boy in the back row raised his hand. "Do you know, Jimmy?" the teacher asked.

"We just moved here last week. We're from New York."

Cause and Effect

The customer in the barber shop was addressed thus: "Your hair seems to be getting thin on top, sir. Have you tried your own brand of hair tonic?"

"No, I haven't," responded the man, "So, it can't be that."

A Matter of Life

A mother pigeon and her young son were getting ready to migrate South. The baby was afraid he couldn't make it.

"Don't worry," Mamma Pigeon said, "I'll tie one end of a piece of string around my leg and the other end to your neck. If you tire, I'll help you along."

The junior pigeon began to wail. "But," he protested, "I don't want to be pigeon towed."

Kind Invitation

A fireman's organization conducting a ticket-selling campaign for the annual dance, featured this slogan: "You come to our dance and we'll come to your fire."

Voracious Indeed

A Red Indian had gone to see the doctor, who, after examining him, told him to be careful about what he ate - in fact, not to eat at all until he got an appetite. Meeting the Red Indian a few days later, the doctor asked how he felt.

"Oh, I feel fine now," he replied. "I wait one day, appetite no come, wait two day, appetite no come, wait three day, appetite no come, get so hungry, eat any-way." ☐

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion. Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.

My sincere thanks to my dear Mother Mary, through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys my daughter Mary Maglena Bruno is happily married.

Mary Bruno, Kerala
I am sincerely grateful for the gift of good health and many other favours received through the intercession of the daily recitation of the three Hail Marys.
Hubert and Jennifer Collins, Chennai

MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for a miraculous escape from sheer death on the eve of October 1, 2017 while travelling on the Santa Cruz Chembur Link Road at 11 pm on our Activa bike. After dinner at my sister's house (Mehul) celebrating her son's birthday, we were returning home. When we reached Kurla junction, there was a patch of 3-4 feet of paver blocks which were loose with mud and tar alongside. As the street lights were poor, we skidded and ran into the divider barricade.

The three of us fell from the bike. My daughter went flying into the barricade and bounced back on me and fell alongside. With all our might we screamed on the name of Our Lord Jesus and Mother Mary. A good Samaritan heard us. They rushed to the spot and encircled us, diverting the traffic on to the other side of the road. They rushed us home in their vehicle. Another followed on our bike which was navigable although the front fender was damaged on impact.

My husband fractured his hands and legs in four places. He was operated for the right ankle. I fractured my little finger on the left hand and I bruised my left foot badly. My daughter was on medication for 15 days. Help poured in from family members, relatives, friends and well-wishers. People spontaneously contributed to our cause without even asking. Some families helped us by providing us with money, food and ration. Few families took turns to look after our daughter and many people offered their prayers. Yes, the Lord works in mysterious ways and Mother Mary supports us always. This fortifies our faith which was nurtured by our parents and elders. Today we are on the road to a speedy recovery. A mighty thank you to Our Lord Jesus and Mother and all the people who helped us.
Mrs. Sheila Rodrigues, Mumbai

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

It was on December 15, 2017, I had gone to see a flat for sale along with my son at around 11.30 am. I climbed from the ground floor to the first floor and was coming down. The steps were of black granite and the corner steps were triangular. I missed my footing and came rolling down. My shoes and my cell phone were thrown off. I only hurt my elbows a little and suffered a small bump on my head which subsided with a little ice. It could have been fatal. I always carry the Rosary with me, day and night. It was Our Lady who protected me from any severe injury. Thank you Mother Mary for your loving protection and care. *Imelda Fernandes, Goa*
Thank you Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for all the blessings of peace and good health to our family. *Glynis Saldanha*
I had a fall and broke my hip. I had to undergo a surgery. I am extremely grateful to God and Mother Mary for being with me and taking away all my fear and anxiety. The operation was a success and I am on my way to recovery. Mother Mary keep us always under your mantle blue. *Maria D.C. Fernandes, Goa*
Mother Mary, as promised, I thank you for helping my son get a job after months of rejection. Do continue to bless him.

Mrs. R. Fernandes

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

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for curing my grand children from sickness. *Mrs. Matilda Carvalho, Mumbai*
Thanks to Jesus and his Mary Help of Christians for successful knee replacements of my husband. *Mrs. Vania Gonsalves*
Thank God the Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit and Mother Mary for the innumerable favours granted, for bringing my neighbour home from the hospital alive, for bringing my mother out of a coma, for giving my son good marks in his SSC exams and for all the other favours.

Fatima Brazil Penha, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to Our Lady and St. Rita of Cascia for favours received.

A Devotee
Thank you O Blessed Trinity, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, all the angels and Saints for all the favours received in the years gone by.

Mr. & Mrs. O. F. Mazarello, Mumbai
All thanks and praise to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary for granting me Indian citizenship after 30 years. Thank you Mama Mary for always being there in our time of trouble and need.

A. D'Silva, Mumbai
Thank you, Mary Help of Christians for the many favours received by us.

Cecilia Lewis
Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary for granting my son a good job and for all the other favours received. Do continue to keep us in good health.
Martinha S. Travasso

INVISIBLE GOD

Vincent Travers, OP

Jesus said to his disciples, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of them dared ask, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord... This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. (John 21:12-14)

Standing on a London street corner, G.K. Chesterton was approached by a news reporter: "Sir, I understand that you recently became a Christian. May I ask you one question?"

"Certainly."

"If the risen Lord suddenly appeared at this very moment and stood behind you, what would you do?" Chesterton looked at the reporter squarely in the eye and said, "He is."

He is risen. Jesus is alive. He is our contemporary. This is a mystery of faith. The risen Lord invites us to be at one with him in every aspect of our lives, and to allow his mysterious presence to become the driving force behind who I am, what I do, the way I do it, and how I live my relationships with the people in my life. Christianity is, in its core, a real relationship with the risen Jesus.

There is a marvellous scene in the movie *Whistle Down the Wind*. The plot is a simple one. Three children are playing in a farmyard and they stumble across a vagrant sleeping on straw in the barn. "Who are you?" asked one of the children.

Rudely awakened and seeing the children, the vagrant muttered, "Jesus Christ!" What he meant as expletive, the children took as truth. They actually believed the man to be Jesus Christ. They treated the vagrant with awe, respect and love for the rest of the movie. They brought him food and blankets, sat and talked with him, and told him about their lives. In no time, their thoughtfulness and tenderness transformed the vagrant, an escaped convict, who had never before known such mercy and kindness.

What a happier and gentler place the world would be if Christians lived the Resurrection as a fact of life, and allowed it to touch and influence every aspect of their daily lives!□



APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

MAY 2018

The Mission of the Laity

That the lay faithful may fulfil their specific mission, by responding with creativity to the challenges that face the world today.

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MARY WAS THERE

On 9th February, 2003 we were travelling by autorickshaw to Agashi. As we reached Virar West, Don Bosco Church the rickshaw went a little further and overturned and I hurt my hand and my foot. My husband, on the other hand suffered no injury at all. I went to the orthopaedic and he told me not to worry. He prescribed some medicines and a wax bath for my hand and I recovered. I went to visit the priest in Virar at the Don Bosco office and narrated the incident to him and I offered a Mass for the souls of those who meet with road accidents. We always carry the Holy Bible, the Novena book of Mother Mary. Whenever we travel we say the 3 Hail Marys, the Memorare and Psalm 91. Our sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for saving us and healing us and for many other favours received.

Mrs. Florinda Mascarenhas, Mumbai

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

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

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