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***We pray, O Lord,
that we
who rejoice
in commemorating
the Blessed Virgin Mary,
may
by imitating her
serve worthily
the mystery of
our redemption.***

*(From the Mass of the Common
of the Blessed Virgin Mary)*

From The Editor's Desk

THOUGHTS

“Watch your thoughts, they become words;
Watch your words, they become actions;
Watch your actions, they become habits;
Watch your habits, they become character;
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

- Frank Outlaw

We cannot stop thoughts that come into our heads but we don't have to serve them tea. -Rumi

We do become our thoughts. We tend to forget that we are clay always being shaped and formed by unseen forces. Thoughts seem insignificant but they make and unmake worlds. Watchfulness is essential for our lives. We guard ourselves against outside forces with great care but forget about forces within us. Thoughts can unravel relationships and disassemble a work place.

The Good News is that we can choose to watch over our thoughts. As Rumi says we can't prevent them but don't have to invite them in and give them a place at the table. We can let them go and choose to entertain thoughts that build relationships. Just something I've been thinking about.

Because thoughts become words and so often we have to regret the words we have blurted out inadvertently. Such pitfalls attend gossip. How tempting it is to make a snarky comment about someone not in the room. Once a clever barb is uttered, it lodges there, barnacle-like, on people's consciousness. Once there, it's difficult to remove.

Most often such thoughts-turned-words are couched in humour and often that humour crosses the line. Most of us have an internal gauge that tells us when a joke or a casual comment moves from playful to hurtful. Conscience is usually loud and clear on this point. But if you feel that your internal gauge needs some fine-tuning or even an overhaul, you might ask yourself the following questions, slightly adapted from the writings of the popular spiritual leader and New Age Icon Krishnamurti (1895-1986). They are the three doors that charitable speech must pass through.

The gatekeeper at the first door asks, "Is it true?" The second gatekeeper asks, "Is it helpful?" The third gatekeeper asks, "Is it kind?"

It is good to ask ourselves what is the general tenor of our conversation? Does it often concern others, their defects, shortcomings or simply their general deportment? How often do we casually and even thoughtlessly demean them?

Life is relationship and communication and words play such an important role in the great scheme of things. I think that was why when God decided to become man they said: *The Word became flesh.*

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

THE BEGINNING OF EVERY STORY...

by Don Giampaolo Dianin

Couples are often asked how they felt when they met: there is always so much tenderness in their story and also much awkwardness, because they reveal unthinkable ways and places

I am trying to describe one of the many encounters that ushers in a love story. "Everything started with a look. I remember the day I saw you for the first time: among so many faces yours struck me and like a magnet I was attracted to you; your face, your smile, your hair, your body. And then your way of talking and mingling with others. From that day I always looked for you. That look initiated every encounter and nourished our being together. And when, beyond the look I began to know your heart, I realized that you were a beautiful person, and I was filled with joy. Perhaps I had found the right

person to share my life with."

It may seem trivial, simplistic like a romance novel, but it is also true that every story at the beginning contains something beautiful, unique, poetic and strange. Couples are often asked how they felt when they met: there is always so much tenderness in their story and also much awkwardness, because they reveal unthinkable mannerisms and spaces.

Love stories don't start by exchanging resumes or even from a collection of data. They start from a meeting of looks that cause wonder and joy because they reveal the beauty of the

other what the face seems to indicate, even if still in an unclear manner, but still able to instill intrigue and fascinate.

Pope Francis describes conjugal love not only as friendship that grows towards the mutual gift that bears the name of conjugal charity; conjugal love is nourished by the beauty of the other who at first gives pleasure, but in time, promises joy when going beyond what appears. Numbers 126-130 of *Amoris Laetitia* are dedicated precisely to the joy and beauty of love.

The Pope distinguishes pleasure from joy. Pleasure can be an appetizing slice of cake, joy is the result of a long and arduous diet that nourishes but makes you feel good; pleasure can be gazing at a beautiful mountain peak, joy is to have ascended it, struggling and conquering it slowly; pleasure can be a sexual act, joy is living it with the person you love and with whom you are sharing your life.

The Pope writes: "When the search for pleasure becomes obsessive, it holds us in thrall and keeps us from experiencing other satisfactions. Joy, on the other hand, increases our pleasure and helps us find fulfilment in any number of things, even at those times of life when physical pleasure has ebbed" (AL 126).

The joy of love contains pleasure, but surpasses it making it genuine, lasting and solid. Thus joy can be lived even in the midst of the trials and toils that form part of the daily grind of married life. Pleasure is a restless and lively sea while joy is the wealth that lies beneath the surface teeming with life.

How can we not think of an elderly couple who have so many years of life behind them; who have gone through joys and trials; seen their children grow up and now they see their children's children! Perhaps the pleasure is less exuberant, but there is joy in their lives, a joy achieved but also a joy given by God to whom they have entrusted themselves and on whom their life is founded.

True joy is also the daughter of contemplation of the beloved. It is the fruit of daily life to recognize that you are more than your limitations. Those beautiful things that you give me are sweeter than the labours that exist. "The love of friendship is called "charity" when it perceives and esteems the "great worth" of another person. Beauty - that "great worth" which is other than physical or psychological appeal - enables us to appreciate the sacredness of a person, without feeling the need to possess it (AL 127).

Francis adds that many hurts and many problems result when we stop looking at one another: "My husband does not look at me; he acts as if I am invisible. In my home nobody cares about me. My wife no longer looks at me, she only has eyes for our children" (AL 128) Such statements are often heard and blurred out when a relationship has been extinguished because of boredom and where there is no effort rekindling it. The evidence is there for all to see. You can get out of it stronger than before, or you can come out wounded and disappointed because you have not communicated. Everyone has tri-



als, but you can come out of it stronger than before or you can come out of it hurt and disappointed because you have not made the effort to rekindle the flame.

There is also a beauty that can save marriages. It is the beauty

of love that does not stop looking at the other seeking out her beauty. Francis recalling the film "Babette's Feast" writes: "The most intense joys in life arise when we are able to elicit joy in others, as a foretaste of heaven" (AL 129). □

A SUCCESS HANDBOOK FOR COUPLES

Maria Chiara Bregolin Tezzon

In my communication studies I learned that it is often necessary to resort to effective slogans and headings to convince readers to go on reading or to proceed with a purchase.

So, if you really expected a success handbook with a dozen points for couples I thank you for reading thus far and I apologize because below you will find, in reality, something else.

Eleanor Roosevelt, in one of her speeches argued that "happiness (or success) is not a goal but a side effect." For the couple this means that the end cannot be the pursuit of one's own fulfillment and one's own happiness, but it should naturally stem from seeking first of all the good of the other.

Let's step back. Let's go back to the moment we fell in love and we understood (because at a certain point it becomes self-evident) that the one who crossed our path was the right person: the one who knew how to make you laugh, who was able to brighten our life and who maybe helped us see the bright side of everything. That was the one I was attracted to, at least for me. I was attracted by his optimism, his confidence in life and in the future; the fact that he was

happy to face the vicissitudes of life, this made me fall in love with my husband. He brought all these gifts into my life and he wanted to share them with me for free.

Husband and wife, though they possess rather different personalities, together they give life to a new identity as a couple that goes beyond the sum of their characteristics, nature and talents.

This couple identity finds its driving force in pleasure and its



fuel is joy. These two principles regulate our choices and give to our consciences certain strength to address some very important issues.

Pleasure brings us closer to each other: it is the flame that is the driving force of the relationship between two lovers and those who know how to maintain and revive it, see that it turns into joy.

Joy is a garment that a couple dons everyday: a good attitude, the first thought in the morning and a deep sense of gratitude before falling asleep at night.

"Few human joys are as deep and thrilling as those experienced by two people who love each other and have achieved something as a result of a great, shared effort" (AL 130). Pope Francis has a long view: his words fill our hearts with confidence when he tells us that noth-

ing is impossible if you really want it together God, who is the supreme Pleasure and supreme Joy wants us to have it like he does.

The joy of which he speaks is 'collateral' of our love, and the wonder we experience in the presence of our spouse, because despite the passing years and everything inside and outside changing, the mystery of the other remains unchanged in our eyes and we desire to know more of the other.

"Love opens the eyes and allows us to see beyond everything what a human being is worth" (AL 129).

"The most intense joys in life arise when we are able to elicit joy in others, as a foretaste of heaven" (AL 129).

We are made for love and to love is to procure "a foretaste of heaven". □

THE SHOEMAKER'S PRAYER

A holy and humble shoemaker used to pray in the morning, at midday and in the evening. He didn't feel able or confident enough to make up his own prayers to the Lord so he always used a well worn prayer book. On a journey one day he felt very bad because he had forgotten his prayer book and it was time for prayer. And so he knelt, turned to the Lord and said "Please forgive me Lord because I need to pray and I don't know how. But you are my God who loves me and I am going to recite the alphabet, from a to z, a number of times. You are wise and good and you can put the letters together and in that way you will be able to know my prayer and what I want to say." The story goes that on that day the Lord called his angels together in Heaven and told them how moved he was by the prayer of the shoemaker. It was the most beautiful prayer he had heard in a longtime - a humble, trusting, sincere and loving prayer - the kind of prayer which works miracles.

Amigos de Fray Martin, Palencia: Translated from the Spanish-abbreviated



THE PUREST KIND OF LOVE

by Anastasia Dias

It was another regular day at university. My mother had called me for the 3rd time since morning, reminding me that I had to book my tickets to come home for the holidays. I was annoyed at her and lost my temper.

Adrienne Woods, a friend of mine, sat nearby and overheard me yell at my mother. After I hung up, she looked me in the eye and said, "You really shouldn't take your mum for granted. She cares about you." I was cynical and said, 'Of course'.

Adrienne began talking and I sincerely hoped she would stop soon; remembering at that moment how she loved to talk. She said, "I was born in a family of three children, which included me. Dad was in the Navy and mum worked as a teacher. Dad came home once in almost nine months. Mum practically raised

the three of us, alone.

"Like most mothers, mum woke up at 5 every morning. She cooked breakfast and lunch for us; and then got us dressed and drove to school. In the evening, she spent time with us, helped us with our homework, prepared dinner, fed us and put us to bed. For us, it was what we expected of her. It was her job, her duty as our mother. This was my mother's routine till the three of us grew up and left for college; each to a new, different city.

"I was 18 and thrilled to go to college in New York. It was as exciting as I had expected. I went home only for the holidays. Home was as dull and as boring as it could be.

"Sometimes, when my siblings left early, it was just mum and I and I hated those days. Mum, you know, was Mum. She had been the same for the past 20 years that I'd known her. She'd had the same old stories to tell. It was so monotonous that I longed to go back to New York.

"One day, in class, I received an unexpected call. It was my Dad. I hadn't seen him or spoken to him for months. He sounded pensive, 'Adrienne, you must



come home. Mum has been very sick.'

"Without any further delay, I took the next flight home. When I reached the hospital, I saw my mother, with tubes all around her, sleeping, unaware that her full family was beside her. Mother looked tiny and frail, her hair had turned grey. She was not the woman I had known, the woman who had raised me and my siblings. This was someone else and she was dying, slowly.

"When I stood at her bedside, I felt her pulse. She was breathing but hadn't opened her eyes. I longed for her to turn over and hug me, one last time; to call me by my name and remind me that I had homework for the next day. I longed for one last kiss wishing me a good night.

"But all I saw was a woman, struggling between life and death with needles inserted in her arms. I thought of all that my mother had meant to me; and the things I felt for her, the things I should've told her, but never did. I remembered the questions I had in mind, they remained un-

answered.

"Mummy lay before my eyes, listless, lifeless. This time, she didn't have stories to tell, she was taking them with her, in her heart, along with memories of us all.

"I could hear her voice saying, 'Adrienne, you should come home more often. The house feels very empty. I miss you all so much.' In her voice I had sensed loneliness and longing. Nonetheless, I hadn't stopped to think or to care.

"I sensed her pulse, it had stopped. Mummy was gone and I lay my head on her heart and wept. The memories came flooding back. I wished for a few more moments to spend with her."

When Adrienne finished, I was sobbing. I had never thought of it in that way. I had been just like Adrienne Woods, if not worse, taking my mother for granted. That day, I understood the value of having a mother. I found that a mother's love was of the purest kind. And the gift of a mother was the most precious of all the gifts in the world. □

Hearing God

The young man had lost his job and didn't know which way to turn. So he went to see the old preacher. Pacing about the preacher's study, the young man ranted about his problem. Finally he clenched his fist and shouted, "I've begged God to say something to help me. Tell me, Preacher, why doesn't God answer?" The old preacher, who sat across the room, spoke something in reply - something so hushed it was indistinguishable. The young man stepped across the room. "What did you say?" he asked. The preacher repeated himself, but again in a tone as soft as a whisper. So the young man moved closer until he was leaning on the preacher's chair. "Sorry," he said. "I still didn't hear you." With their heads bent together, the old preacher spoke once more. "God sometimes whispers," he said, "so we will move closer to hear Him." This time the young man heard and he understood. We all want God's voice to thunder through the air with the answer to our problem. But God's is the still, small voice...the gentle whisper. Perhaps there's a reason. Nothing draws human focus quite like a whisper. God's whisper means I must stop my ranting and move close to Him, until my head is bent together with His. And then, as I listen, I will find my answer. Better still, I find myself closer to God. □

POWER MEETS TRUE POWER

The Centurion and Jesus

Ian Pinto, sdb

Centurions were officers of some authority in the Roman army. A Centurion ideally at least had a 100 men under his command. That made him quite powerful. However, within the vaster Roman Army, a centurion was only the smallest part! The Roman army was made up of legions. Each legion had about 6000 men. Therefore, there were 60 centurions in a legion with their smaller troops or *centuria* as they were called. Centurions, were in fact, the lowest level of authority of the army but were treated very well. So, they enjoyed a higher pay and a greater share of the spoils of war. The Romans knew that if they wanted to maintain a good and strong army, they would have to care for the least. Along with respect and status, centurions enjoyed quite a bit of power. For all practical purposes, they were responsible for the men under their command. That means, they not only ordered them around during wars but saw to their day-to-day activities and so on.

The Will to Power

Power is a fascinating reality. We see it present all around us: in the waves of the sea, the force of the wind, the bite of a dog and even when carrying our shopping bags! Power, at its most basic level, is what allows things to move and perform actions. All

of us possess power in varying degrees and all of us also desire power, again of varying degrees. Let's go back to Genesis and see our first taste of power.

When God created Man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He tasked him with tilling it and caring for it (Gen 2:15). Thus, God handed Man power over the earth. With this power, Man was expected to nurture the earth and make it yield good things. A little later, "God formed from the earth all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air and brought them to Man to see what he would call them; and whatever Man called every living creature, that was its name" (Gen 2:19). Here, God gave Man power over the beasts of the earth and birds of the sky. This power was not to exploit them but firstly, to show Man's superiority and importance over these creatures and secondly, to learn to live in harmony with them.



But was Man satisfied with this power? No! He wanted to be like god (Gen 3:5) and enjoy the power of God. How did that work out for him? It led to his banishment from the Garden and opened the doors for suffering and death (Gen 3:16-19). This dynamic goes on till the present day. Each of us are victims of it. We are all blessed with certain powers, and yet, we long for more power. This could be in the form of wealth, luxuries, status, possessions, stock, bank balances, relationships, promotions etc. We find ourselves yearning for more power. While wielding power is a good thing, hungering for it, is not, as Adam and Eve learnt the hard way.

Surrendering to a Higher Power

If anyone knew something about power, it was a Roman centurion. As I mentioned earlier, power can come in various forms but one of its highest and most vulnerable forms is power over other people. It is one thing to exercise power over things but it is quite another thing to exercise power over human beings. A person in power is in fact, in control of his/her subordinates will to power, and that makes all the difference. Thus, a person of authority can encourage or discourage a persons exercise of power just by commanding it. That is why I referred to this form of power as being 'vulnerable'; it has the potency to make or break people.

The centurion knew very well what power meant and thus he requests Jesus only to say the word and heal his servant (Mt

8:8). Notice how he explains to Jesus the kind of power he had over people (Mt 8:9). However, he realizes that his power was limited. Even though he could get a lot of things done just by commanding them, there were many other things that he couldn't do. He was aware of his power as well as of its limitation. He sensed that Jesus possessed a very different kind of power, unlike the power he possessed. Despite being a respected man, he humbled himself and asked for Jesus' help. In the act of asking for help, he submitted his power into the hands of Jesus and surrendered to the higher power that was Jesus, himself.

The centurion's encounter with Jesus is one of the strongest examples of faith we have recorded in the Gospels. What's even more fascinating is that it was the faith of a foreigner. The centurion teaches us some powerful lessons. Power is a major part of life. We all come into and move out of it at different moments in life. The first important lesson is not to get attached to it. The minute you do, you have begun to set fire to yourself. The second lesson is that no matter how much or how little power you enjoy at the moment, there are things that are beyond it. There is a higher power. The foolish thing to do is to try and grasp it like Adam and Eve. The wise thing is to submit to it like the centurion. The final lesson is to have faith in the power of God. It's not enough to submit to a higher power. One can submit out of weakness or in defeat. There is no virtue in that. Submitting in faith is what allows miracles to happen. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. BEDE THE VENERABLE (+ 735) DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

May 27

Venerable Bede, called by the ancients Bedan (who is not to be confounded with a monk of Landisfarne of the same name but older) was born in 673, as Mabillion demonstrates from his own writings, in a village which soon after his birth became part of the estate of the new neighbouring monastery of Jarrow, but was gained upon by the sea before the time of Simeon of Durham. Such a harmony subsisted between the two houses that they were often governed by the same abbot and called the same monastery of Ss. Peter and Paul' St. Bennet was a man of extraordinary learning and piety and enriched these monasteries with a large and curious library which he had collected at Rome and in other foreign parts. To his care Bede was committed at seven years of age but was afterwards removed to Jarrow, where he pursued his studies under the direction of the abbot Ceolfrid, who had been St. Bennet's fellow-traveller.

His great piety and endowments supplying the defect of age, by the order of his abbot Ceolfrid,



he was ordained deacon in 691, at nineteen years of age, by St. John of Beverley, who was at that time Bishop of Hexham, in which diocese Jarrow was situated, there being then no episcopal see in Durham. From this time he continued his studies, till, at thirty years of age, in 702 he was ordained priest by the same St. John who was made bishop of Hexham in 685, and bishop of York in 704. In king Alfred's version, Bede is styled Mass-Priest, because it was his employment to sing everyday the conventual mass, he tells us that the holy abbot and founder, St. Bennet Bishop, like the rest of the brethren, used to winnow the

corn and thrash it, to give milk to the lambs and calves, and to work in the bake-house, garden and kitchen. Bede must have sometimes had a share in such employment, and he was always cheerful, obedient, and indefatigable. But his studies and writings, with assiduous meditation and prayer, must have chiefly employed him. He often copied books. He wrote several other works after this. All the sciences and every branch of literature were handled by him: natural philosophy, the philosophical principles of Aristotle, astronomy, arithmetic, the calendar, grammar, ecclesiastical history, and the lives of the saints, though works of piety made up the bulk of his writings. An honest candour and love of truth are so visibly the characteristics of his historical works that if some austere critics have suspected him sometimes of credulity, no man ever called in question his sincerity. If on the scriptures he often abridged or reduced to a methodical order the comments of St. Austin, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Basil and other fathers, this he did, not out of sloth or for want of genius (as some later writers have done), but that he might stick closer to tradition in interpreting the sacred oracles; and in what he found not done by other eminent fathers, he still followed their rules lest he should in the least tittle, deviate from tradition.

What we most admire in Bede is the piety with which he pursued and sanctified his studies, and the use of which he made of them. What he says of St. Chad was a transcript of his own life, that he studied the holy scriptures so as to meditate assiduously on

the mysteries of faith and the maxims and rules of piety, treasuring up in his heart the most perfect sentiments of divine love, humility, and all virtues, and diligently copying them in his whole conduct. Hence his life was a model of devotion, obedience, humility, simplicity, charity and penance. He declined the abbatial dignity which was pressed upon him.

Our saint died soon after Ecgbriht's accession to the see of York, but lived long enough to write him a letter of advice upon his advancement. Herein he puts him in mind that it be a most essential part of his duty to place every able and learned priest, to labour strenuously himself feeding his flock, in correcting all vice, and endeavouring to convert all sinners, and to take care that everyone knew the Lord's prayer and the Creed and was thoroughly instructed in the articles of our holy religion.

The letter of Cuthbert deserves to have a place in the life of Bede, though it is here something abridged. "To his most beloved in Christ and fellow-reader Cuthwin, his school-fellow Cuthbert wishes eternal salvation in our Lord. Your small present was very acceptable, and your letter gave me much satisfaction, wherein I found what I greatly desired, that masses and prayers are diligently said by you for Bede, the beloved of God, our late father and master. For the love I bear him, I send you in few words an account of the manner in which he departed this world, understanding that it is what you desire. He began to be much troubled with a shortness of breath about two weeks before Easter, yet without pain; thus he

lived cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God every day and night, nay every hour, till the day of our Lord's Ascension, which was the 26th of May. He daily read lessons to us, his scholars; the rest of the day he spent in singing the psalms; he also passed all the night awake in joy and thanksgiving, only when he was interrupted by a short slumber; but awaking, he repeated his accustomed exercises and ceased not to give thanks to God, with his hands expanded. O Truly happy man! He sung that sentence of St. Paul *it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, and much more out of holy writ. Being well skilled in English verses he recited some things in our tongue. He said in English "No man is too wise to consider what good or evil he has done, before the necessary departure" – that is, to examine the state of his soul sufficiently before his death. He also sang anthems according to his and our custom, one of which is "O glorious King, Lord of Hosts, who triumphing this day didst ascend above all the heavens, leave us not orphans; but send down the Father's Spirit of truth upon us: Alleluia." When he came to that word, 'leave us not' he burst into tears and wept much; and an hour after he began to repeat the same anthem he had commenced, and we, hearing it, grieved with him. By turns we read, and by turns we wept; nay we always wept even when we read. In such joy we passed the fifty days and he rejoiced much and gave God thanks because he deserved to be so infirm. He often repeated that *God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*; and much

more out of the scripture; also that sentence of St. Ambrose: "I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you; nor am I afraid to die, because we have a good God." During these days, besides the daily lessons he gave and the singing of psalms, he composed two works for the benefit of the church: the one was a translation of St. John's gospel into English, as far as the words: *But what are these among so many?*; the other, some collections out of St. Isidore's book of notes; for he said, "I will not have my scholars read a falsehood after my death, and labour without advantage" On Tuesday before the Ascension he began to be much worse in his breathing, and a small swelling appeared in his feet; but he passed all that day pleasantly and dictated in school, saying now and then, "Go on quickly; I know not how long I shall hold out and whether my Maker will soon take me away." To us he seemed very well to know the time of his departure. He spent the night awake in thanksgiving. On Wednesday morning he ordered us to write speedily what he had begun. After this, we made the procession according to the custom of that day, waking with the relics of the saints till the third hour (or nine o'clock in the morning); then one of us said to him, "Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting. Do you think it troublesome to be asked anymore questions?" he answered "it is no trouble. Take your pen and write fast." He did so. But at the ninth hour (three in the afternoon) he said to me 'Run quickly; bring all the priests of the monastery to me.' When they came, he distributed to them some

pepper-corns, little cloths or handkerchiefs, and incense which he had in a little box, entreating everyone that they would carefully celebrate masses and say prayers for him, which they readily promised to do. 'It is now time for me to return to him who made me and gave me a being when I was nothing. I have lived a long time; my merciful judge most graciously foresaw and ordered the course of my life to me. The time of my dissolution draws near. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Yes; my soul desires to see Christ my king in his beauty.' Many other things he spoke to our edification and spent the rest of the day in joy till evening. The above mentioned young scholar, whose name was Wilberth, said to him, "Dear Master, there is still one sentence that is not written." He answered, 'Write quickly.' The young man said, 'It is now done.' He replied, 'You have well said it is at an end; all is finished. Hold my head, that I may have the pleasure to sit, looking towards my little oratory where I used to pray, that while I am sitting I may call upon my heavenly Father and, on the pavement of his little place, sing *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*.' Thus he prayed on the floor, and when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed out his soul. All declared that they had never seen anyone die with such great devotion and tranquility; for so long as his soul was in his body, he never ceased, with his hands extended, to give thanks and praise to God, repeating *Glory be to the Father...* with other spiritual acts. I have many other things I could relate of him;

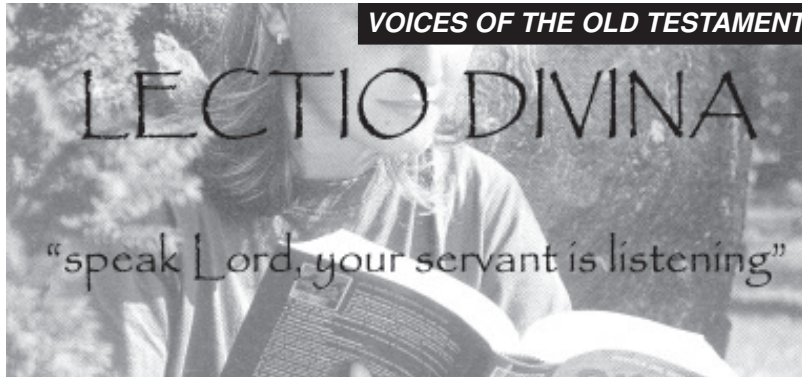
and I have thought of writing more amply on the subject."

Bede died in the year 735 at the age of sixty-two, on Wednesday evening, the 26th of May, after the first vespers of Our Lord's Ascension, whence many authors say he died on the feast of the Ascension, for our Saxon ancestors reckoned festivals from first vespers.

Conclusion

It was the happiness of Venerable Bede that – receiving his education under the direction of saints, by their example, spirit and instructions – he learned from his infancy the maxims and practice of perfect sanctity. St. Chrysostom wishes that parents would breed up their children in monasteries till they are to be produced in the world. Several Roman senators and other noblemen, committed the education of their sons to St. Bennet. The most austere and regular monasteries have been chosen by virtuous parents of the first rank, whose principal desire was that their children should be brought up among saints, where their passions would be in no danger of being flattered, and where their minds would be filled with Christian verities and Christ's spirit, and their hearts formed to piety, grounded in the love, and exercised in habits of all virtues. This is the first and essential advantage which parents are bound to procure their children, upon which their temporal and eternal happiness depends and all other advantages and qualifications are to be founded. Let them not be neglected, but let this be secured in the first place and at all rates. □

(From *Butler's Lives of Saints*,
ed. Michael Walsh)



THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

by Don Carlo Broccardo

Faith is serenity and deep joy that nothing can really upset, because we believe in the one who for love of us passed through death and is now risen and repeats to us: “I am with you always.”

The fourth Sunday of Easter which this year falls on May 3rd usually called “Good Shepherd Sunday” because the Gospel is taken from the tenth chapter of John, the one in which – precisely – Jesus speaks of himself using the image of the shepherd and the sheep. Thinking about this gospel, what responsorial psalm could be more suitable than Psalm 23 (22), the one which begins with the famous words: “The Lord is my shepherd...”?

On our journey through the Old Testament today, we want to read this psalm; it is one of the best known and also a very popular hymn sung in our churches on Sundays! Let us read it once more; and we realize that there are two images used to speak of God: the first is the shepherd who protects his sheep and the landlord who graciously welcomes his guests.

Let us begin with the shepherd. In the ancient world shepherding was one of the main occupations that guaranteed subsistence of entire populations. So everyone knew who a shepherd was, how he behaved, what were his tasks, the risks he ran and the extent to which he went to protect the sheep from any kind of danger. And that was why so many ancient kings were represented as shepherds who took care of their flock, that is, of their subjects. It was no coincidence that the great leaders of the people of Israel were shepherds. Think for example of Moses, who was grazing his father-in-law’s flock when he ended up facing the burning bush (see Exodus 3:1); or David who was looking after his father’s sheep when the prophet Samuel sent for him to anoint him king (see 1 Sam 16, 11)

Let us stay a moment with the

shepherd-king David. While still waiting to ascend the throne, because it was occupied by Saul, the case of Goliath challenging the best soldiers of Israel arose. No one had the courage to fight him. David enters the scene telling those around him that whenever a lion or a bear threatened his father’s flock “I followed it” says David, “and I would tear the sheep from their jaws. If he turned against me I grabbed him by the jaws, knocked him down and killed him.” Then he concludes: this Philistine Goliath will end up like the lion and the bear...

David was still a youth, but he certainly didn’t lack courage! Here’s what is appealing in the Psalm of today: the Lord is just like a shepherd as David was and many others like him. The Lord God knows what is for my good and he does it; being with him I have no need to be afraid. I know he is willing to risk everything to lead me safe and sound where there is the freshest grass and where I can drink from the brook in peace. Like any shepherd he has a stick in his hand to beat

stalking wild animals and in the other hand he holds a crook (a longer stick) with which he beats the grounds so snakes flee. So his courage makes me say: “With you, I fear no evil.”

The second image moves us from the green pastures to a house: we no longer feel secure like sheep because the shepherd protects them but now we feel serene like guests because the landlord has prepared a dinner for his guests – us – and welcomed us by anointing our heads with perfumed oil (that’s what was used). In our hands he has placed a cup filled with wine. What more could we ask for? And then, when the dinner is over, he will not let us go home alone. There will be two companions who will escort us safely: his kindness and the faithfulness of his word.

Psalm 23 goes dabbling in two very common experiences in the ancient world; a little less today (but fairly easy to imagine). It takes us into a world of positive feelings: security, tranquility, goodness, fidelity, the joy of life.

This is faith! There will also certainly be the aspect of the commandments to be observed and the commitments to be realized, but it is first of all, peace and security, because we trust the one who said to Moses: “I will be with you” (Ex 3:12)

Faith is serenity and deep joy that nothing can really upset us, because we believe in the one who for love of us passed through death and is now risen and repeats to us: “I am with you always” Mt 28,20. □



Quiet Spaces

ODE TO JOY

Taken from Pope Francis reflection on at Domus Sanctae Marthae on May 23, 2016

The identity card of a Christian is joy. “Amazement” before the “greatness of God”, before his “love” and the “salvation” he has given to humanity, leads the believer to a joy that none of life’s crosses can tarnish, because even trials are a “certainty that Jesus is with us”.

Inspired by the liturgy of the day, Pope Francis’ homily was a true ode to joy at the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Monday morning. The Pope wanted to specifically re-read the opening words of the song taken from the First Letter of Peter (1:3-9) which, he said, because of its “exultant tone”, its “joyfulness” and the apostle’s way of intervening “with full force”, recalls the beginning “of Bach’s Christmas Oratorio”. Peter, in fact, writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

These are words in which one perceives “wonder before the greatness of God”, before the “regeneration that the Lord — ‘in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ’ — has made in us”. It is an astonishment that is full of triumph and cheerfulness”. Immediately after, the Pope noted, we see the “key phrase” of the letter’s text, namely: “In this you rejoice”.

The joy the apostle speaks of is lasting. For this reason, Pope Francis explained, Peter adds in the epistle that, even if for a little while you are forced to “suffer various trials”, this joy from the beginning “will not be taken away”. In fact, it stems from “what God has done in us: he has regenerated us in Christ and has given us hope”. A hope “which the early Christians depicted as an anchor in heaven”, and which, the Pope said, is also ours. This is where joy comes from. Peter concludes his message inviting everyone to “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy”.

From all of this, the Pontiff emphasized, we understand that joy is truly the “virtue of a Christian”. A Christian, he noted, “is a man or woman who has joy in their heart”. Even more: “There can be no Christian without joy”. Someone might object, saying: “But Father, I have seen many!”. These people “are not Christians: they say that they are, but they are not, they are missing something”. That is why, the Pope said, “the identity card of a Christian is his joy, the joy of the Gospel, the joy of having been chosen by Jesus, saved by Jesus, regenerated by Jesus; the joy of the hope that Jesus is waiting for us. This is joy”.

In contrast to this ode to joy, the liturgy of the day proposes “another word”, one linked to the scene from the Gospel of Mark (10:17-27) in which we read about the young man “who approached Jesus in order to follow him”. He was a “good young man”, capable of “conquering Jesus’ heart”, who, we read, “fixed his gaze upon him” and “loved him”. Jesus made a proposal to this young man: “There is one thing you lack: sell all that you have, give everything to the poor and

come, follow me”; but upon hearing these words the man’s “face was grim and he went away sorrowful”.

The young man, Pope Francis noted, “was unable to open his heart to joy and chose sadness”. Why was this? The answer is clear: “Because he had many possessions. He was attached to goods”. Furthermore, Jesus himself warned that “one cannot serve two masters: you either serve the Lord or you serve riches”.

This scene also sheds light upon our daily life “in our parishes, communities and institutions”. Indeed, the Pope said, if “we find people who say they are Christian, and want to be Christian, but are sad”, it means that something is “not right”. It is the duty of everyone to help these people “to find Jesus, to take away that sadness, so that they may rejoice in the Gospel and have this joy which is truly of the Gospel”.

Pope Francis wanted to expand upon this central concept, and to link joy to the amazement that emerges — as Peter recalls in his letter — “before revelation, before the love of God, before the emotions of the Holy Spirit”. Therefore we can say that “a Christian is a man or woman of amazement”.

One word — “amazement” — which also returns at the end of the Gospel passage of the day, “when Jesus explains to the apostles how this good young man could not follow him, because he was attached to riches, and says that it is very difficult for the rich, those who are attached to riches, to enter the kingdom of Heaven”. We read that they were “more astonished” and asked: “who can be saved?”.

The Pope explained that a man, a Christian, can be so amazed before such greatness and beauty, that one might think: “I cannot do it. I do not know how to do it!”. But looking at his disciples faces, Jesus gives them the consoling answer: “It is impossible for men — man cannot do it... — but it is not so for God!”. We can, therefore, live “Christian joy”, the “wonder of joy” and be saved “from a life attached to things, to worldliness”, only “with the strength of God, the strength of the Holy Spirit”.

Therefore, the Pope concluded his homily with an invitation, saying “let us ask the Lord today to give us amazement before him, before the many spiritual treasures he has given us; and with this amazement that he give us joy, the joy of our lives and of living amidst many difficulties with peace in our hearts; May he protect us from seeking happiness in the many things that ultimately make us sad: things that promise much, but will not give us anything”. In conclusion, “remember this well: a Christian is a man or woman of joy, of joy in the Lord; a man or woman of wonder”. □

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 3 June 2016)

COMING HOME TONIGHT

By Pierluigi Menato,
Translated and adapted by Ian Doultou

In the sudden downpour, the children playing in the street all ran for cover. Beneath one of the thick plane trees stands a young mother with her young son on her hip. She seems to be waiting for someone.

In fact, her gaze was directed to the lighted windows of a low building which were the offices of the metal factory. Obviously, below the level of the windows there were work tables, computers... all that the mother and child could see was hectic activity that precedes the end of a work day.

The employees were leaving one by one, going their separate ways. Just two young employees remained; examining some cards carefully. Then suddenly one of them raised his head and looked distractedly out of the window.

He was so distracted that he didn't even notice the young mother and her boy.

"Daddy, daddy," the little boy chirped, waving his tiny hands. It was rather far and his father couldn't really hear him. The mother wondered; how strange that he didn't remember the custom of their dear little family when the weather was fair. Luke was as cheerful as ever.

That afternoon, the mother, a tidy and systematic woman, after her nap and a cup of tea, entrusted Luke to the babysitter and took off for her usual walk. She would be back around six. Then, after completing several chores and getting dinner ready, she would sit with her son till their little family would be united once more. Like

the sweet return of spring; in the evening the sound of measured footsteps coupled with the patter of little feet brought a smile to her face. She would then hear the little chatter of the boy telling his father about his discoveries that day. The father showed no irritation or impatience even as he hurried home beneath the avenue of plane trees. Some days he was more tired but never too tired to hurry home to the joy and cheer of his little family and the mother drank in the sweetness of that moment as a flower drinks in the morning dew.

Still watching from the driveway are the mother and son. Tonight her husband seemed distracted and even a little restless. He was at the window and then he moved away. He had not yet left the office. He went to the door. Will he come out? "Luke, let's go and meet him"... Just then an elegant and young woman accompanied Henry into the office. The wife waiting in the drive could witness what was unfolding. The office janitor came to the window to shut it. All that could be seen were two shapes behind the frosted glass. She was following their movements. Was she dreaming? Was she having a nightmare? It was beginning to shock her. She is stunned and speechless. Her husband Henry was holding the woman close and she was resting her head on his chest. He kissed her... It was very clear, like a Chinese shadow play.

This was more than she could bear. She put her child down; she didn't have the strength to hold

him on her hip. She felt like dying; her heart empty. She hurried home in a daze, her hands gently but firmly drawing her little son home. He was whining pitifully: "Why mummy? Why must we come home so soon? Aren't we waiting for daddy?"

When she reached home she didn't respond to the babysitter who asked if her husband would be late. Like a robot, she removed her coat and went to the bedroom to sit on the huge bed with Luke in her lap. He was quiet... he couldn't understand this silence of his mother. A shadow had fallen over her pretty features she was like a pencil sketch in black and white. As she held her little son close to her breast his little head beneath her chin seemed to give her that superhuman strength needed to overcome this distress... something to clear her mind... If they had told her that the father of this little boy loved another woman, she would have laughed as if it were some kind of a bad joke. Her Henry, so sensitive and sincere! Until today she believed that...how could she have been so wrong?

This evening the unbelievable had happened right before her eyes...but she was not willing to believe the evidence.

And yet, after what she had seen unfold before her eyes...behind those frosted glass office windows, things couldn't go on as before. The covenant was broken...their sweet intimacy was at an end.

"Till now I was so happy, what shall I do now?"

Henry's voice interrupted her painful brooding: "Silvia, Silvia,

where are you? Where's Luke?" "Here, daddy" the little boy screamed as he struggles to get down from his mother's lap and finding himself at his daddy's feet. Henry, on his knees looked into his little boy's eyes and said: "Tell me little man, why didn't you come to meet daddy this evening?"

"We had to run back because it had begun to rain..." his mother's voice answered. Finding her voice took some superhuman strength.

"But why is it so dark in here?" "What were you two doing?" asked her husband, drawing her to him and kissing her as he anxiously scanned her altered face. "You're looking pale, my love! What's wrong? Are you sick?"

"But it's almost dark here! What were you doing?" asks her husband.

She did not mind attributing her look to a terrible headache; in fact her head ached terribly.

In the dim light of the bedroom she whispered: "I'll just lie down a little and maybe it will pass," she said.

"Won't you have a little soup at least?"

"I think I'll feel better if I don't eat anything."

"Just a soothing spoonful perhaps," he softly whispered as he gave her a teaspoon of some medicine for sleep. After that he did not insist. 'I will let her sleep in peace, perhaps she will tell me later. She's so simple and sincere.' He turned off the bedside lamp nearby and walked slowly out of the room with Luke at his side. This was something unusual.

"Daddy, will you feed me this evening? And won't mummy eat anything?"

"Mummy's not well."

"Luke doesn't want nanny..."

"No, nanny won't be coming, my precious. Daddy will put you to bed tonight."

"But do you know the song?"

"I know so many songs; I can sing them till tomorrow morning."

"From the first to the last one," the child clapped his hands gleefully.

Alone in the darkened room, in that big bed, Silvia listened to the chatter with her eyes closed. It seemed like sweet music...

She had made up her mind. In the meantime she would go on as if she knew nothing; and besides, how could she find the courage to face Henry and ask him for explanations or even to accuse him? But she couldn't bear it. She didn't want to make a spectacle of her pain. Tomorrow morning she would leave; but tonight her legs wouldn't respond...she was too exhausted...

But then, Silvia thought to herself through her painful thoughts...her good sense not distracted by the chatter that now came from the living room. "How could a father, so good and so tender with such an affectionate child conceal a guilty love in his heart?" Even towards her he was his usual affectionate and thoughtful self...and there was no trace of any awkwardness, not even in the tone of his voice, in his face or in his eyes... there was only candour.

"I wish this is only a dream!" Silvia sighed, overcome with anguish. Just then, her husband entered the bedroom to put Luke to bed; the boy had fallen asleep in his arms waiting for a lullaby - he found her drowsy, her head resting in the crook of her arm. Was

she pretending or was she really asleep? Henry was very discreet. He didn't wait to clear his doubts he just tiptoed out of the room silently. He would be up late going over his accounts and taking notes.

The following morning the headache still lingered though Silvia forced a smile in the hope that she would feel a bit better. Henry seemed relieved though he looked very worried: "If it doesn't pass by the time I get home this evening, I'll call the doctor," he said as he left her...telling Luke to take good care of mummy.

As soon as she heard his footsteps on the stairs, Silvia got up and began dressing herself slowly and more serenely, trying all the time to think again...trying to remember how things were before last evening's incident. She felt she had no right to take any decision without having enough evidence. What she saw last night wasn't enough proof of the love of his heart. Having finished dressing she went to Henry's study - something she had never done before - she started rummaging through his papers. She could only find and by chance an address in a corner of his desk folder - the name Wanda Bishop, Hotel Titan... and she struggled to read some fresh scribbling on the napkin. "Bishop!" wasn't that her surname, her husband's surname? And "Wanda" wasn't that the name of his sister, her sister-in-law? That little girl with a face like a gypsy - seen in the family portrait; didn't Henry rarely speak of her and only in vague terms of her

adventurous life...always leaving aside the details?

Suddenly something struck her. Silvia took out her cellphone and punched in a number: "Mr. Bishop, please, it's urgent."

"Hello...is that you Henry?"

"Silvia...what's it my dear?"

"Could I come to your office for a moment? I need to talk to you right away."

At the other end...her husband seemed to smile: "Can't you just tell me on the phone? No...well, come on then, I'll be waiting for you."

A quarter of an hour later, Silvia and Henry sat opposite each other in the guest parlour.

"Tell me...what is it?"

Silvia was upset and emotional and could only stutter as she showed him the address she had found.

"Of course, my sister Wanda is back," said Henry, a frown disturbing his handsome features. Silvia then told him what she had seen at the window the previous night while she waited for him with Luke outside beneath the plane trees. "And you don't need to tell me what you thought, my poor Silvia! I've already understood that." Henry always indulgent even seemed a little annoyed.

"Did you know? Not for a moment, not even later did it cross my mind that it could have been your sister..." Silvia was anxious to explain herself. Then Silvia added: "You spoke as if you never wanted to see her again."

"Instead, our little swallow has come home...almost ten years after she had flown the nest. Yes, she's come back; and as often happens, under a pall of painful humiliation and tears. She knew that

even if the nest was dismantled the hearts of her brothers would never reject her. She turned to me before the others because she knew the address of my company. She made an appointment over the phone. She's sick Silvia...I promised her that I would talk to you before making any decision."

"Oh Henry! Why didn't you say something last night?" She scolded him.

"I saw you so upset I thought I'd wait for a better time."

"Let's not dwell on this anymore, my dear!" pleaded Silvia tenderly. "Now that I know, let me take care of everything."

In an effort to forget her pain Silvia took off immediately to bring comfort to Wanda her sister-in-law.

Earlier in the day, in the hotel room, Wanda was reading the note her brother had sent her. It had reached an hour ago: "...I haven't spoken to Silvia yet. I found her a bit unwell when I got home. Just rest for the moment, I thought we could postpone things till tomorrow. Just have a bit of patience..." Wanda was tired and discouraged and murmured: "Henry is looking for a pretext to cover up his wife's refusal to take care of me, and that's only natural. That's just what I deserved..."

That evening too, Henry came right home from the office and Silvia who had been on the move all day was a little tired, but extremely happy.

She had left Wanda, comforted and almost happy in the little white room at the clinic where she was to be treated.

Yesterday was just a bad dream and the nest is chirping again today with its new-found serenity. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 16

by Michele Molineris

Grigio (Continued)

Once again in Umbria, in 1893, a sister of the Daughters Mary Help of Christians and a companion were going from Cannara to Assisi and on their way they were helped by Grigio.

The sister in question was Sr. Amalia Calaon and at the time she encountered "Grigio," although she was only twenty-four, she was already eight years a professed religious. She was from Padua and died in Bordighera (Imperia) in 1937 at the age of 68 after 53 years of religious life. Here is her testimony.

"It was November 2, 1893. I was in Cannara for about a month. Cannara was an Umbrian town situated in a charming, fertile valley. The superior Sister Brigida Prandi, new as I was to the house and the place, called me and said: "Would you like to take a trip to Assisi?"

I looked at her in amazement and she, sensing my difficulty added: "No, not alone, of course, but with Sister Dallara. I need to send something to his Excellency the Bishop, something important; besides that, to purchase something from the village that we cannot find here and to pick up a box at the station..."

We left at one o'clock and we walked and walked but we never seemed to reach the beautiful hill which seemed closer to us from home. If we had only known how far it was we wouldn't have left so late. We quickened our pace and we were still talking about our

venerated Father Don Bosco whose life we had been reading in the refectory. We didn't feel the time passing and were not exhausted at all. After more than two hours we finally reached that mystical city which is perennially pervaded with the spirit of the seraphic *Poverello*. Meanwhile, from the valley rose a faint fog that blurred the long and wide streets, the gurgling brooks, the charming villages and the beautiful dome of Vignola. Taking some bold shortcuts we reached the station where we were able to pick up the box and we took off for Cannara.

Darkness had fallen; the fog had thickened and we were unable to distinguish anything anymore. Quickening our pace; our hearts beating nervously we yearned for home which we knew was still very far away. The provincial road was wide and straight but never-ending. Suddenly we had a doubt: what if we were on the wrong road? We stopped at a rustic house and asked a woman at the door with a lantern in her hand: Is this the road to Cannara?

- No, no, dear sisters. This is the road to Foligno. You should go back and where you will see a wide road almost like this one, go straight and you won't be wrong...but - she went on kindly, - wouldn't it be better if you stopped here and spent the night? We are poor but a bed and a modest dinner wouldn't be lacking. Where do you want to go all alone in the dark?

We thank you but we must get back. It was very quiet; only the distant sound of the barking of some watchdogs reached us from time to time. New to the place we

were not used to customs so different from ours. We were seriously afraid. Turning to my dear companion I said: Oh, if Don Bosco - of whom we had spoken so much today and whom we love so much - would send us Grigio to defend us!

- Really- replied Sister Annetta.

I sensed fear and anxiety in her voice and we went back to our silence, each of us secretly praying beneath our breaths. Two minutes had not passed when from a nearby thicket came out an unrecognizable animal. It jumped the ditch separating the road from the field and was panting loudly. It came and stood between Sister Annetta and me. We looked startled; the animal was tall with grey hair and two long ears and lively eyes that sparkled in the dark. The animal raised its snout, sniffed both of us and then walked quietly between us as if it had always known us. We were scared at first but then... (Ah, the goodness of our venerable Father). We wept with relief. The big dog, like a meek lamb continued walking between us and gently touching our hand almost as if to say: Don't worry, I'm here! I will protect you like a friend. Go ahead safely.

At a certain point, out of the dark there was the sound of heavy footsteps and we heard a familiar voice exclaim: Ah, finally, there you are!

It was Bartoccio, the good man who worked for the community. Sr. Superior had asked him to come out and meet us, anxious that there might have been an accident, since we had not yet reached home.

When he saw the big dog, he

exclaimed, - Mamma mia! What a beast! Be off! So saying, he raised his stick as if to threaten the dog.

- For heaven's sake, don't touch it, it has protected us all the way.

Without further incident, we reached our institution. At the foot of the steps was the superior, anxiously waiting. Seeing us approach she breathed a sigh of relief but she too was surprised to see the mysterious animal.

Grigio - let me call him - came into the house with us and put his foot on the second step of the staircase and looked up at us and stood still. I turned to the Superior and asked: "Wouldn't it be nice to give it something, a piece of bread at least? This good animal has so willingly accompanied us home.

I hadn't finished speaking, when the dog turned and quickly left through the door. We all thought of running out to catch him...but the square was so vast and so dark it was not possible for us to see him. He was gone.

All praise and thanks to Don Bosco who in a similar endeavour, sent his mysterious Grigio to defend us) (*Salesian Bulletin* July 1919, 179; EBM XVI 21).

* * *

In 1930 the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians were building in Barranquilla, Colombia. Everyday news reached them of robberies and violence in the city and its surroundings, and they too feared the marauders because during the whole month of April they had to store outdoors heaps of construction materials and furnishings like tubs, sinks, doors and windows. Of course the thieves knew the place well. On four occasions, before construction actually began,

they had broken into the residence, and, though they did no damage, they frightened the sisters. The sisters therefore prayed to Don Bosco to send them his Grigio for protection. One night, behold, into the corridor of their old residence trooped a string of dogs, six of them, never before seen in the neighborhood! They posted themselves in the playfields and in the darkest corners of the old house. Getting over their fear, the sisters approached the dogs and found them to be very friendly. At six o'clock the next morning the dogs filed out just as they had come in, and this they did for an entire month. Later, only three dogs appeared, of which one was poisoned, but another one immediately replaced him. They kept guard until the danger passed.

* * *

A third case took place at La Navarre in France sometime between 1898 and 1900. Sister Josephine Cretaz and Sister Verina Valenzano, recording the account twenty years later, could not remember the precise date. As is customary there, toward the end of October, the sisters venture into the nearby villages in search of chestnuts, remaining out for three days. On that occasion the two sisters went together. Going from one village to another took some four hours, mainly through sparsely inhabited woods. At a certain point the solitude and silence got to them and they panicked. "We can be ambushed out here," they cried, "and there's no one to defend us or even know we're here!" As they mulled over

these somber thoughts, they heard a rustling in the bushes as though someone were kicking up the leaves, but there was nothing to be seen. Suddenly a huge dog appeared, drawing near them and wagging its tail; he circled around them and nudged their shoulders with his head as though to say, "Don't be afraid! I'm here." He then dashed out into the open, picked up a chestnut tree branch in his teeth, tossed it playfully into the air and ran to catch it, keeping always in front of them, as though trying to distract them. "Could this be Don Bosco's Grigio?" they asked each other. They were hoping to bring the dog home with them on their return. However, just as they were approaching the town they met a coach with some ladies they knew and they stopped for a chat with them. Meanwhile the dog disappeared without a single trace. (EBM XVI, 21,22).

* * *

What did Don Bosco think about it? That can be deduced from a conversation he had in 1872 with the barons Ricci at The Madonna dell'Olmo (Cuneo). As the discussion had turned to Grigio, of whom everyone had known, Don Bosco said: "Let's leave *Gris* alone!" I haven't seen him for some time!

It was two years that he had not seen him, because in 1870 he was heard to exclaim: "This dog is really a significant feature in my life! To say he was an angel would make you laugh; but neither can it be said that he was any ordinary dog, because I saw him again the other day" (M.B., X, 386). □

SALESIAN SAINTS

BRONISLAO MARKIEWICZ 1842 - 1912

Bronislao Markiewicz was born on July 13, 1842 in Pruchnik in Poland, in what is today in the Latin archdiocese of Przemysl. He was the sixth of eleven children of John Markiewicz, mayor of the town and Marianna Gryziecka. He received a sound religious formation in his family, but later on during his high school studies he grew uncertain about his faith, largely due to the anti-religious ambient that reigned in the school. However, he managed to overcome this crisis soon enough and regained his serenity and inner peace.

Having graduated from high school, the young Bronislao entered the seminary in 1863 because he felt God calling him to the priesthood. When he completed his regular course of studies he was ordained a priest on September 15, 1867. After six years of pastoral work as an assistant parish priest in the parish of Harta and the Cathedral of Przemysl, he wanted to work for youth for which reason he took two years to study pedagogy, philosophy and history at the universities of Lviv and Krakow. In 1875 he was appointed parish priest of Gaé and in 1877 of Blazowa. In 1882 he was entrusted with teaching pastoral theology in the Major Seminary of Przemysl.



Feeling called to the religious life in November 1885 he left for Italy and joined the Salesians. He had the joy of meeting Saint John Bosco, into his hands he made his religious profession on March 25, 1887. As a Salesian he carried out the various duties entrusted to him by his superiors and tried to fulfil them with dedication and zeal. Because of his austere lifestyle and the incompatibility of the climate Bronislao fell seriously ill in 1889 with tuberculosis and was considered near death. Having recovered from his illness he convalesced in Italy until March 23, 1892 when with the permission of the superiors he returned to Poland where he assumed the role of Parish Priest at Miejsce Piastowe at Przemysl, his diocese of origin.

In addition to his regular parish activity Bronislao Markiewicz dedicated himself, in the

spirit of Don Bosco to the formation of poor and orphaned youth. At Miejsce Piastowe he opened for them an institution which offered them trades that prepared them for life and professional training schools close to the institute itself. For this purpose, in 1897 he founded two new religious congregations inspired by the spirituality of Don Bosco adapting his rules specifically to his own charism. Once again he was welcomed among the clergy of the diocese of Przemysl. Father Markiewicz continued his activity as a parish priest and director of the institute to which gave the programme, Work and Temperance (1898). He tried to obtain the approbation for his group as a religious congregation under the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel, with a male and female branch, sadly the approval came just a few years after his death: in 1921 for the congregation of St. Michael the Archangel (Michaelites) for men and in 1928, for the congregation of the Sisters of St. Michael the Archangel also called Michaelites.

Father Bronislao continued always with the blessing and the approval of the bishop, St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, as a trainer of young people and orphaned children, using as collaborators those he had himself prepared. Already in Miejsce Piastowe he had offered a home and trained hundreds of boys spending himself entirely for them. Eager to do much more, in

August 1903 he opened a new home in Pawlikowice near Krakow where he found a home for more than 400 orphans giving them the opportunity of professional and spiritual training.

His total dedication to his children, his heroic spirit of self-denial took its toll of his health which was already being undermined by the disturbances that had been going on in Italy. All this led, quite quickly, to the end of his earthly pilgrimage on January 29, 1912.

Blessed Bronislao Markiewicz distinguished himself by his great love for his neighbour in the person of the poorest, most neglected and abandoned orphans to whom he gave himself selflessly. He was very eager to welcome more and more boys and to offer them the human warmth that they so lacked. This deep desire was expressed in his own words: "I would like to gather millions of abandoned children of all kinds, feed them for free and clothe them in body and spirit." To this commitment of love, coupled with the courageous option for the poor he remained faithful to the end of his life, heroically accepting all the consequences that flowed from these choices. □



MARY THE DOOR OF FAITH

by Maria Ko Ha Fong

At the annunciation Mary passes from the question: "How will this take place?" to the exclamation: "Let it happen." She does not know that it will result in a joyful trust and this should be a model for every believer.

Benedict XVI launched the year of faith with the *motu proprio* "Porta Fidei." It was the fiftieth anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church." The opening of the "door of faith" in many hearts is a suggestive image used by Luke to describe the rapid spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). The Pope applied this analogy with conviction that it leads to life and a communion with God, permitting us entrance into his Church, a door which is always open to people of our generation. Over the years, the Church has been blessed with a host of witnesses and missionaries who have crossed the threshold of this door with fervor and creativity and have helped others to enter. As a leader, Mary is proclaimed "blessed because she believed" (Lk:1:45), and she is recognized as the model for the believer, the first to be evangelized and the first evangelizer. She is the perfect im-

age of the door of faith; in fact, generations of believers go through Mary to Jesus. We entrust this time of grace and growth of faith to her. To her, the 'door of faith' we dedicate these reflections entitled "our walk with Mary" this year.

The daily joys of Nazareth

Let us start with the scene of the Annunciation at Nazareth. Mary makes her first appearance in the Gospel in the context of total ordinariness, in a cozy space, in an attitude of listening and of silence, like a good field open and waiting for the arrival of the seed.

"Entering her," the angel brings her the Word of God.

At the unexpected announcement of the angel Gabriel, Mary's response is not instantaneous. Her first reaction is one of bewilderment, typical of someone who becomes aware of being faced with something infinitely transcendent; an unexpected surprise whose meaning she is not immediately able to grasp. This is not a

doubt rising out of disbelief but rather a sense of amazement at the disproportion between the size of the proposal and the actual limitedness of the capacity for realization. It is the attitude of someone who is humble and reflective; of someone who is aware of his/her littleness and so she approaches the mystery timidly and discreetly carefully trying to fathom its mystery. This is how the poor feel as they marvel at gifts freely given. Mary's second reaction is an objection. Mary asks for light: "Quomodo fiet istud?" (How can this be?); and she states her dilemma of wanting to consent but not knowing how. She asks God what she would have to do to be able to obey. The spirit of Mary is like that of the Psalmist when he prays to God saying: "Help me to understand your laws, and I will meditate on your wonderful teachings [...] Explain your law to me, and I will obey it; I will keep it with all my heart." (Ps 119:27,34).

The silence of unbelief in Jerusalem

After the angel shows her she was to become a protagonist, the locus and witness of "great things," Mary accepts with full availability. She passes from "how can this happen?" to "let it happen," from a question mark to an exclamation mark. It is the impact between the human and the divine. Mary mysteriously crosses the threshold of a door that passes from existing for herself and for her own small life- plans to existing for God and for his great designs. Mary's 'yes,' like the yes Jesus taught us in the Our Father (Mt 6:10) is a trusting abandonment and a joyful desire

to fulfil God's will. With her 'yes' she brings together the host of obedient people of faith in the Old Testament and ushers in the new people, ready to listen to the voice of God who now speaks through his Son. The dynamic of Mary's inner journey is even clearer if we consider the intentional comparison that Luke makes between the two annunciations: to Zechariah and to Mary. Zechariah, an elderly, well-respected priest, an upright man and a perfect representative of Old Testament religion, encounters the angel in Jerusalem while he is performing worship. A holy man in a holy place at a holy time: everything underlies the sacredness and the solemnity of the event. Mary, on the other hand: an unknown girl from an unknown town from which nothing good can come (Jn 1:46), encounters an angel in her simple home. But God reverses the positions. The angel comes "from her" since Mary is actually the temple of the Most High. She "has found favour with God." The divine gift comes to her for free, not because she has observed the law or in response to her prayer-request, as was the case of Zechariah. Even the conclusions of the stories differ: Mary believes, she is open and collaborates in God's plan to save the world while Zechariah is closed and mute, isolated. The one who does not believe in God's design will not even be able to talk about it.

The astonishment of Mary of Nazareth at the impact of the mystery, her gratitude at God's immense generosity and her journey from bewilderment to joyful faith, must remain forever the pattern for every believer. □

NEWSBITS

ROME



The words spoken in Trieste on November 18, 2019 by a Local Councilor of Forza Nuova (and ex-Lega), regarding the Holocaust survivor and Lifetime *Senator Lilliana Segre*, "As a Catholic, I feel offended, because she said that 'Jesus was Jewish'" - more than arousing amazement at the Councilor's absolute ignorance of the history of his own religion, can be heard as a warning signal concerning a generalized lack of knowledge about the origins of Christianity - and its deep roots in Judaism.

Corrado Augias wrote in "La Repubblica" on November 30th, 2019: "It happened to me quite a few times. If one states in public that Jesus was a Jew, a son of Jews, and that he died a Jew, we often meet with considerable bewilderment. Yet the Scriptures are clear: Jesus was circumcised eight days after his birth, thus signing his covenant with the Blessed One according to the Torah (the Law)". And Don Giuliano Savina, Director of Ecumenism at CEI (*The Ital-*

ian Bishops' Conference), who has just published a very topical book "Shaping consciences to clear the vision: a permanent urgency for a confessional ecumenical and inter-religious catechesis", told us in an interview with *Vatican Insider* on September 12, 2018 that when he was parish priest in Milan his parishioners were repeatedly "shocked" when he revealed to them the obvious, well-known fact that "Jesus was not a Christian, he never entered a church. He was a Jew and attended a synagogue". This was followed by an invitation. "We too will visit the synagogue to experience the way in which Jesus practiced his faith".

The depressing examples of profound religious and historical ignorance evidence not only the low cultural level of a few parliamentarians representing parties covering the entire Italian political spectrum, but can also be found amongst large sections of the general population. The many absurd comments we heard after the Trieste incident include a surreal conversation overheard in a bar: "Of course Jesus was not Jewish - he was Palestinian!"

Don Giuliano says that "Nostra Aetate" and all subsequent documents written by the Catholic Church to combat anti-semitism and strengthen the ties between the two fraternal religions have remained within books and folders that are collecting dust instead of being translated directly into people's daily lives". (*Lisa Palmieri-Billig is AJC's Liaison to the Holy See*) □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

And be quick

Caller: "And will you wall with me as far as the bus stop, Tommy?"

Tommy: "I can't."

Caller: "And why not?"

Tommy: "Because we're going to have dinner as soon as you leave."

Manner of Court

One day when old Stevens, the lawyer, was pleading a case in court, the judge ruled against him for the second time, and old Stevens got up with scarlet face and commenced gathering his papers as if to quit the courtroom.

"Do you understand, Mr. Stevens," the judge asked, eyeing him indignantly, "that you're trying to show contempt of this court?"

"No, your Honour," replied Stevens, "I don't want to show my contempt; I'm trying very hard to conceal it."

The Sound of Peace

She was tucking her grandson in bed.

"Shall I tell you a bedtime story?" she whispered.

"Not tonight, Grandma," the child murmured.

"Then, shall I sing you a lullaby?"

"No," replied the child.

"Suppose you go away and let me get some sleep?"

Precise Prayerful Petition

Little Ben, growing out of early childhood, was being taught to address his parents as "father"

and "mother"

One night, saying his prayers, he followed the usual practice, "Lord bless daddy and mummy." Then suddenly he paused and in a most solemn and respectful manner offered a revision: "Excuse me, Lord, I should have said father and mother." He meditated briefly, then concluded, "But Lord, they are the same old parties."

An Irish Dying Wish

An Irish gentleman lying on his deathbed was questioned by his prospective widow. "Poor Mike," she said brokenheartedly, "is there anything that would make you comfortable? Anything you ask for I'll give you."

"Please Bridget," the dying man whispered, "I think I'd like a wee taste of ham I smell aboiling in the kitchen."

"Arrah, go on," said Bridget, shaking her head.

"Not a bit of ham you'll get! 'Tis for the funeral, man."

License to Kill

A policeman watched a woman trying to maneuver her automobile out of a parking space. She banged into the car ahead, then into the car behind and finally, when pulling out into the street, crashed into a passing auto. This was too much for the officer. He walked over to her and said, "Lady, let me see your driving licence."

"She gave him a friendly smile and replied, "Don't be silly officer, who would give me a licence? ☐"

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.

On September 27th 2019, as I was cleaning the top of the old septic tank, one of the four slabs broke and I fell inside the tank. I called out to my daughter-in-law, who came rushing to my aid. One big part of the slab stood beside me and the other part under me. As I could not stand, my husband got inside by the ladder and brought me up on his shoulders and my daughter-in-law was there to receive me. I was rushed to the hospital. The x-ray showed a hairline fracture of the tibia bone and some 60cc coagulation of blood was removed with no other injury. Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary were there for me. My family always recites Psalm 91. My life was spared from what could have been fatal. Everyone was astonished at my miraculous escape.

Maria E. D'Souza, Goa

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary for all the numerous blessings bestowed on me and my family through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to protect and shower your blessings on us.

Mrs. I. Fernandes

My father had been going regularly to clean a wound he had for over a year. However on this day, when he went to the hospital for a follow-up the doctor informed us that the wound was badly infected and had touched the bone. There was immediate need to get it operated to see if it had touched the joint, in which case his toe would have to be amputated. Our constant prayers to Our Lady through the Holy Rosary and Our Lady's intercession with her Son, the next day at the surgery the doctor informed us that they had to scrape right up to the bone, but miraculously there was no need for amputation of the toe. Mary was there and is there everyday. We just need to call out to her by praying the Rosary daily.

Rochelle

With a humble and grateful heart, I thank dearest Mother Mary for the numerous favours we receive over the years. The devotion to the three Hail Marys has always helped me and my family in troubled times. Mother Mary has always come to my rescue in difficult times. Dear Mother Mary, please continue to bless our families with peace, compassion, happiness, health and love for Christ now and forever.

A. Furtado, Goa

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

I was coming with my husband on our bike from Thane to Chembur (Mumbai) and we were saved from a major accident. Our bike skid and we fell but we escaped with minor bruises. I always carry my rosary and recite it while travelling. Mary was there and I strongly believe that it was she who saved us from the major accident. Thank you Mother Mary for your timely help. *Mrs. Tessy John, Mumbai*

This happened thirty-one years ago in the month of August 1988. I was working on an offshore Rig at Bombay High. There was an explosion and a fire. Three employees were killed at the site. I was supposed to have been on duty that night. The day before the accident I was "urgently summoned" to attend a judicial settlement at Pune. Having secured permission (which was very difficult to obtain) I left the rig accordingly. However, to my extreme surprise that midnight the rig caught fire. I am certain that Jesus and Mother Mary and St. Anthony brought me out of the rig. That is the reason I am still alive. We are thankful to Jesus, Mother Mary and all the saints and we express our deepest gratitude. *Jose Chunkathe*

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

Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Joseph for always being with us throughout our pregnancy and helping us cope with stress and for the normal delivery of my baby. Thank you St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my baby and many favours received.

N.fernandes, London

Dear Sweet Jesus, Our Blessed Mother and all the saints and angels for helping my daughter Petra Guerra in her job in Canada; in helping her successful negotiations with the management and union members for the factory workers and for keeping my son Brendon Wasdell, safe from accidents while driving his cab and bringing him home safe.

C.E. Wasdell, Bangalore

Heartfelt thanks for a safe delivery of a healthy child and for all the other favours received. We are eternally grateful to Don Bosco, Mother Mary, St. Jude and St. Anthony. Please protect our home always.

Glenn D'Souza & Family, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Jude for granting my prayers.

Rohit, Mumbai

Thanks to the blessed Trinity and Our Lady for helping my daughter secure 91.2% in her SSC board exams and for all the other favours.

Jonitha D'Cruz

Thank you Mother Mary, Help of Christians for the successful heart operation of my son-in-law.

P. Gomes

Thank you, Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the blessings of good health of Francis Sofia, Flora and Cedric and for the help received during the hard times. Please continue to help us in our day to day struggles. *Sofia Lobo, Pune*

(Continued from pg. 34)

We were travelling on a busy highway in Montana. All of a sudden a rock hit our windscreen and cracked the vehicle's front glass. During this incident, we were praying the Rosary. Mary was present in our midst, since nothing happened to us except for the damage to the vehicle. Our grateful thanks to Jesus and his dear Mother Mary, Help of Christians for protecting us and for all the graces and favours received during times of trial and difficulties. Mary Help of Christians, pray for us. *R. & M. Pereira, Canada*

The Power of the Three Hail Marys

My son was to travel by bus from Bangalore to Goa but at the last minute the bus was cancelled. He was forced to travel by his scooter. On the way, when he reached Hubli he met with an accident. We were not aware of how serious the accident was. We called on Mary Help of Christians for help reciting the *Memorare*. Jesus and Mary came to our aid and my son was saved with just minor injuries. We thank Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for being with us. *J. Vas, Goa*

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



Thank you dear Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and St. Anthony for helping my daughter to receive good marks in her H.S.C. Board examinations; for the necessary house repairs that have been completed and for all the favours we have received. Please continue to bless, protect and keep us in good health. *Joaquim D'Souza, Mumbai*
Sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for relieving my husband of his unbearable pain due to a kidney stone problem. I placed a scapular of Dominic Savio on

the affected part. *Brigida*

My sincere thanks to God the Father, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with a suitable husband. Almighty Father, continue to bless my children with good health and happiness. *Mrs. Lucia Colaco, Goa*

Our grateful thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping us to go to Canada and come home safely although my husband is a paralytic and a heart patient. Do continue to bless us always. *A Devotee from Vasai*

Thank you Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for giving my nephew Lord and Susan the gift of a baby girl. Bless her always.

Mrs. Lena Fernandes, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

**MAY 2020
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We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

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MARY WAS THERE

I can still picture the incident which happened more than 50 years ago. As a young boy I was very fond of kites. One day while I was talking to a friend of mine I suddenly saw a kite falling on the road opposite me, without a second thought I ran after the kite not realising that a speeding truck was coming from the opposite direction. The driver was screaming and shouting as he could not stop the truck in time, I too could not get away. At that very moment out of the blue the image of Mother Mary appeared before me. The truck hit me and stopped but nothing happened to me; I was not hurt at all. I just got up and went to my friend who was also surprised at my miraculous escape. Mother Mary was there in my moment of grave danger and protected me.

Irineus Carneiro

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

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