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*To you the souls of the Dead
lovingly sigh,
Desiring to be rescued
from pain
And to stand in your sight,
To possess eternal joys,
O Mary!*

*As they groan,
hasten, Mother;
In mercy, show them
your heart.
May Jesus through
His wounds
Be pleased to heal them:
ask this, O Mary!*

From The Editor's Desk

THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

A few weeks ago, I happened to pull up a well-known photograph on the Internet. You have seen him. He is a man whose somewhat distorted face and whole body attracts our attention and wonder. He is a middle-aged man sitting in a wheelchair, strangely his arms and legs are twisted at odd angles, and his body is slumped forward leaning to one side of the chair. As you study the picture you notice that his left hand is crossed over his body and is resting on a joystick, which controls all the functions of the motorized chair. In his right hand, which is crossed over his body in the other direction, he is holding a mouse that is connected to a laptop attached to the chair. In the background is a picture of the Cosmos, and again one can't but wonder about the man and about the new mysteries of the universes we are now discovering.

One cannot but wonder. Suppose someone saw him on a city street. Not knowing anything about him, what would he see? Would he look away or would he say a few kind words to him: "Good day Sir, how are you today?" Or would he make sure their eyes did not meet so as to avoid contact and deny the reality of his person?

What do you see when you look at people? I say this because how we see people and how we think about them and value them, determine how we treat them. Many people saw Jesus, as described in the New Testament, as he travelled the cities and countryside, and we know from scripture that some saw as a prophet or a man of God, while others saw a man possessed or a misguided zealot. Jesus never refrained from looking into the eyes of all people for he looked through the eyes of his Father the creator of all reality.

St. Paul says: "From now on we regard no one from a human point of view" (2 Corinthians 5:16). We ought to see now from a Risen Christ point of view. Our reality is not what it seems. Christians often do not see what others see. What is passing away is being made new, and what is old and dying is being recreated and made alive once again. Jesus would have us look beyond the obvious and superficial. What do you see?

It is the face of Christ we are to recognize and the creation of God that we are to embrace. To see people the way Jesus saw them is to look beyond failure to another chance. Many people today live the "three strikes and you're out ethic," and not an ethic of believing in forgiveness, redemption and reconciliation. These realities overcome death and the grave and give life.

You have probably guessed the man I found in the picture is Stephen Hawking. If all we see is a deformed man, then we completely miss him. To see through the eyes of the Risen Christ requires an alert and conscious decision. The ways of the world shape our vision but we have a God-centred faith to enable us to see through the eyes of Jesus. As the prayer of the hymn says: "Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart."

Fr. Ian Doultton sdb

LOVE AND PASSION

by Giampaolo Dianin

The fact that in *Amoris Laetitia* the Pope spoke of pleasure, passion and eroticism as important dimensions of conjugal love caused quite a stir. Some cheered, as if the Church had finally clarified something that was, till now, taboo. In reality, only those who know little of the Church and theological and pastoral reflection on marriage, had marvelled at something that has long been the daily bread of Christian thought, spirituality and Christian formation.

It was in the year 1965 when the Council described conjugal love as follows: "This love is an eminently

human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity, ennobling these expressions as special ingredients and signs of the friendship distinctive of marriage." (*Gaudium et Spes* 49)

Conjugal love is first of all a "human act," that is, an action of the whole person; of intelligence, will, of emotion and reason, of body and spirit. The intertwining of these dimensions of the person is expressed with the words

"feeling that arises from the will," as if to make these two aspects indissoluble against any sentimental reductionism. It is then, a love that embraces the other in his/her entirety giving oneself totally to the other; making a true sexual encounter a sign of the gift of the whole person. Among the expressions of conjugal love, the Council placed the sexual act first as an act that specifies and distinguishes conjugal love from any other form of love: "This love is uniquely expressed and perfected through the appropriate enterprise of matrimony. The actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are noble and worthy ones. Expressed in a manner which is truly human, these actions promote that mutual self-giving by which spouses enrich each other with a joyful and ready will." The acts proper to marriage are not an addition or expressions that may or may not exist, but they express and bring love to perfection. They are honourable, worthy in themselves and they express love and nourish it. Between the spiritual and the physical dimension of love there is a very close bond, a reciprocal nourishment for the growth of the spousal bond.

These statements recall the close relationship between *eros* and *agape*. We can define *eros* as the movement that leads me to the beloved because the other gives me joy, emotion, gratification and pleasure. It might seem like a selfish movement that uses the other for one's own pleasure and also for this reason it has often been judged suspicious in some corners of the history of

Christianity. Pope Benedict reminds us of the dignity of *eros* stating: "the Church, faithful to the Scriptures in no way rejected *eros* as such; rather, it declared war on a warped and destructive form of it, because this counterfeit divinization of *eros* actually strips it of its dignity and dehumanizes it." (*Deus caritas est* 4). Alongside *eros*, conjugal love celebrates a second movement: *agape*. In *agape*, I go to the beloved because I want to give him/her something of me, indeed, all of myself, in love as gift, altruistic and seeking the good of the other. This is conjugal love in its specificity: the joy that I receive from you (*eros*) and the joy that I give you (*agape*). *Eros* and *agape* are inseparable, one feeds the other and together they express the particularity of conjugal love that holds body and spirit together, eroticism, self-gift, spiritual joy and sensual pleasure. They cannot be separated or imagined without one another, even if in real life they don't always shine in the same way.

How can we forget that behind eroticism there is the creative work of God who formed man and woman sexually different and gave them the challenge to become a single person?

Sexuality is a marvellous gift, writes Pope Francis (*AL* 150). Sexual pleasure is not just excitement, but also openness to an encounter. There is an ethical dimension to pleasure that not only consumes the other, but an openness that becomes knowledge and gratitude, a welcome and a gift, an appreciation and an admiration. This is a paradoxical pleasure because it is at the same time, selfishness and altruistic, it



CHRIST IN US, HOPE OF LIFE

is the “enjoyment of you,” but also “living you!” Sexual desire also speaks of depth, mystery, revelation and at the same time, pleasure, suffering, quivering, appetite, wounding, nourishing, emotions and dizziness. The sexual encounter is both personal and impersonal, near and far, bright and dark. In sexual encounters, men and women tend to get lost in the other, whose body is not the other, but introduces them into their life.

Thanks to sexual gestures, the other can be accepted with tenderness that embraces him/her in the most concrete and true manner, in his/her extreme weakness and vulnerability. But it is also possible to cross the moat

that separates one from the other with violence, because the flesh is also the place of excesses, of overflowing and of subversion. Eroticism is a game, but also the cement of the flesh, a deep and serious bond.

Pope Francis affirms: “The erotic appears as a specifically human manifestation of sexuality. It enables us to discover “the nuptial meaning of the body and the authentic dignity of the gift” (AL 151). And again: “In no way, then, can we consider the erotic dimension of love simply as a permissible evil or a burden to be tolerated for the good of the family. Rather, it must be seen as gift from God that enriches the relationship of the spouses” (AL 152).

THE RED UMBRELLA

He was a serious and studious young man and she was a beautiful and intelligent girl. And they loved each other. Before leaving for military service, he wanted to give her a present; a gift that would remind her of his love for her. But he had to consider his finances, which were already stretched by his University books. He went around the shops and department stores. After ages he made up his mind. He bought her an enormous umbrella; it was bright red.



Under that great red umbrella, the two youngsters said their goodbyes, exchanged their promise of undying love and decided to get married. In the new house the umbrella ended up in a closet.

Years went by, two children arrived, and worries, tension, boredom and very long silences.

One evening, sitting on the sofa both of them yawned in front of the TV. She suddenly got up and ran to the closet and after a while she returned with the red umbrella in a cloud of dust. Then she sat on the sofa with the red umbrella wide open. After a long while, he sidled up beside her under the large umbrella. They caressed each other tenderly.

And they found all their lost dreams in the dust of days gone by. Don't forget the red umbrella.

Bruno Ferrero
Sometimes a ray of sunshine is enough
editrice LDC, Torino 2003)

The risen Jesus Christ is the reason for our hope. “He has also opened up for us the fullness of life beyond death” says St Anthony in one of his *Sermons*. This truth is comforting when the thought of death, especially during this month of November brings on sadness and fear.

“Christ has been truly raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a human being came death, by a human being has come also the resurrection of the dead. All die in Adam, and in Christ all will receive life.” (1 Cor 15,20-22). We must have the courage to look hopefully beyond the darkness of death because the apostle Paul warns us: “if it is only for this life that we hope in Christ, we are the most unfortunate of people (1 Cor 15,19). The Spirit that God has given us is already the assurance of this final realization: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is within you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. Yes, he will do it through his Spirit who dwells within you” (Rom 8,11).

Jesus Christ risen is the model of our life beyond death. We will be transformed into his image; and participate in his glory. Through him, the infinite light and love of God will enshroud our person without any more limitations, allowing us

to participate in that same divine life.

Sometimes, curious as we are, we would perhaps like to know more about what happens beyond death. We must be aware that we are talking about a reality of which we have not yet had any direct experience and so only a negative description is possible. If now our corporeal life is limited by weakness, the influence of evil, pain and death then all those things will be gone.

If now our relationship to others and the world is restricted, narrow and opaque, then it will be comprehensive and bright. Paul speaks thus of the transformation that takes place in the resurrection. “That body that is sown is perishable; it will be raised imperishable. It is sown in humiliation, and it will be raised for glory. They buried it in weakness, but the resurrection shall be with power. When buried it is a natural body, but it will be



raised as a spiritual body. For there shall be a spiritual body as there is at present a living body" (1 Cor 15, 42-44).

It is already possible to glimpse how, in the resurrection, God will explode onto us bringing an unexpected fullness to all the potentialities of life, which he had placed in the heart of man when he created him. It will truly be like a new birth.

At this milestone to which Christ has given us access, man is called to traverse through the dark test of death. In this last decisive experience, each person, almost summarizing all the

endeavours of his life, will be totally open to the love of God or a forward attempt through the fragmented veil of our human history. We never forget to turn our gaze to the ultimate future open in the heavenly city, where the tree of life is in bloom.

"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city and his servants shall worship him. They will see his face and his name will be written on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of lamp or sun, for God himself will be their light and they will reign for ever and ever (Rev 22, 3-5). □

WHY WORRY ABOUT TIME?

From the evolution of the sun-dial to the electronic age, time seems to have become the most important element in man's everyday existence. It governs our daily lives and it appears that our whole society and economic system revolves around it.

From the moment the alarm clock awakens us each morning we are conscious of the significance of time. We must catch the bus or train at a particular hour and fret and worry that we will be late. During the day we eagerly watch the clock and heave a sigh of relief when it is time to go home, hoping we will beat the rush hour traffic. Are we finished then with our concern about time? Not really, our favourite television programme is on tonight... and we must not miss the news. What a hectic day! You can't wait for Sunday to really relax, but even then you are tied to time. You have to go to church, you must have your dinner at a preordained time, and you cannot be late for the cinema or theatre. After all, are you not entitled relax for one night?

Does this ever stop? Even going on holidays we must arrive at the airport to catch our scheduled flight. You wonder how people managed before the invention of the clock or how primitive man survived who had no concept of time?

Perhaps our lives would be greatly enhanced if we heeded the words of St Peter (Pt 3:8-14), and if we saw time in its proper perspective by remembering that with the Lord, a 'day' can mean a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day.' Then perhaps, we will slow down and appreciate life... rather than cutting it into pieces and measuring it by artificial time.

Edward Chandler



LIVE THE LIFE YOU WANT TO LIVE

Anastasia Dias

On this journey of life, we're constantly learning. Sometimes, we learn because we want to. But most of the time, we learn because we have to.

With every passing day, we meet people with different experiences in life. Every person we meet teaches us a lesson or two. The friends we make, teach us to work on ourselves. Unpleasant people make us realize that we must be kind so we don't make the lives of others miserable. Because of the people we come across, we choose to change something within us that isn't right.

A few months ago, I met a little girl who helped shape my perspective. Her name was Joy. On our first meeting at the park, she was strolling alongside her mother. One glance at this beautiful child and I couldn't look away. As I approached her, she greeted me with a smile that could outshine the sun on its brightest day.

Joy was sitting in a wheelchair, thinking about life and drooling happily. She was very excited when I went closer to her because she was going to make a new friend.

To any other person, she looked like another child born with

cerebral palsy. But, to me, she was the happiest person I had ever seen.

I tried talking to this little girl. And every time I spoke, she burst out giggling as if she'd seen a clown. I wanted to know her secret. How did she manage to live life joyfully?

I couldn't help asking her mother who was always by her side. She told me that Joy was true to her name. She woke up at sunrise and wanted the curtains drawn open so she could see the sun's rays flooding her house. She would spend her day trying to draw or read or practice writing. When evening came, she wanted to go to the park and watch the sun set.

Throughout her day, even if Joy failed to do something or wasn't given what she needed, she would never throw a tantrum. This little girl fascinated me. She showed undeniable resilience and strength.

As I spent more time with her, I got to know her better. She had a thirst for learning new skills and was very curious to know more about life. I realized she was trying her best to stand on her feet and walk. So, every day we would practice a simple exercise of trying to get her up on her feet.



RABBI, WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Andrew Meets Jesus

By Ian Pinto, sbd

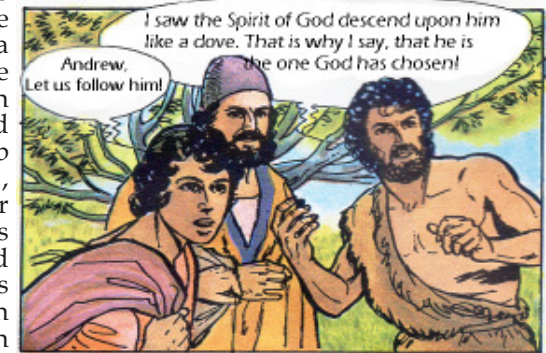
We don't know much about Andrew. He is probably the younger brother of Simon Peter and for some strange reason does not form a part of Jesus' innermost circle, which comprised of his brother, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. He hailed from the coastal town of Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee and picked up his father's profession, fishing. According to legend, he preached the gospel in Greece and Russia before meeting his final end in the Greek city of Patras. Tradition has it, that he was crucified on an 'X' shaped cross that later came to be known as 'Saint Andrew's Cross,' on his own request since he deemed himself unworthy to die in a fashion similar to Jesus.

Fishing for God

The gospels vary in their accounts of how Andrew came to follow Jesus. While Matthew, Mark and Luke recount Jesus calling Peter and Andrew as they were busy fishing, John offers a different version. He shows Andrew as a disciple of John the Baptist. When John pointed out to Jesus and said, "There is the Lamb of God," (Jn 1:36), Andrew and the other disciple, whose name is not recorded immediately left John's side and began following Jesus. When

Jesus spotted them he asked, "What are you looking for?" to which they answered, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Jesus simply told them, "Come and see." The gospel continues, "So they went and saw where he stayed, and spent the rest of that day with him" (Jn 1:38-39).

I find this passage quite insightful as it gives us a glimpse of the character of Andrew. First of all, Andrew appears to be religious-minded. He was discussing something with John when John pointed Jesus out to him. He was serious about his spiritual life. Of course, John was quite a sensation by then. Many hailed him as the Messiah and as a prophet. Andrew was his close disciple. That means that he was regularly spending a large amount of time with John. It's safe to say that he was spending all the time he had when he wasn't fishing with John. This also tells us that he was deeply committed. He put his faith in the words of John and eagerly awaited the Messiah.



With each passing day, it seemed an impossible task for me. But Joy was determined to succeed. She would never give up easily. One evening, before sunset, she held my hand tight and miraculously managed to stand up and walk a short distance. The joy in her eyes as she tried taking a new step was precious. I had never seen anything like it. When we strode back home, she mumbled a few words. I'm sure that she meant to say 'thank you.'

When I got back home that day, I realized I had discovered Joy's secret of living happily. She had no expectations whatsoever. She never expected to see me every day in the park. She didn't expect her mother to stay by her side every time.

Because she had no expectations, she had no complaints. Complaints - I was familiar with them - that life should be a certain way or people should be as I

would have them be.

Joy felt peace and comfort when she saw the sun rise and set each day. She lived each day for what it really was, without preconceived notions. She treated everyone equally, not holding any grudges. For her, the past was simply a memory that was unchangeable. Whereas, the future could be changed and molded into something she really cared about. Nevertheless, what was most significant was the present moment.

Even though Joy had no expectations, she had dreams for herself. Dreams for a life where she could do things just like everyone else. All that this little girl needed was a little support to rise up and then she wouldn't let anything stop her. She never wanted to know why she was born that way but what she could do with the gifts she already had. She wanted to try new things. Most of all, Joy never wanted to give up.

I learnt from Joy's story and you can too. You need to let go of people's voices in your head that stop you from achieving. When your self-confidence takes a dip, you must know that this isn't your final destination. Just like the sun that comes up every morning even after the darkest night, you will get your big break. But if you let failure to get to you, you aren't allowing opportunities to come your way.

You must start believing in yourself and in the dreams you have. Once you create a mental picture of what you want in life, you will know where you're headed. Remember that if you believe in yourself and pursue your dreams, nothing will ever stop you. □



Such was his faith in John that he didn't hesitate to follow the Messiah when John pointed him out. Andrew was searching for God, even as God was looking for him. Thus, when the time came Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Mk 1:17).

Casting the Net

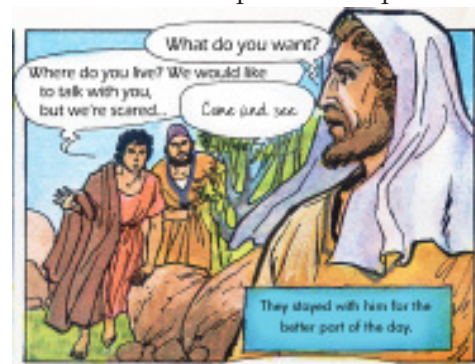
Andrew has a very curious streak in the gospel of John. Every time he is mentioned he is introducing somebody to Jesus. The first time is just after he accepts Jesus' invitation to "come and see;" as soon as he met his brother, Simon, the next morning he immediately broke the news, "We have found the Messiah" and he took Simon to meet Jesus (Jn 1:41-42). The second time we hear of Andrew is when Jesus is about to feed the five thousand. Philip tells Jesus that it would be impossible for them to feed the multitude with the amount they had. Just then Andrew brings forward the boy who had five barley loaves and two fish. We all know how that turned out! The third instance occurs soon after Jesus makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Some Greeks who had come to the temple to worship

met Philip and told him they wanted to see Jesus. Philip passed on the message to Andrew and together they went and informed Jesus. It seems like that is all Andrew does: bring people to Jesus. He carried this forward after Pentecost and ultimately met his death doing just this!

Andrew seemed to have taken up his responsibility of fishing for people quite seriously. The seriousness he shows outshines that of any of the other apostles, even his own brother! He was not just a good fisherman, he also proved himself to be an able fisher of men.

Hauling the Catch

Anyone who knows anything about fishing knows that perhaps the most important part of the activity is hauling in the catch. The whole affair is quite useless unless one has some prize to show for it. Andrew proved his worth by bringing various people to Jesus. You and I are also invited to be fishers of men. Does that mean we have to go around proselytizing? Of course not! Let's look at Andrew; he simply brought people to Jesus. That is what we ought to do to. One can only bring the horse to the water. Similarly, we need only bring people to Jesus. What they do from there is their responsibility and God's work. Each of us will have to answer for our own actions on Judgment Day. You will not be asked why I didn't accept the Lord's invitation. You will be asked what you did for the Lord. I don't think any of us would want to be stumped by that question, even more so since eternity depends on it. □



Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND (1046-1093) (NOVEMBER 16)

Saint Margaret was the sister of Edgar Ætheling, the Anglo-Saxon heir to the throne of England. She married Malcolm III, King of Scots, becoming his queen consort in 1070.

Her influence, which stemmed from a lifelong dedication to personal piety, was essential to the revivification of Roman Catholicism in Scotland, a fact that led to her canonization in 1250.

The daughter of the English Prince Edward the Exile and granddaughter of Edmund Ironside, Margaret was born and raised in Hungary, a country that had welcomed the deposed royal family (Farmer, 1997). Though her family returned to Britain after the power of its Danish overlords waned, the young princess (and her surviving relatives) were soon forced to flee again — this time by the death of her father (1057 C.E.) and the Norman conquest of England (1066 C.E.). Arriving in Scotland, Margaret and her mother (Agatha) sought amnesty in the court of Malcolm III, a



request that he granted graciously (Butler, 1956; Farmer, 1997). According to Turgot (Margaret's hagiographer), the young noblewoman's penchant for personal piety was already well-established by this time:

Whilst Margaret was yet in the flower of youth, she began to lead a very strict life, to love God above all things, to employ herself in the study of the Divine writings, and therein with joy to exercise her

mind. Her understanding was keen to comprehend any matter, whatever it might be; to this was joined a great tenacity of memory, enabling her to store it up, along with a graceful flow of language to express it (Turgot, 1896).

King Malcolm, who had been widowed while still relatively young, was both personally and politically attracted to the possibility of marrying Margaret (as she was both a beautiful woman and one of the few remaining members of the Anglo-Saxon royal family). Though she demurred initially, the two were eventually wed (ca. 1070 C.E.). Their married bliss, captured in various histories and hagiographies of the era, proved to be a turning point in the political and religious culture of Scotland. Seeking to rectify the Roman Catholicism of her adopted homeland, the young queen convened several synods, each aimed to address various practical issues – from the "practice of Easter communion" to the "abstinence from servile works on Sundays" (Farmer, 1997). Butler also notes that "many scandalous practices, such as simony, usury, and incestuous marriages, were strictly prohibited." Her procedural interest in the church was echoed in her personal devotional practice, wherein she spent the majority of her hours in prayer and austerity (Huddleston, 1910; Farmer, 1997).

King Malcolm could not help but be influenced by his wife's piety, a fact that eventually led to his equal participation in many of her "faith-based" initiatives, as described in her hagiography:

By the help of God, [Margaret] made him most attentive to the works of justice, mercy, almsgiving, and other virtues. From her he learnt how to keep the vigils of the night in constant prayer; she instructed him by her exhortation and example how to pray to God with groanings from the heart and abundance of tears. I was astonished, I confess, at this great miracle of God's mercy when I perceived in the king such a steady earnestness in his devotion, and I wondered how it was that there could exist in the heart of a man living in the world such an entire sorrow for sin. There was in him a sort of dread of offending one whose life was so venerable; for he could not but perceive from her conduct that Christ dwelt within her; nay, more, he readily obeyed her wishes and prudent counsels in all things. Whatever she refused, he refused also, whatever pleased her, he also loved for the love of her. Hence it was that, although he could not read, he would turn over and examine books which she used either for her devotions or her study; and whenever he heard her express especial liking for a particular book, he also would look at it with special interest, kissing it, and often taking it into his hands (Turgot, 1896).

With the patronage of two such rulers, Scottish Catholicism experienced a tremendous renewal, as the royal couple endeavored to spread Christianity through the construction and renovation of churches and monasteries, including the commissioning of Dunfermline Abbey and the rebuilding of the Abbey of Iona (founded by Saint

Columba) (Farmer, 1997)

As Butler notes, however, the queen's most notable characteristic was her devotion to the poor and downtrodden:

She often visited the sick and tended them with her own hands. She erected hostels for strangers and ransomed many captives – preferably those of English nationality. When she appeared outside in public, she was invariably surrounded by beggars, none of whom went away unrelieved, and she never sat down at table without first having fed nine little orphans and twenty-four adults. Often – especially during Advent and Lent – the king and queen would entertain three hundred poor persons, serving them on their knees with dishes similar to those provided for their own table (Butler, 1956).

Their years of joyful and pious matrimony came to an abrupt end in 1093, when her husband and their eldest son, Edward, were killed in siege against the English at Alnwick Castle. Already ill, Margaret's constitution was unable to bear this incalculable loss. She died on November 16, 1093, three days after the deaths of her husband and eldest son (Farmer, 1997; Butler, 1956).

Progeny

Margaret and Malcolm had eight children, six sons and two daughters:

Edward, killed 1093.

Edmund of Scotland.

Ethelred of Scotland, abbot of Dunkeld.

King Edgar of Scotland.

King Alexander I of Scotland.

King David I of Scotland.

Edith of Scotland, also called Matilda, married King Henry I of England.

Mary of Scotland, married Eustace III of Boulogne.

Legacy and Veneration

Margaret was canonized in 1250 by Pope Innocent IV on account of her personal holiness and fidelity to the Church. Several centuries later (in 1673), she was also named the patron saint of Scotland. Her relics were initially interred in Dunfermline Abbey, but were transferred to a monastery in Madrid during the Reformation (Farmer, 1997).

The Roman Catholic Church formerly marked the feast of Saint Margaret of Scotland on June 10, but the date was transferred to November 16, the actual day of her death, in the liturgical reform of 1972. Queen Margaret University (founded in 1875), Queen Margaret Hospital (just outside Dunfermline), North Queensferry, South Queensferry and several streets in Dunfermline are all named after her.

Though widely revered, it should be noted that the legacy of Queen Margaret is not entirely laudatory. Specifically, some Scottish nationalists blame her for the introduction of English habits into Scottish religious and political life, and for precipitating the decline of Gaelic culture. As a result, in Gaeldom, she has usually not been considered a saint, but is instead referred to as Mairead/Maighread nam Mallachd: "Accursed Margaret" (Best, 1999; Farmer, 1997). □



LORD, DO NOT ABANDON US!

by Carlo Broccardo

Faced with a present filled with sadness, the prophet Isaiah relies on the heart of God with a heartrending cry, a cry for help. It is with the same sentiments that Jesus teaches us to pray

We are already being ushered into the season of Advent, the season of Isaiah. We cannot overlook this reading which is one of the three (four including the one of Christmas) that the liturgy offers us as we enter the season of Advent on Sunday November 29 this year.

It is a very dense page of reflections and emotions in which the man of God looks at himself and realizes (as sometimes happens to us today) that too many things are going wrong in this world of ours. We are wandering away from his ways, says the prophet, speaking on behalf of the people. "All of us have become like the unclean, and all our good deeds are like polluted garments... we have all withered like leaves and our iniquities blow us away like the wind..."

As usual, Isaiah uses very colourful and poetic language; but

this time he does it to describe a disastrous situation: everything is going wrong! His words are not just a lament, but a real confession of sins. In fact, reflecting on their lives, the people become aware of why things are going from bad to worse. We have made mistakes and you Lord have abandoned us, left us at the mercy of our iniquity; far from you.

Be careful though, because Isaiah is not saying that the downfall of the people was a punishment from God. The evil in the world is the result of the choices of men; all so numb in their sins that they refuse the help of the Lord and, left alone, they emerge worse than ever. "No one invoked your name; no one woke up to cling to you," says Isaiah. If only they had, God would certainly have helped them.

Faced with such a negative present scenario, Isaiah recalls the past: this has not always been the

case, there was a time when the Lord did awesome and wonderful things for us, opened a way for us in the face of our enemies. On the contrary, he says; it has never been heard or seen that a god has done so much for those who trust in him as what the Lord has done for us. Having a desolate reality before his eyes, the prophet looks back and discovers a different situation; a past when God took care of his children. This would be the face of God, if only the people could recognize it, if only they could stay close to him...

The present therefore is what it is; but if the past was so glorious, that means that there is still hope for the future. Isaiah's words are a prayer in which the prophet turns directly to God; seeing the sadness of today, he recalls yesterday's beauty and concludes with an invocation, or rather a sigh: "If you could rend the heavens and come down!" In Isaiah's time they imagined the earth as a flat disc and the firmament, a lid on it. And of course, God lived above the firmament. So, Isaiah hopes that the Lord will tear the firmament open and go down to earth. It is a very concrete way of saying: Lord, if you could do something!

Curiously, the argument that the prophet uses to convince God comes in the last verse of the passage. He does not say, for example: we know our faults and will never do it again; or, we are now resolved, we have improved, we do not deserve your punishment. He does not rely on his determination to change, but

on God's feelings: "You Lord, are our Father; we are the clay and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hands. 'Our redeemer' is your name from of old."

Isaiah relies on the heart of God, using words that are a poignant invocation, a cry for help. Maybe we've got used to it and we don't notice, but Jesus taught us to pray using the same sentiments when we say "Our Father, do not lead us into temptation." I like the new translation of the verse which renders well the idea that underlies Jesus' words: "Do not abandon us in temptation." I like even more rereading the words of Father Gaetano Piccolo in his book of meditations 'Father, do not abandon me in moments when life puts me to the test, because if you abandon me, if you let go of my hand, I will only fall."

This is the prayer that we should repeat every day, using Isaiah's words and giving voice to those who do not have the strength to pray: "Lord, you are our Father, do not abandon us in moments when life tests us. □"



Quiet Spaces

THE THREE GIFTS FROM GOD

On the morning of November 6, 2017, the Holy Father celebrated Mass at Casa Santa Marthae. The following is the edited English text of the Pope's homily which was delivered in Italian.

During Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 6 November 2017, Pope Francis identified three “irrevocable gifts” from God, namely, those of “election, promise and covenant.” He explained that such gifts are freely given in mercy because of our disobedient nature, and we, the faithful, must allow ourselves to receive God’s mercy.

Reflecting on St Paul’s letter to the Romans (11:29-36), the Pope began by noting that in this passage, “Paul is finishing his reflection on God’s election of the Israelites and His election of the Gentiles.” This reveals a “theological reasoning that Paul must make” in order to persuade the peoples that they are both God’s elect. The Pope emphasized Paul’s phrase: “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.” This means that “when God gives a gift, this gift is irrevocable: He does not give it today and take it away tomorrow” and, likewise, “when God calls, that call endures for life.”

In the history of salvation,” the Pontiff continued, God gave three gifts to his people: “the gift of election, the gift of promise and the gift of covenant.” Indeed, “the People of God are an elect-people,” Francis affirmed. “It is the Lord who elects Abram – the first elect – and leads him forth with a promise, and makes a covenant with him and his successors.” And, Pope Francis continued, “it is the Lord who continues to emphasize and reinforce that election” the Pope asserted. In fact, in the narrative about Abram, “in Genesis, how many times does the Lord say: ‘yes, I have elected you’; and how many times does he emphasize and reiterate the promise: ‘I will give you a son, but not this one, another’ – ‘At 90 years?’ – ‘At 90 years!’”

Here Francis remarked on the nature of “the promise,” that is, on the fact that “the Lord continually celebrates the covenant sealed by Him at the beginning,” and “this is the history of salvation,” the Pope explained. “But the Lord never turns back.” Therefore, “these gifts are irrevocable, for the People of God, for the Church and for each one of us.”

“Each one of us has been elected” Francis said. “Each one of us is elect; each one of us bears a promise that the Lord has made: ‘Walk in my presence, be irreproachable and I will do this for you.’” Thus, “each one of us makes a covenant with the Lord,” and one can choose whether or not to do so. The choice is ours, the Pope said, “and that’s a fact.”

In this prospective, Francis proposed a question for self-reflection: “How do I perceive the election: do I feel I am Christian by chance? How do I live the promise, a promise of salvation on my journey? And how am I faithful to the covenant: am I faithful, as He is?” Because “He is faithful” and for this reason “the gifts and the call are irrevocable; He cannot disavow himself; He is faithfulness itself.”

Therefore, the Pontiff recommended, in light of God’s unwavering faithfulness, we should each ask ourselves: “Do I feel elected by God? Do I feel God’s caress in my heart? Do I feel that God loves me and takes care of me? And when I distance myself, does He come to look for me?”

The Pope then shared a personal experience. “Every time that engaged couples come to me so that I can bless their wedding rings, I see these three things there, in that gesture, and for this reason marriage is among the most perfect figures of the gift of God”.

Returning to the text, Francis noted that in the next four lines of the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle repeats the words “‘disobedience’ and ‘mercy’, and there is a tension between them: where there is disobedience there has been mercy.” Paul repeats those two words four times, Francis pointed out, which means “that on the path of election towards the promise and covenant, there will be sins, there will be disobedience, but in the face of this disobedience there is always mercy.”

“It is like the dynamic of our journey towards maturity,” the Pontiff said. “There is always mercy, because He is faithful, He never revokes His gifts,” and all this “is related: the gifts are irrevocable because in the face of our weaknesses, of our sins, there is always mercy, and when Paul arrives at this reflection he goes a step further: not in explanation to us, but in adoration”.

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” the Apostle writes to the Romans. Such words are “an act of adoration, of praise,” said the Pontiff. “He kneels before this mystery of disobedience and mercy that frees us, and before the beauty of these irrevocable gifts as they are, election, promise and covenant,” Pope Francis observed. And “this is Paul’s reasoning: when he can go no further with his mind, because he has explained everything,” Saint Paul “kneels and adores.” He “adores in silence.”

“I think that it would do us good, each of us,” the Pope suggested, “to think today about our election, about the promises that the Lord has made to us, and about how we live out the covenant with the Lord.” But also, he continued, about how we receive mercy from the Lord, “in the face of our sins, of our disobedience.” And finally, the Holy Father said, consider “whether we are capable, like Paul, of praising the Lord for what He has given to us, to each one of us; to give praise and to perform that act of adoration.”

Concluding the homily, Francis invited the faithful “to never forget” that “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable; He is the faithful one.” □

THE BOY-PRODIGY

Pierluigi Menato (TA/ID)

In the shady parking lot in front of the grand "Belvedere" hotel, the children of the tourists were playing at war; shouting loudly and running around. Wooden sabres, harmless rifles, spent cartridges, paper helmets and flimsy flags waving, were being defended with great fervour. Every now and then, someone was knocked down, he lay on the ground shouting for help, but them immediately he got up and without a hint of hurt, ran off to reinforce his team.

Alone, on the side lines stood a blond headed boy, rather delicate in appearance with an intelligent aspect. His gaze seemed timid and disdainful without being passionate about the game and not smiling. Suddenly he was almost run over by a boy dashing towards him and shouting breathlessly:

"Come on, join the attack, we must win! Why don't you want to play?"

His big eyes shone with a blue light. He blinked and from his lips came words that had a distinctly foreign accent: "Play, yes, but not with that..." And as he finished, he slowly pointed to the rifle. "I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what?" That? It's only a toy. It can do nothing, you know. But if you like, let's play something else. What's your name?"

"Humphrey, and you?"

"Enrico. Have you come to stay in Italy?"

"No, I only come to spend the summer months here, because my mother is Italian. But then, we'll go back to Athens, to my father. I

am studying violin at the Conservatoire in Thessaloniki."

"Oh, so you're the one on the first floor of the hotel, who plays so well every morning"

Enrico stood there admiring his young friend without another word; just staring at the blond foreigner who finally smiled.

Among the holidaymakers, there was a rumour that Humphrey, the thirteen-year-old violinist, gifted with a brilliant artistic temperament was a superior virtuoso, a real boy-prodigy. He had already played in public, in concert halls and also at the "Belvedere." To hear him, the hotel had organized an evening gala in the hotel ballroom. There was an extraordinary turnout of curious spectators. The



"Paganini Concerto," played by the young violinist with orchestral accompaniment was on the schedule.

Silence suddenly fell in the noisy ballroom when the boy appeared on stage, pale and focused, his blond head of hair caught by the stage lights. He lifted the violin to his shoulder and with confidence let his bow meet the strings. The notes flourished, agile, clear and quick, beneath his small convulsive fingers. As he played, the enchanting music transported his little soul far from the ballroom and the crowd that listened to him, was captivated by his genius.

At the end of the first movement he was applauded and he went on to perform the second and the third movements brilliantly with such ease, facility and joyful simplicity; the simplicity of a boy unaware of the emotions that his exquisite music had aroused in his audience; unaware of walking with a certain step into the harsh and dangerous path of premature glory.

From the centre of that hall, Enrico could not take his bright eyes off that boy prodigy. It was, as if he wanted his eyes to imprint his image onto his small, ardent soul. He was fascinated that such a small ardent soul, was capable of such great enthusiasm, such bold and extravagant energy. His admiration was boundless, without a shadow of envy!

Above all, he thought that Humphrey, a foreigner, would certainly become famous and do his country proud. While he, an Italian lad, intelligent and capable but not above normal, could never really do anything that great to

satisfy his high and still unclear aspirations. He felt the pulsating beat of his heart making him strangely restless with a desire to prance around like a young foal. When he played at war, he liked the company of his friends leading them to victory against his fake enemies. He was always the victor!

But could these childish thoughts compare with Humphrey's musical talent? He, so frightened and fragile, afraid of even toy guns and he, Enrico, full of courage yet unable to really do anything great...

A pall of sadness drew over his eyes and for a moment he was overcome with childish discouragement. He rested his forehead on his mother's shoulder; she sat beside him; surprised that he had burst into tears, tears that he smothered in her sleeve.

The music had stopped, the crowd were on their feet with an explosion of a resounding final applause.

Greta, a girl, perhaps twelve-years-old with a mop of black hair and bright glistening eyes sat in the row in front of Enrico, said to her companions: "When I grow up, I'll marry a boy-prodigy." That evoked much laughter.

As the summer waned, the crowds of vacationers gradually thinned out at the "Belvedere" and the much celebrated young Humphrey left Italy promising to return the following year; but he did not, not even in the subsequent summers and nothing was heard of him at the large hotel where, on the other hand, each new season

a new breed of tourists swarmed the place, erasing memories of the past. Only a few families, real lovers of the alluring beauty of the place, remained faithful, returning regularly over the years. That was how Enrico and Greta got to know each other and later fell in love. It was a spontaneous and happy love that grew from day to day merging their hearts to beat as one.

But before reaching their dream shore a hard reality had to be faced. For Enrico, who now donned the uniform of a lieutenant of the Alpine battalion, the war game which ended with his childhood, became his real calling as the Second World War was beginning. He was among the first to leave with his battalion for the Greek-Albanian front. He did not want Greta to be sad about his deployment and said jokingly:

"My dear Greta, I wouldn't like to think you made a mistake marrying me when you when you dreamed of marrying a "boy-prodigy."

"Maybe," she smiled, swallowing the lump in her throat, "but I'm sure of this: I love only you!"

* * *

The impregnable Greek mountains, their difficult ascents along icy passes and walls of rock bordering abysses, tested the legendary Alpine troops as they descended from their strategic positions to encounter the enemy at the price of much bloodshed. They fought hard and tenaciously and they were victorious.

Enrico, at the head of his soldiers, was always up in front, where the fighting was fiercest. He was ready to break through the fiercest resistance, overcoming the



most formidable obstacles, defying the incendiary devices that were fired his way. During one of those epic advances he was hit by machine gun fire and he fell in the hail of splinters and shrapnel which embedded themselves throughout his entire body.

He was put on a stretcher and transported swiftly to the nearest field hospital where wounded Italian soldiers together with prisoners-of-war were taken after the battle, for first-aid.

Among the voices moaning for help, one groan sounded louder than the others and it came from a nearby stretcher. With much effort Enrico turned his head. He looked at the wounded man, startled. Perhaps it was the fever that caused this strange hallucination or was it a delusion. But that pale delicate face and that light blond hair and stubble on his chin... sticking to his sweaty face... was it someone he knew. It was Humphry's face, he knew it! Only it was no longer the face of a teenager. But, if he had just to open his eyes, if he could say one single word in his foreign accent! No, no...it couldn't be him. Enrico was

delirious. He just turned his head to look up at the evening sky.

He tried to pull himself together and with much effort reached the edge of the stretcher and called softly: "Humphrey Humphrey!"

A slight flutter of the eyelashes, a contraction of the face; an imperceptible movement of his lips...in a groan of pain; the eyes still filled with that blue light opened for just a moment, meeting Enrico's anxious ones, but he did not know it and the instance passed between the two, like lightning over the drooping eyelids on the pupils of the wounded; and the groaning began again. Enrico dreamily continued to stare at him now certain that it was really him, Humphrey! No longer that fragile boy born only for art and glory, but a soldier too, an enemy soldier, come to fight for his own land; and now a prisoner and wounded; he was moaning in pain.



Meanwhile, the medical captain, aware of the insufficiency of morphine had kept it only for the most serious cases. The last dose - pending supplies, - was apportioned for Enrico, riddled with shrapnel as he was being prepped for a long and difficult operation.

As they lifted him up to take him to the operating tent, he simply said:

"Captain, I don't care for morphine. Use it for that wounded man who is moaning in a lot of pain." He pointed to Humphrey's stretcher.

The grumpy captain pointed out that the man's wound was less severe; only a wound on the leg that would easily heal after the bullet had been extracted. He commented rather gruffly:

"He is an enemy prisoner. I have orders to give priority medical attention to Italians first.

But Enrico insisted and they agreed. Here he was now, having made a sacrifice in that field hospital, on that bed of spasms, under the tormenting action of the surgeon who had immersed searing cauterized instruments into his bleeding flesh. He bit his lips so as to control his moaning and shut his eyes tight so no one would see his unspeakable agony.

Yet, the hero savoured his torment, the secret joy and the good feeling of having been able to alleviate the suffering of someone else. He did not think he was delusional in thinking that Humphrey was a "boy-prodigy." Only, yes, he would be a prodigy being able to survive that atrocious torture his limbs were undergoing. He still hoped to be able to dress himself in his brilliant uniform, decorated with a medal of valour having all his glorious scars covered over and to return like a child to the arms of his mother and there to hide his tears in her sleeve because of the happiness he now felt.

And to hear once more, the voice of his childhood sweetheart repeating to him: "I will marry a "boy-prodigy!" □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO -10

by Michele Molineris

63. Don Bosco in prison (1857)

There were four prisons in Turin: one in the Towers at Porta Palazzo, another on via St Dominic, the third near the church of the Holy Martyrs and the fourth in the basement of the Senate on via delle Orfane. All of them were the object of Father Cafasso's zeal and charity, especially the last because it was intended for everyone.

The regulations for the prisons had been set by Charles Albert in 1859. Mass and religious instruction were prescribed on every public holiday and catechism every day in Lent. To help chaplains prepare prisoners for Easter, Father Cafasso sent priests from the *Convitto* three times a week. It was precisely during his years at the *Convitto* that Don Bosco began the practice of visiting the prisons under the direction of Father Cafasso and he continued this practice for the next twenty long years regularly until other pre-occupations arose and he was advised to lessen their frequency till he completely stopped.

Don Bosco came out every time very disturbed by those walls. They only strengthened his resolve to preclude those places or to redeem them after they had served their time. Because, even then, with their misunderstood ideas of freedom and unity, it was not uncommon to meet young people in those places of pain because of aggravating circumstances of promiscuity who, at the end of the day, always be resolved to end up in that real school of

delinquency, because they were most defiant and dishonest. So that whoever had fallen out of fragility or unwittingly, after those initiations, fell out of malice and pre-meditation so that the conclusion already was that everyone there had to be the same and that theft and deception were the only means permitted to poor people to come into possession of what was due to them by their inalienable right of nature.

Don Bosco's first concern when he set foot in prison was to conquer the leader because, having conquered him, it would not be difficult, and in some cases even easy, to get the rest in hand, because they depended on him as an army on its general. Of course, that wasn't all. He entered also armed with a strong cultural and ascetic preparation: prayer and penance because he was convinced that in this, as in all the works of God, who ultimately does it all, even if the cue seems to come from some particular aptitudes or even from a plan; it had been preordained.

What Don Bosco could never accept was to assist those who were condemned to death. The gallows were a stone's throw from his home, on the roundabout between Corso Valdocco and Corso Regina Margherita. But perhaps it was precisely because that entire set of ceremonies prepared by law, he was able to follow the executions from home as well. But the fact was that he broke down every time he was asked to assist some condemned man. One time in Alexandria, where his presence was insistently requested by the condemned man himself, he first turned pale and then fainted.

In 1857 something curious happened. He assisted a condemned man and heard his confession in the prison chapel. The man was executed near the walls of the Citadel. Believing him dead, the authorities had cut him down from the beam and placed him in a coffin for burial at St. Peter-in-chains cemetery, as was the custom. All of a sudden, the man was heard to stir, groan and make an effort to sit up. The chaplain and some other people who were still in the church, lifted him out and carried him to a bed. He called for Don Bosco who was of course summoned at once, and came in great haste. A cup of coffee was brought to the man, and he drank it, but Don Bosco realized that there was no hope because the vertebrae of his neck had been broken. He therefore urged him to renew his act of contrition, gave him absolution and never left him until, two hours later, when the doctors confirmed his real death. (from EBM., II, 291).

Don Bosco often told us that one day he had been invited by Baron Bianco, our great benefactor, before which he had to stop at the prisons beneath the Senate, where major offenders were incarcerated. The Baron had come to meet him and, as usual, welcomed him warmly. But then he stared at him and said: "Don Bosco what have you got?"

- Me? An appetite!

- But there seems to be something else on you!

So saying he pointed out to a large insect crawling across his cassock, passing over his chest.

- What do you expect? I've just come from the prisons and I always carry some signs with me!

The good gentleman led him aside and then in a delicate manner looked him over closely saying jokingly: "I intend to give you lunch and to no one else!"

And in those early days there were more than one. (Francesia, *Don Bosco amico delle anime*, 210).

64. All for his boys (1857)

Don Bosco's patience was as outstanding as his other virtues. To substantiate this, it will suffice to let the facts speak for themselves how Don Bosco put up with the faults of others, concealing his own hurt feelings and maintaining self-control when dealing with impulsive and overbearing people. There was, for example, a noble lady who, although extremely generous to the poor and genuinely virtuous, could not bear to be crossed in the slightest matter. To correct this fault, she kept a shrewish woman in her house and paid her an annual salary of three thousand lire, besides room, board, and a clothing allowance. Her generosity was repaid with verbal abuse, tantrums, and daily squabbles which she endured until the woman died.

One day in 1857, this lady paid a visit to the Oratory. As was the fashion then, she wore a hoop-skirt. Accustomed to having all doors flung open wide by servants, she was not quite prepared for the door to Don Bosco's room - a double door, but with only one section open. Impatiently she tried to force her way through, notwithstanding her hoop-skirt. Something had to give, and it was the hoop-skirt. In a towering rage she declared that never again would she come to the Oratory. Don Bosco tried to appease her. "My

dear lady," he said, "you know very well that my doors are not as wide as those of your palace!" However, more furious than ever, the lady, clasping her skirt as best she could, stormed down to her carriage and left.

The following day her maid came to the Oratory. Apologizing humbly, she informed Don Bosco that her mistress had sent her to say that she would never set foot inside the Oratory again.

"very well," Don Bosco replied, unperturbed. Formerly he had called on that lady once a month, but now he began calling on her every week. The second time he came, she asked: "Why have you returned to soon?"

"If you won't come to see me," Don Bosco replied, "I must come to see you. My boys need your help!" Disarmed, she laughed and retracted her previous resolution. She had always been generous to Don Bosco, but that did not keep him from admonishing her about her all too frequent temper tantrums. In sincere humility, she listened in silence and admitted her fault. But later on, there was another outburst.

One year, in the Fall, Don Bosco was unable to accept her invitation to her villa. She sent off a furious letter telling him that never again would she help him. After some time, Don Bosco called on her and placidly mollified her. "I've returned your letter," he said, "because I didn't want to see it around on Judgment Day.

And there was calm (EBM., V, 207-208).

65. A six-hour sermon (1857)

One day in 1857 Don Bosco went to Saliceto. The townsfolk

flocked to his sermons and wanted him to go on preaching. Sometimes he preached for an hour and a half and the congregation which forced him say: I'm already tired and can no longer speak.

"Rest for a while," they told him. "We'll wait."

Once he preached from ten until past noon, but even so, no one wanted to leave since, as was their custom in winter, they had had their main meal at nine in the morning. Then, too, there was no place to go. The whole village was snowed in.

Each time he seemed about to conclude the congregation told him to go on. Finally, at one o'clock he came down from the pulpit. The church, the choir loft and sacristy were packed. With difficulty Don Bosco managed to reach the vesting table in the sacristy and took off his surplice and stole. With a smile he asked the men standing there: "What are you waiting for? Aren't you going home?" "We want to hear you some more." "I'm tired. I can't do it. I've been preaching for over two and a half hours!" "Well, rest for a while, we'll wait."

After a light repast, Don Bosco returned to the crowded church. After thanking them for their attention and congratulating them on their good will and fervour, he took up his sermon again, interspersing it with some of the adventures that had befallen him on his way to their village, particularly the donkey ride and his tumbles. Skilfully he drew a moral lesson from each of these episodes.

That day, except for a few breaks, his sermon went beyond six hours (EBM., V, 507-50) □

SALESIAN SAINTS

DOROTHEA DE CHOPITEA (1816 - 1891)

Bride, Mother, Venerable

Dorothea de Chopitea was born in Santiago de Chile on June 5, 1816. Her parents Don Pedro Nolasco Chopitea and Isabella Villota came from Spain and were very wealthy and well-to-do. Dorothea was one of the last of a beautiful line of 18 children. Three years later, as soon as Chile achieved independence from Spain, Don Pedro brought his family back to Barcelona. Dorothea possessed an energetic, lively and enterprising character and she had a heart of gold. When she was 13, she chose Father Pietro Nardò as her confessor and spiritual director; he would guide her for about 50 years, educating her gently to "detach her heart from riches." Father Pietro Nardò made Dorothea read the Gospel parable of the rich man and Lazarus many times over. She received a good education. When she was sixteen, on the recommendation of Father Peter, she would marry an excellent young man Giuseppe Maria Serra. He was a merchant and a banker. They lived as happy and faithful spouses for 50 years at the end of which Giuseppe would say: "Our love grew every day." Six daughters were born of that marriage: Dolores, Anna Maria, Isabella, Maria Luisa, Carmen and Gesuina. They all grew up to be excellent Christians and exemplary mothers. And we should not be surprised if we imagine that the atmosphere that one breathed in



that house was such that one would think they were living in a "religious community."

She was a woman of great faith, of lively piety and arduous penances. Dorothea's main concern was to truly live for God. She made a spiritual retreat every year. In one of these, among other things, she made the following resolutions: "I will not forego meditation and spiritual reading without serious reason... I will make twenty acts of mortification every day, wearing sackcloth for two hours in the morning." On her list of priorities, she placed the poor first: "I will first think of the poor." She accompanied her husband on his travels and was received with great deference by Leo XIII. Through her generosity and that of her husband some thirty institutions, kindergartens, schools, hospitals, workshops... were founded. Father Philip Rinaldi - the third successor of Don Bosco, now Blessed, who knew her personally

attested: "I have seen with my own eyes the relief she has brought to so many children, widows, the elderly, the unemployed, the sick... I heard that the servant of God performed the humblest of tasks for the sick. There is talk, for example, of children with festering head wounds that she secretly cleaned and maternally medicated." Throughout this service of charity, she had the constant assistance of her husband, his full trust and support. When he died, she devoted herself completely to this, her favourite mission.

It was during this period that she came to know the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and this relationship immediately flourished. She wrote to Don Bosco on September 20, 1882 to ask that a college be started in the suburbs of Barcelona: "I would like to start a work for young workers and orphans in the suburbs of Barcelona." Two years later she built a foundation for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In 1886 Don Bosco visited Spain and was touched by her concerns. He was made aware of the accomplishments of this great benefactor. After Don Bosco's death it was time to build the College of St Dorothea. They were short of seven thousand pesetas to buy the house: it was the sum she had set aside for her old age. But she generously gave it, exclaiming: "God asks me to be truly poor and I will." She presided over a charity event on Good Friday 1891 when she contracted pneumonia which, in seven days took her to her grave. Father Rinaldi hurried to her bedside and spent a long time there. He wrote: "In the few days that she was alive, she thought of no-

thing by the poor and her soul. She wanted to say something particular to each of her daughters and like the patriarchs of old, she blessed them all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. As we were all around her bed to recommend her to the Lord, she suddenly looked up. The confessor gave her the crucifix to kiss. We were all on our knees. Donna Dorothea slowly shut her eyes and gently passed away." It was April 3, 1891. In 1928 her remains were transported to the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Sarrià. The revolution of 1936 desecrated her grave and dispersed her bones. These were partially put together and buried in the same shrine.

Dorothea Chopitea was the first Salesian Cooperator to be raised to the honours of the altar, a bride and a mother of six daughters. Although her association with the Salesian family was brief, she was nevertheless one of the very few people to whom Don Bosco gave the name "mother." Father Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, today Blessed, speaking of her death, wrote of Don Bosco: "he always showed great esteem for her and a grateful affection as he used to call her *"our mother in Barcelona"*: mother of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians." And she was truly a mother to everyone: always ready to help where there was need of help, a list of the thirty-one foundations that owe their existence to her was compiled. Someone has calculated that what she donated amounted to twenty million pesetas, which "exceeds the budget of state bodies," wrote her biographer Father Pinol. □



MARY'S "MAGNIFICAT" - HER EXULTET

by Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

Frederic Nietzsche, addressing Christians in his Zarathustra says: "Sing your best songs to me, so that I might believe in your Redeemer. His disciples should look like they are saved." This is one of the greatest challenges for Christians today. They easily forget that they have received "good news," which they find difficult to live Passover as experts with conviction, dignity and originality. To be real and credible Christians they should turn once more to Mary who is the Model of the Passover life and because of which she is venerated as the "cause of our joy." We need to learn to sing this song better.

The Magnificat can be compared to the Exultet that the Church sings on Easter night. Easter is the Passover of God into human history realized in Christ; the Passover of man from death to life, from darkness to light, from despair to hope. The Magnificat celebrates precisely this Passover.

Mary experiences in herself this Passover of God

"O truly blessed night, when earth is joined to heaven and man to his creator." Thus the Church sings in

the Easter Exultet. Easter celebrates this Passover-encounter in which God always takes the first step. God comes to man so that man can come to God. Man responds by passing over as a response to God who comes. Notice this in the Exodus experience.

Mary experiences this mysterious encounter taking place within her. She experiences Easter as she sings the *Magnificat*. "My soul magnifies the Lord... the Almighty has done great things for me." Mary amazingly perceives the Passover of God in her life. She is a witness to an extraordinary "Passover" of God into history, a Passover that has a name and a face: Jesus Christ who will call Mary his mother. All the saving work of Jesus takes place in the dynamic of the Passover: from the incarnation, the Son of God "descends from heaven (Jn 6:38), passing over from the sphere of God to the human world; the cross and the resurrection, on the other hand mark his "passing from this world to the Father" (Jn 13:1). Mary is a witness and a collaborator in this double Passover, which gives her whole existence and the song she sings a Paschal tone. She reflects

this like a shining mirror.

In Mary, the Passover of the Community is Completed

“God has made us pass from slavery to freedom, from sadness to joy, from mourning to celebration and from darkness to light, therefore to him we say: *Alleluia*” (Pesachim, X, 5). These are the words taken from the Jewish Passover Liturgy which highlight the journey that God makes into the life of man. Easter is the passage of that which does not pass!

Now, the “*great things*” that Mary senses and which are realized in her are precisely these Passover passages: from the smallness of a servant to the greatness of a mother; from the nothingness of a creature to the fullness of grace; from humility to glory. As for her Son so for Mary, Easter becomes an admirable exchange, a marvellous meeting of extremes.

How can one not burst with joy on discovering such a wonderful prodigy! In her Magnificat, Mary became the voice of all humankind. “*He has shown the power of his arm...*” (Lk 1.51 to 55). Using a series of seven verbs: shown, dispersed, reversed, raised, filled, bringing down and rescues, Mary describes God’s action for humankind.

He is the God of the Passover. In fact, the seven verbs all represent a reversal of a situation, a Passover. God’s Passover upsets human patterns and makes changes at various levels:

- at the political level: “*he has brought down the powerful and raised up the humble;*”
- at the social level: “*he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich empty away;*”
- at the level of moral values: “*he*

has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts;”

- at the level of salvation history: “*he has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy.*”

Mary, Woman of the Pasch

O Mary, Virgin of the Magnificat and Woman of the Pasch, watch over this world which is in constant movement but does not know where. Bring us to the One who can “change our mourning into dancing and give us joy instead of sorrow” (Jer. 31, 13).

You are the expert of the Pasch. At Nazareth your “*yes*” marked the transition from the Old to the New Testament.

At Ain Karim you proclaimed in your Magnificat: a transition to a new world.

At Bethlehem you collaborated in the Passover of God from heaven to earth.

At Jerusalem, with the prophecy of Simeon and with the loss of your Son in the Temple you fulfilled an inner Passover and felt a sword pierce your own heart.

At Cana you caused water to be changed to wine.

At Calvary you witnessed humanity’s passage from death to life.

In the upper room with the whole Church you welcomed the Passover of the Spirit.

After your “*Passover*” into heaven, you did not stop being the helper of our Passover, Cause of our Joy. Throughout the history of the Church we find you at all the turning points, at every moment when dawn comes and life springs up.

Continue to assist us, O Mary, on our earthly passage. Help us walk safely singing your Easter song: the Magnificat. □

NEWSBITS

VATICAN

Domenico Agasso Jr., had this rare interview with Pope Francis in the early days of the Pandemic. It is interesting (in hindsight) to see how the Pope approached the Crisis then.

“Here we cry, and we suffer. All of us. We can only get out of this situation together, as a whole humanity”. For this reason, we have “to look at each other with a sense of solidarity” and act accordingly. Pope Francis is following with concern the development of the Coronavirus emergency. However, on the phone on Monday, March 16 he also wants to instill hope that the “light” will come and will illuminate the darkness, which “entered everybody’s home”, in the form of pain and concerns. After this suspended time, it will be “a bit like a post-war period”, the Pontiff warns. We will have to re-build. On four important pillars: “the roots”, which are represented by the grandparents and the elderly; “the memory” of these very surreal days; “the brotherhood” among all human beings; “the hope, which never disappoints”.

Your Holiness, Easter is approaching “behind closed doors” with celebrations that will take place only via web, television and radio: for many devotees this will be a double suffering. How should we live this Easter while in the midst of the pandemic?

“With penance, compassion and hope. And humility, because many times we forget that in life there are “dark zones”, the dark moments. We think they can

happen only to someone else. On the contrary, this is a dark time for everybody, none excluded.”

During the Angelus, you stated that Lent can help find a meaning to what is happening: how?

“The preparation time to Easter, with prayers and fasting, trains us to look at the others with solidarity, especially those who suffer. While waiting for the glow of that light that will illuminate everything and everybody again.”

Is it particularly important to pray in this period?

“I think of the Apostles in the storm when they invoke Jesus: “Master, we are drowning”. The prayer makes us understand our vulnerability. It is the scream of the poor, of those who are drowning, who feel threatened, alone. And in a difficult situation, desperate, it is important to know that there is the Lord to hold on to”.

How can God help us?

“God supports us in many ways. God gives us strength and closeness; in the same way He did with the disciples who asked for help in the storm. Or when He gave His hand to Pietro who was drowning.”

Where can the nonbelievers find consolation and encouragement?

“I don’t want to make a distinction between believers and nonbelievers. We are all human beings and as human beings we

are all in the same boat. And no human thing must be alien to a Christian. Here we cry because we suffer. All of us. What helps us is synergy, mutual collaboration, the sense of responsibility and the spirit of sacrifice that is generated in many places. We don't have to make a distinction between believers and nonbelievers, let's go to the root: humanity. Before God we are all children".

Among the Covid-19 tragedies there are the people who die alone, in isolation, without the love of their relatives who cannot get close in order not to be infected. These are heartbreaking scenes that are happening on a daily basis in the hospitals, in Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona. Some, just before dying, send their final goodbyes to the wife, husband, children, through the nurses. What are the thoughts crossing your mind and your heart?

"These days, they told me a story that really struck and grieved me, also because it represents what is happening in the hospitals. An elderly woman realised she was about to die and wanted to say goodbye to her loved ones: the nurse took the phone and videocalled the woman's granddaughter, so the old woman saw her granddaughter's face and could die with this consolation. This is the ultimate need to have a hand taking your hand. To have a last gesture of companionship. And many nurses accompany this extreme wish with their ears, by listening to the pain of loneliness, holding hands. The pain of those who left without saying goodbye

becomes a wound in the heart of those who remain. I thank all these nurses, doctors and volunteers who despite the extraordinary fatigue bend with patience and kindness of their heart to make up for the forced absence of the patients' families".

"Your" Piedmont is among the regions that were mostly affected by the virus. Recently, because of a cold, you could not come back here: what would you like to say to the Piedmontese people?

"The Consolata" (the Pope speaks in Piedmontese) "protector of our ancient race, guard me, until death takes me: like the water of a river, life passes, but you, Madonna, you remain". Nino Costa's poetry-prayer to the Madonna Consolata. This more than anything. "Like the water of a river, life passes, but you, Madonna, you remain". I would say to the Piedmontese people to pray the Consolata, with faith and trust".

This global emergency is also characterised by a solidarity network, consisting of thousands of people who are making sacrifices for others' wellbeing. When everything is over, could this solidarity have served anything for the future?

"To remind humans, once and for all, that humankind is one community. And how important and decisive is universal brotherhood. We have to think that it will be a bit like a post-war period. There will no longer be "the other", but it will be "us". Because we can only get out of this situation together." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Lost in Bookstore

A friend and her young son, Reid were browsing in a large bookstore. Engrossed in making a selection, my friend had lost sight of her child. "Reid!" she called out, racing through the aisles. "Reid!" Just as she spotted the boy, she bumped into another customer. "Pardon me, ma'am," she said, "but most folks come here because already like to read. No sense in wasting your time trying to convince them."

Another Try

Office Boy: "Please sir, could I have tomorrow afternoon off?" Boss: "Ah, yes, that same old excuse about your grandmother, I suppose." Office Boy: "Exactly, sir, she's making her first parachute jump."

All in the Family

John: "What made you oversleep this morning?" James: "There are seven of us in the house and the alarm was only set for six."

Waist Deep

While driving through Buffalo after a heavy snow storm, a motorist noted a cop, apparently waist deep in snow, directing traffic. Feeling sorry for him, the motorist called out, "I'm sorry you have to work half buried in snow." "The cop called back "Don't feel sorry for me, feel sorry for my horse."

Gift Excitement

The small girl had recently received a new watch and some perfume,

which she was very excited about. Their family asked the pastor over for dinner. The girl wanted so badly to tell the pastor about her new gifts, but her mother insisted she wait until after dinner and not interrupt at meal time. Not able to contain her excitement and not wanting to disobey, the little girl leaned over to the pastor during dinner and whispered, "If you hear a little noise and smell something, it's me."

Natural Antibiotic

While serving as associate pastor in a church in the California gold country, I had an elderly gentleman attend some of our Bible studies. When he missed one week, I called to see if he was alright. He told me he had started to feel sick, but a friend had told him of a natural supplement that had helped him to get better right away. When I asked him what it was, he said, it was available at health food stores and it was like a natural antibiotic. I again asked what this wonderful supplement was called and he said, (meaning Echinacea) "Euthanasia, I think."

The Cold Truth

On a cold night a man with reputedly poor eyesight was driving a friend home. The frost was thick on the windows, and after a couple of near accidents the friend tactfully suggested that it might help if they cleaned the windshield. "What's the use?" the driver replied. "I left my glasses at home." □

HOPE

Relying on God

*Courtesy: St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland
by Archie Byrne Op*

Without realising it, we know how Hope colours our whole outlook on our past and future. No matter how bad or disappointing our past may have been up to now, all is not lost. We can always make a fresh start, with the help of God. No matter how bleak or frightening our future may seem, we can also learn to face it with courage and confidence, when we put our trust in God and not in creatures. Hope also changes our whole attitude to the present. It keeps us from settling in where we are here and now. It will never let us settle for what we have already.

But look for one that is to come

It is because of the Hope that is ours as followers of Christ that we can never be completely happy with any set-up or system in this present world, no matter how perfect it may seem. Our Hope keeps drawing us on into a brighter future. There everything will be really perfect and nothing will just have to do. This Christian vision of the future makes every existing human set-up, every social system every political ideology, every system of education or religion, including the Church, seem like a poor first attempt that needs to be vastly improved. We must go on reaching out in Hope from where we are to better things. Clinging on desperately to what we have already just won't do. We have to let go and allow our Sav-

our to lead us on to better things on a journey that has no end within this world.

You can do better

This applies to all the systems we set up in this life. It also applies to our own personal performance. No matter how good or generous we may be, we can never tell ourselves that nothing more can be expected of us. God wants us to give ourselves completely to Him, so that He can give himself completely to us. He knows that this is the only thing that will make us completely happy and content. So long as we are hold-ing something back, our happiness will be less than complete. That is why God's love for us keeps calling for more and never lets us rest. It also assures us, however, that we can go that extra mile with God, until we reach the end of our journey into Him. So we never settle down in self-satisfied complacency: we always feel we can do a bit better for ourselves and for God and his people.



Is Hope only for the young and the drunk?

St. Thomas says somewhere that Hope comes naturally especially to young people and to drunks. Most young people are naturally full of life and great expectations. To them the future looks bright and they look forward to it with confidence and enthusiasm. They are inclined to expect things to get better and better for them as life goes on. They feel they can change the whole world and shape it more to their own liking. They have not yet experienced the failures and limitations of later years. They are not like the old Nun in the story looking up at the statue of the Little Flower and muttering: "If you were in the Convent as long as I am you would not be a Saint either!" Young people are mercifully spared this damper on their natural self-confidence.

Dutch courage

The Hope that characterizes drunks has a different source. Alcohol causes them to forget themselves, to forget their own weakness and limitations, to ignore past experiences of disappointment and letdown. Drink gives them a confidence or self-assurance they would not have without it. That is why it is called 'Dutch courage', a false kind of courage. Still in a way, it is a better example of how Christian Hope works than the confidence that comes naturally to young people. The young rely on their own

strength and vitality to give them confidence. In contrast, it is by ignoring what they should know from experience about their own limitations that drunks get their alcohol-induced courage. Similarly it is by turning away from our own human weakness and failures, to put our trust in God, that we find Christian Hope. We rely on God's love for us in Christ to support and carry us forward, in spite of our human limitations. This gives us the courage and confidence we need, but cannot find in ourselves, to live our Christian lives. Hope changes everything With Hope, then, we see ourselves and our lives, past, present and future, in a new way. We are no longer afraid or depressed by our own limitations. Instead we learn to have confidence by turning away from them and looking to God. With God to help us we can do all things. So long as we rely on our own strength only we are sure to fall. For this we have to look on God, not as Someone threatening to punish us if we fail, but as Someone who loves and supports us to keep us from falling. This can change the way we look at other people too. No matter how hopeless or pathetic they may seem, each of them is greatly loved by God. So, we must never write any of them off as hopeless cases. God's love can do great things in them and they could surprise us some day. Love changes everything, they say, and so does Hope. □

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 2020

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MARY WAS THERE

O sorrowful Virgin Mary, present unto the Heavenly Father, together with the dolorous passion of thy dear Son, thine own sighs and tears, and all the sorrows thou didst suffer in His suffering, in order that, through the merits of the same, refreshment may be granted to the souls now suffering in the fiery torments of Purgatory, so that, being delivered from that painful prison, they may be clothed with glory in Heaven, there to sing the mercies of God for ever and ever. Amen.



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