

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
I Loved You First!.....3

The Less Travelled Road
- Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS..4

No Drama For me
- Melanie D'Souza.....7

Salesian Saint: Bl Eusebia Palomino
Yenes.....11

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos.....12

Lectio Divina: Jesus Cures the Lepers
- Ian Pinto, sdb16

Quietspaces: The Sister's Nickname
- Pope Francis.....18

The Miracle of Chimay
- Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection...20

Don Bosco's Identity:
Don Bosco's Alumni (19)
- Fr. Elias Dias, SDB.....24

Reflecting on Mary:A Woman Clothed
with the Sun (2)
- Pascual Chavez Villeneuveva 28

NewsBits.....30

Walking With the Church:St Michael,
Satan and Devils.....31

In a Cheerful Mood.....15

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

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

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

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



**We pray, O Lord
our God,
that, just as we proclaim
the Death and Resurrection
of your Son,
so, being made partakers
in his suffering,
we may also
merit a share
in his consolation
and his glory.**

*From the Post Communion Prayer
of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary*

From The Editor's Desk

I LOVED YOU FIRST!

I was fascinated with the Pope's very simple language in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and I took that as a cue to begin this editorial. "Show affection and concern for the other person. Love surmounts even the worst barriers. When we love someone, or when we feel loved by them, we can better understand what they are trying to communicate. Fearing the other person as a kind of "rival" is a sign of weakness and needs to be overcome. It is very important to base one's position on solid choices, beliefs or values and not on the need to win an argument or to be proved right." (#140) Such straightforward language!

I recall what I heard a friend tell me about an old mate of his: "Apparently, every time this man came into contact with his offspring or the children of his offspring, he would race to say: "I loved you first." As the children grew older, it became a kind of game with all of them. The children hurried to detect him before he might discover them so they could be the initiators of the phrase "I loved you first." It was rare that they could beat him at his own game. He surmised that when this man entered heaven, he was most likely to find Jesus Christ, arms outstretched, smiling and welcoming, speaking the exact words of the man: "I loved you first!" the Lord is most likely to say that to us and to all mankind.

In his book *Humility and Absolute Surrender*, Andrew Murray states that there are two great lessons to be learned in our religious lives. The first lesson is that it is utterly impossible for man to follow Christ and to obtain salvation by man's own accord. This was the bitter lesson that Peter learned on the night of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Never mind Peter's ecstatic experiences with Christ - the occurrence of finding a net full of fish because Jesus had told him where he might cast it, the salvation from drowning at the hands of his teacher who reached out to him when Peter's faith failed and he began to sink into the water, Peter's presence with Christ at the Transfiguration. Peter had seen it all and yet he, on his own, did not have the courage to profess his faith, even near the hour of the death of the Son of Man.

The second lesson is that what is impossible for man is entirely possible with God. If we are fortunate enough to digest and ingest the first concept, we often end in hopelessness and despair until we accept the second message. To live a religious life is to live every day with the understanding that the impossibilities of man are quite possible with God. God Incarnate came into the world - lived, died, and defied death - impossibilities for man but possible for God. God lived among us. God gave God's self for us. God is there for us ceaselessly, calling each of us to him. God is there for us eternally, beckoning us to move closer, proclaiming always! "I loved you first."

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

THE LESS TRAVELLED ROAD

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

As she was growing up, Gitanjali Babbar's mother wanted her to be a teacher, thinking that this was an appropriate job for a girl. It was besides, a noble profession that was safe and respectable in today's society, anywhere in the world. But Gitanjali dreamt otherwise. Longing to go out and explore worlds she didn't know, she chose journalism only to discover to her dismay that most editors treated the world like a market, interested only in what they imagined would sell. "I didn't want to live in a market," she argued, so she eventually entered a world sustained by different laws.



Initial Steps

As soon as she could, Gitanjali joined the Gandhi Fellowship, a two-year intensive programme that familiarizes batches of talented young Indians with real social problems. These youth are sent into rural villages and government schools, with the express aim of bringing about an inner and outer transformation—transforming the quality of education while cultivating

leadership skills suffused with Gandhian values.

As time went by, this budding young social activist who turned her back on being a teacher was actually improving rural education by engaging kids and teachers and parents, fostering cooperation, activating change by seeing that in every situation there are multiple perspectives and stakeholders. Her time in the Gandhi Fellowship was fruitfully utilized in planting the seeds she needed to eventually launch into the deep on her own, with the foundation of *Kat-Katha*.

Bashful Beginnings

Yet Kat-Katha wasn't really founded, she pensively explains: it evolved! After her time with this fellowship, Gitanjali worked for a health organization that sent her into the brothels. Her assignment was to interview the sex workers about contraceptives and other health topics. Yet the proposed way of questioning which effectively placed a wall between herself and these women, made her very uncomfortable. Something about these women struck a deep chord within her. Soon, on her own, she began visiting the brothels after work, talking with the women and learning how they came to be on G.B. Road in Delhi's red-light area!

And then came the inevitable turning point. One afternoon,



when she came to interview women, she found herself surrounded by several of them eager to ply her with questions and very personal ones at that: "Where did she live? Was she contemplating marriage?" She was flummoxed not knowing what to say. Yet, she shared with them candidly and to the best of her ability, but returned home that night completely perplexed. After serious reflection, Gitanjali quit her job and began spending whole days at the brothels getting to know the women more deeply, gaining their trust. One day an older woman asked her to teach her something. And Gitanjali, who never really saw herself as a teacher, began bringing books. Other women noticed and joined in, and soon their children came too.

At home at nights, she shared her experiences on social media, and over time volunteers began

to show up. Three years later, Kat-Katha had 120 volunteers and was working with the women of all seventy-seven brothels on G.B. Road. Gitanjali speaks of all this matter-of-factly, marvelling at the sequence of events. Someone donated book-binding machines, a business donated used paper, and they began to teach the women how to bind and craft notebooks. The children began to see themselves as artists and revealed an uncanny ability to attract the help they needed. A student wanted to learn to dance and a volunteer appeared to teach her.

"We often refer to Kat-Katha as magic, but it's not magic," Gitanjali reminisces. She sees it all rather as the answer to the prayers of these women and children and to the fact that each of them too is a child of God, destined by their Maker to a much higher quality of life here on earth.

Gradual Expansion

Not long ago, the Gandhi Ashram in Delhi offered Gitanjali an abandoned ashram building to serve as a hostel for the children of the brothel, a true gift of God that would enable her to





rescue the younger girls from the almost certain risk of being eventually sold into prostitution, and the boys away from a world steeped in drugs, alcohol and the sex trade. Here the children could be taught, reading and crucial academic skills but also basic human skills, washing, brushing teeth, being kind and the rest of it. This school is modelled on the school for children housed within the famous Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati, in Ahmedabad.

Today Gitanjali's 'Kat-Katha' is an alternative space overflowing with passionate volunteers who lead by example. Over the past few years, she witnessed several amazing exchanges happening; here people meet freely and share stories and love. Yet what Gitanjali and Kat-Katha do is veritably courageous and visionary, a practice in total selfless service. Kat-Katha is skillfully bringing about radical changes, unobtrusively replacing the usual commerce of the brothel with community, caring, hope and selfless love.

Inspiring Model

Gitanjali and her fellow volunteers take inspiration, as do many other "servant leaders," from Vinoba Bhave, who cared

deeply about creating a just and equitable society, about helping good triumph over evil, generosity over greed. Frail man that he was, he personally walked the length and breadth of India, asking the rich to donate land, which he gave to the landless poor. Through this 'Bhoodaan' movement, Vinoba introduced a new form of social transformation, not dependent on a charismatic leader. He focused rather on the power of connection, innumerable small groups making many efforts, many connecting to many, creating a network for the good.

Gitanjali reports that perhaps her biggest challenge is to not judge, not even the brothel owners. Often these too come up to her and moan, "what good is it to be able to have money if my children can't get an education?" So, she decided to include their children too, most often shamed and shunned because of what their fathers do, in the new hostel school. All must be included because we all belong to the same Father.

I Was Hungry ...

As she looks back on the past few years, Gitanjali herself marvels at how this little seed



has grown into a mighty big tree. She sees it not as the work of her own genius, but of an inner force that just led her along. All she did was to place no obstacles in whatever she was being asked to take up. In this, is she someone exceptional, or does the Almighty have a planned purpose for the lives of each of us? The important point is to listen deeply to what He plans for us, because it is He who sees the larger picture and holds every single person in his compassionate embrace. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name and cares for every single one of them, especially the forlorn and lost. And He does not rest until every single one of them is brought back to the Father's house.

And what about us? While each of us might not be called to make an earth-shaking impact on our surroundings, yet, we could influence the lives of at least a few persons individually by our genuine concern for others. But first, perhaps, what we need is to learn the art of listening deeply to the voice within which directs us in unforeseen ways. In general, it is the first few intimations that we get that are the most important

– and dangerous too, in the sense that they are rather tentative and indistinct. We could easily miss the call, especially when we tend to be so engrossed in our own little aches and pains.

Yet, when we learn to listen, particularly during the Eucharist we celebrate, great things could happen, for as Jesus reminds us, "My Father is still working, and I also am working" (Jn 5:17). Further Jesus adds, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work" (Jn 4:34). But to complete this work today, the Lord needs our hands and feet, our hearts and energies. Would we have something to offer him? "O that today you would listen to his voice! Do not harden your hearts!" Could we be like the woman reported by Mark, who came in while Jesus was at dinner and, breaking open the jar of costly ointment, she anointed him on the head. Through this simple gesture she showed that she intended to give Jesus not only the precious ointment, but the jar as well. What a valuable response to Jesus who himself gave of his all to us his brothers and sisters, even the last drop of his blood! Could our response today be less in any way? ☐



NO DRAMA FOR ME

Melanie D'Souza

It is no secret that we've encountered some really dramatic folks around us: be it those girls from higher-class families in your schooldays, or, some really spoil people at college or work to even those auntsies loitering after Mass, gossiping on the pretext of fellowship.

It can be really hard to distance yourself from such drama, or really easy if you put your mind to it. Before we know, we're in the eye of the storm ourselves and it feels calm and even enjoyable to be within it all. More so, we can unknowingly become the kids are parents warned us about!

Yep, it's hard admitting that we can be causing drama ourselves. In fact, I wanted to thank the last boyfriend who told me that I was being overly dramatic. Me, a drama queen? I was nothing like those girls in my school, right? Or so I thought. *Part of winning the battle over drama is accepting that you are contributing to it but you can change.* That Very Instant!

So how do we know when we can actually do something about the situation? Or when it is time to walk away? (Note, walking away is not always a sign of escapism, no matter what your

friends may say). The Bible, actually does tell us how we may behave in such situations:

1. Respond positively. Always.

Something I learnt from a close friend of mine. Whenever I got into an altercation with a housemate, I could always see how she wronged me but it was difficult for me to see how I may have caused the problem to happen. My friend, who is more optimistic than I am in such situations, would advise me to apologise even if I didn't feel sorry about anything I had done. Guess what? This always works. Not only are you showing the 'dramatic' person in question, the patience you have with their situation, but you're also showing them that they mean enough to you that you are patient with them. What better way to spread God's glory by exercising humility and patience when you least have it?

2. Think Thrice

Yes, I actually mean think three times before you go ahead on your rant. Disregard the *Martha way* and avoid complaining, reacting and calling the situation unfair. Instead, adopt a more proactive *Mary spirit* and prioritise. Do you want to keep

this God-given friendship now or do you wish to waste time and emotion repairing it? When emotionally charged, let's always try to take a few steps backward to evaluate the situation again and again. Then when you're ready, either choose to speak with self-respect or walk away from the situation with proper explanation. Proverbs 15:1 (NIV) tell us what we must already know, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger*".

3. Mercy, mercy, mercy!

This year of Mercy, let's be ever more so on guard as we encounter drama, because we know that everyone is deserving of His mercy. Therefore, we must try to give others a second chance whenever possible, and a chance to see God's mercy through ourselves. That being said, we mustn't behave like bouncers of God; remember that no matter how the other person treats us, we are accountable to God with our own actions. So let us remember to be *quick to listen and forgive, slow to speak and slow to anger, because man's anger does not achieve the glory of God* (James 1: 19).

4. Know your Boundaries

Boundaries just don't define physical space during fights but also the *emotional* and *spiritual* boundaries that you are in the danger of crossing. The way we hurt someone or get hurt is when we fail to respect the boundaries that they shared with us as a result of their trust and vulnerability. Stay away from evaluating others' morality or questioning if their actions constitute as



Catholic behaviour - you are a friend, not their guardian angel.

Chuck technology when you feel like typing out all your bottled emotions away during the late hours of the night - as angry texting has yet to completely resolve an argument in the history of human drama. While we can virtually control ourselves, it takes greater courage to walk away from a gossip conversation, especially if it happens at the church compound. And no I don't mean those auntsies, but even your youth or cell group may not be immune from loose talk. It is at these times that you can choose to either walk away from the negativity or gently confront those who bother you.

There's nothing like the truth that sets us free. When the soldiers discovered our Lord's empty tomb, their first reaction was to cover it up with a lie that Jesus' disciples stole His body (Matt 28: 11-15). A lie that would disregard the disciples' living testimony that our Lord had indeed risen! Similarly, the less we associate with drama, the closer we lead ourselves to the Truth and the true identity that God has called us to embrace.

So off you go, the drama-free life feels lighter! :)□



SALESIAN SAINTS

EUSEBIA PALOMINO YENES 1899 - 1935

Eusebia Palomino was born in the dying days of the nineteenth century, December 15, 1899 in Cantalpino, a little village in the province of Salamanca, (Spain) into a family as rich in the faith as it was poor in means. Her father Augustin, an extremely good and kind man worked as a seasonal labourer for the landowners of the area while her mother Juana Yenes took care of the house and her four children. During the winter months the fields were fallow, jobs were few and food was scarce. That was when her father was forced to beg for help and depend on the charity of other poor peasants of the area. Sometimes he took little Eusebia with him on these trips. At that time she was just seven years old and oblivious of the humiliation of her father. She enjoyed those walks along the country roads and happily pranced alongside her father, admiring the beauty of creation; the brilliance of the Castilian landscape proffered several catechetical lessons that fascinated the little girl. When they reached a farmhouse, Augustin would smile and be welcomed by the good people; he asked meekly: "For the love of God, some food."

Her first encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist came when at the age of eight years she



understood the significance of offering herself entirely as a gift to the Lord. Very soon she was compelled to leave school to help her family. Later, when she gave evidence of a precocious maturity - a little girl herself - she began looking after the little children of some of the local families while their parents are at work. At twelve she went to Salamanca with her elder sister and some others to work as a nanny and house-help to some family.

On Sunday afternoons she attended the festive oratory of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. With their help, she came to be employed by the sisters to work for the community. Eusebia more than willingly accepted to start work immediately, helping in the kitchen, carrying wood, cleaning the house, stringing out the

laundry in the large courtyard. She acted as a chaperon for a group of students attending the state schools and took care of other errands in the city.

Eusebia's secret desire was to offer herself entirely to the Lord. She confided this yearning to a visiting superior who warmly assured her: "Don't worry about anything." So, on behalf of Mother General, it was decided that she be admitted to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On August 5, 1922 she began her novitiate in preparation for her profession. Her days alternated between work and prayer and Eusebia found immense joy in this. Two years later, in 1924, she took her religious vows that would bind her to the Lord she loved so intensely. She was assigned to the house of Valverde del Camino, a town of some 9,000 inhabitants which was situated in the extreme south-west of Spain, in Andalusia mining region close to the border with Portugal. At their very first encounter, the youngsters of the school and the oratory made no secret of their disappointment concerning the newcomer. She was small of stature, pale and not beautiful, rather insignificant, with large hands and, moreover she had an ugly name.

But the little ones were soon captivated by her stories of missionaries or from the lives of saints, episodes of Marian devotion or the anecdotes of Don Bosco. Through her simple faith, her narrations were powerful, incisive and attractive and captivating.

Everything in Sister Eusebia reflected her love of God and her

strong desire to make him loved. Her busy days were filled with conversations on her favourite themes: first, Jesus' love and his saving passion for everyone.

During her beatification process it was mentioned that "maybe there was not a single parish priest throughout Spain who had not received a letter from Sister Eusebia about "Marian slavery."

In the 1930's when Spain was being convulsed by a period of revolutions Sister Eusebia offered herself to the Lord as a victim and was accepted. In August 1932 she showed the first signs of a sudden illness which later became asthma. On 4 October 1934, while some sisters pray by her bedside, she suddenly turned pale and stopped them saying: "Pray much for Catalonia." It was the beginning of the workers' uprising in Asturia and Barcelona (4-15 October 1934). This was a "prophetic vision." There would also be a vision of blood regarding her beloved superior, Sister Carmen Moreno Benitez, who would be shot with another Sister on September 6, 1936. In 2001, after the recognition of her martyrdom, she was declared Blessed.

The illness of Sister Eusebia only worsened. Her doctor had to admit that he could not identify the disease. In the night between February 9 and 10, 1935 Sister Eusebia expired and she seemed to be serenely asleep. The entire following day her frail remains, adorned with many flowers, were visited by the entire population of Valverde. Everyone came back with the same expression on her lips: "A saint has died." □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS (OCTOBER 12)

Childhood in Bavaria

Francis was born into a good Catholic family. His father, Mang, was a hard-working cloth maker, known to be upright and devout. His mother, Frances, was a humble *Hausfrau*. Not being corrupted by feminism, as many women are today, she did not see being a housewife as something demeaning. It was, more importantly, her way to God. Known to have a simple and unshamed piety, she would habitually erupt into spontaneous prayer while carrying out her everyday chores.

The Seelos house was a house of religious formation: Morning Mass, the thrice-daily recitation of the Angelus, and family spiritual reading after dinner was part of the daily routine. The rest of the day was filled with work for the parents and older children, and school for the younger ones. Provisionally, the position of sacristan opened up at St. Mang's and Mr. Seelos applied for and got that position. This new position for Mang meant a new home, the Sacristan's house, next to the Church. The relocation was beneficial to the whole family: Mass and the Sacraments were



now closer, and the father of the family had the key to the Church, which meant opportunities for visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The prayer life of the Seelos family, already robust and edifying, became more so.

Young Xavier (as he was called) went to Füssen's local *Volkschule*, a public school which was, in reality, a Catholic institution. Due to the dedication of the young new parish priest at St. Mang's, Father Heim, Francis received a

scholarship to the *Gymnasium* at Augsburg, St. Stephens, where he would spend the next eight years studying in an academically intense Catholic environment.

The Redemptorist Vocation

Upon the completion of his *Gymnasium* course at St. Stephens, Augsburg, Xavier wanted to continue his education. His academic performance was good enough to win him another scholarship, this time to the Royal Ludwig Maximilian University at Munich to study philosophy.

He did well in his philosophy studies and moved on to the study of theology in his third year. He studied theology as a university student would study any discipline. He was not yet being educated as a seminarian. But in 1842 something extraordinary happened which made him resolve to pursue a priestly vocation. Every Sunday, Francis would tutor his younger brother, Adam, who was studying a trade in Munich. When Adam showed up one Sunday for his regular lessons in reading and writing, he was told, "We will have no writing today. The Blessed Virgin has appeared to me tonight." Just what words she spoke are not known, but Francis told his younger brother that he was given the vocation to be a missionary.

Francis applied to the Redemptorist Order for admission. He didn't apply for admission in any German house, but to the American Redemptorists, who were then under the leadership of the energetic Hungarian, Father Alexander Czvitkovics. Father Czvitkovics was busily going about the work of building the

Redemptorist Order in America.

His family was very affected by the loss, but, as Francis told his brother Adam, "It is God's holy will that I go to the land which I have shown you many times during the summer on the maps when we were alone... I cannot resist the inner call, and I will not oppose it but freely follow it."

In America — First Pittsburgh

On April 20, 1843, Francis and three Redemptorist companions arrived in New York. After a brief stay at the Congregation's foundation in Manhattan, St. Nicholas' on second street, the young aspirant arrived at St. James' in Baltimore, where he formally entered the novitiate and took the distinctive habit of a Redemptorist. On May 16, 1844, he took his vows in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and after completing his required theology was ordained a priest on December 22 of the same year. With great devotion, he said his first Mass on Christmas day.

During his tenure in Pittsburgh, Father Seelos endured several personal hardships. From Bavaria came news of his father's death. This was sad for Father Seelos, especially knowing that his mother grieved the loss of her dear husband, but harder still was the loss which preceded his father's, that of his youngest sister, Kunigunda.

Bad Health

In Lent of 1857, while Father Seelos was hearing confessions, he started to feel chilled. His health, which was never robust, was now failing because of his strenuous schedule. After he had finished

confessions in the afternoon, as he was ready to go to supper, he started spitting up blood.

For five weeks he was bed-bound. He continued to spit blood, but eventually began to get better. He was deprived of the opportunity to say Mass during this time, but he was able to spend the whole day in prayer, which formerly he had only dreamed of doing. The sick religious had been praying to our Lady to bring some sort of change about so that he could spend more time in prayer and be in a more contemplative environment. His prayer was heard, for after the sickness was ended, Father Seelos was assigned to a new role in the Province: He was made Novice Master at the Novitiate in Annapolis.

The Crescent City

When he arrived at his new assignment in New Orleans, it was like a gathering of old friends. Father Alexander, the priest who brought Father Seelos to America, Brother Louis Kenning, who was a novice with him, and Father Duffy, one of his own novices, were all assigned to the same monastery.

In September of 1867, a yellow fever epidemic was raging in the city. Bouts of the disease had been affecting New Orleansians for years. Father Seelos was soon in that number, confined to his bed.

Doctor Dowler, the community physician, was amazed that the priest could hold on to life. In vain did he try to illicit complaints from the patient. Yellow fever made for a miserable death, yet Father Seelos would not make the slightest complaint.

Several times, Brother Louis asked Seelos if he had seen the Blessed Virgin, since it is recorded in the lives of the saints that some had such visits during their last agony. "No" came the first reply on September 29. Asked again on October 2, he answered, "Yes! Once!" On October 4, "Yes! Twice!" This second visit of our Lady seems to have been his last in this life. At 4:30 PM, he was in the throes of death. He had been given the Last Rites and the Papal Blessing, with its plenary indulgence. The priests were holding a crucifix, a picture of our Lady, one of St. Alphonsus, and one of St. Clement Maria Hofbauer alternately up to his face, that he might kiss them as he lay dying. The priests and brothers started singing a hymn to our Lady written by St. Stanislaus Kostka. His countenance brightened when he heard the song to the Mother of God. Before the end of the hymn, with his eyes anchored to the Crucifix, the little man from Füssen yielded up his soul to God.

His Cause

The secular newspapers in New Orleans wrote of his death, as did Catholic papers in Baltimore. A veritable chorus of praise rose up from all who knew him in Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Baltimore. People came forth with their own memories of wonders wrought by the man they were all certain was a saint.

The cause for his canonization was started in the early 1900's, but did not go far and eventually died out. In 1966 his cause was reopened. Pope John Paul II beatified the humble Bavarian on Sunday, April 9, 2000. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Cause for Sorrow

An old man at an evening function bowed his head and wept quietly but copiously while a young woman rendered the plaintive ballad, "My Old Kentucky Home." The hostess tiptoed up to him and inquired tenderly: "Pardon me, are you a Kentuckian?" "Nay, madam," the tearful one replied, "I'm a musician."

Making things clear

"Why do you go to the balcony when I sing? Don't you like to hear me?" "It isn't that. I want the neighbours to see that I'm not beating my wife."

Lost in conversation

"What did you hear at the Opera yesterday?" "All sorts of things. Smith is going bankrupt, Mrs Brown had dyed her hair, the Whites are leaving for a holiday."

Just blank

"Why is it," asked the persistent poet, "that you always insist that we write on one side of the paper only? Why not on both sides?" "One side of the paper madam," replied the cynical editor, "is in the nature of a compromise." "A compromise?" asked the lady. "A compromise. What we really desire, if we could have it our way, is not one side, or both sides, but neither."

Something for a living

"H'm," the publisher murmured. "Your handwriting's so indistinct I can hardly read these po-

ems of yours. Why didn't you type them before bringing them to me?"

"Type 'em?" the would-be poet gasped. "D'you think I'd waste my time writing poetry if I could type?"

Dollar-struck!

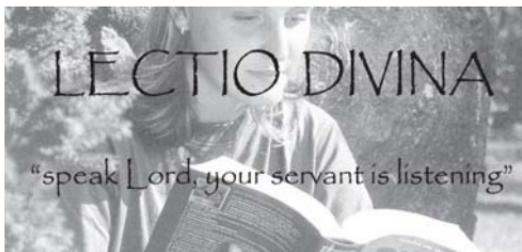
"I am proud of my girls and would like to see them comfortably married," said the old man to the young stranger. "I have made a little money; they will not go penniless to their husbands. There is Beatrice, twenty-five years old, and a really good girl, I shall give her \$100,000 when she marries. Then comes Bernice, who won't see thirty-five again. I shall give her \$300,000 and the man who takes Beulah, who is forty, will have \$500,000 with her. The young man reflected a moment and then asked "You haven't one who is about fifty, have you?"

Is that so?

Two men were hotly discussing the merits of a book. Finally, one of them, himself an author, said to the other: "No, John, you can't appreciate it. You never wrote a book yourself." "No," retorted John, "and I never laid an egg, but I'm a better judge of an omelette than any hen."

Tough competition

Man (to neighbour): "I wish you would sell that dog of yours. Yesterday my daughter had to stop her singing lesson because your dog was whining all the time." Neighbour: "I'm sorry. But your daughter began it." □



JESUS CURES THE LEPERS

by Ian Pinto, sdb

A Serious Affliction

Sickness is a component of our human condition. There has not been a single individual who has not suffered from some illness at some time or the other in life. Sickness hampers our social life by limiting interaction and imposing restrictions on us. A person who is ill requires special attention and medical assistance, if he/she is to recover rapidly.

In the bygone days, when medical science was still primitive, very few illnesses could be treated. Those who were afflicted by grave illnesses usually ended up dead. Leprosy was one such illness. A person suffering from leprosy developed sores all over the body. These sores gave out pus and made life difficult for the afflicted. The flesh would begin to rot, exuding a foul odour and consequently disfiguring the person. In addition, Jewish law and social customs dictated the treatment that ought to be given to leprosy people. *A person infected with leprosy must wear torn*

clothing and leave his hair uncombed; he must cover his upper lip and cry, "Unclean, unclean." As long as the disease lasts he must be unclean; and therefore he must live away from others; he must live outside the camp (Leviticus 12: 45-46). Even those with possible symptoms of leprosy were quarantined and subject to examination by the priests who would ultimately decide whether or not a person suffered from leprosy (Lev. 13: 2-44).

Leprosy was a debilitating illness. In addition to the physical deterioration, a person suffered emotionally and mentally too. Ostracization from society



added to the person's woes. Belief in God and man was bound to slowly wither away. Leprosy moved from being a mere illness that afflicted a person to being a status with which people were identified and a punishment which led the afflicted to be treated in demeaning ways.

A New Kind of Leprosy

Today, with the development of medical knowledge and the discovery of various treatments, leprosy has lost its sting. It is no more a death sentence. Leprosy, if detected early can be treated and cured but even if it is discovered late, with appropriate treatment, the condition of the person can be improved and the effects contained.

In spite of all this, there is a new kind of leprosy which has developed. It is not so much a physical affliction as much as it is an emotional and spiritual one and hence it requires a different kind of treatment. This new kind of leprosy is called 'Indifference'. It does not have any physical symptoms but shows itself in one's attitude and behaviour. It is often said that "the opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference." Indifference, like leprosy, sticks a wedge between others and the self. The difference here is that the wedge is self-inserted. Indifference blinds us to the other. It leads us to either ignore the other person completely; behaving like the person has ceased to exist or to treat a person condescendingly; belittling everything he/she says



or does. Indifference makes us impervious to the needs and goals of others. It puts us in a box within which we feel cosy, content and powerful. Our world becomes narrow and is populated chiefly by oneself and those whom we selectively allow entry. This causes us to ostracize oneself from others. We think that we are clean and everybody else is unclean.

Jesus: Source of Healing

Keeping their distance, they called to him, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" (Lk 17:13). The lepers had the courage and faith to call on Jesus. It was their initiative; at their request Jesus healed them. Despite their healing and redemption from the stigma of leprosy, only one returned to thank Jesus. He was genuinely grateful for what Jesus had done for him. The other nine were cured physically but were still lepers in the other sense. The leprosy of indifference is more malevolent and insidious both to the individual and to others because it does not show itself easily and has great destructive potential. Jesus can and is willing to bring healing. All he is looking for is an open heart that calls to him in faith. □

Quiet Spaces

THE SISTER'S NICKNAME

On the morning of Tuesday, October 20, 1015 Pope Francis broke the Word of God for the little congregation at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

We do not have “a petty God,” nor “a stationary God.” Ours is “a God who goes, forth” to “seek out each one of us.” And when he finds us, he embraces us, kisses us, because he is “a God who celebrates” and in heaven there is more celebration “for a sinner who converts” than “for 100 who remain just.” At Tuesday’s Mass at Santa Marta, the Pontiff returned to the theme of the “boundless love” of the Father.

In his usual manner, Francis began from the day’s Readings, in particular the passage of the Letter to the Romans (5:12, 15, 17-19, 20-21), in which St Paul recalls that “as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned,... much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.” This, the Pope pointed out, is “a summary of salvation history,” in which the Apostle “tells us how God saved us, how he saves us: how he gives salvation, which is the friendship between us and him.”

The Pontiff connected this passage to that of the previous day’s Liturgy, in which, he recalled, “we spoke about almsgiving, we said that God gives without measure: he gives himself, his Son.” The discussion once again revolved around “this idea: how does God give, in this case friendship, our entire salvation?” The Pontiff’s answer was that God “gives as he says he will give to us when we do good works: he will give us a good and firmly packed, filled to the brim, overflowing amount.” This generosity calls to mind the concept of “abundance.” By no coincidence, Francis observed, “this word, ‘abundance,’ is repeated three times in this passage.”

Thus, “God gives in abundance.” Indeed, Paul, in the “final summary” of his discourse, affirms: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” This is how God’s love is: “without measure - His whole self.” In fact, the Pope recalled, he “sent his Son, he lowered himself to become a companion on the path, to walk with us: he himself walked with us, from the beginning with his people.”

What then is the meaning of “this overabundance of self-giving that is God’s love?” It means that “God is not a petty God: he does not know pettiness, he gives all.” It also means that “God is not a stationary God: he watches, he waits for us to convert.” Basically, the Pontiff said, God is a God who goes forth: he goes forth

to search, to seek out each of us.” Every day “he searches, he is searching,” like the shepherd does with the “lost sheep” or the woman with the “lost coin.” God “seeks: it is always so. God actively waits. He never tires of awaiting us.” His attitude is that of the “elderly father” who “saw his son coming, returning from afar” and immediately went to meet him and “embrace him.” God too, “awaits us: always, with the door open.” Because his heart “isn’t closed: it’s always open.” And “when we arrive like the son, he embraces us, kisses us: a God who celebrates.” Jesus “says it explicitly, speaking about justification, about forgiven sins: there will be a greater feast in heaven for a sinner who converts than for 100 who remain just.” This “is the love of God; God loves us this way, without measure.”

Of course, Francis recognized that “it isn’t easy, with our human criteria - we are small, limited - to understand God’s love. We can understand in these gestures of the Lord, this overabundance, but understanding everything isn’t easy.”

To illustrate, the Pope referred to a nun he met during his ministry in Buenos Aires. She was “an elderly sister, very elderly, who worked her entire life on a hospital ward, and was still working there.” She was “over 84 years old” but was “always smiling. She surely experienced God’s love, because she always spoke about the love of God and let this love be felt.” For this reason, “they gave her a nickname.” She was called “Sr. Love-of-God.” It is “a grace,” the Pontiff said, “to find such people, these saints, to whom the Lord has given the gift of understanding this mystery, this overabundance of his love.” The fact remains that “we always have the attitude of gauging situations and things with the measures we have: and our measures are small.” This is why, Francis recommended,

“It will do us good to ask the Holy Spirit for the grace, to bring us at least a bit closer to understand this love and to have the will to be embraced, kissed, with that boundless measure.” St Paul, in reality, “understood how bad sin is” but also “how great is the overabundance of God’s love. To the point that he feels small and at one moment, moved by the Holy Spirit, he calls God ‘papa.’” He often “speaks of the Father” as “the Father” but “at one moment he says: ‘papa.’” Thus, the Pope emphasized, “Thanks to the Holy Spirit I can call him ‘papa.’” In conclusion he said: “Let us ask for the grace of feeling this love, that is the love of a papa, a great and boundless love.” □



THE MIRACLE OF CHIMAY

From Fr. Ian Douulton's collection of stories

This is the true story of Captain George Cole of the Royal Air Force. They are narrated in his own words.

This story would be unbelievable if it weren't true. I can vouch for the absolute truth of every word because it happened to me. It all began in my childhood. - For as long as I can remember, I was fascinated by aircraft and flying; I was determined to become a pilot. My idol was René Fonck, the most famous of the French fliers in World War I. His pictures were all over the walls of my room. When I was nine years old I walked thirty-five miles to Sussex because René Fonck was going to be there. The crowd was so large that I couldn't see him at all. I came home broken hearted. But I was still determined to be a pilot.

When the Second World War began, I joined the Royal Air Force. The Nazis singled me out as a dangerous pilot. I was proud. Everyone said that I had led a charmed life. I thought so too until that morning in 1944 when I was leading a squadron home from a bombing mission. We were heading to our base outside Paris. Over Belgium above a little village called Chimay we suddenly ran into Nazi fighter planes. My plane was hit. It started to spin downwards towards the buildings of the village.

The next thing I remember is a stab of pain in my left arm. I opened my eyes and I saw that I

was lying in a bed in a white-washed room. I thought I must be in a Nazi prison. Two men dressed in white were standing beside me. One whispered: "Do not move, captain, do not move." I later realised he was the Father Abbot. He asked the other monk (or so I presumed) how badly I was hurt. "His left arm is broken in two places, Father Abbot. On the right side, four ribs are broken. I've put splints on the arms and taped the ribs. But he must have a doctor at once."

As I came to, I simply asked: "What prison is this?" To my relief and surprise I was told that I was at the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame de Forge. My plane had crashed on their roof.

I was amazed that they talked. I thought monks, and Trappists at that, don't talk but I was given to understand that being an emergency it was permitted. That was when I realised that I was that emergency. But I couldn't stay there. I should somehow try and get back to my base which was near Paris. This quiet conversation was rudely interrupted by Brother Jean who came running in breathless and informed Father Abbot: "The Nazis, they have found the plane. They are searching it now." Calmly Father Abbot told him to keep an eye on them till they left the premises, adding: "When they leave it, let me know at once."

I could sense that beneath his calm composure Father Abbot was nervous: "God help us! Brother Joachim where are we

going to hide this English captain? You know what happened in those two other monasteries last week when the Nazis found wounded fliers there? The soldiers just killed the monks who had given the pilots sanctuary."

Brother Joachim scratched his peppered chin and replied: "I'll make out some way."

Then he made a strange suggestion: "Father Abbot, I think it would be safer for Captain Cole and for all of us, if we kept him in plain view where the Nazis could see him." Just then Brother Jean dashed in again: "Father Abbot, the Nazis are leaving the plane." A few minutes later there was a frantic knock on the main door, the sound of which resounded throughout the cloister. The three monks looked at one another and Brother Joachim suggested: "Father Abbot, may I suggest that you meet them at the front door. It will give me a little more time to put my plan to work." Father Abbot hurried off to meet his guests.

They pushed the door open once the bolt had been released. The Lieutenant was in a raw mood. His group of men had not found the pilot...and so they came around to the front door and demanded to see the 'one in charge.' "Where is the English Pilot?" asked the irate officer. Father Abbot looked confused, and that irritated the officer even more. "Don't pretend you do not know. We found the plane and he's not in it." Pushing past the venerable monk the soldiers and their leader made their way down the corridor; the sound of their hobnail boots cruelly breaking the silence of the

monastery. "Ah, here's the door to the cellar," he shouted and sent a couple of the soldiers down the stairs while the others made their way up the stairs to the upper floor. Then he shouted over his shoulder as he walked briskly on: "We'll look through all the rooms on this floor." Then looking at the abbot and Brother Jean he shouted: "You two monks, stay where you are!"

Suddenly Brother Jean was nervous and whispered: "Father Abbot, they're going into the infirmary! They'll find the pilot." Father Abbot sighed deeply and all he could whisper to the nervous brother Jean was: "Pray brother!" They soon came out with blank stares on their faces: "There's no one in here, Lieutenant. The infirmary has not been used for some time."

The Lieutenant and his escort suddenly spotted a door on the right. It was fairly large: "Try this door back here." As he opened the door, the Lieutenant was amused to see so many monks and not a sound: "Ah, what is this Abbot? What are these men doing?" He was puzzled seeing so many in one room and not a sound.

Father Abbot explained: "That is the library. They are working on translations."

"Working on translations?" It was not the day for their assignment in translations and Brother Jean nudged his superior: "Father Abbot, you didn't tell them to work on translations today, did you?"

"No, I did not. I am surprised to see them here." The abbot himself was puzzled but concealed his surprise.

The Lieutenant walked among the desks and thinking he was close to his quarry he shouted: "Stand up! Stand up against the wall, all of you!"

To their utter consternation the two monks beside the Lieutenant, Father Abbot and Brother Jean saw Brother Joachim standing straight and beside him, the English flier, pale as a sheet, his face partially concealed with his cowl, his head bowed slightly."

The Lieutenant screamed: "Now, where is the English flier? ...Where is he?" Tell me where you're hiding him, or I'll have you shot." There was no sound. Then turning to the Abbot he screamed again: "You, out there. You are in charge, tell them to answer me."

Father Abbot had to explain to the Lieutenant that they were under a vow of silence and they spoke to no one except to God. The Lieutenant was furious: "They will speak to me or I'll shoot them! Where is the English pilot?"

Suddenly the soldiers who had gone to the upper floor returned to report that they had been upstairs and there was no sign of the pilot there." Brother Jean whispered to Father Abbot but in the hearing of the Lieutenant who was not out of earshot: "He could have run into the woods." Hearing this the entire group rushed out of the room as if on call, and made their way to the little forest outside the monastery compound.

There was a sigh of relief and the first to speak was Brother Joachim who addressed the English flier: "Now, captain, you are still in danger. When the Nazis do not find you in the

woods, they will certainly come back here."

Captain George Cole went on: "I told them to give me some clothes so could make it to the base somehow." They wouldn't hear of it. Brother Joachim thought he was too badly injured to even move. He turned to Father Abbot and said with a peculiar tone confidence: "Father Abbot, I will take Captain Cole back to his base."

"You cannot, Brother Joachim! It's outside Paris; it's more than one hundred miles from here and we are surrounded by the enemy."

"Father Abbot, there are ninety monks in this monastery, what if one of us does lose his life to save the others?" said Brother Joachim. Father Abbot shook his greying tonsured head and whispered: "God grant that it would not be necessary. But I cannot think of any other plan." Then looking at the Brother straight in the eye he said: Brother Joachim, I give you permission to go with Captain Cole." He made the sign of the Cross and looked up for some heavenly consolation.

George Cole continued his narration: "Brother Joachim worked out a fantastic scheme for getting me back to the base. He told me to keep on the monk's robe. He decided to use a motorcycle instead of a car so that he could take to the back roads. Knowing that I was in no condition to hang on to him, he had the brothers strap me, splint and all, to his back. Oh, it was a sight to see two of us take-off on that motorcycle. But in an hour we had covered nearly seventy

miles. Then all of a sudden the motorcycle sputtered and gurgled and finally ground to a halt. We were stranded in the middle of nowhere. The silence all around was only broken by birdsong and the sighing of the wind in the trees. I asked Brother Joachim what had happened and he shook his large head in frustration telling me it was always the same problem, it was the carburettor. It was an ancient machine and without tools there was no way to fix it. Feeling totally exposed I was getting nervous. The road was an open road and Germans could pounce on us from any thicket around the area. Seeing how nervous I was the good brother said: "I will think of something. You pray Captain." Being a practical airforce pilot I told him that I had forgotten how to pray...and didn't remember any words. He just encouraged me: "You just say: God help me! God help me!"

"God help both of us," that's what I thought. Looking around in the noonday sun he spotted, in the distance, a farm house on a little hillock not too far away. Brother Joachim brightened up and was of the opinion that perhaps he could find some help there. I told him to unstrap me and leave me here so that it would be easier for him to go up to the farm house. He would be free to climb quickly but he was determined to carry me on his back all the way up. It was very quiet all around. By now brother Joachim had now broken out into a sweat. As we reached the farm house he told me not to even try to say anything. He would do all the talking. The door opened

as he knocked and to his surprise and utter consternation the face that greeted him was that of a German soldier in uniform and the sound of soldiers relaxing in the background. This was the last thing either of us expected."

The one who opened the door spoke: "Look what we have here!" He shouted over his shoulder, "A monk who is riding piggy-back on another monk! What a joke." Then looking more closely he said: "No, no, there's something wrong here. That man you are carrying is pale...like dead."

Brother Joachim spoke pleadingly: "Lieutenant, we are from the monastery of Notre Dame de Forge at Chimay. We must beg for your help. I am taking this brother to Paris for urgent medical treatment. He fell from the roof, he is in great pain, but he is not permitted to break his silence. We have a motorcycle at the bottom of the hill. We have carburettor trouble. I thought you might have a mechanic among you who could repair our machine."

The Lieutenant shouted over his shoulder: "Corporal Haufnik, call the mechanic. Go with him to find the motorcycle and see that he repairs it at once." Brother Joachim was grateful..."God bless you, lieutenant."

"They unstrapped me and laid me down on the couch and gave us some cheese to eat. That was all they had, adding: "I know you Trappists don't eat meat." Then he recounted: "I was once in your monastery in Chimay. I was only twenty years old, I made a retreat there. I spent three days

Chimay, continued on p. 32

DON BOSCO'S ALUMNI

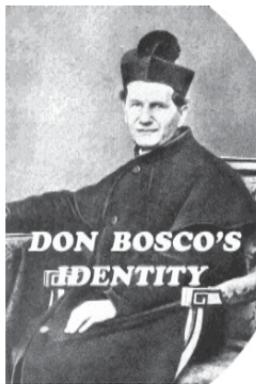
19

by Fr. Elias Dias

It is quite normal that past pupils of a religious institution group themselves into an Association and try to keep in touch with their old teachers; but the response of the past pupils of Salesian Schools has been so exceptional and overwhelming that it has been called a new fact in the history of Pedagogy. Don Bosco loved his boys immensely. He said, "My dear children, you are very dear to me, to know that you are young is sufficient reason for me to care very much for your welfare."

The first International Congress of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco in 1911, unanimously approved the proposal to erect a monument to Don Bosco in the square in front of the church in 1915, Don Bosco's birth centenary. Due to the war it remained in the minds, so much so that even during the war, offerings continued to come in for the realization of the proposal. The inauguration took place on May 23, 1920. All those manifestations of faith, of love and togetherness only showed how much Don Bosco was alive and loved by all classes of people in the world.

Don Bosco exercised his priestly ministry at the time of the Industrial revolution in Italy and experienced the sad consequences of migrant people in Turin especially the young. They were like sheep without a shepherd. At the *Con-vitto* he began his apostolate among the most abandoned boys of the society. Bartholomew Garelli was a 16 year old orphan



bricklayer from Asti. Charles, Gastini was a semi orphan who worked in a barber shop. Joseph Buzzetti worked in construction. Enria and his brother were orphans caused by cholera. Each boy had his own story of trials, and the Oratory was full of hawkers, peddlers, bootblacks, chimney sweeps, stable, and messenger boys, boys left to themselves without food and shelter. All lived under the loving and protecting wings of Don Bosco. He lived for these boys, to make them good Christians and honest citizens. They were the apple of his eye and for them he was everything on earth.

A certain Augustine Smeria wrote to Father Rua "It is seventeen years since I left the Oratory, but it is still fresh in my mind. How could I forget the loving care of Don Bosco in those early and innocent years? When I remember the traces of his ineffable good-

ness, the patience with which he bore our defects, his solitude for our formation, when these come to my mind I feel moved and tears well up in my eyes."

The effectiveness of this method is borne out by the lives of millions of students who were formed in the various Salesian institutions around the world. And the greatest monument to that great success story, that is the educative system of Don Bosco, is the organization of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco of which Charles Gastini, one of the first past pupils said: "Unable to build a monument worthy of the memory of Don Bosco, we decided to form a federation, we wish to be a living monument dedicated to the memory of Don Bosco."

The origin of the Salesian Past Pupils Association goes back to the initiative of Charles Gastini and 11 other artisans who came to solemnize the name feast of Don Bosco on June 24, 1870. Little did they realise then that this seemingly insignificant gesture of theirs would one day become a tradition and a movement which would cover millions of young

men and women spread to the various corners of the world, wherever the Salesians would establish themselves as the educators of the young.

An alumnus [pupil] is a person who has ex-

perienced the pedagogy of Don Bosco and grown to love him. It is this bond of love that made the pupils feel attached to Don Bosco. He continued to show his fatherly affection after his boys had left the institution. He often invited them back to the Oratory and for some he was a real benefactor. When they came to visit him they were warmly welcomed, he was interested in their person, in their family, in their business affairs, he advised, encouraged, admonished, and ever strengthening the bond of affection. He was preoccupied about their spiritual needs, and matters of conscience were settled before they left. At times they brought with them some black sheep, and the sight of Don Bosco alone was enough to bring back the good sentiments they had experienced in school.

Sometimes on hearing that some were in financial strains he helped them with fatherly solicitude or got them help from charitable persons. In spite of all his kindness he had his share of ingratitude. The editor of the *Cronaca* had attended the boarding secondary schools at Lanzo and Varamen and



The Past Pupils escort the urn of Don Bosco to Turin

zze. He admitted that he had been a pupil of Don Bosco in both the schools, but said it was his parents' decision and they had paid his full tuition. A little show of gratitude might have been better, but God will-

ed that Don Bosco should drink also this bitter cup given to him by some former pupils.

In general his pupils loved Don Bosco and met him where ever he went, even at the railway station. On August 4, 1878, the former pupils of Don Bosco gathered to celebrate his name feast. After giving him some presents, one read an address. At dinner the overjoyed alumni toasted Don Bosco repeatedly and Charles Gastini, a comedian, out did them all. At the end the father addressed his beloved sons. Whenever there was a reunion Don Bosco told the past pupils that the only condition that he put for membership was that they should lead a good Christian life "Without exception, you must all try to be a credit to your families, to your school, to your religion and to your association. In this way you can always experience a sincere joy throughout life.

One day a past pupil, a military captain, came to meet Don Bosco and asked him to hear his confession. He promptly agreed but before confession asked him what prompted him to make confession to him. He replied, "It reminded me of the tricks you used to keep us on the right path, the words you used to whisper in my ears and your exhortation to go to confession. These things prompted me to go to confession." Don Bosco told his sons if a soldier can still remember the religious doctrines taught to him in his youth, notwithstanding the moral perils of the military life ...why should we lose heart and become depressed if we do not get immediate results from our youngsters?

The past pupils lavished praises

on Don Bosco: On the occasion of their meeting, Canon Ballesio, spoke for all, "I celebrate the man who wrote the sacred commandments of the Lord in the hearts of so many of his sons and friends, who reproduced and still reproduces the most fair and worthy living image of God before the eyes of his children and all the sharers of his benefits. He gave his country useful and honest citizens ...We sing to you whose ever-blessed memory is engraved in our minds, tenderly yet irrevocably engraved in our hearts. The angel of our days, you to whom many of my friends and I owe our noble, ecclesiastical career, bringing light to our doubts, comforts to our perils, restraint to our anger, fortitude when confronted with passion, encouragement to do good. May you be blessed and may your sons always enjoy your living presence."

The Oratory at Valdocco liked to show their fidelity to Don Bosco above all on the occasion of his yearly feast celebrated solemnly on June 24. On that day his table would be piled high with letters of best wishes and gratitude. This spirit of gratitude soon spread all over the place where the Salesians worked. The first Past Pupils association was the Committee of Oratory Past Pupils formed in Turin in 1870 for the purpose of organizing a yearly feast day in honour of Don Bosco. After Don Bosco's death the group continued to do the same in honour of Fr. Rua. For many years this was the only Past pupils association in existence. When the former companions heard of this gracious idea other alumni in ever increasing numbers wanted to join and thus the

organization was born. A committee was given the principal task to make arrangements for an annual meeting on Don Bosco's feast day. In 1871 forty-five past pupils attended. Don Bosco wanted to reciprocate their courtesy and began to invite them each year to a family reunion at his table, a custom which began in 1876. The great moment of this occasion was always Don Bosco's after-dinner speech full of fun, delicately laced with good advice that reminded them to remain good sons of Don Bosco.

In 1908 the dynamic *Circolo Giovanni Bosco* (John Bosco Association) was formed in Turin by Salesian Past Pupils for Catholic social action, independently of the Committee of Oratory Past Pupils. Together however, they launched the idea of forming a world federation, uniting all past Pupils association which had sprung up in Europe and in Americas. By July 1909 the *Circolo Giovanni Bosco* had drafted and circulated Statutes of Federation which was widely accepted. Thus the World Federation was formed by the union of some 100 local associations and a world congress was planned.

The next few years witnessed the rapid growth of the movement. The First National Federation was formed in 1910 before the death of Don Rua and the first International congress of the Past Pupils took place in 1911 in which there were 1000 participants from 22 countries. At the second International congress held in 1920 they decided to draw up some regulations, to elect the International President and publish a magazine titled "*Voci Fraterne*".

Thus the Association became a worldwide reality.

In 1954 at the canonization of Dominic Savio, the relic of the saint was escorted with a guard of honour consisting of 32 national presidents of their past pupils from around the world. It was at this point that they wanted to make the organization a real World Confederation, with a view to unite them among themselves and with the other Salesians as well to foster fidelity to the Salesian spirit.

Characteristics of the Association: The Association in its internal organization bears the stamp of the Salesian family spirit, fosters a brotherly union among its members, in obedience to the sacred mandate given to them by Don Bosco "to keep united and help each other and promote friendly cooperation in their spiritual, moral and material relationships. By the virtue of their education the Past pupils became the members of the Salesian Family. The past pupils belong to this family by right of the education received which now they may express in a variety of apostolic undertakings. (Salesian Constitutions, # 5)

Don Bosco loved his boys and this love continued to blossom in their lives even after their education. This love prompted them to unite among themselves and the Salesians. The Confederation of Don Bosco Past Pupils seeks nothing more than to pass on to others the principles of Don Bosco which they have imbibed through contact with the Salesians. Today more than before, they are called to be the messengers of love especially to the young born in this atomic age. □



A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN (2)

by Pascual Chavez Villeneuve

Model of the Church

No wonder that in those circumstances between 1860 and 1862, Don Bosco made his definitive title of Help of Christians, which made him decide to concentrate his Marian devotion that he proposed to the people. And it was in 1862 that he had the dream of the "two columns." Three years later he began the construction of the Basilica dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. The beautiful depiction of the Madonna above the main apse represents both the ecclesiology and the Mariology of Don Bosco: Mary is the figure of the Church, mother and model at the same time mother with her son, and where she appears supported by Peter and Paul, and surrounded by the Apostles and Evangelists, that is, the apostolic and missionary Church.

Today the social, political and cultural situation finds itself in a new process of profound and accelerated change. This is not the time to challenge modernity but rather the social model that is emerging which is that of a Europe that wants to live without

God or at best, leaving good "for private use," with no bearing on social life.

Close to Humanity

Today as yesterday the changes that are taking place are having a great impact on the family structure, on the social fabric, on the concept of life. The Church is called to propose and offer Jesus and his Gospel as Mary does.

The story of the wedding of Cana enlightens and offers us lines of action. At Cana, in fact, it is possible to contemplate on the meaning of Jesus' mission and Mary's mission fulfilled alongside him.

It was in Cana that Mary revealed to us that she was close to us sharing our lives, our joys and sufferings, with her feminine precociousness, attentive to the needs of others like the Church that knows that her mission is to serve and not to be served.

The best service she renders us is to show us Jesus, to offer him to us, because only through him do we receive salvation. This is the dynamic that the Evangelist offers us: the work of Jesus and the

salvation of humankind cannot be understood without the presence of Mary and the contribution she makes of her faith.

The linkage of Mary to Jesus for the good of humankind, leading them to Jesus becomes for us a model to follow, if we wish to rejuvenate the Church so that youngsters become the Church.

Walking with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

While we thank the Lord for the gift of his Mother as our Mother, we thank Mary for directing us to her Son, we welcome the call of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who has asked us not to leave this task to the one invested with the Petrine ministry. Like Don Bosco, with genuine and sincere affection, we will cooperate with him in his pastoral mission to "launch out into the deep sea of history and throw our nets to win men and women to the Gospel," taking them from the sea of salt, of all their alienation into the land of life and into the light of God.

Like Mary, we members of the Salesian Family exist to reveal, to propose and to offer God to youngsters. We will collaborate with the Pope in his role as pastor, making ours the "holy restlessness of Christ... for he is not indifferent to the many people who live in the desert;" The desert of poverty, of hunger and thirst, of abandonment, of loneliness, of frustrated love, the emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity and the awareness of human life. "The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards a place of life, of friendship with the Son

of God, towards the One who gives us life and life in abundance."

Like Don Bosco, we members of the Salesian Family, renew our vocation in the Church as "youth pastors" with the mission of leading them to Christ, the only one who will not disappoint their deepest expectations nor delude their deepest expectations, satisfying their hunger and thirst for life, happiness and love.

In carrying out this mission we are not alone. Mary has been given to us as our powerful help to fight against evil for the salvation of youth, as the Help of Christians who, with motherly affection cares for all who find themselves at her feet as they go through this dark world.

Mary, is the model of all the paths that lead to God, precisely because she accompanied the Son along the streets of this world, knowing which ones will surely lead to Him. She guides us during this new phase of history. I therefore invite you to entrust yourself along with me: *O Mary help of Christians, immersed in the sea of light, of the Trinity and seated on a throne of clouds, crowned with stars, as Queen of Heaven, and earth you lift up the Child, the Son of God, who with open arms offers grace to those who approach you, you are surrounded with a human crown by the apostles, Peter and Paul and the Evangelists, you are proclaimed their Queen, you join heaven and earth, Mother of the Church and already in heavenly glory and the pilgrim Church in the world, make us tireless builders of the Kingdom, fill us with the passion the "Da mihi animas" Let us be signs of God To the young and the poor, protect us against the enemy, and at the hour of death take us to eternal joy." Amen. □*

NEWSBITS

LESBOS, GREECE

"We greeted around 300 of these refugees, one by one. Many of them were children; some of them - of these children - watched their parents and friends die, some of whom drowned in the sea. I saw so much pain!" Pope Francis looked up from his prepared speech at the end of the Sunday prayer. (17th April 2016) He could still picture the faces, tears and desperation that he had witnessed 24 hours before, at the refugee camp in Moria, on the Greek island of Lesbos. He told the crowd of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, the story of a young male widower: "I want to tell you about a young man who has not yet turned 40. I met him and his two children yesterday. He is Muslim, and he told me that he married a Christian girl. They loved each other and respected each other. But unfortunately the young woman's throat was slashed by terrorists because she didn't want to deny Christ and abandon her faith. She is a martyr! And that man wept and wept..." This is the man who sobbed at Francis' feet along with his two children.

Of all the encounters Francis had at the refugee centre which he visited with **Patriarch Bartholomew** and **Archbishop Ieronymos** on Saturday, the ones that struck Francis the most were those with the children there. Children who are now alone in the world, who lived under the bombs and are too scared to sleep at night. Children who wished to turn their experiences, suffering

and hopes into drawings.

Beneath the white tent in Moria, a little boy in a white and blue vest held out a piece of paper with a drawing of some peers standing behind a barbed wire fence, which he wanted to give to Francis. "Is this for me? Did you draw it? And which one is you?" the Pope said with the help of an interpreter. Azadi, the child, pointed to the person in the drawing that represented him. In the drawing he was wearing a bandana around his head and a flag with the word "help" written on it. "This is me with my friends from the camp," he explained. His father was by his side. He took Francis' hand and said: "It's great that you're here."



Another little boy who was standing nearby, wearing a blue tracksuit, also gave the Pope a drawing: His picture showed a sun shedding blood coloured tears as adults and children drowned in the sea. Pope Francis looked at him, shocked. "This drawing is symbolic," he told Patriarch Bartholomew. He thanked the boy and passed the sheet of paper to one of his assistants saying: "Don't lose this! I want it on my desk."

The drawings which we publish here were not lost. □



walking with the Church

St Michael, the Angels and Satan

From St Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *I would like to know if the two Archangels, St Michael and St Gabriel are our brothers or friends?*

A. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel are what we call spiritual realities. Angels remind us that there is more to the created order than what we actually see, feel, hear and taste. As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will. They are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures. We humans are at the highest level of created beings. We are both distinct from nature (we alone know that we know) and at one with nature in that we, too, are part of the whole created order. We would not refer to angels as our brothers because they are on a different level of being. Angels however are certainly our friends. The whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd and spiritual companion throughout our lives. Jesus himself, discussing little children, speaks of 'their angels' who look upon the face of the Father in heaven. (Mt 18.10)

Q. *I would like to know something*

about Satan. Does he exist? What does the Church teach about him? Is there a battle going on every day between Satan and St Michael the Archangel?

A. Thank you for your long letter and various questions a few of which I quoted above. The Church has constantly taught that the devil exists, and the Catholic Catechism confirms this teaching in its section on the devil. Scripture and Church tradition sees the devil as a fallen angel. Satan was first a good angel created by God. 'The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God and they became evil by their own doing.' (CCC391). Jesus calls him a 'murderer from the beginning' (Jn 8,44) who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from the Father. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (1Jn 3:8). Pope Paul VI speaking of the devil at a general audience described him as "a living, spiritual being, perverted and perverting... he is the secret enemy that sows errors and misfortunes in human history." □

Chimay, continued from p. 23
 with you and I have never forgotten it. What peace..." By this time the mechanic returned with the good news that the motorcycle was repaired. That meant the pair could leave: Brother stood up, he seemed taller than the Lieutenant: "Then we must leave. My poor brother needs the doctor. If you will please strap him to my back, the pain is not so bad for him that way." Having given us some sandwiches and a flask of hot chocolate the two of us were soon on our way." Before leaving Brother Joachim bowed low: "God bless you for your kindness," he said.

The Lieutenant was amused at the sight: "I cannot help laughing brother. That is a very funny sight, one monk on the back of another!"

"I myself have to smile when I think how funny all of this was."

They were soon on their way and for the rest of the journey we didn't see another Nazi soldier all the way to my base outside Paris. When we pulled up at the gate the first man to meet us was a good friend of mine, Bill Cavanagh. He didn't recognize me. He came toward us grinning. He too was amused to see two monks, strapped to one another. I called out to him and only then did he recognized me. Brother Joachim told him to unstrap me carefully as I was badly hurt. I had to tell Bill that I would have been dead but for Brother Joachim who carried me on his back for nearly a hundred miles.

Brother Joachim mounted the motorcycle once more and started it: "So, captain, you are in good hands now. I will go back." I was

determined to make him stay but he insisted. "Thank you, no, I must go back now. *Au Revoir, Captain*. God bless you and remember those prayers." I was speechless and I turned to Bill and muttered: "I say, what a man, the greatest man I ever met!"

I went to a hospital and then back to a base in England. That seemed to be the end of the story. I gave up trying to tell people how I was rescued. It was all too fantastic. One morning I was working at my desk in the base office when my friend Bill came in with the paper. "Hey George, you know that French Flier you're always talking about, Rene Fonck? There's a story about him in the papers this morning. Listen to this: 'Lieutenant Colonel Rene Fonck famous flying ace of the First World War who mysteriously dropped out of sight several years ago, was found last week as a monk, at the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame de Forge in Chimay, Belgium. There's a picture of him as a monk.' I looked, it's Brother Joachim!"

"But Rene Fonck wasn't through with me yet. In the next two or three years he did something even greater than saving my life. When the war was over, I went back to his monastery at Chimay. I stayed at the monastery for a week. I found something there I had never known before. Peace of mind and of soul. I discovered what gave Rene Fonck his courage and his strength. I learned to believe and to pray. Two years later I was baptised and my sponsor was Brother Joachim, Rene Fonck. My boyhood hero had given me two priceless gifts, life and faith. □"

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

My grateful thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and Mother Mary for the healing of the swelling in my right leg. I continue to pray the 3 Hail Marys most devoutly.

A Devotee, Jaipur

On the 8th December 2015 while sweeping outside I experienced a sharp pain in my lower back. The next day I could not sit or rest properly. I was in severe pain. I feared the worst since I had undergone a successful breast cancer surgery 6 years ago. It was also the first wedding anniversary of my son. I prayed the 3 Hail Marys continuously asking Mother Mary to come to my aid. After visiting the doctor I was told it was only a spasm. Mother Mary did come to my aid. I am ever grateful to Her. I have also been granted many other favours through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. Thank you Mother Mary and do continue to bless and protect me always.

Maria Santimano, Colva, Goa

My husband is a sailor and he is having a very difficult time at his place of work. I said a novena of 'Three Hail Marys' praying that Mother Mary help him. They were struggling for hours on the ship with a problem. After I prayed the Novena the problem got sorted out in an hour.

Smita Fernandes

I had a nail-poke under my foot in October 2015. This caused a severe swelling and much pain, making it difficult for me to walk. It was almost two months that I suffered this. Then I started praying the Three Hail Marys continuously for Mother Mary to heal me. After the recitation I noticed that I could walk properly and the swelling had disappeared. I am thankful to Mother Mary for healing me and always protecting me and my family. I will continue to recite the Three Hail Marys.

Mrs Maria Barretto, Dahisar

I have never stopped praying the 3 Hail Marys for a good result and the result was good!

Joan Nisari, Australia

I offer my sincere thanks to our Beloved Mother Mary for the cure of my wife's severe allergy. I prayed the three Hail Marys and my wife was healed.

Terrance, Mumbai

We are thankful to Our Lady for the numerous favours and countless blessings received through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys.

Jude and Rowena, Mangalore

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I am grateful to Our Lady for the LLM admission that my wife secured at the Mumbai University. *Dr Olav Albuquerque, Mumbai*
Our special, belated, heartfelt thanks to Our Blessed Mother for gift of a precious little daughter Ahaana Rajesh Dias. Thank you Mother Mary for all the special graces and favours received through your intercession. This miracle would not have happened without the blessings of Almighty God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Protect our daughter Ahaana from all hidden dangers and continue to bless our family. Protect and guide us along life's journey. We will forever sing your praises.

Rajesh, Beena, Ahaana Dias, Mangalore
My grateful thanks to Our Lady for healing both my eyes after a complicated surgery.

Mrs. M. Haigh, United Kingdom
My sincere thanks to the Most Blessed Trinity, Mother Mary, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio, for the several favours granted to me and my family, especially my son's marriage, my good health during that period (which was a miracle) and the other miraculous favours. Please continue to bestow your blessings on us, dear Mother.

Mrs C. D'Sa Mumbai
My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for favours granted to me and my family all these years after having settled in Canada.
Aloysius, C.R.

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

A neighbour of ours, Lydia Rio was married for four years but had no child. We pleaded earnestly for the intercession of Don Bosco and prayed at the Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna and the Lord blessed her with a beautiful baby girl whom she named Bianca. We are sincerely grateful to Almighty God, Our Lady and Don Bosco for this gift.

Joe Miranda and Family, Navi Mumbai
Our grateful thanks to the Holy Trinity, Our Blessed Mother and the saints for helping us resolve a long-standing banking issue.

The deSouzas, Melbourne, Australia
I am grateful to the Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for the money I received to disburse for the harvest festival. *M.W. Dodd, Pune*
Our sincere thanks for graces and favours received; for the healing of my daughter's allergies and being successful in marriage.

Mrs. Dolarose D'Souza, Mumbai
My most sincere thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for helping me clear my first semester engineering exams and special thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for interceding for me.

Ms Aksha Mary Pramod, Mumbai
My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for giving my God-Child Mr Abercio and Mrs Sharon the safe delivery of twins after many years. May Our Lady give them good health.

Fr Aramitha Monteiro, Goa

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio I thank you for all the favours I have received. Please continue to shower your blessings on us.

Melwyn Monteiro, Australia
Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for all the favours granted. *C. T. Margao, Goa*
Our sincere thanks to God our Father, Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for the countless favours and blessings bestowed on my family and me during the year 2015. *Philomena D'Souza, Goa*
We are grateful to the Infant Jesus, Mary Help of Christians and St Dominic Savio

for protecting our daughter and her baby during her pregnancy and for giving her a healthy baby. Please continue to bless and protect them.

Maria and Family, Goa
Thank you, Mama Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio. Through the years and through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys you have showered on us numerous blessings.

O. Barretto, Mumbai
Thanks to Jesus, Mary, Don Bosco and St Dominic Savio, for the gift of a girl-child to my second daughter after five years of marriage; and for a safe and normal delivery even after severe complications; through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Mrs Fila Dias, Goa
I thank the Blessed Trinity, Our Blessed Mother, Mary Help of Christians and St Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter-in-law with a safe delivery of her second son after 7 years. Thank you also for the many favours received and continue to shower your graces and blessings on my family.

Gracy N. Godinho
My belated but heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary, St John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter and the gift of a healthy baby boy. Protect him from all hereditary diseases.

Mrs. Sebastian, Powai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER OCTOBER 2016

Universal: *Journalists* - That journalists, in carrying out their work, may always be motivated by respect for truth and a strong sense of ethics.

Evangelization: *World Mission Day* - That World Mission Day may renew within all Christian communities the joy of the Gospel and the responsibility to announce it.

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MARY WAS THERE

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Mother Mary for the many favours we have received. On a recent pilgrimage tour I was completely healed at Lourdes when I took a dip at the sacred bath. I was suffering from excruciating pain under my heel, this happened when I accidentally stepped on a stone. I suffered for three months. I had to be very careful when placing my foot down; climbing stairs at times was painful and the pain would appear suddenly. I offered my pain at Lourdes and prayed for some relief. My pain completely vanished and I am able to walk normally. My son-in-law lost his job in Dubai since the company had terminated many people. His plans were made to return to India, but with a firm devotion and prayers to Mother Mary, he was the only person who was recalled by the Company. Thank you Mother Mary. Please never give up praying to Our Lady.

Michael & Ophelia Barretto, Mumbai

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

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