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**We pray to you
and believe her
to be truly
the Mother of God.
May we be helped
by her interceding
before you.
Through Jesus Christ,
your Son, our Lord.**

*From the Common
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

From The Editor's Desk

THE CANCER OF MEANNESS

Meanness is not a topic for discussion in any forum, on the media, spoken or written. Yet it is a fairly wide spread phenomenon and many people are touched by it to some degree even though they would hate to admit that about themselves. We no longer see things or persons in their true light; they are seen either as a threat to our wealth or a possible source of it. Worst of all it dries up any urge to generosity.

This partly explains why the mean person is one of the least liked or welcomed in any social situation. He is experienced as being reluctant to share, and unwilling to play a full part in any group; he is a kind of outsider, though willing to take advantage of any group or community activity if it might benefit him.

As a quality of soul it can run from a mild failure to a deep seated resistance to sharing with others and to an insatiable desire for more and more. It has often been said that meanness is more destructive than occasional violence. The perpetrator of the latter can be shamed out of his behaviour but the mean person cannot be shamed as easily.

Shame is almost completely absent from his nature apart from the shame of not acting meanly or of being generous. It is a cancer at the heart of all relationships and eats away at the joy and laughter which should characterise them.

All this is probably what Christ meant in his famous comment about the difficulties of the rich entering heaven. It is not being wealthy that matters; it is what we do with wealth or what we allow it to do to us.

But meanness is not just a feature of personal life. It infects families, groups, communities, states. All want more and more and this leaves less for the stranger, the old, the deprived, the homeless, and sick and many others. Whether we are talking about the individual, the group or the state it is the strong who will always win out. Meanness then ranges from some trivial stinginess to greed, which seriously harms oneself and others. It kills trust and fosters deep suspicion, both damaging to co-operation and love. What we need to learn is how to care and not to care for wealth; how to be properly attached to and detached from necessary wealth.

That is our task as curators of God's world; but we soon forget whose world it is, and we quickly claim it for ourselves alone.

If only we could realise that the happiness of others is our concern too, and that there is a minimum of material goods, essential for happiness. How many parents throughout the world no longer see that lovely smile on their child's face, or hear their gurgle and giggle of laughter because they are racked with hunger? And that may be due to the meanness of others, somewhere, somehow.

Fr. Ian Doullton sdb

LIVING BY THE RULES

Ian Pinto, *sdb*

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

The first thing that needs to be in place for any group of people to function well together is rules. I know you might wonder, "Rules? What have they got to do with our family?" Trust me; they do matter. In fact, consciously or unconsciously every family has a lot of rules. They may not have been stated clearly or passed after a unanimous vote, though sometimes that could be a great way of making them (especially when kids are involved). It could be something simple like not being outside of the house after 8 pm in the evening unless for a special occasion.

I remember a few rules that were practiced at home: Nobody will watch television while eating food. That was a great rule because it allowed every member of our family to be fully present at the meal table and indulge in conversation with each other. Another rule that we had which is connected to the first one is: Meals will be taken together. So even if a member of the family was late in coming, say Dad returned a little late from work in the afternoon, we would wait for him so that we could eat together as a family. This impressed upon us kids the importance of waiting on other members of the family. It taught us to value persons and to accompany one another even if they were running late.



So rules are a good thing. Society functions well because of rules. Imagine there were no rules for traffic. There would be chaos and confusion. Rules help things to run smoothly and ensure that everybody can get what they want. But they should be reasonable. The aim of rules is basically to instill a sense of discipline which in turn fosters cooperation. Discipline is a key word in a parent's dictionary. It is about helping children to learn to manage themselves, their feelings, their behaviour and their impulses. Parents would like their kids to develop a sound moral compass, and learn to distinguish between those impulses or feelings which are socially "appropriate" or "inappropriate", be able to justify judgments about their choices and act on them with conviction.

Without rules children would run wild. They would set the house on fire, walk in the middle of the road, and take whatever they want from the supermarket and so on. I'm exaggerating but you get the point. Children need limits. They need to know what's safe (playing football in the back-

yard) and what's unsafe (playing cricket on the street). Telling a child they can't do something unsafe is not the same as punishing them. Children will understand that some things are not to be done when they are prevented from doing them either verbally or physically. For example, a child will learn not to play with the knife if it is taken from her hand whenever she gets hold of it.

Children's first reaction to prevention is usually crying. That's alright. A little crying won't harm anyone as long as the message has gone across. At this point it is very important not to behave rudely or condescendingly since the child will sense it and will feel threatened. One way of dealing with this situation is listening to the child and letting him/her know that you understand how he/she feels but that you are willing to stand your ground.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

It is one thing to make rules but it is another to get people or in this case children to follow them. To that end, rewards and punishments come as a useful help. It is basic psychology that says that living beings will do things that promote life and pleasure,



and avoid those that cause pain. Let's say that there are two bowls of chocolates before a child. One, set of chocolates are wrapped in red paper while the other are wrapped in green. The red chocolates are quite bitter as compared to the green ones which are sweet. After the child tastes the red chocolate the first time and realizes that the taste is not appealing, he/she will avoid those chocolates in the future. Why does the child do so? Simple, he/she associates the red chocolates with badness and the green ones with goodness and so when given a choice will opt for the green chocolates. Such a process is called conditioning and is quite helpful in educating children to make healthy choices.

The danger of conditioning is that it leads children to look for external motivations to behave in a desirable way. Over time, some say, that it overrides a child's natural inclination to do the right thing because they constantly rely on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivators. For example, a conditioned child may find it very difficult to make a choice between two positive or pleasurable options since neither is bad in itself and both seem to give pleasure and happiness. For example, a child may find it easy to decide between doing and not doing their homework but may find it more difficult to decide whether to play games on the play station with his friends or go out and play football in the park.

Here are a few tips given by a psychologist that I found to be useful for using rewards effectively on children and teenagers:

1) Rewards must be desired. Giving a kid chocolates won't work for very long. The reward must be attractive and must be something the child is interested in. I remember when I was young, I was crazy about G.I. Joe action figures. My grandmother told me that if I developed my skill of drawing I would get an action figure. Every drawing I did would be judged by her and I would be awarded a certain number of points based on its quality. Once I had 100 points I would get an action figure. I remember drawing at any and every free moment I could find. It had me hooked and it was not because of my love for drawing. I couldn't and still can't draw even a stick figure very well but I remember trying my best at drawing just for that reward.

2) The goals mustn't be unrealistic. If the child feels that they cannot achieve the goal, they won't try. A general rule of thumb is that the child should be able to earn the reward about 75% of the time.

3) Rewards should be given regularly and consistently. Instead of offering one big reward for straight A's, try offering smaller rewards for each completed homework assignment. Children can't plan for the future in the



same way adults do, and a report card that's three months away might as well not exist.

4) Always follow through. If you promise a reward, and don't follow through, you've just made your life much more difficult. Next time you promise a reward, your child won't believe you. Why should they? That being said, this goes both ways. If your child doesn't earn the reward they don't get it!

5) Be clear about the requirements to receive a reward. It's likely that your idea of a clean room is different than your child's idea of a clean room. Be specific, like this: "If you pick your clothes up off the floor and put them in the dresser, vacuum, and make your bed, we will go to a movie."

6) Be clear about the reward itself. If you say: "I will buy you a new pair of shoes if you study for at least one hour every day this week", your child will be in for a sad realization when they try to pick up a pair that costs \$800 bucks, and you say "no". Be clear about any limitations on the reward from the start.

7) Don't take away rewards that have already been earned. If your child earns a trip to the movies, and then they get in trouble for something unrelated, don't take away the reward. You can still use punishment, but it should be separate. Taking away rewards can lead to a constant sense of defeat when a child works hard, yet never sees positive outcomes.



8) Try rewarding good habits instead of good outcomes. For example, reward your child if they study for an hour each night, instead of rewarding them for an A on a test.

Now for the other side of this coin: **punishments**. Choosing what is appropriate is an important part of shaping your kids' behaviour. But choosing consequences that are just right for each situation – without being too lax or too severe – is difficult. Appropriate consequences teach children that they're in control of their own behaviour even when the parent's aren't around to notice. They're also tailored to match each child's developmental stage, so the child isn't expected to give more than he/she can deliver.

These kinds of effective consequences can be divided into two categories: natural and logical consequences.

· **Natural Consequences** are things that happen on their own as a result of the child's behaviour. For example, puncturing your basketball means that you don't have a basketball to play with. Forgetting to do your homework means that you're getting a remark in your handbook.

· **Logical Consequences** are steps taken by parents or elders to help children see that choosing poor

behaviours comes with some unpleasant side effects. These aren't punishments because they're not punitive. An example would be having your children go to bed early the evening after they refused to go to bed on time. The consequence is related to the behaviour, and it makes sense for the situation. It's also unpleasant enough that they won't want to suffer the same consequence over and over again, so it serves as a motivator for changing their own behaviour.

In both cases, one desires that children see that they really choose their consequences themselves the moment they choose their behaviour. This can be done in two ways according to an article in *The Spruce*:

1) Communicating with your kids up front about consequences. What you're going to do when your kids misbehave should never be a mystery. They should have a pretty good idea of what's coming, based on clearly defined family rules. This way, they can see how avoiding the negative behaviour is beneficial to them, because they know up front what it will cost them.

2) Remaining calm when your kids misbehave. When you get angry at our kids for their behaviour, we make the issue about us instead of about them. Doing everything we can to stay calm actually shocks them, which demonstrates the seriousness of the issue. And it also eliminates the power struggle that distracts our kids from focusing on what really initiated the consequence – their own behaviour! □

PERENNIALY DISSATISFIED?

Alessandra Mastrodonato

So many youngsters painfully experience a corrosive emotion of discontent. They find it difficult to be happy and grateful for little things; they find it impossible to live in the here and now. There's a stubborn and frustrating urge to be elsewhere and to live a life different from the one they received as a gift...they don't want to be who they are; they want to be different.

Perennial dissatisfaction: According to some recent researches, this is quite a widespread "disease" among youngsters the world over. They often have to deal with precarious and unfulfilling jobs, disappointing love lives and a sense of inadequacy which begins with one's relationship with oneself, which then spreads like wildfire to involve all the other relationships, life experiences...and everything else in the youngster's life.

Unresolved restlessness and discontent: this is how youngsters in the third millennium appear. Their daily life becomes an exhausting exercise in trying to achieve a greater fulfillment of their expectations and a constant search for inner peace which is rarely achieved. They constantly look for convincing answers to questions about the meaning of life. It's an endemic discontent that is difficult to explain; almost like a background hum that



seems to go on constantly. It is a discontent that becomes a "life-illness" which even impedes the enjoyment of the present thus preventing the young person from focusing on his/her most



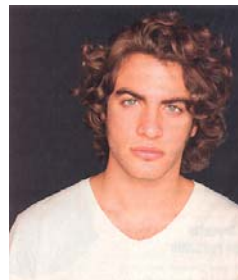
genuine aspirations; his/her inability to see beauty in life. Every action, every choice and every possible existential option now becomes meaningless.

So many youngsters painfully experience the corrosive emotion of discontent. They find it difficult to be happy and grateful for little things. They find it impossible to live in the *here and now*. There's a stubborn and frustrating urge to be elsewhere and live a life different from the one they received as a gift...they don't want to be who they are; they want to be different. And while they are busy dreaming of a different life by trying to satisfy their insatiable thirst for happiness they end up losing the unique opportunity to live fully in present thus giving deeper meaning to their everyday life and being able to recognize that there is something beautiful and extraordinary in their life.

How then is it possible not to be overwhelmed by this perennial state of discontent and dissatisfaction? Should one be content with one's present condition and not aim for anything better by silencing that inner voice that urges us to seek a greater happiness and a fuller life?

Perhaps, between these two extremes: the inability to enjoy the present because of the spasmodic and restless search for a better life and the temptation to "fly low" by renouncing one's dreams and deepest aspirations; there is a middle way.

When one is not reduced to



sterile wishful thinking or an exasperated conflict between oneself and the outside world but lives positively, this can result in a "concrete utopia" of an existence that is fuller and more satisfying. And, if one does not limit oneself to expressing a subjective need, but becomes a force to aggregate one's needs with those of others, extinguishing all those selfish elements that aim at only affirming oneself, this then can lead one to focus on shared planning that is capable of really improving and transforming reality. □

All the time you're asking what's worrying me. All these years I'm wondering if I'm really as good as they are. And the truth is, I've waited so long for something that isn't really there instead of watching the sunrise. And miraculously I haven't stopped dreaming and I haven't stopped hoping. And if there's a secret, it's doing everything as if I were watching the sun rise and not something that's not there.

Elisa 2006,
Something that's not there

SALESIAN SAINTS

FRANCIS CONVERTINI 1898 - 1976

Priest - Servant of God

He was born in Contrada Marinelli near Cisternino (Brindisi) on August 29, 1898 and was orphaned when he was just three months old. When he lost his mother at the age of eleven he was entrusted to Vito and Anna Petrucci who took care of him like a son.

At the age of 18 he joined the army; on the front at Isonzo he experienced the tragic rout of Caporetto and on December 23, 1917 he was taken prisoner and interned at a concentration camp at the Masurian Lakes (Poland). At the end of the war he was totally emaciated and almost died of Meningitis. When he had completely recovered in 1920 he enlisted in the *Guardia di Finanza* and was sent to Trieste and later to Pula and finally to Turin where he had the encounter of his life: He met the Salesians and in particular the great biographer of Don Bosco Father Angelo Amadei who became his confessor. The young man was enamored by Don Bosco - who was also an orphan shepherd boy - and decided to become a Salesian and indeed, a Salesian missionary.

He was sent to the "Cardinal



Cagliari" institute of Ivrea that was filled with a large number of aspiring missionaries. The institute brought out the best of the young Convertini: his simplicity, sincerity, willingness to make any sacrifice and his spirit of constancy. His greatest difficulty was studies. It would be his greatest burden despite his heroic commitment, even later in life.

In 1927, being among the group of missionaries destined for India, he received the Crucifix at the hands of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, the third successor of Don Bosco. In Calcutta the group met the great Salesian bishop Monsignor Louis Mathias and they were sent to Shillong where Convertini was admitted to the Novitiate and then his philosophical studies. During the first phase of his missionary life the

young Convertini came to know another great Salesian like Father Amadei and this was critical for him: also a servant of God, Father Constantine Vendrame. He became, for the young Convertini, the best training manual. Together they traversed many miles visiting villages, entering homes and preaching Jesus to adults and children.

After completing his theological studies he was ordained a priest on June 29, 1935 after which he was asked to leave Assam and go to Bengal, that vast Salesian province stretched from the Himalayas to the Ganges, from the Brahma-putra to Tibet. Because of its heat and humidity this region was referred to as the "Cemetery of Europeans." The diocese was very poor and had a population of six million Muslims and Hindus. The Catholics were only one per thousand. It was a most difficult mission requiring utmost heroism, self-denial and sacrifice. Convertini totally dedicated himself to the people. He was appointed assistant parish priest at Bhorborpara up to 1939 and then Ranabondo up to 1942 and thereafter to Krishna-gar up to his death.

His provincial wrote: "No one in Krishnagar had so many friends and spiritual children among the ignorant and the wise, the poor and the rich. He never preached great sermons or delivered great speeches because he was unable to, but he spoke

personally to people and entered every family." He was the only one who could have access to where no stranger was admitted. He was continually on the move, making his way from village to village and his means of transport were the horse or the bicycle but he preferred to sling his backpack on his shoulders and go about on foot because then he could meet so many people and talk to them about Christ.

Father Convertini's rich life was full of heroic expressions of charity and penance. As a man of God it was his great preoccupation to pour "the saving water of Jesus" on the thousands that he baptized. He divested himself of everything, his clothes, his bed, his shoes and his food to give them to the poor. He always slept on the floor and fasted for long stretches. He was poor to the very end. There are innumerable episodes recounting his supernatural gifts and they are well documented in order to keep the memory of his sanctity alive. He gave himself to every-one without distinction of religion, caste or social status. Everyone loved him.

At the news of his death the Cathedral was filled with Christians, Muslims and Hindus. He died on February 11, 1975 and his last words were: "My mother, I never displeased you in life, now help me!" Doubtless, Father Francis Convertini is a model of Salesian Missionary life, an inspiration for the interior life and of exceptional pastoral detachment. □



CL. WILLIS PINTO

A Student of Theology for the Salesian Province of Panjim

"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me." *Phi: 4:13.*

The thought of becoming priest entered my mind when I was a kid. I thought seriously about it when I was in the 9th std. After meeting my vocation promoter Fr. Maxim D'Souza I was admitted to the aspirante at Don Bosco Sirsi, where I began my journey and at present I am at DBYC Pune.

During my journey on this path of life I encountered Frs. Bernardino, Jason, Thomas, Solomon, Avin and Savio, who helped me to follow Jesus more closely in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

In the formation houses my guardian angels; I mean my assistants were Bros. Kevin, Jason (now a priest) and Clarence. They guided and supported



me immensely.

How can I forget my companions? They played an important role in helping me to live a joyful life. As a Salesian I can say boldly that I am very happy. I have seen many miracles and blessings on my family members since I joined. □

Statistics

Many are downhearted because statistics show falling numbers of people who go to church. If the primitive church had begun with calculating statistics of their numbers with regard to the whole world, they would never have begun preaching the word of God since they were so few. Very many times we encounter a fatalistic attitude when faced with the powerful and all pervasive culture of secularism of modern day life. The first Christians had to face a similar reality in the culture of the decadent Roman Empire. But their belief in the Lord's message was greater than the social pressures from that culture. So they continued to preach and give witness to their beliefs.



Witnesses in & for Our Times



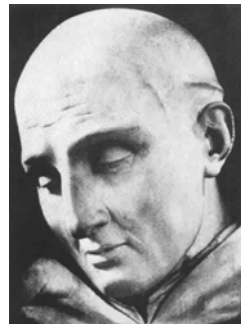
ST. BRUNO OF COLOGNE (1035 - 1101)

To capture what is eternal

Cardinal Consalvi told Napoleon when the latter, at the height of his military power threatened to destroy the Church if the Pope didn't sign the Concordat of 1801: "Your Majesty, we priests have not succeeded in destroying the Church by our infidelities in nineteen centuries, neither will you succeed."

History informs us that Napoleon took the Papal state from the Pope and had him arrested and sent into exile first to Savona and then to France. When Pius VII returned on May 24, 1814 (Hence the feast of Mary Help of Christians) the Church resumed her journey "amidst the persecutions of men and the consolations of God," while the one who wanted to destroy her shortly thereafter had to take the road to his final exile. The "sun of Austerlitz" had set forever and the long sad night had begun for him at Waterloo.

The saint we present, St. Bruno lived in the eleventh century, a very tormented and difficult period for the church both because of its political and ecclesial implications. It was the century of Greg-



ory VII and his struggle to defend the Church against the German emperor Henry and from humiliation caused by him at Canossa and because of the behaviour of the clergy especially the senior members, i.e. the bishops. "During that dark period the Church seemed to move further away from the Gospel. The papacy was either in the hands of local nobles

or the emperor. The election of bishops, who had become local princes took to simony which had become very infectious. The rest of the clergy were almost ignorant and often morally corrupt and one can well imagine the abandoned state of the people who were called Christians only because they were baptized." (E. Pepe)

But even in that century the barque of the Church resumed its journey driven by the winds of the Spirit who animated a bevy of holy people and spiritual movements. They worked hard and courageously for her reform. We may recall St. Romuald, St. Peter Damian and St. John Gualbert.

In France the monastic movement concentrated on the monastery of Cluny and the Order of Cistercians which under St. Bernard of Clairvaux were in the forefront.

There emerged during this period in Germany two great figures: St. Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Order of Premonstratensians and St. Bruno of Cologne, the founder of the order of Carthusians.

A feature worthy of note during these years was the difficult birth and growth of the European Union and it was these personalities that had a great influence on the whole of Europe. We can say that they were transnationals. In other words, there already existed a European Union in spirit founded on the common values of Christianity.

The Rheims Years

Bruno, a noble scion of the Hartenfaust family was born at Cologne, a strategic city that was remarkably prosperous. Still a boy

he began his studies at Rheims in France where the Cathedral had a famous school. From there he went on to Tours where he acquired a Master's degree in Philosophy. He was very clever and throughout his life a renowned intellectual, reaching the heights of excellence in all the then known branches of knowledge.

Around the year 1056 he was ordained and returned to Rheims to teach at that school at the request of the archbishop. He taught there for twenty years very successfully and became a director of studies counting among his pupils illustrious personalities such as the future Pope, Urban II. When he died some of the titles attributed to him were "doctor of doctors," "disciple of the true faith" and the "pearl of wisdom." These are only three of the one hundred and seventy-seven titles received as his obituary.

But even our Bruno of Cologne, despite his enormous culture and wisdom had his fair share of difficulty and suffering to overcome. In fact, in 1075 he was summoned to the delicate function of chancellor by the Archbishop of Rheims, a certain Manasse, a murky and avaricious character (pleasure and violent methods were not unknown to him) and he was much talked about because of his machinations to appropriate part of the assets of a thriving Benedictine Abbey. He also dabbled in simony (having bought the office he held). Bruno, seeking to put order and discipline in the Church strenuously opposed him.

Finally in 1088, in the face of the incorrigibility of Manasse Pope Gregory VII called the clergy of the diocese to oust him and

proceed with a new election. Bruno saddened by the entire bitter saga and the trail of polemics, refused the office of bishop in his place.

He constantly felt the insistent call to a less active and a more contemplative life far from the spotlight of notoriety. He greatly sought nature and silence.

After a brief period of a hermetic experience at Moslesmes (1082-1083) he set off with some companions and friends and in 1084 reached the mountainous country of Chartreuse where he founded a hermitage which became the origin of the Carthusians (even though he never wrote a rule). His desire for a greater commitment to an interior life, to prayer, manual work, silence and penance was finally realized.

Grand Chartreuse to Calabria

But for love of the Church and its reform, in 1088 he was asked to leave the peace and silence of Chartreuse and come to Rome. On the Chair of Peter was one of his pupils Eudi of Chatillon who had taken the name Urban. His former pupil asked him to be one of his advisors in the Holy City, but his Roman stay wasn't to last too long. Threatened by imperial troops, Urban II had to leave the city and move south and so naturally Bruno followed him. Perhaps to reward him for his sacrifice he made, the Pope wanted him to be bishop of Reggio Calabria.

But this was his second refusal and this time to his illustrious pupil, the Pope. He did not feel he was made for an ecclesiastical career or for positions of responsibility. He wanted to serve the Church

and to work for its reform in an evangelical sense but in another way, by living an eremitical life consisting of prayer, silence, discernment and contemplation.

In 1092 he retired to a new hermitage situated in a large valley donated by Count Roger the Norman and remained there very content. The place was called *Santa Maria della Torre*, today Serra S. Bruno (Catanzaro).

He was so fascinated by the beauty of the place that he described it in a letter: "*To his Carthusian Sons*" and to his friend Rudolph: "A pleasant place comprising of a wide and graceful plain that creeps up to the mountains with flower-strewn meadows." Was it just poetry? Not so.

Those who had been there praise the beauty and harmony of the place. To Bruno, it all spoke of God and elevated him. The beauty and harmony of the nature he admired in his monastery were "simple words of God" spoken in every season, every day, which invited him to contemplate his Creator.

The Message: You need a little silent contemplation

This can be St. Bruno's message for modern and postmodern man today. In this modern age there seems to be no place for silence to admire creation. For many today, nature no longer is "the abode of God" to be admired and respected but only something to be conquered and exploited. One no longer feels like a guardian of nature but its master. A theologian wrote that Nature is a "repository of symbolic meaning made to enrich the inner world of man" (G. Piana). But man today seems deaf and blind



THE WEALTH OF LOVE AND THE POVERTY OF RICHES

Ian Pinto, *sdb*

Jesus was always approached by people for advice, healing and comfort. The Gospels give us reports of only a select few individuals who had a one-to-one contact with Jesus. These encounters are interesting as they reveal quite a bit about the personality of Jesus and of God himself. Things that you wouldn't find recorded elsewhere in Jesus' teaching and lifestyle are brought to the fore in these special individual encounters. Besides using these occasions to touch individual's lives, Jesus often draws a lesson from them for the benefit of those around him.

On one of his journeys he was approached by a rich man who fell at his feet and asked him a curious question (Mk 10:17). The question he asked was, "What must I do to have eternal life?" This strikes me as being strange. First of all, let us examine the young man's behaviour. Mark tells us that he ran up to Jesus and

kneled before him. This is extremely surprising behaviour. Running up to a person and kneeling before him/her is ostentatious enough to attract a lot of attention. You can imagine how much more of a stir it would cause when a rich person falls at the feet of an itinerant man! This is not behaviour anyone would expect from a wealthy person. Someone who has the best life has to offer may appear to need little else but here, the crowd is treated to an unusual spectacle. A rich man has come to Jesus, and not by horse or carriage but as fast as his feet can carry him and throws himself on the knees of Jesus! This surely is a sign of great humility and simplicity.

The rich hardly miss an opportunity to show off their wealth and luxury. They often practice the famous maxim – "If you have it, flaunt it" – quite religiously. They make it hard for others not to notice their wealth

and status. The rich person of today would rarely take a walk if he/she can ride or drive over. As against such wasteful tendencies, we have the rich man of the Gospel who is of a seemingly different breed. Not only has he come running to Jesus, he kneels before him. Kneeling is a sign of submission, of humility and of surrender. The rich man doesn't hesitate to give up his prestige and honour before Jesus. He probably recognized him as someone greater than himself.

Submitting to another person is quite difficult unless the other is stronger, shrewder, influential or more authoritative than oneself. Most of us would probably have struggled with authority at some time or the other. The rich man seems quite clear: he has wealth, power and status while Jesus has neither of those but Jesus has something he doesn't have and he wants to learn the secret. He knows that it will cost him but shows extraordinary willingness to humbly submit himself to Jesus. This is an important and powerful lesson: money can buy a lot of things but it cannot buy the things necessary for living a happy and contented life. It can buy cars, houses, apparel and so on but cannot buy health, love, forgiveness, peace and humanity.

The rich man who came to Jesus was genuine in as much as he wanted an answer to an honest question he had. How could he attain eternal life? The nature of the question reveals that he was a serious minded fellow who despite his riches was not deter-

red from the things that really matter and that means being a good person now so as to achieve goodness eternally in heaven. When Jesus told him that what he wanted could be achieved if he kept the commandments, he was doubtful as he had practiced them from his childhood (v. 20). Jesus perceived that this was a one-of-a-kind situation. He looked at him steadily and loved him and said, "For you, one thing is lacking. Go, sell what you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me" (v. 21). This proved to be too much for the man as "on hearing these words, his face fell and he went away sorrowful" (v. 22).

It is quite curious to think that a person who observed the commandments from his early days should find it difficult to share his wealth and possessions with others. It's easy for me to speak since I have very little myself and would find it comparatively easier to sell all I have and follow Jesus than for say, Bill Gates or the Sultan of Brunei to do the same! But that is what is expected, nay demanded of us; the love with which we do what we do. You can do all the good in the world but if it's not motivated and fueled by love it hasn't much worth. That was probably the situation of the good man. He lived a righteous life but he apparently did it not out of love but out of mere compulsion. The Christian faith is one big adventure of love. Everything is pervaded and motivated by love; a love which has its source and end in God, who is the fullness of love itself. □

Quiet Spaces

LIKE GRANDMA'S COOKIES

On the morning of October 14, 2016 Pope Francis broke the Word of God for the little congregation at the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

Christians should not be like grandma's cookies, specifically those known as "liar's cookies"; they are beautiful on the outside, but empty and devoid of substance on the inside. This theme of hypocrisy, in all of its worst forms, was the theme of Pope Francis' homily during the celebration of Mass in the Santa Marta chapel on Friday, 14 October, 2016.

In his homily, the Pontiff also called on each of the faithful to make an examination of conscience with regard to hypocrisy. Building upon the day's reading from the Gospel of Luke (12:1-7), Francis reflected on "one word which the Lord says to the disciples: 'leaven.'" In the passage, St. Luke cites the teaching of Jesus: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." Pope Francis pointed out that Jesus "also spoke of leaven on other occasions, when he explained, for instance, that the Kingdom of Heaven was like the leaven which the woman kneaded with the flour: it made the lump grow. So it is with the Kingdom of Heaven." Likewise, "The Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians: 'Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump.'"

In a step proposed by the liturgy, "Jesus speaks about a leaven that does not make the Kingdom of Heaven, an evil leaven." There are therefore two levains, one good, one evil: "the leaven which makes the Kingdom of God grow, and the leaven which only makes what appears to be the Kingdom of God." Indeed, "the leaven always makes it grow, always; and, when it is good, it makes it grow in a way that is consistent, substantial, and it becomes good bread, a good meal: it grows well. But, the leaven of evil does not make it grow well."

To better explain this image, Pope Francis shares a personal recollection: "I remember that for Carnival, when we were children, grandma made cookies, and it was a very, very thin batter that she made. Then she dropped it into the oil and that batter swelled, and swelled and, when we began to eat it, it was empty." Those cookies were called "liar's cookies," and his grandmother explained why: these cookies "are like lies: they seem big, but they have nothing inside, there is nothing true there; there is nothing of substance."

Thus, Jesus warns us: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." That leaven "is hypocrisy." This is why the Lord advises us to be wary "of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Moreover, Francis stated, "many times Jesus said 'hypocrites, hypocrites' to the Pharisees, to the doctors of the law." For example, "if's enough to read Chapter 23 of Matthew: one after the other." But in reality, "what is this leaven of evil, what is hypocrisy?" To answer this question the Pope considered "several passages of the Bible." It so happens that "The Lord laments with the prophet: 'This people invoke me with their

lips, while their hearts are far from me.'" This is because, the Pontiff explained, "hypocrisy is an internal division, you say one thing and do another: it is a sort of spiritual schizophrenia." Furthermore, "the Pontiff explained, "a hypocrite is a phoney: he seems good, courteous but he has a dagger behind him." Just like Herod, Francis recalled, who with fear "received the Magi" with "courtesy" and "then, as they were leaving, said: 'go and then return and tell me where this child is so that I too can go to adore him.'" Instead he wanted "to kill him."

"A hypocrite is two-faced", the Pope continued. "He is a phoney." Jesus, "speaking of these doctors of the law," affirms that they "say but do not do." This "is another form of hypocrisy, it is existential nominalism: those who believe that, by saying things, everything is in order. No, things must be done, not just said." On the contrary, "a hypocrite is a nominalist, he believes that everything is done with words." Moreover, "a hypocrite is incapable of blaming himself: he never finds a smudge on himself; he blames others." Just think, Francis said, "of the speck and the log": this is precisely how "we can describe this leaven which is hypocrisy."

From this perspective, "in order to understand what Jesus wants to tell us," the Pontiff outlined the steps for an "examination of conscience on our way of acting in life, on our leaven," so that "we can be freer to follow the Lord and always tell the truth". For this reason it is important to ask ourselves: "How am I growing? Am I growing with the old leaven that serves for nothing? Am I growing like my grandmother's crêpes, empty, without substance, or am I growing with new leaven, the leaven that makes the Kingdom of Heaven grow? What is my leaven like?" In other words, "With what spirit do I do things? With what spirit do I pray? With what spirit do I address others? With the spirit that builds or with the spirit that turns into air?"

Francis also recommended that we never never mislead ourselves by saying: "I did this, I did that". Instead he pointed out the example of the little ones: "Children confess with such truth! Children never, never, ever tell a lie in confession, they never say abstract things: 'I did this, I did that.'" Thus, the Pope explained, children are "concrete, when they are before God and before others they say concrete things, because they have good leaven, the leaven that makes them grow like the Kingdom of Heaven grows".

The Pontiff then concluded his meditation praying that the Lord "give to us, to all of us, the Holy Spirit and the grace of the clarity to tell ourselves what is the leaven I grow with, which is the leaven I act with," in order to always be ready to respond sincerely to the question: "Am I a just and transparent person or am I a hypocrite?" (by www.osservatoreromano.it)

I NEVER GET A BREAK

From Fr. Ian Douilton's collection of stories

For our story this month you might want to meet a fellow named Joe. He's a talkative fellow, especially when he has something on his mind. These days, this is what he'll tell you over a glass of beer: "Oh man, you can't tell me anything about bad breaks. I've had them all, but nobody understands that, not even my wife. I can't make anyone believe the bad luck I've had. People are always blaming me for things that aren't my fault. They're always pushing me around. You know, I'm getting tired of being pushed around, as long as I can remember. Even when I was a kid... I can never forget the time when I was fourteen and my dad promised me a bicycle. He said if my brother Pete and I would take care of the garden around the house for the summer he'd buy us each a cycle. I took care of the front and Pete had the back and two days before school started, my dad came up to me to ask how I had fared."

Joe was wondering when he was going to get his bike. He had already picked out one for himself. But his dad wanted to see for himself how he had looked after his part of the front garden. First they went to the back garden, the part that Pete looked after. It looked clean and neat. It was pretty good, the grass was green. The beds were clean of weeds... and the flowers in the pots looked healthy and ready to bloom before the summer was out. Then it was time to go to the front garden. Joe wasn't comfortable. As they turned the corner and came to the

front... Joe pleaded for some more time, just a couple of days to get it into shape. His father seemed disappointed and made no secret of it: "Oh, Joe, look at this hard... there are three bare spaces in the lawn, there's a row of bushes all dead... the cannas are being choked by weeds..."

"Dad," Joe pleaded weakly, "The grass was always thin in those spots. This sandy soil won't hold the water. That's why the bushes died. I was afraid to weed the cannas. I was afraid I might pull up the roots." His father realised that Joe hadn't looked after his part of the garden for weeks. His father was now rather upset: "You always had plenty of time for swimming and playing football... Let's face it Joe, you didn't take care of this yard and it's a mess." Then he added: "You didn't keep your part of our bargain. I'm sorry about the bicycle, son."

Joe was shocked: "You mean, you're not going to get me a bike?"

His father wouldn't go back on his word. Joe was angry and hurt and started whining: "Dad, you wouldn't do that... you wouldn't let a couple of old weeds keep me from getting a bike. Now I'll put this lawn back into shape... just a couple of days, just today and tomorrow." But both Joe and his father knew that would not be possible. His father started climbing the porch to go in but he turned one last time and looked Joe straight in the eye and said: "You can't keep running away... and manufacturing excuses... to cover up your own laziness. I am sorry

son..." By now Joe was in tears and he blurted out: "No you aren't. You just don't want me to have a bike. You don't care as long as Pete gets it. He just has to ask for something and he gets it. He's always been the pet around here. I don't count."

Joe never did get over that, his own father, and he wouldn't give him one day more for a little thing like a couple of weeds, he made him miss all the fun he could have had with that bike. That's the kind of breaks he'd always had. That's the way it was at school too. Every time anybody mentions high school, all he can think of was that lousy football coach and the dirty trick - as Joe put it - he played on him. In his final year Joe thought he was a star midfielder but the day before the finals the coach decided to drop him. While Joe was lacing up the coach came up and said: "I can't take a chance, you haven't been down for the last few practices where we tried out some new moves. If I put you in, our whole offence will suffer." Joe was just raring to go... Joe pleaded: "I can still run and pass." But the coach reminded him: "That's the way you talked before the last game. You almost lost that one for us. David Joseph had to pull the game out of the crisis, so I'm starting him today." Dave worked hard and when he had any spare time he was always practicing his shots and sprints. Besides Joe complained he didn't have time for those personal practices as he had his term paper to finish. The coach retorted: "Three of four other boys on the time also work on the paper and they find time to practice... you've been

sloughing off Joe and till you get down to business, you don't get on the team."

When Joe told me about this is how he put it: "That was just his excuse. I know the real reason for building up David Joseph. Dave's father was a friend of the Principal of the School board. Well, that ended me and football. I knew that I'd never get any places as long as that guy was coaching. When you're only a kid a jolt like that can hurt you in a lot of ways. Well, it made me lose interest in my studies too. I didn't get into the college of my choice. I was going to major in journalism; I was going to be a reporter and write books. Boy, even now it burns me up when I think how great I would have done if it hadn't been for that lousy coach."

And when Joe got a job, it was the same old story: other fellows got all the good breaks; even when he would have come out on top at that chain-store outfit if he had to goof it up again. For three years, he did all the dirty work in the office and then one day, the boss called him in: "Joe, I suppose you've heard about Webster and Macdonald from store number five?" The two of them had met with a terrible accident and would be incapacitated for a while. Mr. Hamilton offered the vacancy to Joe... and would he take it? "Alright Joe, you take over tomorrow."

That seemed to be Joe's big break and he had started pretty well. A couple of weeks later Joe came to the office and Ms. Stanley the store secretary said over the PC, "Oh, you missed another call from Mr. Hamilton. He's called twice since nine thirty."

Joe simply replied as he settled down at his desk: "I'll phone him in a few minutes. It's not my fault I couldn't get here earlier. Car wouldn't start and then I was caught in traffic. Where's Johnson, why didn't he stay in the office until I got here?"

"He had to go downstairs to show the men where to put the new collars," said Ms. Stanley, "He wants to know when you'll be able to check that next sales campaign material." Joe thought that Johnson could handle that himself. Then he added that if Johnson didn't finish the inventory he could stay after six and finish it. Joe himself informed the secretary: "You can help him. I'd do it, only I've got to leave early this afternoon, we're having company for dinner."

A couple of days later Joe saw the company bulletin board and came to Mr. Hamilton's office: "Mr. Hamilton, may I see you for a minute, it's very important." He had seen that Johnson his assistant was being made manager of the new Westchester store and he seemed peeved. Mr. Hamilton assured him: "Yes, we gave the position to Johnson." Joe began to raise his voice to make a point: "But Mr. Hamilton, after the way I managed number five... you saw the new sales record I sent." Then Mr. Hamilton went on: "Joe, who handled purchasing while you were at number five?" It was Johnson. Then he asked again: "And who supervised the inventory about the special sales campaign?" Joe seemed to get the drift: "I let Johnson take care of those things because I thought he could use the experience." So Mr.

Hamilton concluded: "Well, he's got a great deal of experience. He worked overtime four days a week. Word gets around fast Joe."

Now Joe began to whine again: "Mr. Hamilton, the staff over there didn't give me any co-operation. I had to crack the whip to keep the work going and they resisted it. I know they've been saving things." Then Joe added: "Mr. Hamilton, I've been here twice as long as Johnson...after all the years I've given to this company..." The old man shook his head and smiled: "Yes Joe, you've been around a long time."

That was why Joe thought he didn't get any tough breaks. He felt he had a right to get that job. He believed that Johnson was always Mr. Hamilton's fair-haired boy.

Even at home, his wife Hazel according to him: "She pushes me around like a piece of furniture. I do the best I can. When I'm between jobs I help around the house like the day before yesterday when the washing machine broke down." He believed that Hazel never really learnt to run that thing right. He had spent all afternoon trying to find out what was wrong with it and he was hurt when his wife decided to go shopping. Then he said casually: "I couldn't finish the job because I didn't have a particular wrench." He called up his friend Wally whose brother-in-law sold washing machines, so Wally brought over his wrench. They had hardly gotten started when Joe decided that they needed a break and both of them decided to cool their heels with cans of beer. It was well over an hour the two had chilled out

when Wally realised that it was time to get back to work: "Say, Joe...you think you should start putting those parts back on the washing machine?" Wally couldn't really help him because he was unfamiliar with that model of washing machine. Just then they heard the front door open and in walked Hazel. Wally was feeling awkward while Hazel looked around and saw the entire dining room strewn with parts of the washing machine. Wally edged his way towards the door: "Excuse me, I have to leave, good bye..." he muttered. "Bye Wally and thanks for the help." Hazel was livid. Joe could see that. He stood up beer can in his hand and said: "Now, Hazel, don't look at me like that. This machine has been broken for three days. You can't expect me to fix it in half an hour." Hazel screamed: "I've been gone nearly three hours. I knew I should have called the repair man." Now Joe felt humiliated. Imagine Hazel wanted the repair man, she couldn't rely on her husband. "Get away from that machine. I'm going to phone the repair man." Sometime later...the service agent arrived and was shocked to see the state of the machine. Joe was desperately trying to defend himself: "That pipe was rusted clear through. I just touched it and it fell to pieces. Well, the company makes those machines so they'll break down in a couple of months. I know those big outfits. They're all out to do the customer. Anyway, it was all Wally's fault." Hazel was angry and she looked straight at Joe and said: "Joe, how can you stand there and say those ridiculous things? For once in

your life, just for once, admit something was your fault." When the argument had simmered down Joe tried once more: "Hazel, I've been trying to tell you, I could have fixed it in no time if I just had the proper tools. You believe that repair man, you believe everybody except me." Hazel shook her head: "Of course, of course." Then he added: "Is there anymore beer on the ice?"

"There's one can, you might as well empty it. That's one thing you do successfully." Hazel shook her head in exasperation.

Listening to Joe Hazel was beginning to see that everyone was his enemy. He believed that even his wife gives him a bad time. Then in exasperation he sat back and said: "That's tough. It does something to you. Well, it just makes you feel like giving up."

Well, that's Joe; a pretty sad case. Joe looks through heaven and earth to find reasons which will explain away his own lack of character. The psychological name for what Joe has is: Persecution Complex. But naming it does not cure it. All Joe has to do is admit his failings and to reach above himself for the strength that will make him a success. We'll give you a name for that too; it's a spiritual thing; the virtue of Christian Humility. It is only when a man empties out his own false strength and fills himself with the strength of God that he's equal to the challenge life holds for him. Maybe you're like Joe. Maybe he's told you a story or some of it. If he has, the advice we gave him, holds for you too. Pray with all your strength for humility. Until you admit you're wrong, you'll never be right. □

HIS WIT AND WISDOM CHAPTER VII

by Natale Cerrato

The *Biographical Memoirs* report an incident which Don Bosco himself relates and which might be emblematic of what we affirm. Don Bosco was in a city café with a youngster when a handsome young man with a hat and highland trousers entered and sat down. He asked for a “bowl” of coffee. When it was brought to him, he picked up the sugar with his tobacco-stained fingers. Some young students and dandies who were present watched the performance with great amusement. After exchanging amused glances and chuckles, they went up to him and one asked,

- Have you seen today's *Gazzetta del Popolo* yet?

- No! He said. I can't even read.

- The young men changed the topic and began singing the praises of the *Gazzetta*, quoting the latest stories, especially those concerning priests. Meanwhile, they were looking sideways at Don Bosco to make sure that those malicious jokes were directed at him.

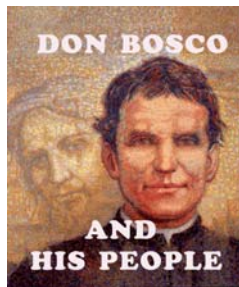
- Is that true? - Said the highlander.

- But how come, you don't know these things?

- And you believe them?

- Certainly, the *Gazzetta* says so, and so does everybody else. Don't you?

- Me? - The good man pondered a while before replying, and then, solidly, let them have it in good Piedmontese. “Look



fellows,” he said, “you ought to know that a donkey brays louder than a mule and that fools always side with those who shout loudest. That was how the biographer Father Lemoine, reported this picturesque expression, adding that “it is the ignorant who shout loudest.” But the original meaning is much more good-natured. This is the typical humour of Gelindo and Gianduja.

In common with his people Don Bosco possessed a good-natured wit in conversation even if certain expressions weren't part of his vocabulary. Beneath his typical Piedmontese humour is always concealed a deep humanity.

Proof of his presence of mind is demonstrated when his stepbrother Anthony who was tired of seeing him study, one day said to him, “I've grown big and strong without ever setting eyes on such books,” John replied: “Our donkey is bigger and stronger than you are, and he never went to school.”

Many of those who heard him

speak attested that his “conversation was most delightful, generously interspersed with timely, humorous anecdotes and incidents.”

Master of himself, he usually kept a cheerful and jovial appearance. “Indeed, joviality was the very essence of his character, even in the midst of the thorniest problems and the greatest afflictions.”

Jokes spontaneously came to his lips.

A youngster once pointed out to him the words of the Gospel about sparrows having to do no work and yet God provides them with food. And Don Bosco added: “But my dear, the Lord lets them get fat so they can go to the frying pan to be served as food for those who work.”

The same humour that peppered his conversations also appeared in his letters. Writing from Sant'Ignazio near Lanzo, on July 21, 1862 to the boys of the Oratory he diligently describes his journey in the rain. Among other things he wrote:

“I was on the *Imperial* (the name of the coach) anything but an emperor. There were several others with me. Two umbrellas were open which protected those who held them while I was in the centre seat but had no benefit but to receive the discharge of the water from both umbrellas. So when I reached Lanzo there wasn't a thread on my body that was dry. I was frozen cold. O, my dear boys you should have seen Don Bosco descend the coach completely drenched, like those big rats you see running out of the backyard into the sewers beyond.”

And such examples can be multiplied.

This humorous style is found in Don Bosco's precious manuscript: *The Memoirs of the Oratory*. We shall just present two affectionate descriptions.

In Chieri, John Bosco befriended a young Jew. The mother of the youngster was furious and hurried over to John's lodgings and abused him profusely. He described it thus:

“Picture to yourselves ugliness itself, and you will have an idea of Jonah's mother. She was blind in one eye, and deaf in both ears; hardly any teeth, and a long, pointed chin; she was thick lipped, with a twisted mouth; her voice sounded like the squeal of a foal. The other Jews used to call her “Lilith the Witch,” a name they use for the ugliest thing they can imagine.”

In Turin, Don Bosco had just moved his wandering Oratory to the cloister of cemetery of St. Peter in Chains:

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

A field in which Don Bosco's wit was particularly explicit was when he sought money for his works. If he succeeded so well despite serious sacrifices and humiliations it was thanks to his ability to persuade his benefactors.

To Count Luigi Cibrario who insisted that Don Bosco accept the knight's cross, he replied: "My dear Count, if I had the cross and the title of chevalier, people would think that Don Bosco no longer needs help; besides, I already have enough crosses – too many, in fact. I'd sooner you gave me some money to feed my poor orphans."

One day a tax collector showed up at the Oratory with an income tax form for Don Bosco to fill out and return with payment within the prescribed time. Undismayed, Don Bosco called at the tax collector's office for an explanation. "The reason is quite simple," the agent replied. "You have an income from the board and tuition fees of all those boys in your school, and that is taxable. There can be no exceptions! If you don't pay, you'll be fined, and the amount will be all the greater since you neglected to declare your income."

"Listen," Don Bosco replied, "I have a better idea. I'll hand over my income to the government and let it pay the tax."

An old countess, very rich and religious had a weakness for being offended when her advanced age was alluded to. Having a daughter who was now over thirty, it became unbearable for her to hear herself referred to as "the old countess." On meeting her Don Bosco told her:

"Oh, I am delighted to meet

you. And how is your mother?"

"My mother? It's been some time since Our Lord called her to Himself."

"Just a few weeks ago I heard that she was perfectly well!"

"Perhaps, you are mistaken. I am the mother countess!"

"I would never have believed it!" Don Bosco exclaimed. "You look so young and healthy that I may well be excused for my error."

"Well," the countess said, visibly gratified, "I take care of myself..."

"I will pray that the Lord keeps you so for many more years," Don Bosco rejoined.

From then on the Countess was an enthusiastic supporter of Don Bosco, and she helped him until her death."

When the new church of St. John the Evangelist was being built in Turin Don Bosco wanted to pave it with marble. But that would cost 9000 lire in 1881. At Sampierdarena he met the businessman Signor Repetto who owned a marble quarry in Liguria. He greeted him with the title Chevalier.

"Don't tease me, Don Bosco" came the reply, "I am not a chevalier, just a plain business man."

"But could not a man in your position use a title of honour to enhance your position?"

"Of course, I would not take offense."

"Well, look, you have contracted to lay the flooring for the Church of St. John the Evangelist. Could you not do it free of charge and rid me of a worrisome expense? And I promise to obtain a chevalier's cross for you."

"We could manage that," Repetto said.

"Then, it's a deal," Don Bosco concluded.

The generosity of Repetto towards the public place of worship combined with Don Bosco's ability to seek favours for his benefactor bore fruit in its time.¹⁵

Don Bosco always maintained his sense of good humour even in the face of trials and difficulties. According to the testimonies of Father Michael Rua, who was his close associate for forty years: when Don Bosco was more cheerful than usual, it was a sign that he had great troubles and if he added a joke to his smile it meant that things were really bad. In those circumstances he would ask his boys to tell a story:

"Tell me the story of Ganduja" or to another, "tell me about the tower in the city palace"; to yet another he would say: "Have you any news about Garibaldi?" and he would laugh.

On the morning of the feast of Mary Help of Christians: May 24, 1886, while he was being crushed by the crowd, he almost suffocated, he turned to his secretary and whispered into his ear: "I wonder if I could devoutly give them two punches?"

Some inexperienced person wanting to help him caused him more pain than comfort. To someone who, in an attempt to help him to walk, awkwardly lifted his arm and dragged him so badly, Don Bosco begged to be excused: "Oh, don't worry that largest piece always gets stuck."

During his last illness, his secretary Father Viglietti, was one day feeding him a little soup and making him hold the bowl.

"Yeah," said Don Bosco, "You want me to feed you eh?"

Another time he said to the same Viglietti: "Viglietti, give me a little iced coffee... but make it hot!"

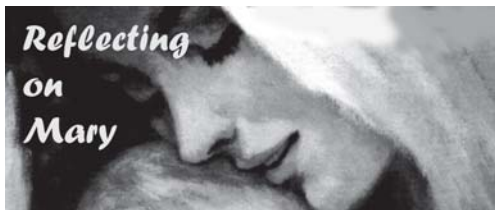
When the Salesians came to visit him they found him joking as he greeted them in military fashion bringing his hand to his forehead. While some of them thought that one day with the doctor's permission they could move him to make him more comfortable, he said to Father Belmonte: "You should do it like this: tie this rope around my neck, then drag me from one bed to the other."

To those who asked: "Don Bosco, what can I do to help?" He replied: "Help me to breathe..."

On the evening of January 17, 1888 Father John Baptist Francesia a Latin scholar lent a hand in the compassionate task of lifting him bodily from the bed. "Oh, there was no need to disturb such a celebrity for so little," Don Bosco said. "Father Sala, you alone would have been able to do it."

To Dr. Fissore who tried to encourage Don Bosco, he replied: "Doctor, what do you want to do? Raise the dead? Tomorrow? Tomorrow I will go on a long journey."

He died peacefully on January 31, 1888 at the sound of the *Angelus*. He was called the cheerful saint; always witty and humorous. He wanted to visibly demonstrate to youngsters the joy of being a Christian. His serenity and cheerfulness revealed a deep inner peace. But together with it was the kindness and simple wit of his people. □



MARY: SILENT MOTHER OF THE WORD

Bernardina do Nascimento

Do we chatter or pray?

One of the most unbearable aspects of inflated and fascinating Marian devotions that is very fashionable today is its excessive verbosity, which makes it difficult to distinguish between sincere devotion and pathological or pestiferous adulation. The chatter about Mary in panegyrics without any theological background and sermons ends up turning the mother of Jesus into a celebrity rather than the Virgin Mother. Marian fideism has been transformed into a huge supermarket of sentimental episodes where one finds what one needs to sedate one's anxieties or sublimate one's neurotic feelings of guilt. I am always struck by the beautiful words of the fourth century bishop of Milan Saint Ambrose: "Mary is the temple of God, not God in the temple." Precisely because she is a temple, she is not a market square or an arena for an exchange of views or titles. That was why Gabriel approached her with utmost

discretion and great restraint.

A FECUND SILENCE

Life's great ideas are uttered in the intimacy of an encounter. These things are transacted in the privacy of a meeting not under the gaze of curious cameras or in front of gossip microphones. When the Word was announced it was not broadcast to the ends of the earth but conceived in the silent semi-darkness of a Nazareth cottage. The divine pregnancy took place in a human mother who did not chatter the news to the four winds but "pondered it in her heart" (Lk 2:19). Yet young Myriam would have things to say and to explain. But how was she to find convincing words to say that her Son was the fruit of her most radical and generous availability before a God who was absolutely not banal in his condescension? What discourse could explain a "fiat" inserted into the drama of history; an incomprehensible new human creature conceived

in such an inconceivable way? And would she not be exposed to slander and mockery? Being filled with the Word meant being struck by the sword of the Holy Spirit as St. Paul reminds us in the letter to the Ephesians (6:17). And the Word-Sword is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and judges the intentions and thoughts of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Silence is the sieve through which words are transformed into the Word. Mary's attitude warns us about making the Word something ostentatious and boastful; a proclamation in dubious and blaring tones that is not to prayer but profanity.

NEW LIFE BURSTS FORTH IN SILENCE

As the Word gradually takes on human features, the caring custody and the patient meditation on the Word, causes the Mother's conscience to mature and refine in her solitude. Her consciousness is transformed in a *melting pot* in which vain words devoid of all banal formalism and is transformed into prayer; existential sentimentality is harmonized to become pure maternal instinct and fatuous relationships are sealed, cemented and blossom into a family. It must have been an exhilarating and ineffable moment when for young girl from Nazareth that had a flash of certainty when a drop of life from heaven began becoming a



real life, a person who had announced his presence. In those moments Mary did not have a crown of stars on her head or the moon beneath her feet, but she had a baby in her womb and an explosive joy in her heart that obliterated all doubt and fear. A dialogue beyond words commenced between the mother and child, filled with deep emotion and significance. The blossoming of new life influenced new values and nuances that made fatigue, pain, worry and loneliness meaningful together with all the other great values in tow. Becoming a mother involved getting into the game, taking on a new role and new responsibilities at the large table of life. The heart of a mother nourishes her newborn by dispensing love, attention, care and dedication, thus becoming the most credible sign of a person who moves history not by natural selection, but by the difficult love of every mother. It is a reality so true and deep-rooted that not even the 'liquidity' of modern faith can deny. True Marian devotion leads us to live these realities personally without hesitating or escaping into sterile devotion. □



walking with the Church

Betrothal Ceremony

Fr. Edward McNamara

Q: *I am engaged to be married and have discovered the betrothal ceremony included by Father Philip Weller in his translation of the Roman Ritual (1962). My intended and I would like to use this ceremony, which contains some wonderful prayers and a moving blessing of the engagement ring. Is it permitted for a priest to use it? Has it been abrogated by the "Blessing for an Engaged Couple" found in the recent Book of Blessings?*

A: With respect to the possibility of using these formulas I think a first answer can be found in the April 30, 2011, *Instruction Universae Ecclesiae* on the "Application of the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*." This document clarifies the norms on this point. To wit:

Liturgical and Ecclesiastical Discipline

24. The liturgical books of the *forma extraordinaria* are to be used as they are. All those who wish to celebrate according to the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite must know the pertinent rubrics and are obliged to follow them correctly.

"35. The use of the *Pontificale Romanum*, the *Rituale Romanum*, as well as the *Caeremoniale*

Episcoporum in effect in 1962, is permitted, in keeping with n. 28 of this Instruction, and always respecting n. 31 of the same Instruction."

Number 31 refers to sacred orders and has no bearing on our discussion.

Therefore, as a general principle we can reply yes, the prayers from the 1962 ritual may be used.

However, there might be a couple of caveats regarding Father Weller's texts. First of all, we must recall that his effort was a private translation and not an official text. The official texts of the translated rites were and remain in Latin although both Pius XII and St. John XXIII had already approved a limited use of the vernacular in some rites. Father Weller provided his translation above all to aid instruction of the faithful. Thus the presentation of his book asserts:

"An introduction is given to the various parts, and brief commentaries within the actual rites, both of which are aids to priests in explaining the sacred rites as they are being administered, as well as material for instructions and sermons." □

NEWSBITS

BEIRUT

Originally from the Chouf district, Maya Terro, after having successfully participated in the Master MESCI (Master in Development, Economics and International Co-operation) promoted by the University of Roma Tre, has returned home to tackle the many problems of her Country - witness of countless religious conflicts - that overlook Beirut and drop towards the Mediterranean.

Maya, 31, is one of the founders of FoodBlessed, an initiative to recover wasted food, which is packaged and then distributed to those in need. In Lebanon about 30% of food is thrown away (of which 65% is fruit and vegetables) while 29% of the Lebanese population lives below the poverty line. With the help of volunteers, Food Blessed intercepts the ones most in need and helps them.

"The fundamental problem to tackle today is that of the Syrian refugees", Maya explains, "one inhabitant in five is a refugee without survival tools. The situation is further aggravated by the lack of infrastructure, a deficiency our small but complex country has experienced since its dawn. This lack further complicates our already pressing emergency, as for example having no infrastructures means Syrian refugees cannot be placed in urban contexts, as happens for example in Turkey.

We need a non-sectarian approach to security too: we do have a national army, and being national, it must defend our borders which are national borders.

"I believe that Hezbollah could



make its contribution to the common good by entering the Lebanese national army, joining it and thus responding to its high commands".

About the Christians of Lebanon and their role in Lebanese society, even on this Maya, who ran for Parliament in the last elections, shows that she has a clear vision. "What divides the Lebanese is politics, the lack of employment, the lack of electricity, the inability to collect garbage in the big cities; these are the problems that divide the population and to which a solution must be found, a solution for everyone. It is the lack of stability that fuels our continuous emergency".

Maya's experience is an example of how Italy trains many students who are then able to take on responsibilities in their respective countries. "We form them here to help them at home - Professor Leonardo Becchetti explains to Vatican Insider - creating important ties between our country and their country of origin.

"Our English language courses - concludes the professor - are a very important opportunity to forge bonds with one another and provide our Italian and foreign students with a fundamental tool to sow good around the world". □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Gross Integrity

The trial was nearing its climax. On the witness stand was a beautiful blonde. The prosecuting attorney glared at her.

"I will repeat my question, young lady," he thundered. "Where were you on the evening of March 21?"

The witness hung her head. "Please don't ask me that," she pleaded.

The prosecutor stiffened. "You must tell us," he roared.

The beautiful girl blushed. The court waited with bated breath. "All right," she admitted finally, "I'll tell you. I was at home working out a crossword puzzle."

"Is that anything to be ashamed of?" demanded the prosecutor, his eyes blazing.

The blond hung her head still lower. "Certainly, it is," she sobbed, "a beautiful dame like me wasting an evening on a crossword puzzle."

Fatal Sympathy

A weekly bridge group, made up of interverate bridge players, was in the midst of an exciting hand when one of the members suffered a heart attack. He was carried to a couch, where he breathed his last.

"What do we do now?" asked one of the members.

The oldest player thought for a moment and then:

"Out of respect for the departed I suggest we finish the hand standing up."

A Matter of Perspective

After the wedding, the minister

patted the groom on the back and told him, "Son, God bless you. You are at the end of all your troubles."

A few years later, the young husband met the preacher and threatened to beat him up.

"What's the matter?" the preacher asked in astonishment. "When you married me, you told me I was at the end of all my troubles!" the young man cried.

The minister smiled, "Son, I just didn't tell you which end!"

Driving a Bargain

The new minister's car broke down just after the morning service, so on Monday he drove it to the local garage for repairs. "I hope you'll go a little easy on the price," he told the mechanic. "After all I'm just a poor preacher."

"I know it," came the answer. "I heard you preach."

Breeding Company

A dowager remarked that she wanted to send her dog to the dog show. "I don't care at all," she explained, "for the prize money he may win, but I am most anxious for him to meet some really nice dogs."

Secret of Success

An elderly preacher tells the secret of his success: "Well, each time I enter the pulpit I say a silent prayer: *Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff and nudge me when I've said enough.* ☐"

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.

It was the year 1989, the month May at the Medical University in Liege, Belgium. My husband (now late) was to undergo a heart bypass surgery in the Holy month of the Blessed Rosary. In the late 1980's Luxembourg hospitals did not provide the facility for open-heart surgeries. So my husband was referred to a team of specialists in Liege, Belgium. We (my two elder children and myself) also accompanied him to Liege and stayed in a nearby boys' hostel. Just a day before the operation my daughter who was then a toddler, fell ill with high temperature and a sore throat. Due to frequent vomiting she had become quite weak. The stress, anguish and agony had taken its toll on me. Mentally I was blocked and did not know how to handle this situation. Being a young wife and mother, I was torn into shreds between my husband and our daughter. Very casually I mentioned this to my husband and also about my plans of returning to Luxembourg to get my daughter treated by her regular pediatrician. Without responding, he left the hospital room for a brief stroll in the corridor. Fifteen minutes later, with a gentle knock at the door, entered a pretty young lady dressed in crisp white summer coat and flowing blue scarf. As she entered an inexplicable heavenly aura filled the air. She came straight up to me and inquired about my child's health. With tear-filled eyes and a choked voice I gave her the details. After a thorough check up and assurance that my child will be alright, she gently patted my shoulder and left the room smiling radiantly. Her soft touch and motherly care revived my drooping spirit. That same evening, with the prescribed medicines my daughter's state improved tremendously. I firmly believe she was my Heavenly Mother who came in disguise to help me, an earthly mother. That year in 1989 I was "doubly blessed" and "doubly rewarded": My husband returned home after a successful surgery and my daughter was back to her smiling self. The Rosary recited regularly with fervour will always bring rewards sooner or later. *Mrs. Vivia Christopher-Samuel, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*
Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary for answering my prayers and for always showing me your presence everyday of my life. Be with me forever and make me give of my best. *Grace Fernandes*

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

I am sincerely grateful to Mary Help Of Christian for getting a good medical report and getting cured of diabetes after reciting the Three Hail Marys.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Rodricks, Goa
My son-in-law developed a swelling on his neck and the doctor advised a biopsy. I prayed to Our Blessed Mother, because I am in Goa while he is in Bombay and I was not sure if he would go for the biopsy. I am grateful to Our Blessed Lord and his Most Holy Mother, the biopsy report came back negative.

Celina Pinto Vaz, Goa
Thank you Divine Mercy and Mother Mary, Help of Christians for your help and guidance.

J. Lobo, Mumbai
Thank you Mama Mary for all the favours and blessings received.

Pauline Abernathy, UAE
Thanks dear Mother Mary for all the favours granted.

Rita Fernandes
Our heartfelt thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Most Blessed Mother Mary for the innumerable favours received through the recitation of the **Three Hail Marys**. Dear Lord Jesus and our Most Blessed Mother please keep us all under your protection always.

James Corera and Family, Bangalore
Blessed Mother of Jesus, I thank you for hearing my prayer and helping me in my time of urgent need. Thank you very much for good health, my husband's job and for taking care of my son. I am grateful to Jesus, the greatest physician, all the saints and angels. I always pray the Rosary and faithfully recite the **Three Hail Marys**.

Mrs. Marie Crasto, Mira Road
Loving Father, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and all the angels and saints, I am immensely grateful for curing my brother and me from sickness thanks to our faithful recitation of the **Three Hail Marys**.

A Devotee from Vasai/Kurla

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

Special thanks to God almighty, Mother Mary and all Saints specially St. Jude for blessing my daughter with a good life partner.

Dulcian D'Souza, Kolhapur
I thank the Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and St. Teresa of Kolkata for curing me from Cellulitis.

J.U.D. Mumbai
A million thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for countless blessings received and especially for a normal healthy baby delivered by Meagan.

Mrs. Karis Rodrigues, Bangalore
Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Anthony for granting me your protection always.

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



Our sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for giving our daughter Cloreisha a safe delivery and the gift of a healthy baby girl and for many other favours received.

Gladys and Anthony, Mumbai
Our grateful thanks to Our Lady, Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for curing our brother of a very complicated heart disease.

C. D'Souza & Q. D'Costa
My sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for interceding with Our Blessed Lord. It was after wearing the scapular I conceived!

Rita Fernandes
My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours received.

Julie Deniz, Mumbai
Belated thanks to St. Dominic Savio. I had conceived in the year 1990 and I wore the scapular of St. Dominic Savio. However it ended in a miscarriage, but later I was informed by the doctor that a full term pregnancy would have been fatal to my life. I regret acknowledging my gratitude to this wonderful saint.

An Ardent Devotee
Our sincere thanks to Abba Father, Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for blessing Lionel and Charlene with a healthy baby boy. Throughout her pregnancy she treasured the medal of St. Dominic Savio. Dear Mother please keep this family under your loving care and protection always.

The Family Members
My sincere thanks to the Most Holy Trinity, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and all the angels and saints for curing my elder daughter from a throat illness and for curing my son of a slipped disc, my smallest daughter from all her sicknesses and for all the innumerable favours granted.

Maria Nunes, Mumbai
My heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for the complete recovery of my son who had a serious head injury and for all the other favours received.

E. Mascarenhas

**APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER
OCTOBER 2018**

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QUEEN OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Queen of the most holy Rosary,
in these times of such bold
impiety, show your power, and
from the throne, from which you
bestow pardon and graces, mer-
cifully look upon the Church of
your Son, His Vicar on earth, the
clergy and laity, who are sorely
oppressed in this conflict.

You can overcome all heresies.
Hasten the hour of mercy, even
though the hour of God's justice
is provoked by the sins of men.

Obtain for me the grace I need
to live a holy life upon earth and
to reign among the just in heaven.
Together with all faithful Chris-
tians in the world, I greet you and
acclaim you as Queen of the most
holy Rosary.

Queen of the holy Rosary, pray for us.

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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