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***Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may, by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.***

*(Adapted from the prayer on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary)*

From The Editor's Desk

A SECOND OPINION

Years ago when a new walkway was underway on the campus where I lived and I was eager to get my feet onto it, but after the first 'round' I was feeling a slight but unmistakable stab each time my weight came down on my right knee but, being optimistic by nature, I kept going. Some days later I ground to a halt in agony.

The moral was that flat-footed people like me should not walk long distances on flat surfaces. That's why we are not allowed into the army. Soft tissue damage, the doctor called it, makes life very complicated indeed.

The doctor's advice was crisp: stop walking until there was no pain. Then people began asking a rather tedious question – 'Why not get a second opinion?' I agreed, in a bad tempered sort of way to see another specialist. He asked me to walk around the room and after telling me to sit down he said, 'There's nothing I can do for you.' He paused, waiting for my jaw to drop, and continued: 'My advice is to cut off all contact with the medical profession. Doctors often do more harm than good. Start living normally again. You may feel real pain, but ignore it. I've seen this happen to the sanest of people. It's a bit like a child alone in a dark house being advised to keep an eye out for ghosts. The ghosts will always appear.

Did I feel like a right fool? Quite possibly, but that paled into insignificance before an overwhelming sense of relief and gratitude. If you had asked me that morning was I the happiest half-wit in the world, I would have responded with a blissful and vigorous nod of the head.

The best kind of doctor is able to see the world through the eyes of the patient. He will know that the patient is never a passive observer of the healing process and that, wherever the will to recover is lost, medicine is worthless. He will know how to challenge those who lapse into self-pity and how to encourage without being patronizing.

Today, it has become a fad to keep up with the latest medical research and to swear by it without any real medical experience. It could happen at a conversation over dinner that we become aware our own human fallibility. Specialized knowledge and skill have a tendency to make people think that they have all the answers; least of all those with no medical background, much less competence. That is a temptation, and where there is temptation prayer is needed. Because even they (our dear doctors) are human and because we all depend on them for so much, doctors need our prayers. I thought it a good idea to give them a thought since so many of us are in and out of hospitals or clinics for some ache or pain. God bless them...

Fr. Ian Doultton, sdb

October 2025

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Don Bosco's Madonna

## THE ALTRUISM OF LOVE

by Bishop Giampaolo Dianin

*In marriage I ask you and you ask me to put into the common domain the talents, gifts, time and even the renunciation of goods for the good of, what we call the family.*

Love does not seek its own interests, says St. Paul (1 Cor. 13,5) in the hymn to charity that Pope Francis comments on in articles 101-102 of *Amoris Laetitia*. It is very straightforward but it throws up many questions like: what is the relationship between loving oneself and loving the other? In a relationship where do you set boundaries between giving and receiving? In a marriage what do words like fulfilment and happiness mean?

The term "interest" refers to the world of economics where money is invested to make a profit. Banks, but also individuals give loans but then ask that it be returned with interest. It is also possible that someone doesn't demand the interest but at least the amount loaned.

Love on the other hand seems to have a different logic: love is gratuitousness; it is freely given exclusively to please the other, to see the other happy. Paul in the letter to the Philippians highlights this aspect: "Do no seek your own interest, but rather that of others" (Phil 2,4). Love for oneself – the Pope recalls – has a psychological priority in the sense that when I am able to want only the good and the freedom of the other am I considered truly mature. Christian *agape* puts love at the forefront of gifting oneself

to the other, a love that could even become the gift of one's life (Jn. 15:13), that is to say, is the height of one's "unselfishness."

But we should recognize that even in loving relationships there are always returns, if only the gratification of seeing each other happy for the gift given. We may say that sometimes that in the gift given there is a prevailing sense of restitution, but even so, some form of reward exists. For example, I give up my longing to go trekking in the hills because you love going to the beach so much, but then seeing you happy gives me greater joy than trekking in the hills.

But then is this selfish or unselfish love? In the case of an act of charity done to a poor person, altruism prevails and in return you at least have the joy of having been able to offer a gift; but marriage is founded on reciprocity; the basis of which is that it is natural and you are even duty bound to wait for a response! Two people have promised to love, respect and be faithful to each other and that is why it is right to offer oneself and to wait for the other.

So let us formulate this characteristic a little better: we might say that in love there is both interest and unselfishness.

My love is unselfish because I

don't do things to gain something. I cannot calculate everything on a scale to measure out who does more and who renounces more. Love cannot figure out everything, each one puts what one has into the relationship and what is invested could be little but it has been invested with one's whole heart.

My thoughts turn to the parable of the talents in which the last servant buries his talent for fear of losing it. There are relationships that arise out of a calculated fear, a fear of losing something. There are pacts that are based on love, but which seek protection and guarantees in order to defend themselves against possible negative consequences of the decisions or choices the beloved has made.

Mature love should be unselfish, offering oneself freely to the other without seeking responses. But this is a commitment on the part of both: loving each other competing to gift themselves freely. In the end, there are no calculations because each has given everything freely and has received a thousand fold.

But there is also an interest in love that is not primarily mine or that of the other but for the good of the relationship. We can say that both parties invest their lives in those who then take on the family's traits. The interest is in the love and respect that unite them both as they consciously and freely invest their lives for the sake of the other, but also for the plan of life which continually nourishes and enriches the relationship.

Marriage is not just a pact between two people but a pact for a life project wherein both parties

are stakeholders. I ask you and you ask me to invest my talents, gifts, time and even renunciations for the good that 'we' call family which includes both of us but which also surpasses this 'we' when it includes the children too.

To nourish the gratuitousness of the gift and the freedom from calculations brings joy and amazement in the offering of the life that each of us has given to the other with God's help: "for you have received freely, give freely" (Mt. 10, 8).

### A Question of Priority

"Love gives nothing beyond itself and takes nothing except from itself. Love does not possess nor wants to be possessed because love is enough for love." Gibran, in one of his best-known poems describes love as something that is enough in itself. As a profound feeling that feeds on nothing but itself and finds in itself meaning and fulfilment.

Love in its most varied forms can be found in the family: love for oneself, for one's spouse, one's children, one's dog...

Love that is real is love without any 'ifs.' What we need to experience first of all is ourselves. If what we want from others is a mature love then we must start with ourselves.

I believe that must be a priority: I tell all my new friends and I make no secret of it, that for the well-being of the whole family, at the top of my priorities there is me: my well-being, my space, my time to meet my needs as a woman, a person. □

## IT'S UP TO YOU TO CHOOSE WHAT TO DO

Monica Cornali

**I** believe it's important to clarify what forgiveness truly means, how it has often been misunderstood, and the significance of educating others about it. This education should promote forgiveness not merely as a moral obligation, but primarily to foster well-being and ultimately encourage positive actions. This is not about selfishness; rather, it aligns with the Gospel principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

I propose an interpretation that combines spiritual insight with the complexities of human psychology. Since the fields of human sciences and neuroscience have revealed the intricate nature of psychic processes and the unconscious aspects of humanity, we cannot make absolute and definitive statements about human beings. Recognizing this mystery necessitates acknowledging both their fragility and dignity, avoiding simplistic reductions.

The esteemed German philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) emphasizes the fragility of human

actions, asserting that individuals who commit unjust acts can be forgiven if they hold greater worth than the deeds they perform. While such actions are deemed regrettable and wrong, they do not wholly define the individual; something within them retains the potential for redemption. From this perspective of fragility, "the guilty man appears as the victim of a mystery of iniquity that makes him worthy of pity before anger," as the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) aptly noted.

Research in psychology since the 1990s has revealed that many individuals struggle with emotional blockages and incomplete matters in their lives due to forgiveness that has not been given or received. It is important to recognize that forgiveness is not a guaranteed or predictable response; rather, it represents a possibility. Forgiveness offers an opportunity for new and unexpected actions, acting as a gift instead of a mere reaction to guilt which often manifests as revenge.

Forgiveness can be understood as a process rather than just an emotion. When Nelson Mandela was asked how he managed to spend so many years in prison and still forgive those who wronged him, he responded, "As I walked towards the exit, I realized that if I hadn't left behind bitterness and hatred, I would still be imprisoned."

A common misconception is

*A very common mistake is to think that forgiveness must start from a feeling, whereas forgiveness is first and foremost a choice of the will*



that forgiveness must begin with a feeling. In reality, forgiveness is primarily a conscious choice that is part of a process. First, we choose to forgive; then, often long afterward, our feelings may begin to align with that choice. It is important not to expect the other person to change in order for us to forgive. Sometimes they may change, but other times they may not. However, the act of forgiving transforms us.

Let's clarify some misconceptions: forgiveness is not the same as simply forgetting or removing the hurt. It's not about letting bygones be bygones, nor is it a way to distract or repress feelings.

Numerous studies have shown that there are many obstacles to forgiveness. For some, holding on to feelings of resentment and anger can serve as a way to keep themselves in the role of victim. Others may struggle to forgive because they believe that the person who caused harm must suffer and pay for their actions, mistaking this desire for reparation. How-

ever, such feelings often lean more towards punishment and vengeance, aimed at humiliating the wrongdoer. While there is a call for justice, this concept is more civil in nature, whereas forgiveness is inherently a human, existential, and spiritual process.

It is also crucial to understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is unconditional, whereas reconciliation may come with conditions. Letting go of the desire to punish or seek revenge does not necessarily mean resuming the relationship. In fact, it may sometimes be necessary to establish clear boundaries to protect oneself from the repeated harmful behaviors or attitudes of a problematic individual.

Research in neurophysiology has shown significant benefits of forgiveness. Chronic anger is closely linked to a negative cardiovascular profile, which can harm heart health. In contrast, forgiveness is associated with a healthier cardiovascular profile and the release of endorphins, which can improve overall well-being.

From a psychological perspective, practicing forgiveness can lead to decreased anxiety and depression, increased empathy, improved interpersonal skills, and a greater sense of self-awareness and inner freedom.

Ultimately, learning to forgive is beneficial not only for ourselves but also for those around us. □



## REASONS TO BELIEVE - 10

by Franco Molinari

### The excitement of the Messiah

The Bible stands out as an unparalleled bestseller, having been translated into nearly 1,300 languages, including the Roman dialect. However, the most remarkable aspect of this masterpiece is not its literary merit but its prophetic nature. Let's look at a few examples.

In Genesis 15:18, God promises Abraham, "Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Through you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed." This promise may seem almost unbelievable. Nonetheless, approximately 44 kilometres from Jerusalem, near Hebron, lies what is traditionally believed to be the tomb of Abraham. While we are not focused on the historical accuracy of this tomb, it is significant that this site is sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians — two billion people in total — who regard Abraham as the archetype of one who believes and hopes against all odds.

Another implication concerns the significant role that the Jewish people are meant to fulfil in the world. Despite being a small ethnic group, economically disadvantaged, like a clay pot among

iron pots, the prophet Isaiah foretells that a mysterious figure from Israel will become the "light of the nations." This is just one of many messianic passages. Jerusalem, a small peasant village, is destined to become a world capital. While this seems like an extravagant prediction, especially when comparing that humble Palestinian centre to the powerful seven hills of Rome, one must consider that today, Rome's international significance is not solely due to the archaeological legacy of Augustus and Trajan but also because of its connections to the figure of Christ.

Common sense suggests that the Messiah would restore the Kingdom of Israel. However, Christ became the "light of the nations" not in the political sense envisioned by the Jewish community, but in a spiritual one. The prophet Ezekiel announces that the new flock will not consist only of Israelites but will be chosen from all nations based on criteria of mercy: "I," says the Lord, "will shepherd my people and make them lie down. I will seek the lost, bring back the strayed, strengthen the sick, and bind up the broken."

The text presents a compelling exploration of the Messiah as described in various prophecies. In-



*Man of Sorrows*

terestingly, there seems to be a contradiction: while the Messiah is proclaimed as a figure of immense glory, Isaiah chapter 53 portrays him as "a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering." This description depicts him as so downtrodden that people hide their faces from him, describing him as "despised and humiliated, more like a worm than a man."

However, these conflicting views can be reconciled through the insight of Rabbi Eugenio Zolli, who converted to Catholicism. He expressed that "the Old Testament appeared to me as a divine coded message," suggesting that Christ serves as the key to unlocking its meaning.

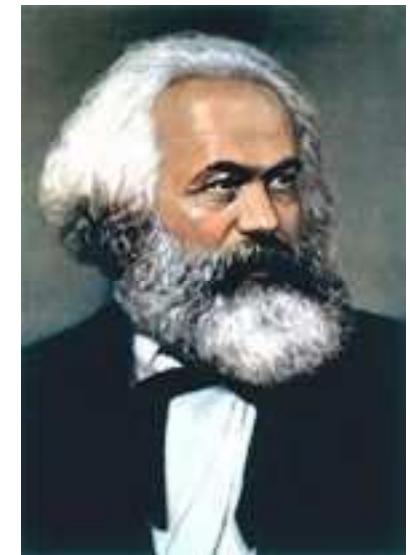
Christ embodies the man of sorrows, bearing the burdens of humanity's suffering. Yet, he is also the conqueror of death and time, declaring, "My words shall not pass away," a statement found in

Matthew 24. This assertion is profoundly realized through the testimonies of those who identify as marginalized or suffering.

Benedetto Croce, who emphasized freedom above all else, stated, "Christianity is the greatest revolution history has known." Meanwhile, Paul-Louis Couchoud, who questioned the historical existence of Christ, acknowledged that all that is good in the West has flourished under the influence of the cross.

### Christ, Marx and children

Eleanor, Marx's favourite daughter, recounts: "Daddy often spoke about the life of the poor carpenter from the village of Nazareth, who was oppressed and killed by the wealthy and powerful. He added, 'There are many things that can be forgiven in Christianity, for it teaches us to love children.'"



*Karl Marx*

The bearded man from Trier could not have emphasized this essential teaching of the Gospel any better. If Christ were merely a man, it would be difficult to understand such a choice. He certainly could not have derived this idea from Plato, who argued that the children of low-income families should be allowed to die, nor from Aristotle, who believed that it should be illegal to raise disabled children.

In Rome, as well as in Athens and Sparta, the killing of weak children was not only permitted but also mandated.

Let us explore whether Jesus had the opportunity to attend school among the religious leaders of his time. The rationalist Joseph Ernest Renan, seeking to portray Jesus as merely a religious genius, argued that Christianity is a successful form of essentialism. This perspective was viable until 1947, but that changed with a significant discovery.

In that year, a Bedouin, while searching for a lost pitcher, stumbled upon amphorae in a cave near Qumran, which proved to be a groundbreaking find. These manuscripts contained the rules, spirituality, and ascetic practices of the Essene monks.<sup>1</sup>

One key insight from these texts is the exclusion of children from the Essene community, coupled with a dismissive attitude toward the child's world. This stands in stark contrast to Christ's message when he said, "Let the little ones come to me. And woe to anyone who causes them to stumble. It would be better for that person to have a millstone tied around their neck and be thrown into the sea."

This is not the only dividing

wall between Jesus and the teacher of justice, whom some hasty critics had identified with him.

At Qumran, the teacher of justice preached love for the children of light and hatred for the children of darkness. His teachings were certainly not aligned with the Sermon on the Mount, which instructs, "Love your enemies."

The Essenes practiced Sabbath observance, legal purity, and strict distinctions between lawful and unlawful food with obsessive rigor. The most devout Jews would not eat an egg laid by a hen on the Sabbath, and at Qumran, even bodily needs were ignored on that day.

In contrast, Jesus emphasized that brotherly love and service to others take precedence over Sabbath observance. In other passages, He sarcastically criticizes those who obsess over food, pointing out that everything eventually ends up in the sewer. Instead, He taught that the heart is what truly matters, as it is driven by intentions that can lead to good or bad outcomes.

Food ultimately results in waste, while goodness (and evil) springs from within. A follower of Christ should be recognized not by any outward badge but by love, which is the freest and most intrinsic of feelings. Given these beliefs, Jesus of Nazareth would likely have been excommunicated from the Qumran community. The roots of the Gospel do not lie in the teachings of the Essenes. □

<sup>1</sup>Members of a Hellenistic-Judaic religious sect widespread between the 2nd century B.C. and the 1st century A.D., they lived gathered in monastic-type communities.

CARMEN LAVAL

TIME FOR THE SPIRIT

## SOME OF THE MANY DAILY MIRACLES

### 1. TO BREATHE

Breathing is fundamental to life—it's a divine gift. In the second account of creation, we see that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). Each inhale connects us to this sacred essence. Breathing is also vital in psychology; it plays a crucial role in therapeutic practices. Visualizing God's healing love flowing through your breath can lead to physical transformation and tension release. During moments of stress or restlessness, focusing on your breath promotes relaxation. The Bible reminds us, "There is one breath of life for all men and beasts" (Ecclesiastes 3:19), highlighting our unity with all creatures. As you breathe, take a moment to appreciate the love that surrounds you.

*Each breath is a gift and a reminder of our shared connections.*



### 2. WATER

You are like water. For the first nine months of your life, you thrived in this essential element, a powerful symbol of unconditional love. Your body is composed of 75% water, highlighting its vital role in your existence. Consider the transformative nature of water. It slips away when contained, grows stagnant when still, but remains pure when allowed to flow. Water doesn't seek to rise above; it naturally finds its way to the lowest points. Embrace this lesson: let your thoughts and actions move with grace and harmony, aligning with the flow of life.

*Take a moment to express gratitude for this life-sustaining substance.*

### 3. TO SEE

"I witnessed it myself!" This statement represents a commitment to independence and valuing personal observations over others' accounts. In a world where many express concern about disconnection and the neglect of pressing issues, we often find ourselves surrounded by images yet fail to truly see. To listen with our eyes sends a powerful message: "You matter to me." Our perspective can transform us. When we focus on beauty, we experience its profound impact, awakening the beauty within ourselves and revealing the divine presence in creation. Let's strive to be more present and truly recognize the beauty and needs around us.

*Instead of overlooking someone,*



take the time to really look at them. Doing so benefits us both.

#### 4. TO LISTEN

In a world filled with constant noise, our ability to truly listen often fades. However, when we commit to genuinely hearing one another, we unlock a deeper connection. By fully attending to someone speaking, we don't just hear their words; we grasp their emotions and intentions. God's presence resonates in the sounds of creation — through the whispering wind, flowing streams, gentle rain, and bird songs — inviting us to experience the world's harmony. Yet, I find His voice most profoundly in words, whether they come from my heart, another person, or beautiful music. When we truly listen, we connect more deeply with both the world and the divine.

Today, try to listen with your heart.

#### 5. WALK

Walking is not just a physical act; it's a fundamental part of who we are. Each step connects us to the earth and symbolizes our journey toward something greater. As a poet beautifully states, "Where do we go? Always home." Don Bosco would likely respond, "To Paradise." Walking alongside friends enriches our experience, allowing us to appreciate the beauty of creation together. This shared journey fosters unity and support, enhancing our paths. The Bible speaks often of "walking," reminding us that God watches over our journey. Engaging in mindful walking can deepen our experience: "He will give his angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm

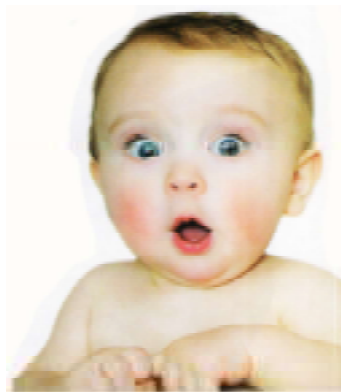
91). Embrace walking as a powerful way to connect with yourself, others, and the divine. Or: "Even though I go through a dark valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me" (Ps. 23).

*Walk with gratitude for the land that sustains you.*

#### 6. ACCEPTING

You don't need to like a thought, situation, or person to acknowledge their existence. Acceptance doesn't require love; it simply means recognizing that these elements are part of your life. This acknowledgment is essential for personal growth. Acceptance is an active choice to engage with life differently — embracing clarity and calmness. It involves understanding, tolerance, patience, and forgiveness, guiding us on the most effective paths to our goals, even if they are not straightforward. Consider hiking a mountain: instead of climbing straight to the top, we take winding paths to reach the summit. Embracing acceptance gives us the strength to navigate challenges and continue our upward journey.

*Suffering may exist, but we keep climbing. ☐*



## BL. CHIARA BADANO October 29

Ian Pinto, sdb

#### The Spark of Faith

Ruggero and Teresa Badano were a couple from Sassello, Italy who were married in the early 60's and who eagerly looked forward to a fruitful sign of their marriage — the birth of a child. However, like Joaquim and Anne, they were unable to conceive and have children. For 11 years, they prayed with unfailing faith until at last, the Lord granted them their intention and gave them a baby girl. This girl, like the child of Joaquim and Anne was no ordinary girl; she was specially blessed by God and set apart for a unique mission. Incidentally, she was conceived sometime after her father prayed at the shrine of Our Lady of the Rocche.

Since Chiara was the fruit of years of marriage, prayer and sacrifice, her parents loved and nurtured her with their full selves. Though her father would remain away from the family for extended periods, on account of his job as a truck driver, he ensured that he was as involved as possible in the upbringing of Chiara. Her mother was a housewife who doted on Chiara but brought her up in the way of the Church. Being the only child meant that she enjoyed the full attention and love of her parents. Hence, she grew up being very close to her parents but also developing a tense relationship with them as she matured into her teenage years. She was recognized as being an intelligent and strong-willed girl who had a pleasant manner and heart for the needy.



Her mother narrates an incident that shows her concern for the poor. "Chiara had many toys and like all children she liked to play. One day, while she was playing in her room and I was working in the kitchen, I told Chiara, 'Surely, you have many toys, lots of them!' She replied, 'Yes, why?' I said, 'Couldn't you give some to the

poor?" She answered, "They are mine!" And she grabbed her toys out of fear. After some time, while I was in the kitchen, I heard her say, "This one yes, this one no...!" I was curious. I looked from her door and saw that she had divided all her toys and then she told me, "Bring me a bag, mum." I brought her the bag and she put some of her toys into it. I asked her, "But Chiara, these are the new ones!" And she said, "Mum, I cannot give old and broken toys to poor children."

While she was in the first grade, one of her classmates lost her mother. Chiara sensed the effect it had on the girl and became a close friend of the girl. She would offer her things and help whenever she needed them. When Christmas came around, Chiara enthusiastically responded to her mother's suggestion to invite the girl over to celebrate with them. Chiara urged her parents to bring out the best tablecloth and cutlery since Jesus would be coming to dine with them.

In her diary, she recorded an incident when one of her classmates contracted chicken pox. She wrote, "One of my classmates has chicken pox and everyone is afraid to go to visit her. With my parents' permission, I decided to do my homework over at her place so she wouldn't feel lonely. I think that love is more important than fear." Incidents like these reveal to us the heart and mind of Chiara. She was full of the Gospel and was more than happy to share the love, compassion and friendship of God with those around her. They also reveal to us the atmosphere of her family. Clearly, her family is a deeply rooted Christian family, and they have done their best to inculcate in her the

values of Christ.

### Aflame with the Gospel

When Chiara was 9 years old, her family travelled to Rome for a 'Family Fest' organized by the Focolare Movement. The Focolare Movement is a Catholic lay movement founded in 1943 by Chiara Lubich in Trent, Italy. It was founded in the aftermath of World War 2 and was focused on rebuilding families that were broken and destroyed by the war by preaching a message of unity and love, and showing them in concrete works of service. The word *focolare* is Italian for the family fireside. The central charism is to promote unity among individuals, families and religions, so as to fulfil Jesus' prayer: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). Though rooted in Catholic tradition, the movement has expanded to include people across Christian denominations and even religions.

The event that the Badano family attended was designed to strengthen Catholic families and nurture their Christian roots. It was here that Chiara experienced a call from Jesus and decided to become an active member of the Focolare. In her diary, she records her sentiments that were nurtured by being a member of the movement, "I discovered that Jesus forsaken is the key to unity with God, and I want to choose him as my only spouse. I want to be ready to welcome him when he comes. To prefer him above all else."

Noticing the fervour of this young girl, the founder, Chiara Lubich gave her the name Chiara Luce (meaning 'light'). Lubich noted that the light of the ideals on which the Movement was founded and by which its mem-

bers pledged to stand is capable of overcoming the darkness of the world. By giving her this new name, she seems to have set Chiara on the path to being a light for those around her. And this Chiara took seriously. She would visit the sick and elderly in her village, and reach out, in whatever way possible to the needy.

Her enthusiasm and sense of service did not ensure that she glided through life with ease. She struggled in her academics and even failed her first year of high school. At school, she was teased for her religiosity and was given the nickname, 'Sister,' a jibe at her conservative attitude.

### The Fire of Holiness

Chiara was handed her cross in the summer of 1988. While playing tennis she experienced severe pain in her shoulder and was taken to the doctor. She was told after examination and tests that she had osteogenic sarcoma with metastases — a rare form of bone cancer. At first, she was devastated with the diagnosis but gradually learned to accept it with a spirit of surrender. As the chemotherapy was initiated, she lost sensation in her legs. She wrote in her diary, "I felt so little. The path seemed so hard. I often felt oppressed by the pain, and I used to repeat: 'For you, Jesus, if you want this, so do I!'"

As the cancer spread, life became increasingly harder, not just for her but for the family. They were constantly in and out of hospital, and there certainly was the financial burden of the treatment. However, they stood by her and supported her till the end. Chiara decided to forego all painkillers

and thus was often in excruciating pain. In spite of this, she would insist on moving around the hospital so that she could talk and bring joy to other patients. There was a patient who suffered from depression whom Chiara would visit and walk with regularly. Her parents kept urging her to avoid this unnecessary pain but she refused to rest saying, "I'll be able to sleep later on." One of her doctors testified, "Through her smile, and through her eyes full of light, she showed us that death doesn't exist; only life exists."

When she realized that death was close, she began to plan her funeral, which she called her wedding, with her mother. She chose the music, songs, flowers and even the readings for mass. She wanted to be buried in a wedding dress, a white dress with a pink waist — a sign that she was the bride of Christ. She told her mother, "When you are preparing my body, mum, you have to keep saying to yourself, 'Chiara Luce is now seeing Jesus.'" Her final words to her mother were, "Oh Mama, young people... young people... they are the future. You see, I can't run anymore, but how I would like to pass on to them the torch, like in the Olympics! Young people have only one life and it's worthwhile to spend it well."

Chiara Badano lived and died as a sign of hope; her life proclaims very powerfully that life is beautiful no matter the circumstances. Her sickness and death are a reminder of the words from Scripture: "*Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" (1 Cor 15:54-55) She was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. ■



## SMALL FAITH, GREAT THINGS!

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

**T**ake a few moments to read the gospel passage slowly and attentively. Pay attention to the dialogue between Jesus and his Apostles. Luke 17:5-10 The apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus responds by saying that even faith as small as a mustard seed can accomplish great things. He then shares a parable about a servant who, after working in the fields, does not expect special treatment but simply does what is expected of him. This teaches the apostles about humility and the nature of service in the Kingdom of God.

**Meditation:** Ponder on all the three readings, starting from the book of Habakkuk. (*Habakkuk* 1:2-3; 2:2-4) The prophet grappling with deep questions about injustice and suffering. He cries out to God, asking why evil seems to prevail and why God appears silent in the face of such turmoil. This lamentation is a powerful reminder that questioning God is a part of our spiritual journey. Habakkuk's honesty in expressing his

doubts and frustrations is a model for us; it encourages us to bring our struggles before God without fear.

In chapter 2, God responds to Habakkuk, instructing him to write down the vision clearly so that it can be shared and understood. This directive emphasizes the importance of clarity in communication and the need for a vision that inspires hope. The famous declaration, "The righteous shall live by his faith" (*Habakkuk* 2:4), serves as a cornerstone for understanding faith as an active, living response to God's promises. It reminds us that faith is not passive; it compels us to act and to trust in God's ultimate justice, even when circumstances seem dire.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, (2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14) we see an exhortation to rekindle the gift of God that Timothy received. Paul encourages Timothy to be bold in his faith and not to be ashamed of the testimony of Christ. This passage highlights the importance of courage in our spiritual lives. Timothy is reminded

that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

This call to action is particularly relevant today, as many young people face challenges that can discourage them from expressing their faith. Paul's reminder to safeguard the faith entrusted to us (2 Timothy 1:14) emphasizes our responsibility to nurture and share our beliefs authentically. In a culture that tests our convictions, we are encouraged to stand firm and embrace our faith without shame.

In the gospel passage from Luke, when the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith, He responds with the metaphor of a mustard seed, illustrating that even a small amount of genuine faith can lead to extraordinary outcomes. This teaches us that true faith is measured not by size but by authenticity and willingness to act. Let us cultivate and share our faith boldly, knowing that even the smallest seed can grow into something remarkable.

Moreover, Jesus' parable about the faithful servant highlights the importance of humility and service in our faith. It reminds us that our acts of service are responses to God's grace, not ways to earn His favor. This perspective fosters gratitude and inspires us to selflessly serve others without seeking recognition or reward. Let's embrace this calling and make our lives a testament to the grace we've received.



## Questions for Reflection

1. What does having faith as small as a mustard seed mean to you? Can you recall a time when a simple act of faith led to a significant outcome?
2. What recent challenges have tested your faith? How did you respond, and what did you learn?
3. How do you view your role in serving others? How can you focus more on humility instead of recognition?
4. In 2 Timothy, Paul encourages Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God." How can you nurture your faith and what practices can you adopt?
5. How can you apply today's lessons in your daily interactions? What steps can you take to show humility and service in your community?
6. How can you support others in their faith journeys? How can you encourage friends or family members who might be struggling?

**Prayer:** Engage in a conversation with God. Share your thoughts, feelings, and questions that arise from the passage. Thank God for the gift of Faith as you read the prayer:

Lord, I thank You for the gift of faith, however small it may seem. Help me to recognize the power of my faith and to trust in You even in times of doubt. Teach me to serve with humility and to find joy in fulfilling my responsibilities without seeking recognition. Amen. □



## Quiet Spaces

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am very happy to be here to celebrate today's Eucharist in this beautiful Cathedral. As you know, I was supposed to be here on 12 May, but the Holy Spirit worked in a different way. But I am truly pleased to be with you and in the spirit of fraternity and Christian joy, I greet all of you here present, His Eminence, as well as the Bishop of the Diocese, and the authorities present.

In this Mass, both the first reading and the Gospel invite us to reflect on hospitality, service and listening (cf. Gen 18:1-10; Lk 10:38-42).

First, God visits Abraham in the figure of "three men" who arrive at his tent "in the heat of the day" (cf. Gen 18:1-2). The scene is easy to imagine: the blazing sun, the stillness of the desert, the intense heat, and the three strangers seeking shelter. Abraham is seated "at the entrance of his tent," the position of the master of the house, and it is moving to see how he exercises this role. Recognizing the presence of God in the visitors, he gets up, runs to greet them, and prostrates himself on the ground imploring them to stay. Thus the whole scene comes to life. The afternoon's stillness is filled with gestures of love which involve not only the Patriarch, but also his wife Sarah and the servants. Abraham is no longer seated, but stands "by them under the tree" (Gen 18:8), and it is there that God gives him the best news he could have hoped for: "your wife Sarah shall have a son" (Gen 18:10).

This encounter encourages us to reflect on how God uses hospitality to enter the lives of Sarah and Abraham, announcing the child they had long desired but given up hope of having. God revisits them, seeking hospitality and trust. The elderly couple responds positively, offering food, companionship, and shade, in return receiving the promise of new life and descendants.

Similarly, the Gospel illustrates God's approach when Jesus visits Martha and Mary. He comes to friends, not strangers. One sister serves him while the other listens attentively. Jesus addresses the first sister's frustrations by highlighting the importance of listening (cf. Lk 10:41-42).

These approaches—service and listening—are not mutually exclusive; they are essential dimensions of hospitality. Our relationship with God should take priority. While fulfilling our duties, we must first meditate on Scripture and listen to the Holy Spirit, as these moments of silence and prayer are vital for our spiritual and emotional well-being.

Summer offers an excellent opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and be more open to others. With more free time, we can reflect, travel, and connect with each other. Let's embrace this season to care for one another, share advice, and listen—acts of love we all need.

Pope Francis noted, "If we want to savor life with joy, we must combine two approaches: being at the feet of Jesus and being attentive

to those who knock at our door seeking friendship" (Angelus, 21 July 2019). His words resonate even more after the challenges of the pandemic, highlighting their enduring truth.

Certainly all of this requires effort. Serving and listening do not always come easily; they require hard work and the ability to make sacrifices. For instance, it takes an effort in listening and serving in order to be faithful and loving mothers and fathers raising their family, just as it requires effort for children to respond to their parents' hard work at home and at school. It also requires effort in order to understand each other when there are disagreements, to forgive when mistakes are made, to help when



someone is sick, and to comfort one another in times of sadness. But it is precisely by making an effort that something worthwhile can be built in life; it is the only way to form and nurture strong and genuine relationships between people. Thus, with the foundations of everyday life, the Kingdom of God grows and manifests its presence (cf. Lk 7:18-22).

Saint Augustine, reflecting on the story of Martha and Mary in one of his homilies, said: "These two women symbolize two lives: the present and the future; a life lived in toil and a life of rest; one troubled and the other blessed; one temporary, the other eternal" (Serm. 104, 4). And considering Martha's work, Augustine said: "Who is exempt from the duty of caring for others? Who can rest from these tasks? Let us try to carry them out with charity and in such a way that none will be able to find fault with us... The weariness will pass and rest will come, but rest will only come through the effort made. The ship will sail and reach its homeland; but the homeland will not be reached except by means of the ship" (ibid., 6-7).

Today, Abraham, Martha and Mary remind us that listening and service are two complementary attitudes that enable us to open ourselves and our lives to the blessings of the Lord. Their example invites us to reconcile contemplation and action, rest and hard work, silence and the bustle of our daily lives with wisdom and balance, always taking Jesus' charity as our measure, his Word as our light, and his grace as our source of strength, which sustains us beyond our own capacity (cf. Phil 4:13). □

*Homily of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV  
at the Cathedral of Albano on 20th July 2025*

# THE END OF THE WORLD

By Pierluigi Menato, T.A. by I.D.

"Did you hear that? Thursday night, we'll all die."

"You die? What's going on?"

"A comet is passing by. It collides with the Earth, the planet breaks apart, and we... just imagine what will happen to us! We'll sink into the abyss, already in the depths, and there, my dear..."

"Who told you that?"

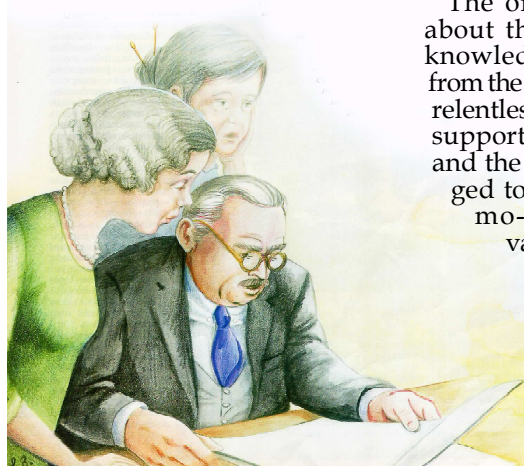
"Everyone is saying so. The newspaper even states it clearly. It even mentions the exact time it will pass. I think, if I'm not mistaken, it's after midnight... yes, about then..."

"So, are you saying that would be the end of the world?"

"Exactly! You said it right: the end of the world!"

"When does it pass, you ask?"

"Thursday night. We'll stay up because if we have to die, it's better to witness this end while we're awake. At least in the world beyond, we'll have something to tell them, don't you think?"



"Certainly, it offers only meagre satisfaction; but in short... However, dear Nanni, there is one thing to say: whoever invented the comet got it right. Everyone dies – poor and rich, young and old, right? It's inevitable. A jolt, a chasm that swallows us all, two screams if there is time to make them, and then goodnight, everyone! I almost find comfort in it because it is an equal law for all.

So, there we were, hearing those two people – men, women, boys, the waiter at the nearby bar, the lady on her way to the supermarket – discussing the comet.

The pharmacist was the first to leave the chatter of the crowd to devote himself entirely to what he referred to as the "planetary movement." The usual conversations at the bar now languished, whether piously or otherwise, given the comet's return to the news after seventy-six years, seven months, and thirteen days."

The only person who spoke about the comet with any real knowledge was Friar Benedict from the Abbey Convent. Through relentless efforts to seek financial support from the Municipality and the Province, he had managed to establish a sort of seismo-astronomical observatory. What he said to the people of Colle-fiorito was regarded as absolute truth. However, for the devout Friar, peace was a fleeting notion. The bell at the entrance to the Convent

rang constantly, as people came and went, filled with questions and concerns about the comet.

One young man asked, "Father, I am about to get married. Should I take this into account?"

"My dear son," the Friar replied, "advice is often given inaccurately. Get married, and we'll see what happens."

"But what if we all die?" the young man pressed.

"Then don't get married," the Friar answered.

"But what if you don't die?" the young man countered.

"In that case, get married," said the Friar.

Just five minutes later, another person approached with a dilemma. "Brother Benedict, I have a promissory note due on Thursday. What happens if I can't pay it?"

"My child," the Friar responded, "this is a matter of conscience."

"What if the comet doesn't pass?" the young man asked.

"Then that's even better," the Friar replied.

"And if it does pass?" the inquirer continued.

"Ah, my dear, if it passes, then it's much worse."

The poor Capuchin friar was losing his patience, even as he was called upon by the Father Guardian. Nevertheless, considering there was little to fear in the grand scheme of things, he decided to offer everything to God and continue his dual role as both an astronomer and a guide for souls.

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Even at the end of summer, as they approached the small villa hidden among the cypress and olive trees on the hillside, sur-

ounded by boxwood and oleanders, the voice had come.

The two sisters, no longer young, were shy and fearful. Always withdrawn in their contemplative lives and dedicated to doing good out of true Christian charity, they now trembled at the mere thought of the immense catastrophe looming over the world.

They asked their trusty maid, a woman just as fearful as they were, what might happen on this terrible night if the world were to completely fall apart. Anxiously, they looked at the sun-baked countryside for a telltale sign, a sure clue, a first warning. But what could it be?

In the fields, the ripe wheat – a vast golden harvest, like old gold – was dotted with bright red poppies, contrasting beautifully with the turquoise sky. The hills, with their slopes interweaving in bizarre colours, spread out a multi-coloured carpet for the great summer. The wind, passing by, stirred up new songs among the foliage of the pines and oaks, and vast breaths of deep immensity descended upon the great, boundless ocean of green and blue. Everything spoke of love and eternity.

In those days, Oswald was a man of few scruples, someone who profited from the humble and the fearful. He arrived at the back gate with a yellow envelope under his arm. After crossing the flower-filled garden, he approached the woman who had come to open the gate and inquired about the 'young ladies.'

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Ah, my dear, I urgently need to speak with them. It's essential and of great interest," he replied.

The faithful maid pondered for a moment before going to alert the young ladies, while Oswald waited in an opulent damask room adorned with paintings and mementos of ancestors, including figures of old nobility, prelates, feudal lords, soldiers, and artists.

When the young ladies appeared, timid and shy, standing one behind the other and glancing at each other, Oswald bowed deeply. Then, with the eloquence of a man accustomed to the spotlight, he began to speak.

Meanwhile, he couldn't help but lament the fate of the planets, the fickleness of the constellations, and the disarray of the satellites, which, much like humans, were constantly at odds with one another. As if that weren't enough, a comet was now on a collision course with Earth, leading humanity toward an inevitable

catastrophe.

How much wealth has been lost? How much property has been destroyed? How much has been left behind? To whom? To fatal destiny!

"But in this world," Oswald continued, "even in the most extreme moments of life, one must always maintain common sense, calm, and trust in God, the only infallible judge of our good and evil in the beyond. Above all, we must be charitable, giving to those who have less and leaving a grateful memory among the poorest and the humble."

As a charitable man, Oswald devoted his efforts to settling interests and legacies in the face of the impending disaster. He aimed to guide good and wealthy people in allocating their resources to support both public and private charitable organizations—such as hospitals, orphanages, retirement homes, schools, and kinder-



gartens for abandoned children, among others.

He could point out and recommend to the "young ladies" a Pious Institute in the city. In fact, he had already prepared a draft of the deed of gift for their patrimony, possessions, and everything else that belonged to them. He remained calm, knowing that this document could easily be signed and taken to the appropriate office for registration.

The two sisters, overwhelmed by the lawman's lengthy explanation, exchanged glances, silently questioning one another. The elder sister finally spoke, asking, "Did the others do that too?"

"Most certainly," he replied.

"And they gave up everything?" she pressed.

"Completely everything, down to the last stone of their real estate—everything, everything," he assured them.

The younger sister remained silent, looking at her sibling for guidance. The elder sister noticed the resignation in her eyes and asked, "Would you like to read us the deed of gift?"

"Gladly," said the little man with a lace collar and small, sharp eyes. He donned his gold-rimmed glasses and read aloud in a solemn tone, emphasizing the key phrases that highlighted the generosity and altruism of the donors, who were worthy descendants of the "most reverend and noble house of the Count Malespini."

After he finished reading, it was time for the signing.

The two sisters shared a deep, sorrowful glance, filled with profound resignation. Then, consumed by their grief, they fell silent.

One by one, they carefully signed the single copy of the document, their hands trembling as they did so.

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On that Thursday evening in Colle-fiorito, there was a specific energy in the air, noticeable to everyone around. People had gathered in the square and the streets, eager to see what would unfold in the next hour.

The sky was clear, adorned with a quilt of stars, and a refreshing breeze blew in from the hills. After a hot day, the evening was quite pleasant. Throughout the evening, there had been some magnificent farewell dinners, and now, just before midnight, the effects of these celebrations were becoming apparent. There were speeches that seemed to drift neither in clarity nor coherence, lively songs, and a sense of joy and reverie filling the atmosphere.

A dozen or so people, after playing traditional village songs, began singing beneath the loggia of the town hall, and laughter erupted from the gathered crowd. Young girls were particularly enjoying the lively banter and playful exchanges.

Suddenly, a car belonging to the carabinieri pulled up. The marshal, who had been increasingly annoyed by the noise for the past couple of hours, approached the scene, determined to make himself heard. "If you don't stop, I'll have to take action!" he warned.

"We are feeling refreshed, Mr. Marshal," one of them said.

"More than refreshed! You should really say that you filled yourselves with wine like barrels!" the Marshal replied.





"It was just the dinner," another defended.

"Oh, come on, youngsters! Let's not joke around, okay? If I have to report you for contempt of court, it'll be your loss!"

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Midnight was approaching, and everything still felt divine. Everyone was looking up at the sky, but down below, in the calm turquoise atmosphere, only stars were twinkling. Then, with a deep breath, the early morning hours began to stir. A rooster crowed in the distance, and from the nearby hill, a faint glow announced the arrival of dawn.

The two sisters, gazing out from

a window of the villa, had waited together, embracing each other, for the end of the world. Exhausted from their long vigil, they trembled in fear at every rustling leaf, every distant chirp of a bird, and every whispering breeze that descended from the hills. They closed their eyes, truly overwhelmed with terror, whenever a luminous streak suddenly crossed the night sky, which, in the summer darkness, seemed fill-ed with sorrow.

They felt, as never before in their lives, the tremors of the earth just before dawn, signalling a new spectacle.

Happy peasants, in large groups, descended into the fields, carrying their scythes for the harvest. They chatted among themselves as they looked up at the clear sky. The bleating flocks, adorned with bells, climbed towards the pastures on the still violet hills, accompanied by the first love songs of the girls just as a wild concert of birds welcomed the rising sun in praise of the Lord.

At that moment, the two poor ladies humbly wept quietly. □

## **FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 69**

by Michele Molineris

### **312. I made a fortune with Don Bosco (1883)**

In Paris in 1883, Don Bosco was being pursued relentlessly. To help him avoid capture, Bethford, who was hosting the saint in the afternoons, devised a plan to inform people about where Don Bosco would go to celebrate later.

At De Combaud's, some individuals concealed themselves near his room, waiting for him early in the morning when he would leave. This situation naturally implied the complicity of the staff, who assisted the visitors, and the staff, in turn, gained benefits from their involvement.

When Don Bosco left Paris, an old servant who had been working in the antechamber approached his mistress. As the daughter recounted, he said, "I am very sorry, Madame Countess, but I would like to request permission to leave."

"Leave? Have you been mistreated? Do you want a salary increase?" she asked.

"No, no, Madame Countess. Everyone treats me well here, and I don't demand anything. I simply want to inform you that I have made a fortune and no longer need to work for a living."

Thanks to the generosity of Don Bosco's visitors, he had been able to significantly increase his savings. (*M.B.*, XVI, 137).

### **313. The slower you go, the more tips you get (1883)**

Fr. Mocquereau, a disciple and successor of Fr. Pothier in the restoration of Gregorian chant, suff-

ered from acute laryngitis in 1883, which rendered him almost mute. This condition threatened to undermine the high hopes placed in him for the overall direction of sacred chant within the community and for the reform work. He wished to meet Don Bosco and relied on the assistance of Madame De Combaud, who was hosting him for the night.

"Come tomorrow morning at seven," she said. "I will provide him with a carriage that has only two seats; he will ride in it, and you can talk with him freely for half an hour."

The following day, as the carriage arrived, the young Benedictine, focused on the upcoming conversation, quickly approached the carriage driver and whispered in his ear, "You know we are heading to Via la Chaise to meet the ladies of the Cenacolo. Please drive slowly; the longer the journey takes, the bigger the tip."

As he spoke, he turned to Don Bosco, who was still standing by the last step. Protecting him, he guided him to the carriage and helped him inside. Although he would have preferred to be alone, he accepted the necessary company of the secretary. The secretary, sensing his discomfort, promptly assured him that he would not be a burden, as he was committed to maintaining strict confidentiality.

Once the horse began to move slowly, Father Mocquereau started to speak, outlining the primary purpose of his journey. Don Bosco listened with his eyes closed, responding occasionally with a simple, "Bien, bien." When Father Mocquereau finished, Don Bosco said, "In the sacristy of the

Retraite, I will bless her and give her a medal. She should then say three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys, and three Glory Be's each day, along with the invocation: *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*"

Father Mocquereau then asked, "And next Sunday, shall I try to sing Mass?"

"Yes," Don Bosco smiled, "try, try!"

The father quickly shifted to another topic, handing him a letter from a young lady who was facing obstacles in her pursuit of religious life. Since he could hardly read it, Fr. Mocquereau asked for permission to read it aloud, which he did with great warmth. He carefully scanned the letter, noting the mentioned date and the significant challenges, adding a few comments along the way.

Once the reading was complete, the secretary, who had been reciting in the office, paused and turned his attention toward Don Bosco, gazing at him intently. The saint, with extraordinary calmness, smiled without uttering a word. The monk then pressed for a response. Calmly, Don Bosco replied, "Wait, wait. I must pray; I need to ask the Lord for guidance." After a moment of reflection, he continued, "Tell that person: to him who gives, it will be given. They must first engage in many acts of charity." After a brief silence, he added, "It is not necessary for them to give to Don Bosco specifically. There are many other worthy causes—a vast array of needs: orphans, missions, and so on. Give, and it will be given to you; and in the meantime, say the prayers you are meant to say. I will give you a medal to wear."

Fr. Mocquereau was respons-

ible for delivering fifty thousand francs to Don Bosco from the young lady.

Twenty-five to thirty minutes had passed for a journey that should have taken only ten to fifteen. La Chaise Street was crowded with vehicles, public lecterns, and elegant carriages, and a dense throng filled the nuns' courtyard. As Don Bosco dismounted, a collective prayer arose for him; some people urged him to touch medals and sang hymns, while others called out from all directions asking him to recommend their intentions or pray for the sick.

When they finally entered the sacristy at the Cenacle, Don Bosco had the man kneel in front of a statue of Our Lady. Afterward, he stood and recited the Our Father and Hail Mary with him, adding a few other prayers. He then offered a broad blessing "for the health of his body and the sanctity of his soul." For a brief moment, he placed his right hand on the man's throat before getting dressed for Mass. Father Mocquereau attended and then left with a great sense of peace and contentment in his heart.

His illness never completely went away, and he had limited vocal ability for the remainder of his life. Nevertheless, he always managed to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to him by providence. Remarkably, he served as the chapel master at Solems for almost the entirety of his long life. He actively participated in meetings and congresses, passionately advocating for authentic liturgical melodies. Additionally, the vows of the young lady were fulfilled, as she took the veil and embraced the rule of St. Benedict. (M.B., XVI, 141). □



## THE ROSARY: A PRAYER OF TRIUMPH

by A.B. Bosco

October is the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary, with October 7th marking the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. This feast falls during the liturgical season known as Ordinary Time, a period in the Church's calendar for spiritual growth and reflection.

### The Battle of Lepanto: A Pivotal Moment

The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary was instituted by Pope Saint Pius V in 1573. It was established to thank God for the miraculous victory of Christian forces over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. This victory was attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, through the praying of the rosary. The feast was later

extended to the universal Church by Pope Clement XI in 1716.

### The Threat of the Ottoman Empire

In 1571, the Ottoman Empire, led by Ali Pasha, posed a serious threat to Christian Europe. The Ottomans sought to conquer the continent and destroy Christianity. Ali Pasha aimed to replace the Christian cross

with the Muslim crescent and place a turban on the Pope's head. In response, Pope Pius V called for a united Christian effort to defend Europe.

Don Juan of Austria, the 25-year-old commander chosen by the Pope to lead the Christian forces, famously declared: "No Heaven for Cowards. My children, we are here to conquer or die. In death or in victory, you will win immortality." Although unfamiliar with





naval warfare, Don Juan placed his trust in the Virgin Mary, referring to her as the “Star of the Sea.” Many soldiers prayed the rosary before the battle, seeking Mary’s intercession for a favorable outcome.

### The Forces at Lepanto

The Holy League, hastily formed by Pope Pius V, consisted of Catholic nations such as Spain and parts of Italy. Despite their determination, the Christian forces were vastly outnumbered. The Holy League had 214 ships and 80,000 men, while the Ottoman fleet boasted 225 ships and 120,000 soldiers. The Turkish forces were well-trained and had the advantage of seasoned sailors. The fate of Europe depended on this naval battle, which would take place in the Bay of Lepanto, off the coast of Greece.

### The Power of the Rosary

As the battle drew near, Pope Pius V urged Catholics throughout Europe to pray the rosary for victory. He also called for continuous Eucharistic Adoration in churches and encouraged the faithful to join in processions, praying the rosary together. Soldiers aboard the Christian ships were also encouraged to pray the rosary and receive the Eucharist before the battle. The Pope himself joined in these prayers during the battle, uniting with the faithful across Europe.

### A Miraculous Victory

As the battle began, a sudden shift in the wind seemed to favor the Christian forces. This unexpected turn of events caught the Ottoman fleet off guard and gave



Pius V

the Christians a critical advantage. Don Juan’s forces captured Ali Pasha’s flagship and killed the Turkish commander. The loss of their leader caused the morale of the Ottoman troops to collapse. Many of the Turkish ships were sunk or captured, and by the end of the day, the Holy League emerged victorious after five hours of intense combat.

### Pope Pius V’s Vision

While the battle was still raging, Pope Pius V had a vision confirming the Christian victory. Looking out from his window, he exclaimed with certainty, “The Christian fleet is victorious!” His words were prophetic, as news of the victory had not yet reached him. Filled with gratitude, the Pope wept in thanksgiving. The Christian faithful throughout Europe celebrated the victory, with church bells ringing and praises offered to the Blessed Virgin for her intercession.

In gratitude for the victory, Pope Pius V established the Feast of Our Lady of Victory, which was later

renamed Our Lady of the Rosary. The feast was added to the Church calendar on October 7th as a lasting reminder of the role of the rosary and the Virgin Mary in securing this miraculous triumph.

### The Vision of the Woman in the Scriptures

The victory at Lepanto highlights the power of prayer, especially through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Scriptures, there are references to a powerful woman, often interpreted as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. In Song of Solomon 6:10, a beautiful woman is described in words that mirror the qualities attributed to Our Lady: *“Who is this who looks down like the dawn, as beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sun, as awesome as an army with banners?”*

This imagery is also seen in the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531, bringing salvation to the indigenous peoples of Mexico. Our Lady of Guadalupe, depicted standing on the moon, is a vivid representation of the woman described in Revelation 12:1: *“clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet.”* The image of a banner, often a symbol of victory in battle, is also important in both the story of Lepanto and the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

### A Weapon for Our Times

The Battle of Lepanto may be a historical event, but its lessons remain relevant today. St. Padre Pio, a beloved spiritual leader, once said, “The Rosary is the weapon for these times.” In the modern world, we face our own battles — whether spiritual, emotional, or

physical — and the rosary remains a powerful weapon in the fight against evil, sin, and despair.

Blessed Pope Pius IX famously declared, “Give me an army saying the rosary, and I will conquer the world.” This statement highlights the power of prayer, particularly the rosary, in overcoming adversity. The Rosary is not just a form of petition during times of crisis but a way to deepen our connection with the Blessed Mother, who intercedes on our behalf before her Son, Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion: A Timeless Victory

The victory at Lepanto, won through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the faithful prayers of Catholics, serves as a reminder of the power of prayer in our lives. As we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary every October 7th, we are reminded of the incredible power that the rosary can have in overcoming the challenges we face. Just as the Christian forces turned to the rosary for victory in 1571, we too can turn to the Blessed Virgin for help in our struggles.

In times of fear, doubt, or uncertainty, the Rosary offers us a way to fight back against the forces of evil and to place our trust in Mary’s powerful intercession. Like the soldiers of Lepanto, we can rely on the Blessed Virgin Mary to guide us through the battles of our own lives. As we pray the Rosary, we join in the same devotion that led to victory in 1571 and continue to experience the power of prayer through the intercession of Our Lady. □





B.F.

## MY VOCATION STORY

### "WE ARE THE HEART OF DON BOSCO IN SERBIA"

Says Fr. Janez Jelen, sdb

#### Please introduce yourself?

I was born in Slovenia, in the municipality of Velenje, a mining town where the construction of a new church remains forbidden by the communists. After World War II, Tito's partisans executed many of their ideological opponents, including my uncle, France Brenčič, who was killed without trial and buried in a foiba (a crude cave).

My mother was a talented poet, and my father, a plant nursery owner, fell in love with her work after discovering a booklet titled *"Song of the Silent Valley."* Their marriage resulted in nine children. Despite doctors advising against the birth of their first child, my parents placed their trust in divine providence, and their first daughter was born healthy, bringing them joy. Interestingly, my brothers and I were named Anthony, Joseph, and John—echoing the names from Don Bosco's family. Our story reflects resilience, love, and unwavering faith.

#### How did your Salesian vocation come about?

My father dedicated himself to cultivating fruit plants, showing remarkable courage during the Nazi occupation. By day, he supplied the occupiers with produce, while by night, he secretly supported the partisans. A pivotal moment occurred when both groups

arrived at our home together; my mother persuaded the Germans to retreat peacefully by pointing out that there was a child in the house—me, born on July 25, 1944. Although my parents and my older sister were eventually deported, they were saved by the compassion of an Austrian Catholic soldier.

Under communism, my father's steadfast refusal to join the party meant we faced higher taxes, but we never lacked for anything, thanks to Providence. I attended Salesian High School in Krijevec, Croatia, but soon returned home, realizing it was not the right fit for me.

During winter holidays, I participated in Spiritual Exercises led by two inspiring Salesians. It was in these moments that I felt God's presence, leading to the birth of my vocation. My sister Ivanka, born in 1958, also chose the path of becoming a nun. Our vocations are rooted in our parents' exemplary Christian lives and the intercession of countless Slovenian martyrs who suffered under communism, inspiring us to serve others with faith and resilience.

#### Why are you in Serbia?

I had the honour of being ordained a priest in 1972 in Celje, among 61 novice priests in Slovenia that year. After my ordination, I served as a chaplain in Cerknica, where I found great fulfillment as a children's cate-



chist. When the centenary of the Salesian Missions arrived, I expressed my desire to become a missionary, but my superiors reminded me of Don Rua's words: "You don't have to go to foreign missions; your mission lies within the Balkans!"

In 1975, I arrived in Belgrade, then the capital of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Province had been divided in 1970, leaving Slovenia with Serbia, Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Montenegro. Missionary work in the diaspora is challenging, as the Catholic faithful are often dispersed within Orthodox and Islamic majorities, facing indifference to their faith. Despite these challenges, I found joy in visiting families, blessing them, offering confessions to the sick, and connecting with young people.

#### What is the situation of the Church in Serbia?

The Church in Serbia currently enjoys a favourable position. Following the fall of Milošević, new democratic opportunities have emerged. We have launched initiatives like the Vojvodina Scouts and the Emmaus boarding school

for boys in Mušlja, along with implementing religious education in schools since 2000. However, we are confronted with the serious challenge of poverty, which drives many to emigrate. Our Salesian archbishop in Belgrade, Monsignor Stanislav Hočevar, actively promotes trust, cooperation, and ecumenism, but the number of believers continues to decline.

Additionally, there are efforts to eliminate religious education from high schools, despite its numerous benefits. It fosters cultural understanding, social responsibility, and democratic values among youth. We must advocate for the importance of faith in our education system to ensure a strong future for our community.

#### What are young Serbians like?

Serbian and Hungarian youth share dreams common to young people worldwide—they yearn for peace, connection, and love. Yet, the harsh reality they face often dims hope for the future in Vojvodina and Serbia, primarily due to limited job opportunities at home. Many aspire to seek better prospects abroad, particularly in Hungary and Germany. A troubling trend is the fleeting interest in spirituality and vocation; young people hesitate to make life-long commitments, whether in marriage or religious life, often lacking support from family and the community. After Confirmation, church attendance noticeably declines. Despite these challenges, a dedicated group re-

mains actively engaged in parish life through movements such as Salesian co-operators, couples' groups, Bible study circles, and the Medjugorje prayer group. Young members of scout groups, summer oratory, and the Don Bosco vocal-instrumental choir contribute vibrantly, performing every Sunday.

While the current climate poses difficulties for vocations, there is still hope as we see promising individuals emerging within the Salesian community. Together, we can inspire our youth to embrace their spiritual journeys and foster a brighter future.

#### What does your work entail?

We are fortunate to have two vibrant parishes: Muñja and Belo Blato, which serve as excellent grounds for global pastoral work and youth engagement. This vital work fosters respect for individuals from diverse backgrounds and promotes the integration of various generations within our community. Our new Salesians are especially passionate about connecting with young people. My main mission is caring for the sick, a focus I've embraced since the beginning of my priestly journey, as they are among the most vulnerable. It's essential to remember that young people can also face health challenges and deserve our tenderness, cheerfulness, and patience.

I also serve as a confessor in a boarding school where we work collaboratively. While each of us has distinct roles, we unite in our shared purpose, embodying Don



Bosco's powerful words: "*Da mihi animas, caetera tolle!*" Together, we can truly make a difference.

#### What are your dreams for the future?

I understand that my time may be short, but I am driven by a desire to make a meaningful impact before I leave this world. I wish to visit the poor and the sick, document the history of the Popes, and connect with young people to protect their souls and bodies. I aspire to inspire at least one Salesian and a priestly vocation, and I long to witness the beatification of a Slovenian Salesian like Andrej Majcen, who courageously established Salesian life in China and Vietnam despite being expelled from both. Knowing him was a privilege; he was a dedicated confessor in Ljubljana, serving others selflessly. □



## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

#### Schoolboy Wisdom

What is an antiquarian?

He is a man who doesn't drink water.

What a bat do in winter?

It splits, if you don't oil it.

What is the Soviet?

The Soviet is what some people call a napkin.

#### Bit in Our Mouths

Randall Thomas Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903 to 1928, had a quick wit. At a religious conference, as members filed into the dining hall, a clergyman remarked in pious tomes: "This is the time to put a bridle on our appetites."

"No," the Archbishop disagreed. "This is the time to put a bit in our mouths."

#### Holy Smoke

Maryknoll Father Robert V. Tobin made his point the hard way in Lima, Peru, recently.

The young missionary complained to his altarboys that they weren't putting enough incense into the thurible. Young Pedro, an imaginative 11-year-old who thinks for himself, came up with a solution. During Benediction the next night, billows of black smoke and a rank, pungent odour rose from the thurible Pedro was swinging.

After the choking, irritated, congregation filed out, Father Tobin demanded an explanation. Replied Pedro, innocently. "You said you wanted lots of smoke, Padre, so I just added a few rubber bands

to the incense!"

#### Earn by Mistakes

Little Angus was given a new ten shilling note for his birthday. Going to the local chemist he had the note exchanged into shillings and six pences. Then he went across the street to the grocer and received a ten shilling note for the change.

He repeated this several times. Finally his father called him to account and Angus explained. "Well, sooner or later, someone is going to make a mistake, and it's not going to be me."

#### A Better Choir

Miss Smith: "What made you give up singing in the choir?"

Miss Jones: "Well, I was absent one Sunday and the people thought that the organ had been repaired."

#### They Both Pay

Two psychiatrists meeting in a busy restaurant got to talking and one said he was treating a rather interesting case of schizophrenia.

At that, the other analyst balked: "What's so interesting about that?" Split-personality cases are rather common, I should say."

"This case is interesting," responded his colleague. They both pay."

#### Pessimist

A pessimist is a person who feels bad when he actually feels good for fear he'll feel worse when he feels bad. □

## THE RED MITTEN

**O**n the coldest day of that winter, a hurried man lost his left mitten.

A mouse spotted the mitten and crawled inside. Curling up tightly, he soon fell asleep.

Shortly afterward, a frog hopped by, leaping through the cold. He poked his head into the mitten and asked, "Is there still a vacancy?" The little mouse woke up and grumbled, "If I make myself small, there might be!"



The mouse and the frog felt friendly and warm inside the red mitten. Suddenly, an owl swooped down from a tree with a great flapping of its wings. Neither the mouse nor the frog liked owls, but the owl pleaded, "My feathers are frozen; please let me in." They huddled closer together, and with a few adjustments, the big bird settled down.

Now, there were three of them in the warmth of the red mitten: the mouse, the frog, and the owl. They had barely dozed off when a hare passed by and chattered, "Oh! It must be nice and warm in there. Make way; I'm coming!" The hare then settled comfortably in the middle.

There were four of them huddled together: the mouse, the frog, the owl, and the hare. Suddenly, a fox burst into the mitten without saying a word and shouted, "Runway!" It was a very bossy fox. Unfortunately, a seam gave way, allowing a blast of icy air to seep through the crack. "What should we do now?" they wondered, as they stood tightly together—now including the fox. The mouse, the frog, the owl, the hare, and the fox were all crammed into the mitten.

Just then, a cold boar covered in snow arrived. "Stay out of it! We're already suffocating in here!" squeaked the mouse. "Why should I stay outside?" grunted the boar. "If there's room for you, there's room for me too!" With a few nudges, the boar settled down among the others.

Unfortunately, another seam split, and more wind blew through, but the animals in the mitten didn't notice—they were too close to one another. So, there they were, in the mitten: the mouse, the frog, the owl, the hare, the fox, and the boar. They could hardly breathe.

A bear came trotting along, and this time, everyone shrieked in fright. "No! Not you!" they cried. The poor bear sat down in the snow in front of the mitten and burst into tears. "You're sitting in there in the warmth," he sobbed, "while I am out here in the cold and frost. Even

my tail has frozen."

"Alright," the others said sympathetically, "you can come inside too." They squeezed together tightly until they nearly suffocated. The bear became tiny, and almost all the seams of the mitten crackled pitifully, but somehow the bear managed to settle inside.

This time, there was not a single bit of space left in the red mitten, where all seven of them had piled together: the mouse, the frog, the owl, the hare, the fox, the boar, and the bear. However, no one noticed a tiny ant that was still slowly crawling between them. That was too much!

Boom! The mitten burst into many little pieces. All the animals tumbled into the icy snow, whipped by the frigid wind, and they all felt cold again.

Relationships between people have a delicate balance. It only takes a little something to ruin everything. □

### MARY WAS THERE

On January 14, 2024, a typical day turned into a moment of miraculous survival. My father and sister were heading to church for Sunday Mass when a stray dog suddenly ran across their path. My father lost control of the bike, and they both were thrown onto the road. He suffered a severe head injury, bleeding profusely, while my sister, bruised and frightened, called for help.

Thankfully, compassionate passersby rushed them to the hospital. To everyone's surprise, my father remained conscious after receiving 16 stitches on his forehead. The doctor remarked on the severity of their injuries and how fortunate they were to be alive. We believe it was Mary's divine intervention that saved them from what could have been a tragic accident.

We are deeply grateful to our Lord and His Blessed Mother for granting them this second chance at life. As St. Vincent de Paul said, "Each of our days is marked with the protection of Mary." Thank you, Mother Mary, for your love and guidance.

*Maria Juliana D'Souza & Family (Goa)*

### POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK OCTOBER 2025

*For collaboration between different religious traditions.  
Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might  
work together to defend and promote peace, justice and human  
fraternity.*



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## MOTHER OF MERCY

As we gather in celebration, let us offer a powerful tribute to the exalted Queen of Heaven. "O Mary, your name will resonate through eternity; your glory will endure for all time." May Mary inspire our choir to uplift the Divine Majesty through her joyful hymns. As St. Ambrose said, "May the soul of Mary be in everyone, so that all may rejoice in God." It is essential that we follow her guidance and purify ourselves through sacred penance. In today's world, where sin is often overlooked, we must encourage one another to confront our wrongdoings. The Gospel urgently reminds us: "Unless you repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3). Through the intercession of the Mother of Mercy, may we receive forgiveness and transform our fears into the joy of peace. (*St. Pope Paul VI*)

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Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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