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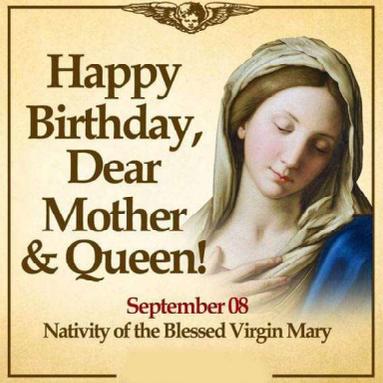
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*May the humanity
 of your
 Only Begotten Son
 come, O Lord,
 to our aid,
 and may he,
 who at his birth
 from
 the Blessed Virgin
 did not diminish
 but consecrated
 her integrity,
 make us acceptable
 to you.*

From The Editor's Desk

SHARING THE PASSION WITH PASSION

It was just a few weeks after my ordination I was asked to be a chaplain for a group of youngsters going on an overnight hike-cum-picnic. Jimmy and some others took off on a trek, and it was on this trek that he was hit by a car. He was in hospital we came to know, so we immediately rushed there and found him in a very serious condition. The doctors said that he would not die, but his injuries were severe. A few hours later Jim's parents arrived. By that time, the doctors had decided that Jim's right leg was so badly damaged that it had to be amputated. I could only weep quietly with his distressed parents on that dark and rainy evening. This young man, in his twenties formerly so agile and full of hope, now had to face life with just one leg. It was a painful night. We all felt numb to the core.

As I reflected on the sad event, I could understand Job complaining so bitterly about his misfortunes. Why, O God, did this have to happen? It all seemed so senseless.

As I browsed through the *Book of Job* in my room later that night, I came to the passage where God answers Job's complaint. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?" asks God (*Job 38:3*). Where, indeed? I had to say, with Job, that I was not there. Like him, I had to admit that I was holding forth on things I did not comprehend. All I could do was to leave it in God's hands, not understanding, but trusting in him.

Just think of how much pain our world endures. There's the heartbreak of death, the pain of physical suffering and the torture of mental illness or the isolation of depression. What pain!

I recall being on a railway platform chatting with a homeless man. He had nowhere to go. His family had no interest in him. He had ruined himself and disgraced his family through heavy drinking. On that day, at sixty-five, he regretted it all, but he felt it was too late. The only way he could cope was to spend his pension once again in the pub.

This, of course, does not mean that all suffering should simply be accepted passively. Mother Teresa and her sisters spend their lives trying to ease the pain of the afflicted. Some suffering is inevitable and we accept it. However there is much suffering that can be avoided, and it is our duty to fight the causes of unnecessary pain.

In itself, suffering is not something good. It is frequently destructive and unnecessary, and should be eliminated wherever possible. But when it happens, it can be redemptive if joined to the pain of Christ on Calvary. He transformed the destructive power of suffering into something redemptive indicating that that was how a human being endures suffering. Jimmy would face life with just one leg, but for sure, something beautiful would come out of it. He learned to live his life with passion all the same, which would be like the joy and peace of Easter.

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

THE PEDAGOGY OF LOVE

by Mons. Giampaolo Dianin

The issue of femicide poses questions about love and the crucial educational aspect of this defining experience in all our lives.

Learning to love is a skill that can be honed through the education of one's emotions. In its absence, there is a risk of problematic outcomes. However, with the right approach, we can bring about positive change, instilling hope and optimism in our society.

A challenging topic is sex education, which is a part of the broader emotional dimension. There is extensive discussion about it, but something needs to be clarified to reach a consensus. The reason is not trivial because sexuality is not primarily a matter of knowledge, such as methods and prevention of sadness and disease, but a matter of meaning. The Catholic sociologist Mauro Magatti states that we face a critical issue in reconstructing meaning, as we are suspended between nihilistic and technocratic positions (which attribute meaning to individuals) and fundamentalist positions that seek a unified framework but risk solidifying into intolerance and violence. The question of significance relates to a vision of the individual, relation-

ships, and love that our culture struggles to convey because it has lost its essence. This complexity requires a deeper understanding and a more nuanced approach.

In her statement, Chiara Giaccardi talks about three transformations that define our culture. The first is individualism, which drives us to pursue self-fulfillment and well-being. It's important to note that individualism is not the same as selfishness. The second is consumerism, which encourages disloyalty, and the third is technology, which leads us to believe that problems can be solved through technical solutions instead of relationships. She believes that we need more understanding of relationships because we are focused on ourselves: we seek affection and love without being able to incorporate them into our lives, and we rely



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on technical solutions that do not nourish our hearts.

The key is to distinguish between the sexual aspect, the emotional aspect, and the dynamics of a relationship. Affective education should focus on building a solid foundation for healthy relationships based on respect. Magatti discusses the importance of understanding the 'why' rather than providing 'how-to' instructions. We should contemplate why it's important to respect others and why we shouldn't use them. We need to recognize and appreciate the humanity in others, as they are human beings just like us. Our relationships define our society; we are responsible for building and nurturing them. When someone becomes self-absorbed and selfish, they are betraying their humanity.

Bullying, for example, is a manifestation of emotional, affective, and relational illiteracy. It is a product of a culture lacking in solidarity and rich in bullying, failing to educate emotions and neglecting the recognition of boundaries between individuals.

Raffaella Iafrate emphasizes the importance of embracing the concept of limits and acknowledging the dignity of others as an essential boundary. We need to recognize the distinctiveness of others to have two options: either to assimilate or destroy them. On the other hand, a healthy relationship is built on respect for others and recognizing our limitations. Understanding that our actions have social consequences is fundamental to practicing ethical responsibility. In the context

of education, the following principles are emphasized:

Understanding sexuality is a crucial step before delving into information and techniques. This approach ensures that individuals are enlightened and well-informed about their own sexuality and that of others. We acknowledge the challenge of prioritizing relationships due to our differences. Embracing limits is not a restriction, but a source of joy. It empowers individuals to respect the boundaries of others and find contentment in healthy relationships.

Early education plays a crucial role in instilling values such as solidarity and rejecting violence. Solidarity, the unity and mutual support among individuals, is a key component of emotional and affective education. It is essential to instill these values in young people from an early age to lay the groundwork for healthy relationships. □

*Sexuality is
not primarily
about knowledge,
methods,
and disease
prevention but
about significance.*

I'M ENTRUSTING YOU WITH MOTHER TERESA'S SECRET

Alessandro Gisotti - Vatican Radio

Here is a portrait of her drawn by Mgr Comastri, who met her.

I *Met a Saint* is a remarkable book about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, written by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the vicar general of the Pope for Vatican City. It was published by *Edizioni San Paolo*. The book came about when Alessandro Gisotti, the deputy director of Vatican Radio, asked Cardinal Angelo Comastri to share his extraordinary experiences of being in close proximity to the founder of the Missionaries of Charity.

I believe that meeting Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a great gift from the Lord. Every time I met her, she put great serenity in my heart. I almost seemed to experience the presence of God in her soul. I was once enchanted by a journalist's definition of Mother Teresa: *"Mother Teresa is an open window, and God has looked out of this window and smiled at the world."* I fully share it because every time I met her, I almost had the physical sensation of approaching the Lord, of feeling the Lord, who was evident in her soul. I bid her goodbye for the last time on 22nd May 1997 in the House on the Via Casilina; she was already ill, and you could see she had very little strength. On that occasion, I confided in her about my suffering because my mother had died a few days earlier. I told her: "Mother, my mother has left me." And I still remember her telling me: "Your mother is in heaven. Now she is closer to you than

before," and added, "I will also go to heaven. I will always be close to you." These words, for me, were an extraordinary consolation. Because when Mother Teresa of Calcutta promised something, she did it.

With her canonization, we all feel closer to her now. Can she do even more from heaven than she did in an extraordinary way on earth?

"There is no doubt about it. John Paul II said: "The saints in heaven do not need applause. The saints only ask us to follow them." And Mother Teresa, in her constant reminder, never tires of telling us: "Be saints." I remember when she gave me some little pictures; she used to write "Be holy" on them. This simple yet profound message echoes through the ages, because holiness is the only thing that counts. To use her words: "The only suitcase we will carry from here is the suitcase of charity." I remember that when she said those words to me, she added: "While you still have time, fill it up because it is the only suitcase you will take with you."

In the book, the chapters are interspersed with prayers by Mother Teresa or prayers she cherished and recited daily.

"We could say that prayer was the secret of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. When Pérez de Cuéllar

(then Secretary General of the United Nations) introduced her to the UN in somewhat grandiose words, saying: "I present to you the most powerful woman on earth. She is truly the United Nations because in her heart are the poor of the whole world," Mother Teresa replied: "I am just a nun who prays" and added: "By praying, Jesus puts his love in my heart. I take it to people with the poor of the whole world, the poor that I meet." Then she dared to say: "Pray too, and you will realize the poor you have beside you, perhaps on the threshold of your own house."

"Mother Teresa's unique ability to forge deep connections with people was truly remarkable. Her interactions, even with the likes of Princess Diana

"Mother's compassion extended far beyond the confines of royalty. When cautioned about Princess Diana, she responded, "I have never received Princess Diana; I have always received the unhappy Diana." That profound statement reflected Mother's universal compassion as she recognized the shared humanity and suffering of all, regardless of their social status or wealth, seeing them all as children of God."

Of the many encounters you had with Mother Teresa, which one has stayed with you?

I remember each meeting with Mother Teresa as beautiful and rich, but the first meeting stands out the most in my memory. I recall telling Mother Teresa that I had expected her to ask me about the charity work I do, and her response was powerful: "And you



think I could do charity? Could I go to people with low incomes if I didn't pray? It is by praying that Jesus puts love in my heart. I go and take it to the poor I meet on my way," she said. She then added, "Remember well," lifting an admonishing finger, "that without God, we are too poor to be able to help the poor."

Beatified by Saint John Paul II, the Apostle of Divine Mercy, Mother Teresa was canonized by Pope Francis during the Jubilee of Mercy. Can we say that she is perhaps the most vital witness of our times to God's mercy?

Once, when a journalist tried to photograph her eyes, someone present asked, "Why do you insist? You are bothering Mother." The journalist replied, "I want to photograph her eyes; I have never seen such happy eyes. I would like, somehow, to capture the secret of the joy in those eyes." I remember that the nun next to me translated to the Mother in English, and Mother replied, "The secret is so simple: my eyes are happy because my hands dry so many tears. Do likewise: have eyes as happy as mine." Her joy, so simple yet profound, offered hope and encouragement to all. □

WHERE'S YOUR LIFE HEADING?

by Anastasia Dias

On a bright April morning, a man went for a walk in the fields. As he strolled, he felt something unusual beneath his feet. Intrigued, he began to examine the rocks. His persistence led him to dig through the mud, and he was delighted to discover precious gems hidden beneath the ground. Filled with determination, he sold all his belongings and bought the field.

Another story I've encountered is about an elderly man who was deeply passionate about pearls. He used to visit his friends' homes and ask if they had any pearls. Patiently, he would sit and listen to their conversations, hoping to come across the 'pearls' he was fervently searching for. His unwavering dedication eventually paid off, and he found what he had been seeking.

Jesus compares the "kingdom of heaven" to certain people and incidents. I've often found it challenging to understand and relate to these two parables. That was until a few months ago, when a friend of mine, Ryan, who is older and wiser than I, noticed that I was going through a rough patch.

Usually, when people face difficult times, they are advised to party, date, or distract themselves. However, one day, as I confided my troubles to Ryan, he said: "Take a year off, trek the Himalayas or the Appalachians. Meditate, pray, or meet new people. But, most importantly, find yourself in the process."

As I considered his words, a feeling of relief washed over me. Yes, I had lost myself, but now I was free from the burden of unrealistic expectations I had placed on myself and my life. The fear of losing what I possessed had weighed me down, making me feel like I couldn't face life anymore. But now, looking back, I realized that my problems were insignificant compared to the hardships faced by many in situations like war, poverty, or hunger. I had magnified them in my



head because I thought it was all about me.

Taking Ryan's advice to heart, I began a journey of self-reflection and realization. I didn't scale mountains for a year, but for a month, I climbed the mountains of my mind, contemplating my life. And in the silence, a voice within me spoke: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?" (Mk 8:36)

For a long time, I had been pursuing my life goals and aspirations, only to find that even when I achieved them, I was still unhappy. But through a journey of self-discovery and meditation, I began to understand the root of this unhappiness. It was my selfishness, my egocentric view of life, and my pride that were the culprits. Realizing this was the first step towards a more fulfilling life, one that was not just about me.

I had lost touch with myself and my joy because I had been so self-absorbed. That's when I began to realize that I found immense joy in serving others. When I returned to college after the winter break, I spent extra hours helping my students with their life and study problems. I reached out to friends who isolated themselves in their rooms, thinking they were shutting out the world, too (I had been in a similar space just a few months ago). I made a list of the wonderful, beautiful, and small things people had done for me that had changed my life in ways I could never have imagined. I also opened up to my professors, peers, and friends when I was struggling.

At that moment, I found my life's purpose: serving my neighbour. And in doing so, I discovered a joy that I had long forgotten.

Over the course of a few months, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery. It was a profound realization that the "kingdom of heaven" is not some distant place, but a hidden joy within me that springs to life when I witness the happiness of others. But I had not been aware of that truth because I was only focused on being happy by myself.

Dear young reader, have you ever paused to consider what truly brings you joy? Where do you unearth your hidden treasures and your pearls? Are you so caught up in the pursuit of the world's pleasures that you've lost sight of your own happiness?

Consider where in your life is true happiness hiding. Take some time to reflect on your own journey. If you are content with your current situation, there's no need for drastic changes. However, if you're feeling unsettled, consider taking a year off to delve into these profound questions.

I remember standing on the edge of one of the tallest mountains I'd ever seen when I realized that I had gained the world by serving those more needy than myself. This time, I hadn't lost myself. Instead, I had discovered a new sense of self. At that moment, I experienced a joy unlike any other. So, as I made my way back, my cheeks were flushed, my hands were cold, and tears of joy streamed down my face. I was overwhelmed with happiness. I sincerely hope, dear reader, that you too can experience this profound joy.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Is. 6:8) □

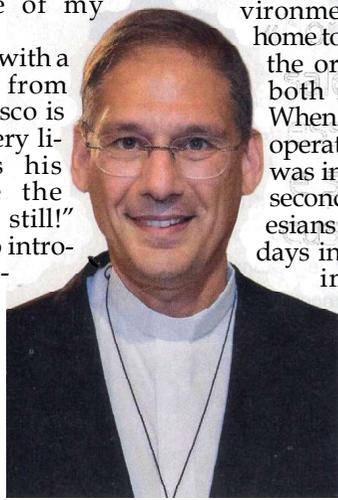
MY STORY

The life and vocation of Fr Francesco Maroccio,
The Rector of the Salesian Headquarters.

"I never thought I deserved to become a Salesian, but it never occurred to me to be anything else. Jesus who met Don Bosco, and his Mother, Mary have always accompanied, protected and loved me."

I was born in Civitavecchia (RM) on 13 December 1969, which is Saint Lucy's Day, the same day and year Pope Francis was ordained a priest. During his visit to the Sacred Heart parish in 2014, I told him, "Your Holiness, I am the fruit of your priesthood!" To which he replied, "In what way?" I explained to him that I was born on the day of his priestly ordination, and the Pope smiled. Because of the day I was born, my middle name is Lucio. I like these two names that my parents gave them to me. They are not just names, but symbols of their hopes and aspirations for me. I was a lively child, and the teachers (nuns) often put me in detention because of my restlessness.

My journey began with a simple observation from my mother: "Francesco is not bad; he is just very lively. He finishes his homework before the others and can't sit still!" This led my father to introduce me to the Salesian Oratory at the age of nine, where I joined the oratory's sports club. This marked the start of my gradual and increasingly involving inclusion in the Ora-



tory environment. It started with football, a lot of time spent in the playground, then the catechesis of Christian initiation with First Communion and Confirmation, and later theatre with other young people and former adult students. These experiences shaped me, and my life as a pre-teen and teenager was a balance between family relationships, the school environment, the football team, and the friendships I formed at the oratory. I attended classical high school in my hometown and developed a passion for studying the classics and philosophy.

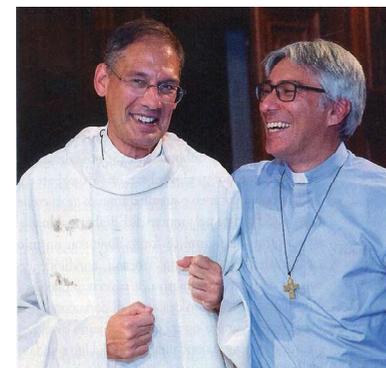
Prayers and the "chicks"

I grew up in the Salesian environment which felt like home to me. My family and the oratory family were both important to me. When my mother had an operation in Pisa while I was in the second year of secondary school, the Salesians hosted me for ten days in their house. I was impressed by how different generations lived together and their ability to welcome and manifest an atmosphere of brotherliness. One important thing I forgot

to mention is that since I was a child, I have always felt very close to the Lord. It's like having a friend you trust and can talk to. When I was 15, I mentioned to a Salesian, a vocational animator, that I wouldn't mind becoming a Salesian.

The following year, when I was 16, a Salesian invited me to a vocational camp in Subiaco organized by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It was there that I experienced *Lectio Divina* for the first time and heard a word that stayed with me. This word captivated me and I felt challenged by it. Without being told or asked, I started praying at with a sustained daily rhythm (Lauds, Middle Hour, Vespers, Rosary, Compline, Holy Mass). After this experience, which continued regularly during the school year, although less intensively than during the summer, the oratory's supervisor proposed that I become the coach of a football team in the 'chicks' category. Additionally, besides playing football in a city team, I also coached the younger ones. This experience was fundamental, along with prayer, in helping me understand that the Lord was calling me to become a Salesian. During my military conscription, I realized how much I missed the boys I was coaching. The educational relationship that had been established made me feel a paternal as well as fraternal affection for them. These reasons prompted me to apply for the novitiate at the end of my secondary schooling. I was 18 and went straight from home to the novitiate in Lanuvio.

It wasn't easy for my parents to accept my decision. Our relation-



Fr Francesco and his provincial

ship was very close, and they struggled to understand my sudden and drastic choice. My vocation had been developing within me for some time, with the guidance of a Salesian, but it took them longer to come to terms with it. The first year was particularly challenging, especially for my mother.

A perfect fit for me

On September 8, 1989, I began my journey as a Salesian. It felt like the perfect fit for me. Being a Salesian brought me great joy, and I always felt honoured to be a part of it. While I never felt worthy to be a Salesian, I also never considered pursuing any other path. Children, teenagers, and young adults have always been at the centre of my Salesian life, bringing me immense joy and fuelling my passion for education. As a Salesian, there is an inherent inclination to empathize with and approach each individual, reflecting Don Bosco's emphasis on a "passion for souls," which, when nurtured through prayer and connection with God, becomes the driving force behind a Salesian's life and enables them

to overcome any challenges. Young people crave a deep connection with Jesus, even though this desire is often overshadowed by the influence of secularization.

I spent the first ten years of my formative years with a Salesian friend, Fr. Ugo Troccoli. We shared every stage of our formation, attending different professions and ordinations, and had a common desire for a deep dedication to the Lord and young people. He died of a severe lung disease, but his example, his friendship, and his memory continue to inspire me. They remind me to give my last breath (as he did) for the young.

In the city of the Pope

The years of Salesian life, after priestly ordination, were a blessing. I served as an animator and teacher of religion, history, and philosophy at the school of Villa Sora in Frascati for eight years.

When I received the instruction to go to Chos Malal in Patagonia, Argentina, I was surprised by a change in plans. The same Rector Major who had originally assigned me to Argentina now asked me to serve the Salesians and the young people of Rome instead. This unexpected change reminded me of a prophecy made by Don Bosco on 5th April 1880 regarding the work of the Sacred Heart. He said, *"We have accepted it because when the Pope is in a normal situation, we will establish our central station in Rome to evangelize the Roman countryside. It will be a work no less important than that of evangelizing Patagonia. Then the Salesians will be known, and their*



glory will shine forth" (MB XIV, 592). This is the desire I carry in my heart, not others: to evangelize the youth of Rome, make the Salesians known, and let the glory of the Lord shine through them. Said in this way, it sounds like an excessive claim! But we will not do this work; it will be done by the Sacred Heart - said Don Bosco when the Salesians who were part of his General Council, the first time, all voted against him on the proposal to build the Sacred Heart Church at the Castro Pretorio because of the enormous debts that the Salesian Society had at that time. "In service of being the Rector of the headquarters, the challenge is to "breathe with two lungs": the global aspect that involves all Salesians serving the Rector Major for the animation and governance of the Congregation, and the local aspect that reaches out to young immigrants and poor young Italians.

Don Bosco had a strong desire to open a house in Rome. Now, he sees the home of his successor, the Rector Major in the Sacred Heart. May he bless and make this work, which the Pope has entrusted to him, fruitful. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



MARIE TERESA COUDERC (September 26)

Ian Pinto, sdb

VOCATIONAL JOURNEY

Marie-Victoire Couderc was born into a farming family on February 1, 1805, at Le Mas in south-eastern France. She was the fourth of 12 children and the eldest daughter. Two of her siblings died in infancy and so they were reduced to 10. The family were probably well-to-do farmers because her parents could afford to send her to boarding school. As a young girl, she would frequent Holy Mass. While in the boarding, Marie would dutifully recite her prayers and made concerted efforts to be gentle and kind to all.

One day, her father brought her home to participate in a mission being preached in Sablieres, a town close to their home. Marie joined the rest of her family for this spiritual event but she seemed to take back more than anyone else. Marie was so taken up by the preaching that she felt called to be a missionary herself. The preacher, Father Jean Terme inspired her with his enthusiasm and zeal. Father Terme had founded a religious society of sorts for



women called the Sisters of St. Regis. Their purpose was to provide Christian education to people who had no access or possibility of receiving it. Over the course of the mission, Marie expressed her desire to become a nun to Father Terme. He was overjoyed at her generosity but her family remained apprehensive.

After discussing matters with Father Terme, her parents allowed her to join the religious life. After completing her novitiate and making her first profession, she was sent along with two other sisters to run a hostel for women

pilgrims close to the shrine of St. John Francis Regis in Lalouvesc. Thanks to her hard work, dedication and vision, the hostel flourished.

Besides overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the hostel, Marie was given charge of forming novices for the congregation. She was also named the Superior General of the fledgling congregation. Funds were dwindling but the mission was booming. There were huge numbers of women who would come on pilgrimage. Very often, there weren't enough beds and so bed-sheets would be spread on straw in the corridors to create more space for guests to sleep.

While serving there, she realized the deep longing that pilgrims had for solitude, prayer and contemplation. Therefore, she endeavoured to turn the hostel into a retreat house. In this process, she discovered God's will for her: to pioneer a group of sisters who would facilitate moments of prayer, solitude and recollection for women. Thus, the idea for a new congregation was born.

THE CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF THE CENACLE

The purpose of the congregation was to facilitate spiritual retreats for women. At the time, the Jesuits were called upon to preach the retreats. The sisters would assist them in whatever way necessary and would foster an environment of prayer and reflection. Considering that the congregation wasn't recognized as a separate entity at the time, it remained part of the Sisters of St.

Regis.

Father Terme introduced the Sisters to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and trained them to assist and guide women in their spiritual journey. A real jolt hit the fledgling congregation when Father Terme died in 1834. In his will, he mentioned the direction and care of the "daughters of the Retreat" be taken over by the Jesuits. Thus, their formation in Ignatian spirituality and the use of the Spiritual Exercises could continue and deepen.

In an attempt to separate the two factions within the Congregation, the teaching ministry carried out earlier at the hostel in Lalouvesc was stopped. This created tension in the community as not everyone was in favour of this decision. Financial issues began to rise and very soon the atmosphere turned bitter. Sr. Marie took responsibility for this debacle and was consequently removed from office by the Bishop. She was replaced by an inexperienced novice who couldn't improve the situation, and who was subsequently also removed within a few months. On the advice of the Jesuit retreat preachers, the Bishop tried appointing a series of wealthy women to stabilize the situation at the hostel but none of them were successful.

This fiasco affected Sr. Marie pretty badly. Not only was gossip spread about her, she was practically treated as an outcast by the congregation. She was sent with another nun for nearly a year and a half to a remote house in Lyon. She was then sent to two other houses to oversee their closure

and to ensure that all transactions were done transparently. These experiences weighed down her confidence and caused her mental and emotional suffering. During this time, she attended a retreat that helped her cope with her situation in a Christian manner. The retreat was preached by a Jesuit and was based on the theme of Sacrifice.

By this time, the young congregation had taken definite form. Under the guidance of the Jesuits, the sisters realized that their spirituality and mission resembled the role of Our Lady in the Upper Room or Cenacle with the disciples. Just as Mary gathered the disciples and facilitated their prayer, so also the sisters ought to gather women and help them encounter God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they took the name Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle.

The Congregation slowly spread around France and then to Italy, Belgium, Switzerland and Holland. They were later invited to begin their work in England and America too. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the Sisters of the Cenacle played a vital role in caring for the sick and injured.

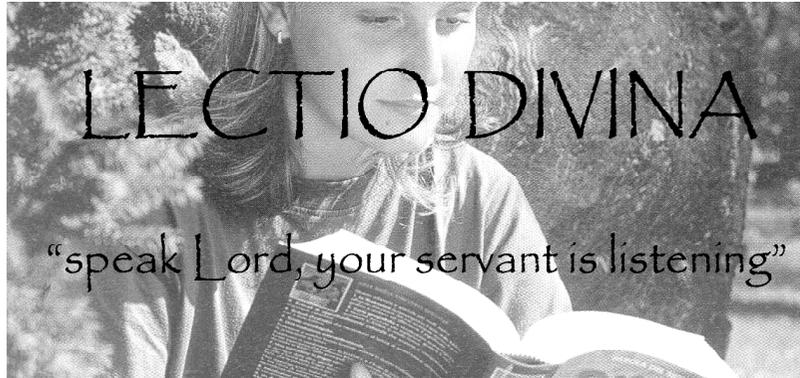
As of 2021, there are about 320 sisters serving in 6 continents. They are mostly engaged in sharing the Word of God. This sharing usually takes the form of preaching and guiding retreats, offering spiritual direction, counsel and catechesis, creating opportunities for prayer and recollection, and in other works that aim at spiritual renewal. They are

also involved in the fight against injustice, war, hatred and other social evils that severely disturb and affect people's lives.

SPIRITUAL LEGACY

A testament to the sanctity of Sr. Marie is her humility and serenity despite the tough challenges and situations she had to face. To be treated as she was, to be discarded to the periphery and to be the butt of gossip and slander is challenging for anyone but it takes a saint to handle these experiences serenely. Although there was much to criticize, she never criticized. She continued to work for the betterment of her religious community by prayer, penance and the acceptance of her rejection. In the end, she was able to say, "God has always given me peace of soul, the grace to leave myself in his hands and to want nothing but to love him and be ever closer to Him."

In the beginning of 1885, she fell unconscious and remained in that state for several hours. This left her bedridden. She died in September of that same year. She has left behind not just a beautiful congregation with a relevant charisma but also a lot of her writings. In her writings, she stresses on themes like surrender and charity. Sadly, the Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle is on the decline. They are forced to close down houses because there are so few sisters. In some cases they have handed over their houses to other religious organizations to run; in other cases, they have been forced to sell their properties to finance other works. □



HEARING THE LORD

(Mk 7:31-37)

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

1. Reading: Spend a few minutes carefully and slowly read the gospel passage. Focus on the narrative's specifics and put yourself in the action. Make an effort to comprehend the significance of Jesus' healing as well as the responses of those who witnessed it.

2. Meditation: Ponder on the message of the passage. Consider the significance of Jesus' healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment. Reflect on the compassion and power of Jesus as He touches the man and restores his hearing and speech. What does this story reveal to you about Jesus' mission to bring healing and restoration to all who are suffering?

In Mark 7:31-37, we read a healing miracle performed by Jesus. A deaf man with a speech impediment is brought to Jesus by some people who are seeking his help. Here we notice that Jesus takes the man aside privately, away from the crowd, and performs the healing.

Jesus starts by touching the man's tongue, spitting, and sticking his fingers in his ears. With a sigh, Jesus looks up to heaven and says, "Ephphatha," which means "Be opened." The man's speech impairment is instantly eliminated, his ears are opened, and he is able to hear and speak clearly.

This miracle is significant in several ways. It first illustrates Jesus' kindness and readiness to assist those in need. Jesus shows his concern for people by taking the time to tend to the man in private, even though he is surrounded by a large group of people.

Second, Jesus uses a special technique in this healing. Spitting, physical contact, and the term "Ephphatha" all demonstrate Jesus' ability to heal people through unusual ways. It highlights the fact that Jesus' healing ability is derived from God and is not constrained by knowledge or techniques from humans.

Moreover, the term "Ephphatha" carries symbolic significance.

It means that the man's ears are opening, and his tongue is becoming looser, allowing him to engage with the world around him completely. This physical recovery also relates to a deeper spiritual truth: Jesus' ability to open people's hearts and minds so they can accept and share the gospel.

Mark 7:36-37: Jesus is not interested in fame. And he commanded them to keep it a secret from others, but the more He demanded, the more they spread the word. They exclaimed: "Everything he does is good." He makes the dumb speak and the deaf hear," with unwavering admiration. He forbids the proclamation of the cure, but that does not actually occur. Whether or not Jesus wishes it, those who have witnessed what Jesus has done ought to go and tell others!

The advice not to disclose it to anyone. The emphasis that Mark's Gospel places on Jesus' refusal to reveal the cure is occasionally overdone, as though He had a secret that He wished to keep hidden. When Jesus performs a miracle, He does not typically ask for silence afterward. Instead, He once even asked for publicity (Mk 5: 19). Prohibition is pointless! The Good News has such a powerful internal force that it spreads on its own.

Finally, it's important to note how the witnesses responded to this miracle. They declare that Jesus has done everything perfectly, and they are shocked and amazed. This response emphasizes Jesus' indisputable authority and power, reaffirming his status as the Son of God.

This passage challenges us to consider how Jesus can redeem

our lives by bringing about healing and restoration. It serves as a reminder of his kindness, his capacity for transformation, and his desire to help us receive the gospel's veracity. It inspires us to come to Jesus in faith, believing that he can heal and complete us.

3. Prayer: Engage in a conversation with God. Share your thoughts, feelings, and questions that arise from the passage. Thank God for His compassion and power to heal. Ask for the grace to recognize and respond to the areas in your life where you need healing and restoration. Pray for the courage and seek His guidance on how to be an instrument of healing and compassion for others.

4. Contemplation: Enter into a moment of silence and stillness. Allow the words and images of the Gospel passage to settle in your heart. Imagine yourself as the deaf man, experiencing the touch and healing power of Jesus. Reflect on the ways in which you can open yourself to Jesus' healing in your own life. Simply rest in God's presence, allowing Him to speak to you beyond words.

5. Action: Consider how you can apply the message of this passage to your own life. Reflect on any areas where you may need healing and restoration, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. How can you approach Jesus with faith and trust, seeking His healing touch? Reflect on how you can be an instrument of healing and compassion for others, reaching out to those who are suffering and in need. Make a commitment to take action based on the insights you have gained. □

Quiet Spaces

FAITH IS NOT A FRAUD

Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Friday, April 26, 2013

Acts 13:26-33, Jn 14:1-6

Faith is not alienation or fraud, but a real path of beauty and truth, forged by Jesus to prepare our eyes to gaze without glasses 'on the marvelous face of God' in the final place prepared for each one of us. It's an invitation not to give way to fear and to live life as a preparation for seeing better, hearing better, and loving more. This was what Pope Francis said in his homily in the Mass celebrated on Friday morning, April 26, in the chapel of St. Martha's Guest House.

Pope Francis focused his homily on the passage from John's gospel (14:1-6): 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.'

"These words of Jesus," said the pope, "are the most beautiful words. In a farewell moment, Jesus speaks from his heart to his disciples. He knows his disciples are sad, because they realize things are not going well." So, Jesus encourages them, heartens them, reassures them, gives them hope: "Let not your hearts be troubled!" And he begins to speak like that, like a friend, also with the attitude of a shepherd. I say; the music of these words of Jesus shows the attitude of a shepherd, as a shepherd speaks to his sheep. 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.'"

When he has said these words, according to the account in John's gospel, continued the pope, "he begins to speak: of what? Of heaven, of the final home. 'Have faith in me: I remain faithful.' It's as if that is what he said." And with the metaphor, "the figure of an engineer or architect, he tells them what he's going to do: 'I go to prepare a place for you; in my Father's house there are many dwelling-places.' And Jesus is going to prepare a place for us."

"What is this preparation?" asked the pope. "How does it happen? What is this place like? What does prepare a place mean? Renting a room up above?" Preparing a place means "preparing our capacity to enjoy, our capacity to see, feel, and understand the beauty of what awaits us, of that country toward which we are traveling."

"And the whole of Christian life," continued the pope, "is a work of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, to prepare a place for us, prepare our eyes to see." 'But Father, I can see perfectly well! I don't need glasses!' But

this is a different kind of seeing. Think of those who are suffering from a cataract and need to have an operation on the cataract. They can see, but after the operation, what do they say? 'I never thought it was possible to see as well as that, without glasses!' Our eyes, the eyes of our soul, need to be prepared to look at the wonderful face of Jesus." So it's a question of "preparing our hearing to hear the beautiful things, the beautiful words. And especially, to prepare the heart: prepare the heart to love, to love more."

"On life's road," the pope explained, "the Lord is always doing that: with trials, with consolations, with sufferings, with good things. The whole of life's road is a preparation. Sometimes the Lord has to do it quickly, as he did with the good thief: he only had a few minutes to prepare him and he did it. But normally in life it takes time: to let our hearts, eyes, hearing be prepared to arrive in that country. Because it's our country."

Pope Francis warned against losing sight of this fundamental dimension of our lives and the path of faith, and against the objections of those who don't accept the prospect of eternity: 'But Father, I went to a philosopher and he told me that all these thoughts amount to alienation, that we are alienated, that our life is here and now and we don't know anything beyond it...' Some people think like that. But Jesus tells us that isn't so and says: 'Have faith also in me. What I am telling you is the truth; I am not tricking you, I am not deceiving you.' We are on the road to that country, we children of the stock of Abraham, as St. Paul says in the first reading" (Acts of the Apostles 13:26-33).

And since Abraham's time, said the pope, "we have been on the road, with that promise of the final country. If we read the eleventh chapter of the letter to the Hebrews we will find in it the story of our predecessors, our ancestors, who went on this road toward that country and greeted it from afar. Preparing for heaven is beginning to greet it from afar." And "that's not alienation: that's the truth, which is letting Jesus prepare our hearts and eyes for such great beauty. It's the road of beauty. Also, the road home."

The pope ended the homily by wishing "that the Lord may give us this strong hope" and "also give us the courage to greet this country from afar." And finally, "give us the humility to let ourselves be prepared, that is, let the Lord prepare our dwelling-place, the final dwelling-place for our hearts, our eyes, and our hearing." □

SARAH'S DREAM

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, *sdb*

Sarah's whole world since childhood had been the enchanting strip of beach in Riccione, known as 'the green pearl of the Adriatic.' The air was always filled with the scent of salt and the sound of seagulls, and the sand was warm and soft beneath her feet. She fit right in among its people, including the tanned-faced fishermen with eyes as deep and mild as the becalmed sea.

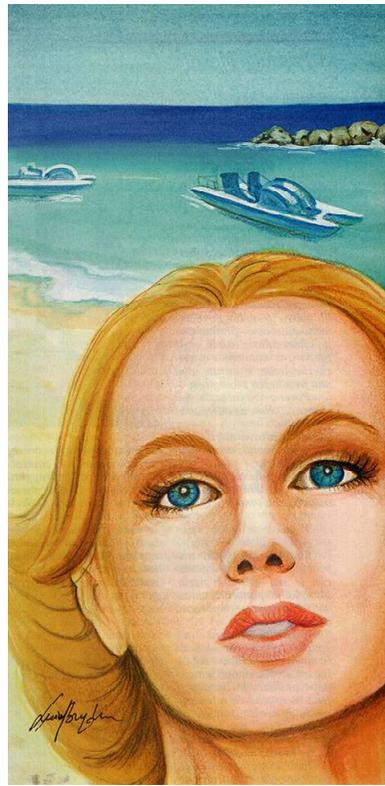
Papa Domenico doted on his little girl, who was his only daughter after four sons. He delighted in hoisting her onto his shoulders, always mindful not to harm her with the strong grip of his hands, weathered by the oar's movements and forever infused with a potent salty scent.

Often, when the sea was calm, the trawler set out for fishing, carrying father, brothers, and even Sarah, who cheered them on with joyful shrieks and giggles at every thud of the oar. She would blissfully contemplate the wake cut by the prow in the sparkling waves, and point her little finger at the fluttering sails. With her curls blowing in the wind, she would sing the songs of Romagna with her clear voice, while her small hands learned to mend nets and sails with her mother and friends on the sun-baked shore.

Years passed, but Papa Domenico's return seemed like a distant hope after that tragic and turbulent night at sea. The passage of time only deepened Sarah's emo-

tional turmoil, as if her enchanted world had crumbled under the weight of despair. The once lively house now stood as a testament to their collective grief. Even her mother, usually a beacon of strength, seemed lost in her own thoughts in the kitchen. Her siblings, once full of chatter, now returned home with faces etched with sorrow.

During the summer, the sea attracted a large number of swimmers who overran the shore, chatting and either venturing into



the deep waters to swim or riding on white pedal boats. For Sarah, stepping out of her humble house at the busiest times and spending a long time observing the diverse crowd of holidaymakers had become a leisure activity. Slowly, in her heart she began to feel the desire for a new and different life. She wondered why she couldn't also resemble those elegant, lively young women who, in their beach wear and summer dresses, passed by exuding a subtle wave of perfume, hurrying each evening to enjoy themselves at the hotel or disco. The murmur of voices and fresh laughter, interspersed with harmonious sounds, reached her, but she remained indifferent to the allure of her sea, straining her ear and soul and her gaze lost in its vastness.

Her seventeen years of age were crying out for more. She couldn't get enough of that little patch of the harbour, the daily hustle and bustle around the fishing gear, with no other entertainment than chatting with the villagers about the more or less abundant catches of fish and the adventures of their men at sea.

Had she not been told many times that she was a beautiful girl and that finding a husband would be easy and natural for her? All she had to do was say 'yes' to Andy, Judith's only son, and the marriage would be arranged. Andy, who had grown up next to Sarah, loved her deeply with a loyal tenderness, a love that was evident in his every action. Although he was a bit shy and awkward, he did not dare confess to her how much he had worked and toiled day and night to make a pretty little bank acc-

ount for the well-being of both of them. Judith and Sarah's mothers looked favourably on the matter. Still, in Andy's eyes, the girl assumed an expression so abstract and icy that it disconcerted the radiant hopes of that firm and honest son of the sea.

If at first Sarah thought she could chat with him, now, as her deep aversion to everything familiar from her childhood grew, she felt she was also rejecting him, Andy, along with any prospect of marriage.

She felt sorry for the young man, even though she didn't understand the complexity of her sudden change in attitude, which seemed surly and almost contemptuous. Andy had found her at times in tears, on the beach facing the sea, lonely and lost, and had tried in vain to comprehend why with kind words. She always fled without even a gentle reply.

Sarah had finally received a stroke of unexpected luck when she met the Lundy sisters, two older blondes. One day, they and a few friends appeared at Sarah's brothers' boats seeking a sea adventure. Brian and Neil quickly took the opportunity and they all set sail, enjoying the tranquility of the waves until dusk. The Lundy sisters were captivated by Sarah's beauty and innocence and were deeply saddened by her father's tragic death. They promised to return and see her again, a promise that showed their genuine interest and care.

They did indeed come back, and Sarah, having gradually overcome her awe, was filled with joy at spending a few hours

in the company of those elegant young ladies. Their closeness gave her a subtle sense of pride, making her anticipate and hope for the realization of something she had been harbouring deep in her heart.

At the end of the season, on the eve of their departure, they met again on the beach. Sarah, feeling very melancholic, suddenly burst into joy.

"Do you mind if we leave, Sarah?"

"Oh, not at all."

Laura embraced Sarah, offering comfort and reassurance, "Don't worry, dear. We will always remember you. Look at the beautiful sea, the freedom, and the youthful joy you can experience here. We had so many wonderful times together..."

Sarah's sobs intensified as she spoke with desperation, "I can't bear to stay here any longer. The thought fills me with unbearable sadness. Why can't I come with you to the city?"

"To the city?" Laura repeated, surprised.

"Yes, could you take me with you? I'll do all the housework... I'll wash, iron, and cook. I may lack education, but I can manage household chores."

Laura responded, "Sarah, that's a strange idea. How would Mom react?"

"I've never been held back by Mum. With the house struggling financially, my earnings could ease her burden," Sarah replied, displaying a selfless determination.

So much did she pray, and even more so the next day, that to the dismay of her parents, Andy's anguish, and the neighbourhood gossip, Sarah left with no regrets,

accompanying her new mistress to embrace her new life.

At the home of the wealthy industrialist Lundy, located in the city centre, they required extra help with domestic tasks. Old Nora, who had been working tirelessly as a cook, was no longer able to handle all the sweeping, washing, ironing, and other chores in the large apartment. While the girls' father didn't mind his daughters taking over the household responsibilities. He welcomed Sarah enthusiastically, grateful for the thoughtful decision. Sarah, with her modest attire and impressive skill in managing household work, made a strong impression. Even Max Lundy, a university student, was captivated by her. She appeared more like an actress than a maid, her cheeks flushed with a mix of embarrassment and delight. Sarah struggled to hide her pleasure at the praise, creating a remarkable sight. The admiration from such a distinguished young man was genuinely flattering and intriguing, suggesting a potential deeper connection.

She devoted herself to her work with all the determination of her youth. Days, weeks, and months flew by. Although the relentless labour was far more demanding than her previous rural lifestyle, it paled in comparison to the satisfaction of building a new life in the city and working towards the career she desired. She knew she couldn't remain in service forever. She planned to save a portion of her earnings and, little by little, who knows... so many things could happen in life! A

chance encounter in a bustling and affluent place like the Lundy house was not out of the question... Her imagination, more powerful than any weapon, wove dreams of success.

At times, in the evening, as she finally lay in bed, memories of her mother, brothers, and Andy would float through her mind at the hazy edges of her drowsiness. She could hear once again to the songs of her hometown, the fishermen's chants, and the sound of waves beneath the trawler's keel. However, in her fatigued state, the visions slowly dissipated...

Now it was Max Lundy's smiling profile. He detached himself from the social scene and leaned over the poor deluded girl, paying her the kindest compliments as he always did. The young man must have had sympathy for the girl, judging by the familiar cordiality with which he treated her. He often visited the kitchen during gatherings, bringing her a small cake and stopping to smoke a cigarette with her. She, grateful for his kindness, busied herself with washing pots and pans.

In reality, Max didn't fully understand the effect he had on the girl's feelings. He found it very natural to respond to her generous and sensitive heart, which felt sorry to see her sacrificing so much without relief at such a young age, when life holds its best joys for us. Deep down, he was grateful for her thoughtful attention. She cleaned his study, perfumed the flowers on his desk, and neatly ironed his shirts and underwear with remarkable freshness. "Poor girl... Are you



tired?... Don't you want anything at all?" She looked at him with new light in her clear eyes and said, "I feel so good here... near you all'... I wrote to Mother telling her that I am happy!"

As the year was coming to a close, autumn was returning. The days were growing grey, the landscapes were becoming bleak, stained with rust, and covered with a layer of dead leaves, painting a melancholic picture.

Sarah had noticeably transformed. She had grown taller and slimmer, resembling the city's fashion. Her hair was now short and full, her shoes were snug, and her figure was impeccable. On Sundays, as she walked alongside the maid from downstairs and one could easily mistake her for the little mistress.

Despite enjoying a few films and dances during her free time, Sarah was grappling with a growing sense of exhaustion. The half-days spent in the laundry and on the floors to be polished

were taking their toll, leaving her feeling drained and fatigued.

Elena and Laura took over some of her chores, but they were busy with work, social life, and friends. Nora, increasingly tired, encouraged her with kind words but didn't lift a finger beyond cooking. However, her greatest sorrow was not this. She felt suffocated with pain because Max greeted her less often and seemed not to notice her or acknowledge the respect, she showed him. Was she deluded? Could it be that he didn't love her because of their different social backgrounds? She felt herself rebelling against the doubt of having cherished a dream. No, it couldn't be true. Max must be hiding his true feelings, and she loved him too much, now, with all the intensity of her eighteen years. Every word, every look, every courtesy from him, day after day, had fanned the flames of her love, which now threatened to burst into flames. She had never loved like this, not even Andy, so the past melancholy of her adolescence disappeared in the face of this first real torment of the heart.

Sarah and Nora had made a lot of effort to prepare for the reception at the Lundy house. The table and room were decorated with flowers and ornamental plates. Sarah expressed her concern to Nora about the increasing frequency of gala evenings. Nora explained that this time it couldn't be helped as it was the official engagement of a young gentleman.

Suddenly, Sarah became emotional and trembled, causing

the porcelain she was holding to slip from her hands and shatter. Concerned, Nora asked her what was wrong. Sarah explained that it was just dizziness due to tiredness, and Nora insisted that she go to bed. Nora took care of Sarah and cleaned up the broken pieces while making sure the roast didn't burn.

On that evening of the family's celebration, the unhappy girl endured a lot of suffering in her little room. Her silent pain was known only to the walls. Her sudden illness was an acceptable reason for her absence. However, the next day and the days that followed, her once lively face, now swollen and red from constant crying, caused deep concern. After three weeks of internal struggle, Sarah was just a shadow of her former self. The doctor recommended complete rest. Elena was supposed to accompany her back to her mother, providing extra money from the monthly allowance so she could take care of herself. On her departure, Sarah summoned the last of her strength as she offered Max a weak smile at the genuine concern in his eyes. He held her hands and wished her a speedy recovery. When she arrived, her mother welcomed her with open arms, and she could only surrender to her like a child, sobbing, "Mom, Mom, never again..." Andy, unwavering by her side, gently wiped her tears with the back of his hand. In that moment, their eyes met, a silent understanding passing between them, and from that day forward, they were inseparable. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 56

by Michele Molineris

VI. FINAL YEARS (1880-88)

251. Come with me! (1880)

In 1880, Sister Maria Mazzarello accompanied her daughters who were leaving for America to the port. After seeing them off, she intended to visit the houses in France. During that winter, she experienced an occasional dull ache in her side, causing her considerable discomfort. Despite this, she continued the journey with her missionary sisters. However, she was struck by a burning fever in Sampierdarena. After recovering a little, she embarked for Marseilles with the intention of visiting her daughters in France later. When she arrived at Saint-Cyr, she was hit by a violent pleurisy and stayed there for a month, suffering a great deal.

On her way back, she met Don Bosco in Nice and asked him whether she would every fully regain her strength. Don Bosco replied with a story: "Once upon a time," he said, "Death came knocking at a convent door. To the sister portress, who opened the door, Death said, "Come with me." But the portress replied that she could not, since there was no one to take her place. Without another word Death walked into the convent and kept telling everyone it met, "Come with me," whether she was a sister or a postulant or a pupil, even the



cook. But all answered that they could not heed its call because they still had a lot of things to do. Finally, Death approached the superior. "Come with me," it told her. She too presented her excuses why she could not. But this time Death did not back down and insisted, "The Superior must lead by example, even on the journey into eternity. So come, and don't hold back, because I cannot accept your excuses." What was she to do? Naught but bow her head and follow." Mother Mazzarello understood, but passed it off in fun, so as not to grieve the sisters who were with her. She passed away on the morning of 14 May 1881 at the age of 44. (*E.B.M.*, XV, 299).

252. Was humility not one of Don Bosco's virtues? (1880)

On January 30 Don Bosco went to say Mass for the Sisters of the Visitation. In that convent

lived a certain Mademoiselle Perier, a former pupil of the institute and niece of one of the superiors. Stricken with terminal cancer, she was awaiting her end. Receiving permission to enter the cloister, Don Bosco went to the infirmary, where he found several sick sisters, to each of whom he addressed words of comfort. Coming to the young lady's bedside, he asked her, "Why don't you ask for permission to get up? Come, rise."

"She cannot," the superior softly whispered. "She has terminal cancer."

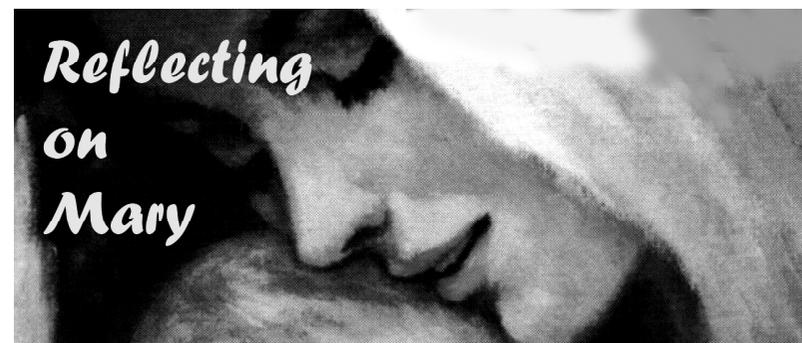
"Get up at noon," Don Bosco continued, "and have dinner with the others."

He blessed her and left. No sooner had he left the room than the sick girl began to say, "I no longer feel any pain. I am cured and I want to get up. Please give me my clothes." In fact her malignant tumour had vanished.



A curious event then took place. Don Bosco had told the mother superior to ask the doctor to confirm the miraculous recovery in writing. A practicing Catholic, the doctor took offense at the request and insisted on asking Do Bosco for an explanation. While he waited to be introduced, he remarked to Father Bologna, the director, "Isn't humility one of Don Bosco's virtues? Doesn't this request smack of vainglory? Is he trying to take advantage of this recovery for his own purpose?" Father Bologna tried to put the situation in the proper light, but he might as well have been talking to a stone wall. Then came the doctor's turn to see Don Bosco. No one knows what went on between them, but when an hour later Father Bologna pushed the door ajar to tell Don Bosco taht the people waiting outside were growing impatient, he saw that the doctor was on his knees in tears, his hands clasped as in prayer, and Don Bosco was in teh act of blessing him. When the doctor emerged from the room, he told Father Bologna, "No, it is not for himself. Not at all! It's for the sake of others and for Our Lady's glory!"

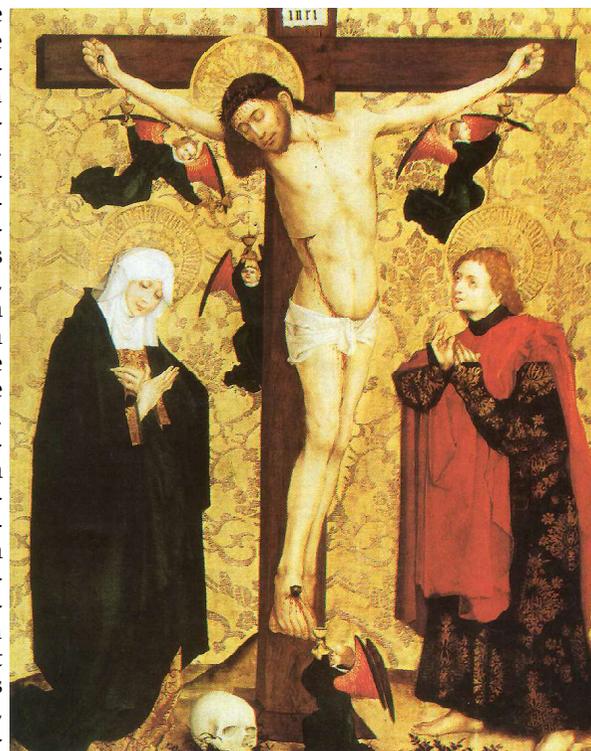
Later, Mademoiselle Perier became a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, and lived until 1886 when she died in the mother house at Nizza Monferrato. □



CO-REDEMPTION AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

by Adrienne von Speyr from *Mary in Redemption*

Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary's suffering takes on a unique and profound character. Unlike other mothers who experience the heart-wrenching loss of their sons, Mary stands in unwavering faith and obedience before her divine Son and his will. She is in a supernatural union with his suffering, but she cannot reach him in his abandonment. She is called to endure a suffering that initially appears to offer no hope, similar to the purifying suffering of purgatory.



Christ crucified assumes his mother into his death

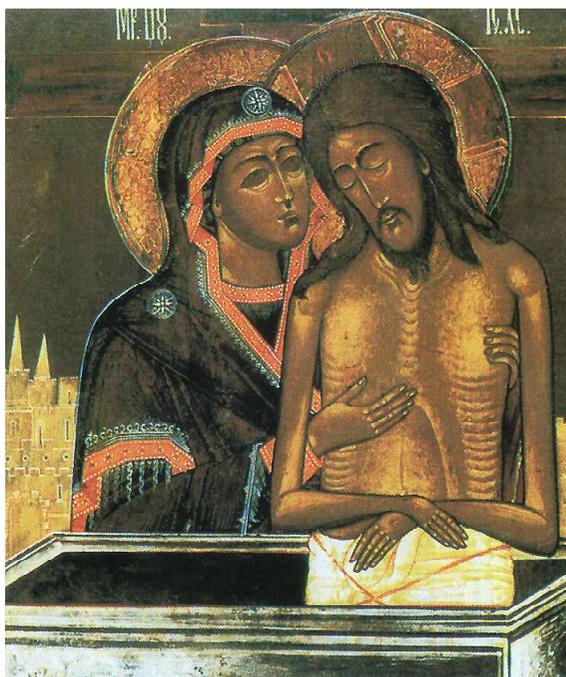
Mary experiences this fire that consumes the world's sin in her

soul, vividly witnessing it in the death of her Son. Mary is immersed in a fire that will purify many sinners in the future, a fire in which she suffers alongside the Lord without having sinned. She first experiences the purifying effects of the fire through her Son, who is also suffering and unaware of her own suffering. Even though she is without sin, the purifying fire burns within her, prefiguring the suffering that will benefit others. She does not see the effects immediately but will only see them when the Son reveals them to her, at Easter. Just as Mary had given form and life to her Son's humanity in his body, she now experiences his death, in a way that cannot be compared to any human act. It's not that the Son causes the Mother's death, but he incorporates it into his own death. This transcends all human understanding. While a lover may kill their beloved and then take their own life, this is a human act with its own significance.

Sharing in the Son's death

The involvement of the Mother in the death of the Son is not a simple process, but a deep connection with the Father: a path that goes beyond human understanding. In future, the martyrs will also be joined with the

Lord's death by consenting to it; however, their death will be physical. For Mary, it was a death of the soul, a profound sharing in the end of all that was of the Son and in the Son. He is not just a humiliated man, compelled to give up his life, his works, and his plans in a shameful death. He is a God, and his death is that of someone who is both God and who, in death, seems to falter in his mission. His once clear words and teachings now become obscure as he approaches death. In this most human event, the Mother is included in a way that is completely mysterious and incomprehensible to her. Only the Father and the Spirit perceive the unfolding. The Spirit, to whom the Son returns to the



Mary remains Mother even in her Son's death

Father, is the one who presents Mary's redemption to the Father, just as he brought Mary the seed of God. Sure! And something that happens in the darkness, just as the Spirit's shadow was. Even though much remained mysterious, everything beautiful and difficult was intertwined for Mary in the luminous mystery of being able to give the world the Messiah. Now, on the other hand, everything is cloaked in the terrible mystery of having to lose her only divine Son. And right now, in this moment, in this present that inexorably swallows up everything, even the past and the future, there is no other feeling but this loss. It is a human loss, but because it happens within a commitment to God, it is experienced in the atmosphere of God's sovereignty that can only be accessed through prayer. Mary's role as a mother goes beyond the death of her son, showcasing her enduring love. This is beautifully portrayed in a late 18th-century Russian icon from North Central Russia. A prayer at that moment, along with the Spirit, is sent up to heaven. Therefore, it is lived in an interior attitude already prepared by prayer, by the presence of the Son, by her consent, and by her special privilege. This prayer is so supported by all of God's gifts that it enables the mother to participate in the redemption of humanity, a concept that refers to Mary's role in the salvation of humanity alongside her Son. The energy released here is not limited to Mary in personal and earthly terms, but flows immediately and completely back into God, with all the possible effects

of her selfless surrender, as it becomes integrated into the work her Son has accomplished. The deep and sacred nature of the mutual relationship between Mary and her Son becomes visible: Mary gave birth to the Son for the purpose of redemption, and in turn, the Son "gives birth" to Mary for the purpose of co-redemption. It is a reciprocal relationship. Mary is present and does not fail. If she had refused in any way, perhaps the Son might have also refused her, but instead, as his mother, she accompanied him every step of the way. The role of the Mother is sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to the Spirit, the Mother is always connected to the divine-human nature of the Son, even in specific circumstances and even in death. It's not just about her actions, but about her very essence. Her motherhood is both physical and spiritual from the beginning and begins supernaturally with the angel's appearance. Only those who fail in their mission lose the grace of being accompanied by her from the very start. Since the Son chose her as Mother, Mary remains Mother even in the death of the Son. He chose her to work all things, and her role in redemption was already anticipated and included in redemption. She was already part of his redemption even when she gave birth to him. Giving birth to him was an act dedicated to her Son and his mission, an act that represented the divine-human mission of her Son. And Mary does not lose this significance: she remains the Mother, whether he dwells in her or hangs before her on the cross. □



MY VOCATION STORY

DON BOSCO IN RAINBOW LAND

Giulia Guddemi

A bishop from little Valaperta...to Peru. Monsignor Galbusera recounts the years spent in the service of the Church, in the world

Monsignor Gaetano Galbusera has had a profound and transformative journey as the Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of the city of Pucallpa in Peru. His return to Italy marks the end of a chapter filled with exciting and significant experiences, which he undoubtedly shares with us, inspiring and intriguing us all.

A story like his is extraordinary. He was originally from a small village like Casatenovo and even made it to South America following his faith journey. "I was born in 1940 in Rimoldo, a small hamlet of Casatenovo, in a patriarchal peasant family," he says. Looking back, after a long experience around the world, I have to recognize in the family the presence of so many values were the strength of my people: perseverance, honesty, the family with its solidity and concern for the upbringing of children, solidarity, and above all, the Christian faith."

For a life choice such as his, family support was essential. He explains that this support was present and considered from the beginning. However, we should also acknowledge the influence of the other environments he frequented during his childhood and early years. These environ-

ments undoubtedly contributed to instilling the values that led him to pursue his current life path. He expresses gratitude for the support and values he received from his family, primary school, and the oratory. These values allowed him to grow, face life's challenges, and choose a path of service and vocation. They encouraged him to think big, dream beyond his circumstances, and cultivate ideals while striving for something greater than himself. He emphasizes the importance of Christian values, which form the fabric of their culture and are shared by the community.

The values mentioned are the foundation of entire communities, even small hamlets like Rimoldo and Valaperta. As explained by Monsignor Gaetano, those



very hamlets had been the starting point for many other religious who had followed a similar path. He says, "My choice of life is not original or extraordinary. Those familiar with our history know that other missionaries have left for Brazil, Argentina, and Africa. The Gospel of Jesus has deeply influenced our homes and has inspired strong decisions supported by families and the community. It was faith in the Gospel that gave us the courage to move beyond our 'smallness' and engage with the world. If I'm not mistaken, the first missionary left for Brazil in 1910, Father Samuele Galbusera, a Salesian."

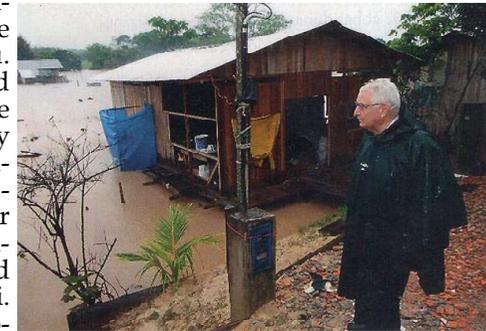
The decision to go to Peru was not the only objective for the peasant of Casatenovo. It was a path that unfolded unexpectedly, sparked by a request from outsiders. Before South America, the cleric had experienced many much in Italy and underwent rigorous training, all of which shaped his future. "I became a Salesian, a son of Don Bosco, following an open path. A vocation demands total availability: to go where they send you and where there is a need. In the beginning, you don't know what your call holds; you are faced with one surprise after another. And certainly, I never expected to be called all the way to Peru.

As a young priest, I worked in a reformatory in Arese with the Larabites, as they were called. Then, I was also with high school students in Brescia, and after that, I was asked to be a parish priest, first in Arese and then in Sesto San Giovanni. I was also the Superior (Pro-

vincial) of the Adriatic region. And then, out of the blue, came the proposal for Peru," says the bishop, a testament to his dedication and adaptability.

In 1997, I was called to Rome by the Superiors who proposed that I go to Latin America to direct a new seminary opening in the Andes at 3,000 meters. The seminary had just been founded by Father Ugo De Censi, co-founder of *Operazione Mato Grosso*, a movement with its groups and volunteers on a mission in Casatenovo. I accepted the proposal and served as a seminary rector for ten years. The project aimed to train priests with the experience of working and sharing with poor people, open to pastoral life, living in direct contact with people far from the clerical spirit, with generous charity. Then, to my surprise, I was asked to become a bishop in the Amazon region.

"My diocese, located along the Ucayali River in Peru and extending into Brazil with the Amazon River, has been a site of first-time evangelization for the past fifty years. The local population consists of a minority of indigenous people and a majority of mestizo people. The area faces significant challenges including poverty,



limited access to education and healthcare, as well as issues resulting from deforestation, illegal mining, and pollution. Most of the population resides in Pucallpa, which is experiencing rapid growth but also grappling with serious economic and social issues. The region has a strong presence of 'popular piety' with widespread religious practices such as processions, the feast days of saints, and vigils. While missionaries are dedicated to nurturing a strong and committed faith among the people, the Church's pastoral work also involves addressing social, environmental, educational, health, and safety concerns. Pope Francis has articulated the complexities of the region in his document 'Dear Amazonia,' which I encourage you to read."

The primary objective of the experience in Peru was undoubtedly that of a religious mission, which was to serve others in need and spread the Word of the Gospel. Monsignor Gaetano has been an exemplary model during his 12 years of activity. He has organized pastoral visits to the communities in the 'jungle' and facilitated various activities to serve the population, including a school, a small hospital, various parishes, kindergartens for children, and training for seminarians. Describing the people he encountered, Monsignor Gaetano mentioned that the people of the Amazon have their own culture, are closely tied to their land and nature, have their own beliefs, and are devoted to fishing. However, due to numerous problems, especially the young people tend to move towards the city, abandoning their traditions. He also em-



phasized that Peruvians are very open and welcoming.

Unfortunately, my recent experience in Peru has come to an end. In hindsight, it's natural to compare Italian and Peruvian civilizations. Father Gaetano explains that globalization brings the attitudes and trends of developed societies to poor countries, especially to young people. He mentioned fashion, music, virtual culture, and consumerism as examples. The contrast between the few who can afford these trends and the majority living in hardship is always evident. Those who are not familiar with the third world may not realize the extent of our consumerism and indifference. Father Gaetano promptly refers to the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, emphasizing the need for a more austere life, serious concern for the environment, and a rediscovery of traditional values such as family, solidarity, and the Gospel. It is also essential for young people to embrace strong ideals. □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Masks

A woman, watching a movie of a team of surgeons operating: "The atrocious fees they charge - I don't wonder they wear masks!"

What's wrong?

"I can't imagine," said the indignant woman to the psychiatrist, "why my family made me come to see you. What's wrong with loving pancakes?"

"Nothing at all," said the doctor, "I love them myself."

"Goody, goody," said the woman. "You must come to my house. I've got trunks and trunks full of them!"

Polite

"What dirty hands you have, Tommy!" said the teacher. "What would you say if I came to school like that?"

"I wouldn't say nothing," replied Tommy, "I'd be too polite."

Soothing

It was a summer hotel. The night was hot and the fretful baby cried lustily.

"Tut! Tut! We can't disturb our neighbours this way," said the fond father, taking the child in his arms.

"Let me sing him to sleep."

He had been singing to the little one for a short time, when there was a knock at the door and a voice said: "There's a sick lady next door, and if it's the same to you, would you mind letting the baby cry instead of you singing to it?"

Good for the fields

"That was a good speech our candidate made on the agricultural situation, wasn't it?"

"It wasn't bad," said the farmer, "but a couple o' nights of good rain, would've done a heap more good."

Overeating

Murphy's landlady said, "Pat, I'm afraid I shall have to charge another two dollars. You've been such a big eater."

"For heaven's sake don't do that!" said Murphy. "I'm killing myself already trying to eat what I'm paying for now."

Precautions

A fellow got into the bus with a 50 kg bomb in his arms and sat down.

"What's that you've got there?" asked the conductor.

"A delayed-time-bomb. I am taking it to the police station."

"Goodness! You can't keep a thing like that in your lap. Shove it under your seat."

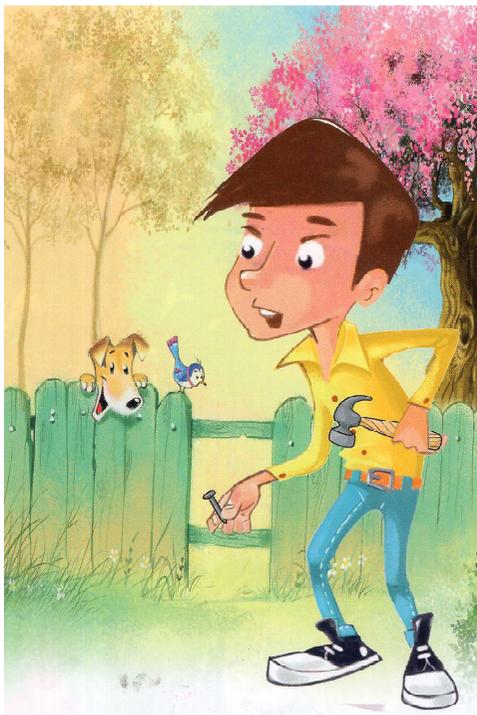
Oh, Love!

"Dearest Annabelle," wrote Oswald, who was hopelessly in love. "I could swim the mighty ocean - for one glance from your dear eyes. I could walk through a wall of flame - for one touch of your little hand. I would leap the wildest stream - for a word from your sweet lips." As always, your Oswald.

P.S. "I'll be over Saturday night, if it doesn't rain." □

NAILS

Once upon a time, there was a boy with a difficult character. He was easily incensed, quarrelsome, and had a quick temper. One day, his father handed him a bag of nails and invited him to hammer a nail into the fence that surrounded their yard every time he got angry with someone. On the first day, the boy planted thirty-eight nails, each one a testament to his fiery temper. But as the days turned into weeks, he began to notice a change. The nails became harder to drive, and he found himself pausing, taking a breath, and reconsidering his anger. Then, one evening, he told his father that he had not been angry with anyone that day. His father, with a knowing smile, told him, "That is very nice. Now, take a nail out of the fence for every day that you are not angry with anyone." After a while, the boy could tell his father that he had removed all the nails. His father then took him by the hand, led him to the fence and said, "My son, this is very nice, but look: the fence is full of holes. The wood will never be the same again. When you say something in anger, you cause wounds similar to these holes in the people you love. And no matter how many times you apologize, the wounds remain." □



Human beings are fragile and vulnerable. They all carry a label that says: 'Handle with care, fragile goods.'

COOPERATING IN THE WORK OF THE SAVIOUR

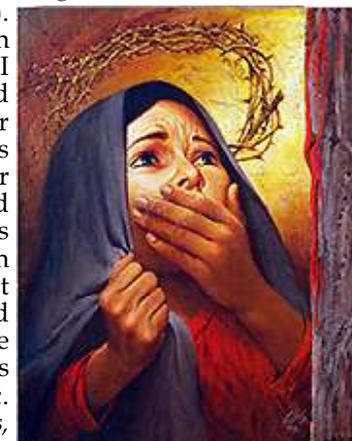
15 March '65. *St. Paul VI to the theologians of the IV Marian Congress*
(From the address.)

The approach emphasized by the Ecumenical Council in the final chapter of the Constitution, "De Ecclesia," which is dedicated to the "Blessed Mary, Virgin Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church," will provide valuable guidance as you continue your work.

The written pages are extremely insightful in the way they address the theme of Our Lady in Sacred Scripture, considering the ecclesiastical Magisterium, patristic interpretations, and modern exegetical studies. We hope that your thoughtful contributions will guide us to a more sensitive approach to the message of the Spirit, who presents Mary as the highest and most faithful model of a life fully open to God's will, and deeply involved in the Mystery of Salvation through love and dedication.

The Council outlines Mary's exceptional role in the work of our salvation, emphasizing her cooperation through conceiving, begetting, nourishing, presenting, and suffering with Jesus. By her obedience, faith, hope, and ardent charity, she was a mother to us in the order of grace. This maternal role of Mary in the economy of grace continues without end until the eternal crowning of all the chosen ones (*Constitution on the Church*, nos. 61-62).

Let the conviction take deep root in hearts, as Our Predecessor Leo XIII said, that there is nothing dearer and more desirable for us than to shelter ourselves in the shadow of Mary's patronage. We place in her hands our thoughts and actions, innocence and repentance, anguish and joy, prayers and vows, in short, all our things, with full confidence. We trust that what would be less worthy to be presented to God by our hands will be acceptable to God himself if offered by the hands of his most holy Mother. (Lett. Enc. *Octobri mense*, 22 sept. 1891; *Acta Leonis*, XI, pp. 299 ss.) □



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Like Mary, the Church is also a virgin and, in giving birth to the children of God, she maintains faith, hope, and charity without compromise.

(St. John Paul II)

Don Bosco's Madonna, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay. The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors.

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