

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
A Phone Call.....3

Between Conflict and Consideration
 - *Mons. Gianpaolo Dianin*.....4

The Hearts of Jesus and Mary
 Brimming over with treasure
 - *Fr. Chino Biscontin*.....7

Believe You've Got What it Takes
 - *Anastasia Dias*.....9

Leaven for a New Humanity
 - *Marcella Orsini*.....11

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
 St. Norbert (June 6)
 - *Ian Pinto, sdb*.....13

Lectio Divina: The Most Holy Body
 and Blood of Christ
 - *Fr. Dinesh Vasava, sdb*.....16

Quietspaces: Salvation of Little Things
 - *Pope Francis*.....18

The Mysterious Staircase
 - *Pierluigi Menato*.....20

Fioretti of Don Bosco - 53
 - *Michele Molineris*24

Reflecting on Mary: The Virgin Who
 Listens - *Silvio Roggia*.....28

Vocation Story: Fr. Gabriel Romero
 - *O. Pori Mecoi*.....30

In A Cheerful Mood.....31

The Apple *B.F.*.....34



*Blessed are you,
 O Virgin Mary, by the
 Lord God Most High,
 above all women
 on the earth;
 for he has so exalted
 your name,
 that your praise shall
 be undying on our lips.*

(From the Common of Our Lady)

From The Editor's Desk
 A PHONE CALL

Last summer, I got a call late one evening. An American voice at the other end said, 'Hi there Ian, Do you know who this is?' I thought for a moment, but without success. 'This is Edmond,' said the mysterious caller. I paused in puzzlement, and heard a chuckle at the other end. That laugh stirred a memory.

'Edmond!' I gasped in astonishment. Edmond and I had been in college together many years ago. We had studied the same subjects, and had shared the same common interests. We held many a heated discussion over cold cups of coffee in those far-off days in our rooms at the Bradley Flats. But then our ways parted. Edmond had gone to the States and gradually we had lost contact with each other.

I had no trouble recognizing him the next day, when we met for a coffee at our favourite Coffee Shop in Colaba. Like myself, his hair was showing generous streaks of grey, and his face had lost its freshness. But there was no mistaking those sharp, bright eyes, or that infectious smile. As we talked, I could even detect snatches of his old Bombay accent through his American drawl.

We had a lot to talk about, as we caught up with each other's stories. I told him about my years of training for the priesthood, and my appointments since then. I learned from Edmond about his early struggles as a student in Boston, and I heard about his wife Alia and their three children. And of course we reminisced about the old times.

Probably the best thing about our reunion was the ease with which we could be together. Although our lives had taken very different directions since we had last met, over twenty years ago, we quickly found that we were no strangers. Any initial awkwardness quickly evaporated and the old frankness and easy chatter reasserted themselves. In one sense, it was like the old days, almost as if we had never been apart.

It's inevitable, I suppose, that we drift away from others, even from those to whom we once were close. Our lives take their peculiar twists and turns, and our paths separate. Still, it's reassuring to know that friendships can survive an absence of many years and long distances.

We sometimes drift away from God like that too. It's not so much that we deliberately turn our backs on him, but our hearts become preoccupied with other things, and a distance opens between us. Still, it's easy to make contact again, and when we do, we find that nothing has really changed, that God is no stranger. Now that Easter and Pentecost are over and we're getting to the 'rough-and-tumble-of-life' why not pick up the phone and make that call?

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

BETWEEN CONFLICT AND CONSIDERATION

by Mons Gianpaolo Dianin

We need to learn to manage conflicts, grow in the art of dialogue, respecting the reasons of others with the common goal of safeguarding the relationship.

Conflict is part of life. It is an aspect that inhabits all relationships and finds its roots in the fact that we are different. We think and feel differently. We defend our reasons and try to win over the other.

Our character weighs on conflicts: the touchiness, the arrogance, the fragility that leads one to defend oneself by attacking, the difficulty of accepting the reasons of the other, the claim to a truth that, in reality, is always more complex than personal reasons.

We all have to learn how to handle conflict, grow in the art

of dialogue and communication, respect the reasons of others, and in the style of confrontation that should be respectful and with the common goal of safeguarding the relationship.

It often happens that conflict degenerates into violence when one intentionally tries to harm the other. One may even go so far as to solve the problem by eliminating the other. Conversely, conflict recognises an opposition but intends to address the problem by maintaining the relationship. Violence emerges when one cannot stand in the conflict and experience it as an element that is part of every re-



Learning to process defeat and rejection is essential; Psalm 119 expresses it this way: 'Good for me if I have been humiliated so that I may learn your decrees.'

lationship. In conflict, it is not the goodness or otherwise of the person that is at issue because we all have our merits and limitations. Still, the hard work of caring for the relationship is at stake, and if the relationship is healthy, it cannot fail to include the dimension of conflict.

The other, always different from me, can be an adversary without being an enemy. But if one of us constantly looks in the mirror and repeats to himself that he is right, he ends up convincing himself that he has the truth in his pocket and loses the humility to always seek it. That is why confrontation and conflict are necessary: they are the path to a truth that is always more than my reasons.

Parents are often happy to have a peaceful and quiet, good, yielding child who never quarrels with others. The opportunity to quarrel and to do so is, instead, significant. Pedagogist Daniele Novara writes that quarrelsome children seek, in their own way, confrontation,

they should certainly be helped, but those elaborate conflicts are part of the educational path. Violence is also the result of being prevented from quarrelling when they were children because no one helped them manage their emotions, passions and anger.

Often, the background of violence hides a marked emotional fragility, an inability to cope with pain, abandonment, fear, loneliness, and all the evolutionary challenges we have to deal with on our life path. The impression is that our children are overprotected, live happiness built on the immediate gratification of every desire, have received few no's and are not used to a healthy revolt.

The logic of a conflict also includes defeat, which must be acknowledged and processed. Removing it without processing it is illusory because it will re-emerge and be transfigured into frustration or the desire for revenge or vengeance.

If I do not recognise the other as being other than me, I am faced with two paths at the moment of conflict: engulf or destroy him. On the other hand, a healthy relationship is based on respect, that is, on recognising the other's diversity, on a sense of limitation because I do not have the truth, and on responsibility because no individual act is without social consequences. Every relationship is a practical experience but also an ethical one. □

**THE HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY:
BRIMMING OVER WITH TREASURE**

by Fr Chino Biscontin

A humble Frenchwoman, Margaret Mary Alacoque, dedicated herself to spreading devotion to the Heart of Jesus following several apparitions to show his infinite mercy to all.

In the first half of the 17th century, a book by a Dutch theologian, Cornelius Otto Jansen, entitled *Augustinus*, was published. The ecclesiastical authorities condemned it, but it became very popular, especially among the intellectual and religious elite, giving rise to a current of thought called 'Jansenism'. It provoked a pessimistic spirituality, made up above all fear and frigidity. It spread mainly in France but also Lombardy and Tuscany."

According to Jansen, after original sin, man can only do evil. Only grace can enable (it would be better to say compel) man to do good. But grace is not given to everyone, but only to a minority of the predestined. For most humanity, there can be nothing but a destiny of condemnation.

A humble (and also suffering and often humiliated) French nun, St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), in the Parisian convent of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial, called by Jesus and on his instructions, succeeded in spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A devotion that emphasized the Lord's love for everyone, the trust in his infinite mercy and the sweetness of complete confidence in him.

St. Margaret Mary wrote: "The Divine Heart is an ocean full of

treasures of every kind. There poor souls can throw every request; it is an ocean full of joy where all our sadness can be drowned; an ocean of humility where all our folly can be submerged; an ocean of mercy for those in anguish; an ocean of love in which to immerse our poverty."

As can be seen, it was different from the Jansenist spirituality, trusting, soothing, full of gratitude and hope, which placed the union of love with Jesus at the centre. St Margaret also gave a form to the devotion to the Heart of Jesus: she suggested approaching Eucharistic Communion every first Friday of the month for nine Fridays in a row, assuring devotees that they would undoubtedly be saved in this way. In the Jansenist approach, Eucharistic Communion was rare and surrounded by much fear. She also suggested devoting an hour each Thursday to meditating on how much Jesus loved us, recalling his agony in Gethsemane. She finally said that the Friday after *Corpus Christi* should be the feast of the Sacred Heart for the whole Church, which was done in 1765. In this way, this sweet devotion of love became universally popular."

Saint John Eudes (1601-1680), a Norman priest full of zeal and

charity, who was also a devotee of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is credited with spreading devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which, with Pius XII, became a holy feast of the entire Church, to be celebrated the day after the Feast of the Sacred Heart. The Saint, in fact, always kept the two devotions united, explaining that for nine months, the Heart of Jesus had pulsed next to the Heart of Mary and that at the foot of the cross, Mary had shared the suffering love of her Son for our salvation.

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus draws attention to his actual and

concrete humanity in everything similar to ours except sin. It emphasizes as we have said, his love made visible by the lance that pierced him on the cross: a wound that remains open even in the body of the Risen Lord. And from that wound of love, the gift of the Holy Spirit flows out towards us.

Devotion to the Heart of Mary introduces a note of maternal tenderness into our way of living the faith and, in the end, also into our way of conceiving of God, who, as John Paul I taught: "He is father; more still, he is mother." (Angelus of 10 September, 1978).□



BELIEVE YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES

by Anastasia Dias

Will you call the workers? I'm leaving for the city tonight. Tell them I'd like to see them immediately," demanded the boss.

The assistant nodded his head and beckoned the three workers. All three came up to the master's office hurriedly and nervously.

The first one was brilliant and talented. He had established himself in the company. The boss gave him five bags of gold because he trusted him enough and was sure that he would double it in no time.

The second was dedicated, hardworking and good-willed. He worked long days and nights to achieve his dreams. The boss gave him two bags and felt sure he would double it with some extra effort.

The third fellow was insecure, shifty, afraid and reluctant. The master thought: "Let's give him a chance; he might change." The master gave him a bag of gold.

With his public relations skills, the first worker knew all the right people in town. He used his skills and doubled the money in no time. The second guy worked day and night, not sleeping even some nights in a row, and surprisingly, he doubled the money after quite a few days of hard

work. The third man was petrified. He couldn't sleep at night. He was afraid that the boss had given him money. He was scared of what would happen if he lost the money. He was worried he wouldn't be able to make enough money. He was afraid to face his boss when he returned. One day, he thought to himself. "I can't do this anymore."

So, he caved in, overcome by his fears. He got what he thought was a bright idea: he hid the gold where no one would find it. Then, he went home alone and fell into a deep sleep.

This story sounds exceptionally familiar, and we all know how it ends. There are many interpretations of this parable of Jesus. I've been thinking about how it applies to my life.

Last year, I began a Ph.D. program in the United States of America. I thought all was going to be great; I knew I had to work hard, and I knew things would be different. But when I came to the US, I realized: "Oh my goodness! Things are so different."

I'm going to be brutally honest because that's who I am. I struggled with my coursework, thinking of myself as a failure. I had trouble sleeping at night. I spoke to my Program Coordinator, and she said, "Maybe this isn't the right

thing for you." That's all I could hear everyone saying "This isn't the right thing for you." I believed these people. However, I possess this quality: I talked to multiple people, gathered opinions, and then did what I thought was right.

Then, I heard someone say: "Hey, you've come so far. You are most definitely very good at Math, and maybe this isn't the kind of Math you're good at why not try something else?" Again, I would love to say that I believed the voice. And maybe I did because I did tried again. I switched from a PhD in Pure Mathematics to a PhD in Applied Mathematics, and I was like... "Oh, my goodness. This is a perfect fit."

I haven't told you what happened in my life between the switch. I faced many days of fear, thinking, 'What if?' I had multiple sleepless nights and thoughts of leaving everything here and going back home to my comfort zone. That's what many people choose to do. Forgive me. I do not intend to judge them, nor am I in a position to judge them since I felt the same way. Until one day, I looked at myself in the mirror and said: "You haven't come this far only to let go. You still have a long way to go. Remember, it's only over when you believe it's over." After this, I spent days working hard to get into the Applied Math program.

I talked to people and told them about my background, my research interests, and my career plans.

Finally, one morning, I got an email saying a decision had

been made, and I had entered the program!

I was elated. I couldn't help thinking about the challenges I had been through. Notice how my life changed from being like the third worker's life to the second worker's life, and now I'm aspiring to be like the first one. I could have believed what people thought and felt about me or what I thought about myself and pulled out. I could have given in to my anxious thoughts and left. I could have returned home to my safety net and lived there happily ever after. But I have realized that everything beautiful, wonderful and worthwhile in this life is worth the struggle. That is why I didn't give up.

I am still figuring out my way through Grad School. There are challenges at every step of the way. Life could be better here, but I've convinced myself it is worth the time and effort.

My dear friend, if you are going through a hard time like I did just a few months ago, I have something to tell you:

"Why do you underestimate yourself? Come back with regained confidence. The world is waiting for you. Get up, get going! (Taken from a comment I read on a YouTube video) □



LEAVEN FOR A NEW HUMANITY

*Their names are Christian, Manuel, Edwin, Tony...
and they set off to the four corners of the world
to tell the story of Jesus by their lives.*

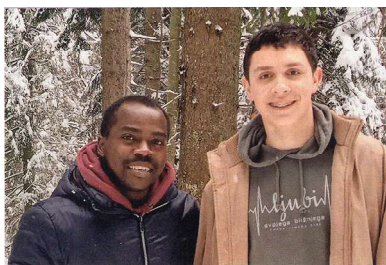
It is time for more extraordinary generosity in the Congregation. A universal and missionary Congregation." This was how the Rector Major launched his appeal to Salesians worldwide to set a goal for that year's growth in generosity.

The need for support, encouragement and the vitality of the strong values of this type of life has remained at the heart of the Salesian mission. It has ensured that the Sons of Don Bosco have never abandoned the most fragile, motivating themselves, with their specific creativity, in the search for solutions of proximity and solidarity.

Every year, numerous young Salesians eagerly embrace the missionary call, beginning or continuing in the Provinces and Delegations of their destination a transformative process of 'inculturation of faith and charisma.' This process, at times, alters and at times, completely upends the paradigm to which we are commonly accustomed, showcasing the dynamic and evolving nature of the Salesian mission.

This was the case of Cyprian Mbaziira and Germain Maevatoky, two young Salesian missionaries in Slovenia and Syria, respectively, whom we met and who told us their stories.

Cyprian: I am a missionary from Uganda to Europe. My name is Cyprian Mbaziira. I am



A missionary is a sign of God's love for the people he is sent to. So, as a Salesian missionary, my prayer to God is to be a sign of his love and goodness among the young people of beautiful Slovenia (Cyprian)

a young Salesian from Uganda in the African Great Lakes Delegation (AGL), which includes my country, Rwanda, and Burundi.

I took part in the 152nd missionary expedition last year and, after a time of discernment with the General Councillor for Missions, Fr Alfred Maravilla and receiving the missionary cross from the hands of the Rector Major Fr Angel Fernández Ártime, in Valdocco, I was sent as a missionary to Slovenia.

I spent almost a year in Slovenia. I resided in the provincial house in the capital, Ljubljana. I lived in a large community with pastoral activities such as a parish, a youth centre, a student hostel, a music school, a pre-novitiate and a printing shop.

In addition to attending the Slovenian language course organised by the university's Fac-

ulty of Philosophy, I collaborated in the youth centre's activities. I recently received a new mission from provincial Fr Marko Kognik to be a teacher at the Salesian Institute in Zelimlje, about 19 km from Ljubljana.

My formation for the Salesian mission started nine years ago after I finished secondary school in my home country. In March 2013, I began my journey with a six-month experience as an aspirant at the Salesian Primary School in Bombo.

Later, while learning French, I continued the same experience at the Salesian Institute in Ngozi, Burundi.

After a year in Burundi, I went to Rwanda, where I stayed for five years. In Rwanda, I attended the pre-novitiate, and on 16 August 2016, after a year of novitiate, I took my first religious vows.

During my novitiate year, I first expressed my desire to become a missionary. After my profession of first religious vows, I studied Philosophy for three more years in Rwanda, after which the Provincial Fr Pierre-Celestin Ngoboka sent me back to Uganda for practical training in the Namugongo community in Kampala, where the Salesians run a school and a public chapel. During my second year of training, on 30 January, before the feast of Don Bosco, I wrote a letter to the Rector Major expressing my availability to work in the missions.

The Salesian charism is a very rich one. It has much to offer, especially to those who open their doors to it. I will talk about three things: love, optimism and joy.

A missionary is a sign of God's love for the people he is sent to.

So, as a Salesian missionary, my prayer to God is to be a sign of his love and goodness among the young people of beautiful Slovenia.

At Namugongo, this was my inspiration, and my daily motto was "Always be happy!"

And I assure you that this has worked wonders in maintaining a joyful atmosphere in and out of the classroom. This is my wish, my prayer to God, that He will make me His instrument to witness to Him as an apostle of joy and optimism wherever He sends me or the community.

There was a time when many European missionaries went to different parts of the world to spread the Gospel's good news.



Besides preaching, they realised that people had other needs and began to change their lives.

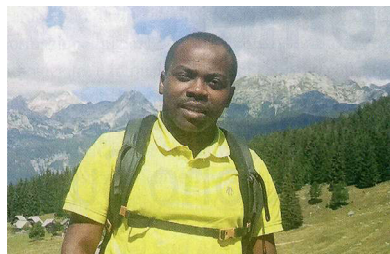
They built schools, hospitals, roads, churches, wells, etc. And in Europe? Is it the same the case today? My answer is no. People do not need wells, schools, roads, hospitals or churches. The only thing people need in our beautiful old continent of Europe (the one that has evangelised other parts of the world, my country, Uganda, included) is Christ.

The Faith is in crisis, believers and vocations are fewer and fewer, so there is an urgent need to renew the activity of the Church and the Salesian charism here and now, a Church that must approach

non-believers and promote vocations to religious life.

If I had to sum up in three words what the pillars of my Salesian mission in Europe are, I would say: Prayer, Love and Joy.

Being a missionary is a beautiful thing, though not as easy as we sometimes think it is. It requires strength, courage, humility and a lot of patience. There is no place we can separate ourselves from God through prayer. So, love and joy come together in this inspiring and supportive group. I am sure and convinced that love and joy can change the



During my missionary training and discernment, I imagined the suffering of peoples. In the war and the desire grew in me to go to a place where I could be useful as a peace maker.

world and open the door to eternity for those who practise them, like Mother Teresa 'the apostle of love' who happily transformed life in the poor streets of Calcutta and became a saint. I live my mission praying that I may continue to serve with joy and be among those who will rejoice with Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians, and the other saints in heaven.

Germain and his mission in Syria

My name is Germain Maevatoky. I was born in the delegation

of Madagascar (MDG), but I am currently a young missionary in Syria, in the Salesian Province Middle East (MOR).

I arrived in Aleppo on 2 July 2022 and will stay there for a year to learn English, Modern Standard Arabic and Syrian Arabic.

On 21 September 2021, I arrived in Italy at the end of my first year of training for the new missionaries of the 152nd Missionary Expedition.

During my stay in Italy, I studied Italian for seven months at the Salesian community in Salerno. Then, the Provincial told me I had to go to Cairo, Egypt, to wait for my visa to enter Syria.

I stayed in Egypt for two months, then received my visa for Syria and left for Damascus, from where, finally, after a few days, I went to Aleppo.

I believe the heart of my mission is to be a sign and bearer of God's Love for young Syrians, so tried by more than ten years of war.

My most significant difficulty for now is the language; patience and time are needed to learn it. We communicate in English or French, but despite the language limits and cultural differences, I was very touched that the young people welcomed me without fear or reticence. They are friendly, generous and open to spreading a culture of peace among themselves and their families.

I expressed my desire to turn my long-distance empathy into concrete actions.

Today, as a missionary in Syria, my heart aches, but my primary mission is to bring God's love to young people with a smile and joy. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. NORBERT OF XANTEN (JUNE 6)

Ian Pinto, sdb

I am sure you are well aware of Paul's conversion story. How he was thrown down by a bright light while on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. You must also be aware of the conversion story of Francis of Assisi. After a powerful experience following his imprisonment for participating in civil war, Francis completely renounced the things of this world and embraced a life of a wandering ascetic. If you combine the elements of these two conversion stories, you will find that they match the conversion story of St. Norbert.



enviable physique, and a sharp intelligence. He put these gifts to good use and excelled at everything he put his hand and mind to. He achieved great academic success and won the appreciation of everyone. His wagon was seemingly hitched to the highest star. There were no apparent limits to what he could achieve and Norbert had the world at his feet.

CONVERSION STORY

Norbert was born in Xanten, Germany in 1080. His father's family was highly influential and wealthy with connections as high as the royal family of Germany. His mother came from another of Germany's influential families, the House of Lorraine. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Norbert enjoyed the best of everything. He could have whatever he wanted and not only on account of his family's wealth: he was gifted with a handsome face, an

In those days, the greatest dignity, second perhaps only to being a member of the Royal Family, was to be a holder of Ecclesiastical office. Bishops and Cardinals were almost considered to be princes, and from that era, we have the term that is thankfully no longer in use to refer to bishops as 'Princes of the Church.' There remains a fair amount of pomp and fuss surrounding the

bishop today but it is nowhere near what was practiced in yesteryears.

Norbert was looking to further his prospects in life and so he sought to acquire ecclesiastical office. He was made a Canon in his native place and was initiated into ecclesiastical life by being ordained a sub-deacon. This meant nothing to him other than a stepping stone into greater extravagance and pomp. Therefore, there was not even the slightest change in his lifestyle. He was every bit the hedonist he was before. He was a sucker for fun and remained the life of every party. He was not interested in receiving Holy Orders for fear that it would restrain his worldly pursuits.

However, one fine day, as he was riding on his horse to a village called Freten, he had a life-changing experience. The sky suddenly darkened and a fierce storm raged. Completely exposed in a village meadow with no shelter in sight, Norbert decided to outrun the storm. A bolt of lightning struck the ground a few meters from him and both horse and rider were flung to the wet earth. Such was the force of the lightning that Norbert lay unconscious for over an hour. When he came to his senses, he was overcome with fear and a queer sense of remorse. He raised a prayer to God asking, "Lord, what would you have me do?" and the Lord answered him, "Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it."

Humbled by the experience, Norbert decided to abandon his

wayward lifestyle and make reparation for all the sins he had committed. He resigned his position in the Imperial Court and retired to the Benedictine Abbey of Siegburg for prayer, self-reflection and mortification. He put himself completely in the hands of the Abbot, Cono. To show his gratitude to the Abbot for his guidance and compassion, Norbert set up an Abbey at Fürstenberg with his own money and on a piece of land that belonged to him. After a few years of seclusion and discernment, Norbert felt that he should seek ordination to the priesthood and dedicate his life to Jesus and the Gospel.

MAN OF GOD

Norbert presented himself to the Bishop of Cologne and asked to be ordained. The Bishop accepted and after a brief period of preparation, ordained him a priest. Following his ordination, Norbert returned to the Abbey at Siegburg for a 40-day retreat after which he returned to Xanten and celebrated his first mass there. On that occasion, he chose to preach about the ephemeral character of worldly pleasures and on exact performance of religious duty. Many of the clergy in attendance that day were shocked by the words that came out of his mouth. Many grumbled at him and one even dared to spit on his face! Norbert remained steadfast and unperturbed. He had discovered God and was set on fulfilling God's will in his life.

Norbert chose to renounce all possessions and embraced a life of evangelical poverty. He sought

and acquired permission from the Pope to become a missionary preacher. For several years, he travelled across Germany, Belgium and France preaching repentance, peace and moral conversion. While on his missionary journeys, Norbert lived a life of utter simplicity and trust in Providence. Such was his austerity that those who wished to follow him simply could not sustain themselves. Three of his closest disciples died of illness as their bodies were too weak to fight it. Nevertheless, his reputation preceded him wherever he went and he always had around him a band of faithful disciples. In 1119, Pope Callixtus II, seeing the good he was doing and hearing of his sanctity, asked him to found a religious society in the diocese of Laon in France.

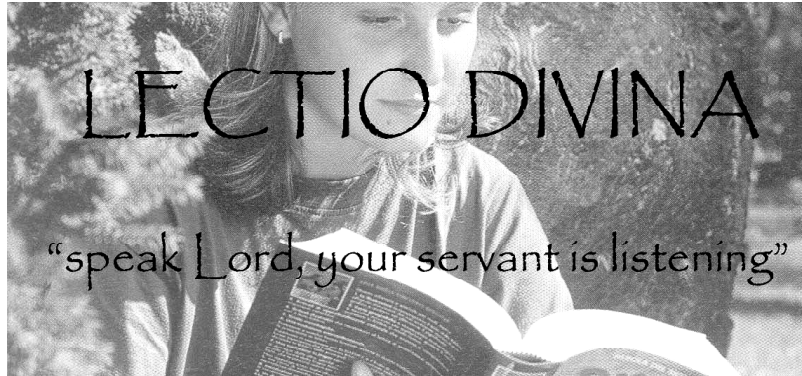
THE NORBERTINES

Since he was at Prémontré in France at the time of founding the Order of Canons Regular in 1120, the name given to them was Premonstratensians. The Order was dedicated to preaching, pastoral work and education. Norbert adopted the rule of Augustine and integrated elements from the Cistercian Order due to his close acquaintance with St. Bernard of Clairvaux. The Premonstratensians who later came to be called by their founder's name, Norbertines, had the appearance of monks but were not monks since they engaged in active ministry. Hence, they were called Canons Regular. Norbert intended that his followers remain active in their pastoral service while respecting the monastery as a haven for asceticism and contem-

plation. At the time of founding the Order there were 13 members excluding Norbert; the following year, the number had risen to 40! The Norbertines attracted vocations from Germany, France, Belgium and Hungary, and began expanding in these countries.

Norbert grew in popularity as an effective preacher. He was instrumental in combatting heretical teachings in various places. Such was his impact that after he had crushed a Eucharistic heresy in Antwerp, Belgium, he was given the title 'Apostle of Antwerp.' A few years after he founded the Norbertines, Pope Honorius II appointed him Archbishop of Magdeburg. Norbert carried his zeal for moral reform into his new diocese and was met with stiff opposition. Several unsuccessful attempts on his life were made. He is honoured and remembered for playing a crucial role in defending the Church and the Pope against severe opposition.

The Norbertines have etched a name for themselves for being strong supporters of the Papacy in tumultuous times besides being the evangelical force that established Christianity in parts of Central and Eastern Europe. The Order nearly died off by the beginning of the 19th century but eventually had a resurgence. The Norbertines have a female branch as well. Together they number around 1300 religious worldwide. Today, their ministry mostly centers on retreat centres, schools, cottage industries like cheese-making and brewing of spirits, farming, printing, parochial and youth work. □



THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

by Fr Dinesh Vasawa sdb

1. Reading: Read the passage slowly and attentively. “On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples asked him, ‘Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’ So, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks, where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’ So, the disciples set out, went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal” (Mark 14:12-16).

2. Meditation: Reflect on the passage and consider its meaning. Ponder the significance of Jesus preparing to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples.

Consider the disciples’ obedience in following Jesus’ instructions and how everything unfolded as he had foretold. Consider the symbolism of the Passover meal, commemorating the Israelites’ liberation from slavery in Egypt, and how it foreshadows the Eucharist. Let us further reflect on the feast through the following meditation:

The institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper is a profound act of love and self-giving.

Scholars generally agree that John’s chronology of Jesus’ death is more accurate than the synoptic gospels’ chronology of Jesus’ passion. Jesus died on the afternoon before Passover, and his body was taken from the cross before sunset as Jews gathered to begin the traditional meal. As a result, Jesus’ last meal with his disciples was not a Passover meal.

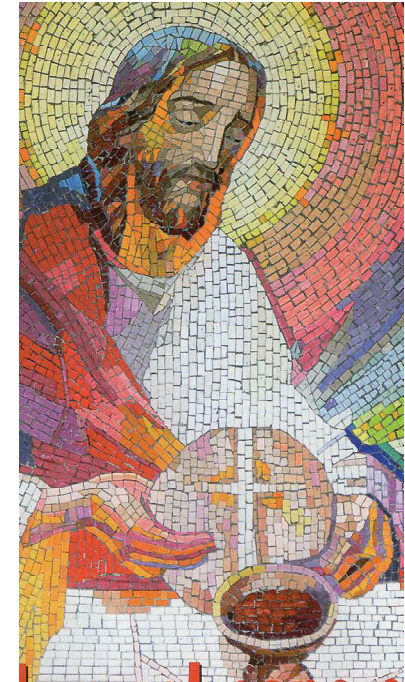
Nonetheless, Mark and the early Christians witnessed their feast as a new type of Passover. The early celebrations of the Lord’s Supper by his disciples were a way to enter

again into Jesus’ last meal with his disciples and the relationship that was founded in that celebration, just as the Passover celebration was not just a remembering of what happened one night in Egypt, but a renewal of the relationship that was formed on that night. Their comprehension and appreciation grew as they participated in the ritual and reflected on its significance. The condensed description of Jesus’ Passover celebration with his disciples in our text reflects years of reflection on their old traditions, memories of Jesus, and new experiences as people who believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Reflection Questions:

1. What thoughts and feelings come to mind when considering your body?
2. What thoughts and feelings come to mind when you think of your blood?
3. In the first section of this gospel, Jesus instructs his disciples to locate the Passover preparation room. The events unfold exactly as Jesus predicted. What exactly is being revealed here? Why?
4. Why do you think Jesus did not use something else to become his body and blood, such as pebbles and wildflowers? What was the advantage of pebbles and wildflowers over bread and wine? What would be absent?
5. What does this tell you about God’s desire to be with us in the sacrament of the Eucharist?

3. Prayer: Engage in a conversation with God. Thank Him for the gift of the Eucharist, where Jesus offers Himself to us under the appearances of bread and wine. Express your gratitude for



the opportunity to participate in this sacred meal and ask for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

4. Contemplation: Rest in God’s presence and allow His Word to resonate within you. Reflect on the profound mystery of the Eucharist, where Jesus offers Himself as actual food and true drink for our spiritual nourishment. Consider the love and sacrifice that Jesus demonstrated by instituting this sacrament and how it continues to unite us with Him and one another.

5. Action: Consider how this reflection on the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ impacts your life. □

Quiet Spaces

SALVATION OF LITTLE THINGS

Pope Francis' homily on Monday, February 29, 2016

God's salvation comes not from great things, not from power or money, not from clerical or political networks, but from small and simple things that sometimes even arise from disdain. Francis proposed this meditation during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning.

"The Church prepares us for Easter and today makes us reflect on salvation: what do we think salvation is like", Francis began, "the salvation that we all want?". The story of "Naaman's disease", narrated in the Second Book of Kings (5:1-15), presents "the fact of death: and afterwards?". Indeed, "when there is sickness, it always leads us back to that thought: salvation". But, the Pontiff asked, "how does salvation come about? What is the path to salvation? What is God's revelation to us Christians with regard to salvation?"

In the Pope's view, "the key word to understanding the Church's message today is disdain". After "Naaman arrived at Elisha's house and asked to be cured, Elisha sent a boy to tell him to wash in the Jordan seven times. A simple thing". Perhaps for this reason "Naaman disdained", exclaiming: "I have made such a journey, with so many gifts...". Instead everything was resolved by simply bathing in the river. Moreover, Naaman continued, "our rivers are more beautiful than this one".

Francis then pointed out, in reference to the Gospel passage taken from Luke (4:24-30), that "the inhabitants of Nazareth" similarly "disdained after hearing Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah that Sabbath in the synagogue", when he said "today this has happened", speaking of the liberation, of how the people would be freed". The people commented: "What do you think about this man? He is one of us, we saw him grow up from boyhood, he never studied". And the people "disdained" and even "wanted to kill him".

Again, the Pope continued, "later on Jesus felt this disdain on the part of the leaders, the doctors of the law who sought salvation in moral



casuistry — 'this can be done to this point, to that point...' — and thus I don't know how many commandments they had, and the poor people...". This is why the people did not trust them. The same thing happened with "the Sadducees, who sought salvation in compromises with the powerful men of the world, with the emperor: some with clerical networks, others with political networks sought salvation in this way". But "the people had an instinct and didn't believe" in them. Instead, "they believed in Jesus because he spoke with authority".

And so, the Pope asked, "why this disdain?". It is because, he said, "in our imagination salvation must come from something great, from something majestic: only the powerful can save us, those who have strength, who have money, who have power, these people can save us". Instead, "God's plan is different". Thus, "they feel disdain because they cannot understand that salvation comes only from little things, from the simplicity of the things of God". And "when Jesus proposes the way of salvation, he never speaks of great things", but only "little things".

From this perspective Francis suggested a re-reading of the Gospel Beatitudes — "you will be saved if you do this" — and of Matthew, Chapter 25. They are "the two pillars of the Gospel: 'Come, come with me because you have done this'". It involves "simple things: you did not seek salvation or hope in power, in networks, in negotiations, no; you simply did this". Yet actually, this gives rise to much disdain.

The Pope then proposed, "preparing for Easter", as he too intends to do, by "reading the Beatitudes and reading Matthew 25, and thinking and seeing if something about this causes me disdain, takes peace away from me". Because "disdain is a luxury that only the vain, the proud allow themselves".

Here, "at the end of the Beatitudes", Francis explained, Jesus says something powerful: "Blessed is he who is not shocked by me", who "does not disdain this, who does not feel disdain". Reflecting on the reasons for these words, the Pope repeated that "it will do us good to take a little time — today, tomorrow — and read the Beatitudes, read Matthew and pay attention to what is happening in our heart: whether there is something that causes disdain". And "ask the Lord for the grace to understand that the only way to salvation is the folly of the Cross, that is, the annihilation of the Son of God, of his becoming small". In today's liturgy, Pope Francis concluded, "the little thing" is "represented by bathing in the Jordan and by the little village of Nazareth". □

THE MYSTERIOUS STAIRCASE

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, sdb

It seemed Spring had suddenly made its presence felt in the old park of the Angevin Castle. The boys' voices echoed garrulously in the silence of the clearings; their light-coloured clothes stood out against the sombre green of the oaks: only one, Luke, did not join in the commotion of his companions. Thoughtful, a wrinkle on his forehead, he wandered the park's paths. Finally, he could no longer resist the temptation: he crossed the courtyard again, entered the Castle and found himself in a long, semi-dark corridor. He hesitantly stopped in front of a small door concealed in the wall.

Sometime earlier, while visiting the Castle with his history teacher and his classmates from Middle School, he had seen the custodian, who was acting as a tour guide, push open the small door saying: "And here is the mystery staircase."

"Mystery?" the teacher had repeated.

"Yes, mystery: because nobody knows where it goes. Supposedly, it hides some 'trapdoor' set up by Queen Joan I of Anjou, who, according to legend, lived in this Castle, and who had no qualms about using to get rid of her enemies."

Now, the mystery of that staircase, the end of which was unknown, excited Luke's curiosity and awakened his adventurous spirit. He therefore, drew from his pocket the small torch that, for all reasonable purposes, he always carried with him and, opening the door, slowly began to descend.

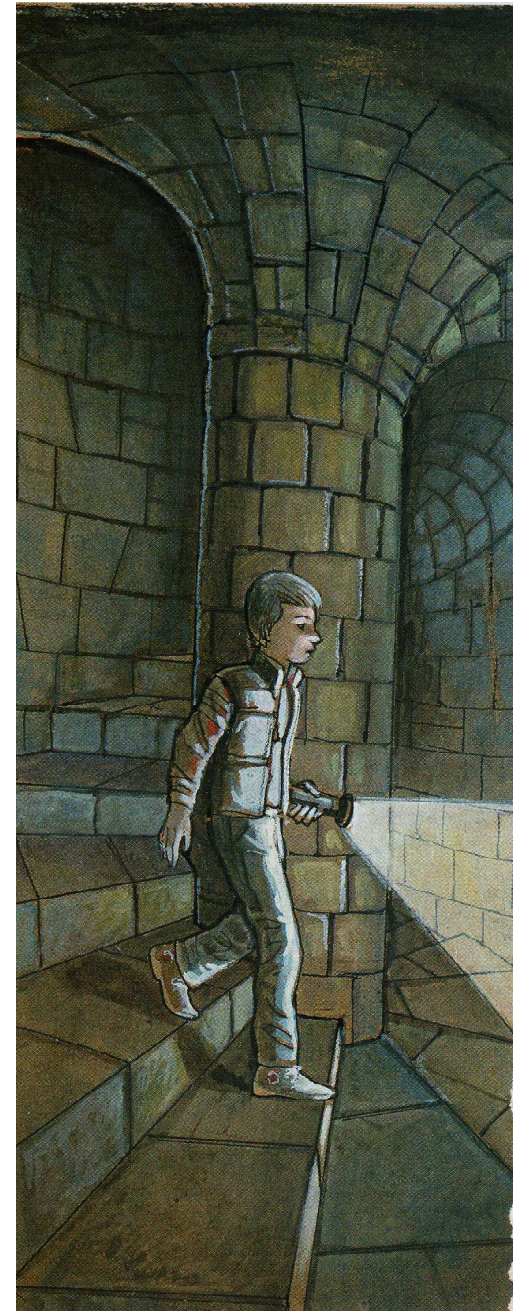
The staircase was spiral, and the torch beam did not illuminate

more than one step at a time. Luke went cautiously, keeping his free hand extended so as not to bump into some unexpected obstacle. All of a sudden, on the seventy-first step, the ground failed under his feet. Instinctively, he stretched out his arms, but he felt himself plummet into the void and lost consciousness.

When he came to, he found himself on a small tongue of beach. The sea stretched out before him as far as the eye could see, while above his head loomed the gloomy bulk of the Angevin Castle. It did not take a great effort of imagination for him to realise that the 'pitfall' had thrown him onto that strip of beach. Thankfully, the sand had cushioned the fall, and he got up unharmed.

He now tried to wrack his brain to see how he could get back into the Castle. He shouted with all the breath in his little lungs, but the few high windows were closed: no one heard his voice, which was otherwise smothered by the roar of the waves. He hoped that some boat would pass by in the open sea and that they might be able to see his waving handkerchief, but on the wild and foaming sea, no boat could be seen that day. So what? He could certainly not stay on that stretch of beach forever, also because, with the rising tide, the beach was gradually thinning out. What would happen to him when the waves reached the Castle's base?

Without losing heart, he started walking along the tongue of the beach, looking for a possible shelter to save himself from the imm-



inent danger of the high tide. He breathed in relief when he spotted a long, narrow slit in the wall.

Fortunately, Luke was very slim and agile. He could thus, without too much difficulty, pass through the slit. He found himself in a cave. The torch no longer worked, but Luke had a box of matches and an illustrated magazine in his pocket. He made a torch from the comic book, lit it and walked into the cave. The ground was so damp that he had to cling to the walls to avoid slipping; giant rats ran ahead of him, making his teeth chatter in disgust. He passed through an archway and entered a second cave and then a third: he was in the castle dungeon, where, besides large rings fixed to the wall, there must undoubtedly have had been a way out on to dry land. But, lost in those immense caverns, how could the boy find it?

By now the torch had been consumed, and Luke lit one match after another. He had very few left and dreaded the moment when he would no longer have even that tiny flame to guide him. Suddenly, he recoiled in fright: a gigantic shadow stood before him. But then,

stretching out his hand, he realized it was only a statue twice huge as a giant.

Finally, as he lit the last match and was about to give up the idea of salvation, he saw a glimmer of that some light rain falling from above. He ran in the direction of that glimmer, climbed a few steps and reached a slit through which he exited, finding himself in one of the castle courtyards.

A brusque voice greeted him: "Where are you from, boy?"

The speaker was Count Lamberto Oderigo, owner of the Castle. "That way," Luke replied, making a broad, vague gesture with his hand.

"How that way?" insisted the other, wrinkling his eyebrows.

Then the boy recounted the whole adventure, from the moment he began to descend the mystery staircase to the moment when to save himself from the tide, he took refuge in the dungeons of the Castle.



"Is what you tell me true?" asked the old gentleman incredulously. But do you know that you risked your life by falling off the mystery staircase? Not to mention that if the tide had already been high, you would have drowned miserably. Why did you do

this?"

Luke hugged his shoulders: "I don't know. But I like to see what others have not yet seen, to arrive where others are afraid to go. I like it, even if I run into some danger afterwards...."

"The fascination of the unknown," muttered the count, "attracts explorers and guides them towards daring discoveries. There is a good streak in you, my boy. What will you do when you grow up?"

"Be a sailor."

"I thought so!" replied the count.

There was much talk at the Castle about the extraordinary event that Luke experienced. But the best came when he mentioned the gigantic statue in one of the dungeons. Count Oderigo was extremely fascinated by this revelation, and the next day, guided by the boy, he went down into the dungeon with some workers. The statue was found and, through a massive breach in the wall, was brought to light. It was the famous "Laocoon," which Lamberto Oderigo had searched for in vain throughout the Castle.

Now, the large statue is in one of the rooms of the Castle, and on the bronze plaque at the base is engraved: 'Discovered by Luke M.' The old count took a fancy to the daring boy and wanted to compensate him in some way for the very precious statue he had found, so the following autumn, he arranged to get Luke admitted at the Naval Academy: that would be the first stage in the innumerable journeys dreamt up by the young explorer, which had begun with the fictional adventure of the Mystery Staircase. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 53

by Michele Molineris

238. This priest must be a religious (1878)

On 2 April 1878, Don Bosco was accompanied by Fr Rua in Marseilles. A guest of St Joseph's parish priest, he met with two people in his house who were there, destined to be instruments of Divine Providence for him; we mean Mrs Prat and Abbot Mendre. Mrs Prat, hearing Mass in the parish church, noticed a priest at the altar, whose exterior deportment struck her immensely; she discerned in him a general demeanour, an exactness in the observance of the rubrics, a habitual recollection, an air of holiness that made her exclaim: "This priest must be religious."

An irresistible desire to meet him up close drove her into the sacristy to ask who this priest was who celebrated Mass in such a fervent manner. The parish priest satisfied her amply.

"May I be introduced to him?" she asked shyly.

"But right away, madam," Abbot Guiol replied.

The introduction took place there, and it took no more than that for the good lady to be entirely won over to Don Bosco's cause and to place her absolute trust in the saint. God only knows how much she did for St Leo's Oratory from then on; it is enough to say that she was its true mother to her last breath.

Canon Mendre then also formed a forthright relationship with Don Bosco. Only in April 1878 did he come to know who Don Bosco was. The parish priest Guiol, whose vicar he was, called him one day

and told him: "Don Bosco is about to begin his work here in Marseilles; you must put yourself at his disposal."

The servant of God was also a magnet for Fr. Mendre: from their first meeting, the good abbot became everything to him. The saint's expression had remained in the memory of the French Salesians: "Abbot Mendre stole Don Bosco's heart." However, the terms could have been reversed for a more significant reason. For almost forty years, hardly a day went by that the vicar curate, and then curate of St. Joseph's did not, in turn give some proof of benevolence to Don Bosco's sons (*M.B., XIII, 530*).

239. The Sodality of "the little garden" 1878)

Evasio Garrone entered Valdocco (Turin) as a student on 4 August 1878. He was eighteen years old and was a shopkeeper at home town. It was seven o'clock in the evening when he reached the sacristy door. He stopped in front of a procession of young people entering it. Curious, he followed the stream and saw a priest hearing confessions, surrounded by many teenagers preparing themselves. He knelt with them, thinking more of his home than his sins.

When his turn came, unprepared as he was, he remained mute, for he could not remember a single sin. The priest then said to him: "I will speak."

And one by one, in order of time and with the indications of the places, he spelt out to him all his sins, indicating their number and circumstances. Having done this, he gave him a few warnings with so much encouragement and affection that he felt increasingly com-

forted with every word he spoke. The contentment in his heart grew to such an extent that he felt as if he was in Paradise. At the end, the confessor said to him: "Garrone, thank Our Lady that after six years of sighing, she has heard you. Always be devoted to her; she will save you from many dangers."

From the age of twelve, the young man nourished the secret desire to become a priest, but knowing that his family couldn't afford to keep him in school, he had not disclosed this inclination to a living soul. At eighteen, having heard of Don Bosco and a hope awakened in his heart, and he presented himself to the parish priest to whom he revealed his thoughts for the first time. Having listened to him kindly, the parish priest obtained his acceptance into the Oratory.

Everyone, could therefore imagine his astonishment when he heard of the time that had elapsed since the idea of becoming a priest had first occurred to him and then when he heard himself called by name, with all the rest that we have narrated.

When he had finished his confession, he withdrew to a corner of the sacristy, got down on his knees, and, with his hands behind his back, stood there oblivious and contemplating that mysterious confessor who had uncovered all his secrets. He said to himself, "Could this priest, who knows me so well, be from my village? But I have never seen him in Grana! So how does he know me?"

The next day, as he stood in the courtyard, he saw all the youngsters running towards a priest who was then advancing toward them. He ran, too. He was the one in the confessional! As soon as he was

near, he heard him say to a youngster: "I want to cook you." Then he turned to him and said: "I want to cook Garrone here too." Who is this priest who calls me by name, knows all my business, and wants to cook me?" And without further ado, he questioned him: "Say, are you from my town?"

"Not me," replied the priest. "Do you know me?"

"I have never seen him." Having said that, he asked a neighbour who he was.

"Don Bosco!"

"Yes, I am Don Bosco," the priest replied, smiling.

Sometime earlier, he had made the acquaintance of some youngsters from the 'little garden sodality. Fr Berto soon accepted him into the sodality, too. One day, when Don Bosco saw him intent on watering the flowers, he told him: "Well, leave it to me; I'll make you my gardener." "Don Bosco, I want to be a priest," he replied. "Yes, and a missionary too." Garrone, who did not want to become a Salesian, kept silent for fear of displeasing him, hurried to finish his work and fled from the boarding. In 1879, Don Bosco gathered together all his 'beans,' as he called his youngsters of the little garden, gave them a talk and finally said: "Some of you will go on holiday; one of you will go home with the desire to return to the Oratory, but, overcome by his relatives, he will go to the seminary. Others will return to put on the clerical habit and be with Don Bosco. One will die. Another, returning to do the retreat, will not be able to go to Lanzo because he will have to assist one of his dying companions. Everything came true on the dot. Garrone, who had returned on the eve of the retreat,

wanted to leave for Lanzo when he was told: "Go and assist Tavella, who is seriously ill." He ran to the infirmary, and the sick man lived one more day and night. In 1881, Garrone, having made his last confession at the end of the school year, was told by Don Bosco: "We will not see each other again for a while. You will go to be a soldier, and they will send you far away from Turin, but always remember your guide, Mary, the Most Holy Help of Christians; always trust her. Mary will console you and save you even in your misfortune. Garrone, relatively small in stature and petite, was ruminating: "This time, Don Bosco's wrong. How can I qualify if I'm only palm high and finger thick?" The fact of the matter was that after three months, when he sought out his number and presented himself for an examination, he was utterly surprised to be declared able-bodied and sent to Catanzaro. He returned a few months later to serve in the military hospital in Turin. He immediately went to see Don Bosco, who told him in confession: "Be charitable to the sick, time is precious. Study and learn well; with what you know as a soldier, you can do much good. This is your time to do good. Be careful, however, for the brief time you will be in Susa.

He did not understand the last words, but a few months later, having been promoted to the rank of corporal adjutant, he was sent to the infirmary of the 5th Alpine Regiment in Susa. Without Our Lady's special grace, he would have been ruined in soul and body. When he went to Turin, Don Bosco reproached him for having forgotten the one who protected him so much. But he added: "What you have en-

countered will serve you as an experience to do much good among the young. Thinking about his case, he asked to return to Turin, where he stayed until he was discharged, going to confession to Don Bosco every Saturday. One of those evenings, Don Bosco, hearing his confession, told him: "Be careful of that patient; make sure he gets everything." Garrone had told him nothing of his sickness, but when he returned to the neighbourhood, he approached a Protestant who had decided to become Catholic. Seeing his grave predicament, he looked for a priest to baptise him but found none. So, taking water, he himself baptised him conditionally. The sick man was so joyous that he threw his arms around his neck. Within ten minutes, he passed away. Dismissed from the army, he needed help figuring out what to do, whether to go to the seminary or stay with Don Bosco. He remained at home for three days; then, on the day he had to take the exam to be admitted to the seminary, he came, almost without knowing what was doing, to Turin to the Oratory. He was sent to St John the Evangelist to be among the sons of Mary. At the end of the year, he made his confession to Don Bosco and was accused of having lost patience several times with a bedridden patient. "After three days, he won't bother you anymore," Don Bosco assured him. In fact, three days later, the sick man died. Garrone left for America in 1889 with Bishop Cagliero. He put to good use the therapeutic knowledge he had occasionally acquired in the infirmaries, and was also able to provide himself with discreet scientific equipment so that he could acquire an uncom-

mon proficiency in medical practice, while receiving the faculty to practise medicine in Patagonia. To him, we owe the first hospital and pharmacy in Viedma. During a quarter of a century, combining his mastery with charity and a spirit of sacrifice, he became one of the most influential factors in the evangelisation of Patagonia. (*M.B., XIII, 894*).

240. The story of the terracotta mug (1878)

On 14 October 1878, Don Bosco was certainly in Turin. That day in the house of Madame Adele Clément at Saint-Rambert in Albon, an unknown priest entered. He spoke French and never wanted to give his name, but at her repeated insistence, he replied: "A few years from now my name will be printed in books and those books will come into your hands. Then you will know who I am."

The lady's husband, an oil and coal merchant, had brought him into their house. He was returning from Chanas, a village half a kilometre from Saint-Rambert, from there he had got a load of goods. Suddenly he saw a priest walking with incredible difficulty. Feeling sorry for him, he approached him and said: "Father, you look exhausted." "Oh yes, my good man," the priest replied, "I've had a long journey." "Father, I would gladly offer you to sit up here if the vehicle were not as it is, but on such a cart, I dare not." "You'll do me a great favour, and I accept. I can't take it anymore." That said, helped by the man he mounted the cart. He appeared to be between thirty and forty years old and had a serene aspect. A peculiarity, which the man did not notice at the time but which he realised later on, was that

although the priest was sitting at the back of the cart, he stuck his whole head and biretta into his cape to avoid being seen by the roadside gangs. No one had made the slightest sign of noticing him, even when they were passing by. When they reached the house, Mr Clément gave him his hand and helped him down; then, he ran to his wife to warn her that he had brought a very tired priest who needed refreshment. The lady, a charitable and pious woman, immediately went to prepare him lunch. He accepted and, during the meal, lovingly listened to her tell of her misfortunes, the most painful of which was that of her son who had suddenly gone blind and hard of hearing. The poor lady could not give herself peace; she had prayed to all the saints, but nothing came to ease her pain. The priest told her: "Pray, good lady, and you will be heard."

"You mean that, Father? Could you go and see him?"

Her husband poured him a drink during the meal. On the table beside the wine bottle was a white terracotta mug, as was the custom then, for water and it was circled with silver. The priest said: "Keep this mug to remember me."

So, they did, as attested by their daughter, then a little girl, who adds, "My father, the year before he died, said to me, 'This mug must not pass into the hands of your brothers. I will give it to you and you will keep it. It is a relic of that holy priest.'"

Toward the end of the meal, Mr. Clément went out to water the horses, having to leave again soon. At that moment, the priest got up from his seat and said to the mistress:

(Continued on pg. 35)



THE VIRGIN WHO LISTENS

Silvio Roggia

Faith, charity, hope is the track and forward thrust of Christian living. Mary helped us rediscover the treasure in these, which are the 'ABC' of being Jesus' disciples and of which she is a shining model for the Church. These ways of being are not learnt as suddenly as one learns a new piece of information or is enabled to do an unusual operation on a computer... It takes a long companionship, as the twelve did with Jesus, to make his way of life become ours, too.

Mary, whom we have already mentioned as a pilgrim of faith, is the woman on the road. Monsignor Tonino Bello writes: "If the characters in the Gospel had a kind of built-in odometer, I think Mary would have won the ranking of one of the most tireless walkers. The journey to Nazareth and back through the hills of Judah to find her cousin, with that sort of rapid supplement mentioned by Luke, who assures us that "she reached the city in haste"; the journey to Bethlehem. From there, we will go to Jerusalem to the pre-sentation in the temple. The clan-destine expatriation to Egypt. The cautious

return to Judea with the note of departure issued by the Angel of the Lord, and then back to Nazareth. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the group discount and doubling the route with an excursion around the city in search of Jesus. Among the crowds, to meet him wandering through the villages of Galilee, perhaps with the odd chance that he might make his way home. Finally, on the path to Calvary, at the foot of the cross, where the wonder expressed by John with the word *Stabat*, rather than the petrification of pain for a failed enterprise, expresses the statuesque immobility of one who waits on the podium for the prize of victory." So writes Msgr. Tonino.

What consoles us more than Mary's steps on the dusty roads of Palestine are the paths that her heart and thoughts had to tread until the end in order to become more and more a faithful disciple of that Son greater than herself, the mystery of light, of salvation, of faith, hope and charity for all humanity... a mystery!

Let's move beyond mere imagery and bring it closer to home.

To be disciples means to actively walk in the footsteps of the Master, in the company of him and those who follow him most closely, like Mary. But how do we embody this discipleship in our modern lives?

Mary has some concrete suggestions, ready and at hand, suggesting to us for the 'now', as we insistently repeat to her at every Hail Mary: 'pray for us sinners now,' for it is precisely here that we can play our game.

Luke allows us to peek, almost fleetingly, into one of the most surprising phases of the life of the family of Nazareth because of the absolute silence with which it has been handed down to us. Jesus, Joseph and Mary lead the simple life of their compatriots for thirty years. Thirty years without the Gospel giving us even half a page about such a precious time, given that it was Jesus' time when God walked among us and revealed himself, making himself seen as he is in the face of the Christ.

"His mother kept all these things in her heart" — this is what the Gospel says about "his mother" during those thirty years. It describes a companionship with Jesus that matured the heart.

There she had welcomed the proclamation, and now there the Word bore fruit, just like the seed that took root in the parable and germinated where it found good soil but which always needs its long seasons to come to maturity.

Would this help the 'now' that we so urgently need? We were expecting something more practical, quick-fix, whose effect you see within an hour. Instead, Mary shows us thirty years of meditation.

Being disciples like Mary

The Word is thus incarnated. The nine months between the Feast of the Annunciation and Christmas celebrate a beginning! But the more beautiful and more significant the beginning, the more substantial the journey must be in life, development, and growth, of which the beginning is the first step (first: therefore, all the others must follow...). The Word takes root and bears fruit if once the seed has fallen into the good soil, it germinates there and accepts the challenge of the long winter, of the fruitful spring and on...

Supposing that was how it was for Mary, how can we expect to rush through the stages and not accept the logic of gradualness and constancy instead, continually starting again and 'keeping watch' without giving in to sleep, (like the foolish virgins.)

Will it be an empty wait, like the one that you suffer in the dentist's anteroom or in the station waiting room, where you try to kill time?

Therein lies the secret. Being able to make our long journey not an insignificant calendar of months that are always the same but a today that is always new because each 'now' is filled and illuminated by his Word, which warms and gives vigour to the heart, as it was for Mary.

That this is the good path was confirmed to us again by Pope John Paul II when he opened the path of the universal Church in preparation for the Jubilee of 2000. Indeed, he told us that to be faithful disciples of Jesus in these years, we must:

1. Rediscover our Baptism (faith, charity, hope...).
2. Take up the Word of God

again so that it enters our hearts. Put ourselves in the company of the Word: this is how we can now follow in Christ's footsteps daily.

"Your Word embraces the universe," says the psalm: for the saints, everything speaks of God. But for us who are scattered among a thousand noises, worries, and temptations, who struggle to listen, who risk drying up those clods of good soil that we also have within us, it is better to concentrate our efforts on the essentials: let us start from the Gospel "If we do not live of the Gospel Jesus does not live in us" says Charles de Foucauld. If we are open to the Gospel, everything makes our uninterrupted days fruitful and maturing following the Word made flesh of Christ the Lord.

However, before asking ourselves how to be more concretely attentive to the Gospel, let us pause for a moment to verify and consolidate the underlying motivations. Are we convinced of the importance of listening? What is so precious behind listening to the Word of Scripture that makes the Pope's liturgical invitations in this direction so pressing?

Taking faith, charity, and hope in our hands with Mary at our side has already allowed us to realise how the gift infinitely exceeds the expectation: what God wants to offer us, what He has prepared for us, the intensity of His presence and care for me, for each one, are so disproportionately great compared to me that I can barely perceive, glimpse some reflection of His truth, His charity and His promises.

If this is so, we understand that with God, it is much more urgent to learn to welcome than to pro-

pose things of our own to Him: wiser to listen than to speak and holier to obey than to demand.

Listening, more than a disposition of the ear, is an art of the heart, of the whole person who little by little knows how to make himself docile, in tune, capable of grasping the smallest desires of the one he loves and not just the biggest headlines, written in block letters, of what the other has publicly declared. It happens like this in relationships of affection: children with parents, between fiancés, between those who genuinely know how to love. So, it is with the Lord. St Francis de Sales, a giant of spirituality, wrote thus: "*Lovers of God cannot be without thinking of him, without breathing for him, without aspiring to him and speaking of him.*"

Gradually substituting our thoughts for God's, resonating in unison with what pleases God, confusing ours with his will; John XXIII: "*outside of God's will there is nothing that interests me*".

In short, Pope John Paul II is quite right in pointing out to us too, that the road that Mary travelled should become like one "Listening" to God. We should walk daily in the company of the Gospel so that little by little, we break our patterns and let God's thoughts and what pleases Him, become the centre of gravity of our lives. Einstein said it is easier to break the atom than a preconception'. To change our minds, to change our mentality, is a genuinely God-like feat: only He can do it if we, morning after morning, give Him an audience, put ourselves in His care under the light of His word. Sometimes it burns, but that is when it does us what is best. □



MY VOCATION STORY

FR GABRIEL ROMERO

*Regional Councillor for
the South American Cone
O. Pori Mecoi*

Can you introduce yourself?

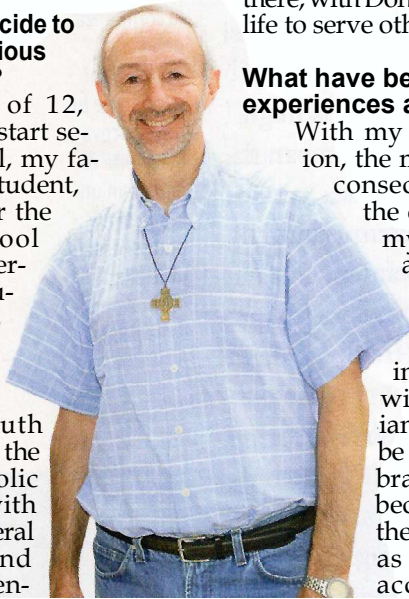
My name is Héctor Gabriel Romero. I am 50 years old and was born in Bella Vista, in the interior of the province of Tucumán, in northern Argentina. I have been a Salesian for 30 years and a priest for 23.

What was your family like?

My father, Miguel, was a trader who died in 2003, and my mother, Cristina, is a retired teacher. Thank God, I have two brothers, Federico and Ana, with their respective families, and I have four beautiful nieces and nephews.

Why did you decide to become a religious and a Salesian?

At the age of 12, when I had to start secondary school, my father, a former student, made me enter the Salesian School Tulio García Fernández in Tucumán. It was there that I met the Salesians. I became part of a youth group that was the school's Catholic Action, and with them, I had several missionary and service experien-



ces, spiritual retreats and camps. The group experience opened me up to discover new friends, be part of the Salesian youth movement, participate in some provincial and national youth meetings, and be part of theatre groups, such as the Don Bosco Musical in that centenary year of 1988. I was happy to go to school: classmates, sports, study, teachers and Salesians created an atmosphere where I felt at home. That atmosphere and the apostolic experience I had with my friends in the youth group made me think that that was where I belonged and that I would always want to be there, with Don Bosco, and give my life to serve other young people.

What have been your experiences as a Salesian?

With my religious profession, the motivations for my consecration deepened: the certainty of giving my life to the Lord and making Him the centre of my choices. Only during my probation in San Juan, with the witness of the Salesians, did the desire to be a priest and to celebrate the sacraments become clearer. And then, during my years as a priest, I had to accompany several

stages of initial formation: Pre-novitiate, Novitiate and Post-novitiate, and in those communities, we collaborated pastorally in the parishes and the College where they were placed, together with the brothers in formation and the rest of the formation team. In 2016, I began my service as Provincial of the ARN, based in Córdoba, up to GC28.

The South American Region was part of Don Bosco's dreams. What are its current strengths?

Looking at the South America Cone Region, I could highlight the living and active reality of the Salesian Youth Movement, with its diversity of groups and Oratorian, missionary and volunteer activities; the intense experience of the mission shared with the laity, where some works are entrusted entirely to a team of committed lay people well trained in Salesian spirituality; and the challenging reality of the missions with the indigenous peoples: the Paraguayan Chaco, the Amazon, Mato Grosso and Patagonia, among other places.

What is the social situation in the countries of the region?

The health crisis has undoubtedly had and will have a long-term impact on the region's economies. Countries must take immediate action to kick-start a slow but steady recovery process. Long-standing challenges in housing, education, and public health, while addressed, require new decisions to address climate change's effects.

Schools have reopened, and companies are hiring or rehiring staff; however, scars require attention.

Statistics speak of the highest poverty rate in decades, coupled with an increase in informal minimum wage jobs and income inequality that remains high. We must also mention the increasing rate of violence in some cities, grievances, strikes and protests. In some countries, the high inflation rate directly affects family and regional economies.

Amidst the challenges, it's crucial to recognize the vast opportunities for economic and social restructuring that major crises can bring. The region, in varying degrees, boasts natural resources in energy and agriculture. Some countries hold substantial gas reserves and have untapped potential in renewable energy. The same can be said for food production and technology. The region's potential for green growth is immense, with abundant opportunities for renewable electricity - solar and wind - and a rich natural capital - water, trees, biodiversity - that can pave the way for new industries.

How are the Catholic Church and the Salesians viewed?

Although most countries in the region have a strong Catholic tradition and a history closely linked to religion, recent years have seen a growing secularism, especially in the big cities. Added to this is the rise of evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and unfortunately, in some people, the various abusive situations experienced within the Church have generated rejection and disgust to the point of making them abandon the faith. We Salesians are part of this Church and, with all the difficulties we experience, we have, I

believe, a good level of esteem. We are appreciated for our educational and pastoral work, our professional training, and our presence among the poorest and in mission territories.

Fortunately, there is still a significant number of young people who are eager to dedicate their lives to God within the Congregation. Many also actively participate in missionary and Oratory apostolate. This is a testament to the deep-rooted Salesian charism and the enduring love and respect for Don Bosco.

What is most satisfying?

Visiting communities and getting to know places, people, works, one learns to listen and value the life and traditions of each place. I am happy to see the generous dedication of my Salesian brothers, the availability of so many lay people seriously committed to the mission, and the Salesian creativity that has been consolidated in so many works and services to respond to the needs of the moment.

What are the problems to be faced?




I could say the challenges indicated in our GC28: the need to deepen our identity as consecrated Salesians to be able to live the mission among the poorest with intensity, taking advantage of the size of our educative-pastoral communities to foster an influential and effective presence among the young and to have concrete time for accompaniment and personal listening; to grow in co-responsibility with the laity in formation and mission, continuing to entrust them with tasks of animation and management.



What are your dreams and projects?

I dream that we can increasingly bear witness as true Salesian "brothers"; with our differences and stones, we can understand each other, accept each other, value each other and work together for the young. Our witness of 'fraternal communities' committed among the poorest of community 'holiness' can give rise to new vocations for this region of our beloved Congregation. And on the eve of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first missionary dispatch to Patagonia, we can renew our fidelity to this missionary project, dreamt of by our father, Don Bosco, responding to the new challenges of the young people of our territory. □



 +91-8482951815
 vocations@sdbinb.in
  joinboscomumbai

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Time to grow

The train was listed as an "express" but it stopped at every station and even in between. Towards the end of the journey the ticket-collector came to examine the tickets. "Look here," he told the man, "this boy is too big to travel on a half-fare." "Really?" said the puzzled passenger, "he was small enough when we started."

Real name

"Name?" queried the immigration official. "Sneeze," replied the Chinese passenger. The official looked up, "is that your Chinese name?" "No, English name" said the man politely. "Give me your Chinese name, please." "Ah Choo."

On training

They were training Mandy on her duties as a maid. After she answered the phone the first day, her mistress asked who had called. "Twasn't nobody," Mandy said, "Jes' a woman says, 'It's a long distance to New York,' and I says, 'Yessum, it shor is, and hung up.'"

Who rules whom

Themistocles had a son who was the darling of his mother. "This little fellow is the sovereign of Greece," said Themistocles. "How so?" asked a friend. "Why, he governs his mother, his mother governs me, I govern the Athenians, and the Athenians govern all Greece."

Seeing Red

While Raffaello was busy painting in the Vatican, he was visited by two cardinals who began to criticize his work and found fault with everything without understanding much. "The Apostle Paul has too red a face," said one. "He blushes to see into whose hands the Church has fallen," retorted the angry artist.

Straight

There was that old-timer who would take his shot of whiskey with eyes shut tight and fingers holding his nose, because he did not want his mouth to water and dilute it.

Highbrow

A person educated beyond his intelligence.

Well-protected

An inebriated gentleman was weaving down the street carrying a box with perforations in the lid and sides. A neighbour stopped him and said: "My word, what have you got in that box?" "It's a mongoose," said the drunk. "What on earth for?" said his friend. "Well, you know how it is with me. I'm not very drunk now, but I'll be soon, and when I am, I see snakes and I'm scared of them, that's why I got a mongoose, to protect me!" "But," said the friend, "those are imaginary snakes..." "Right," said the drunk, "and this is an imaginary mongoose." □

THE APPLE

B.F. Sketch by Fabrizio Zubani

Every morning, the powerful and very rich king of Bengodi received the homage of his subjects.

He had conquered everything conquerable and was a little bored. The subjects paraded one after the other with a fake, unctuous smile painted on their faces.

In the midst of the others, punctual every morning, came a silent beggar, who offered the king an apple. Then, always in silence, he would retire.

The king, used to receiving far different gifts, accepted the gift with a somewhat annoyed gesture, but as soon as the beggar turned his back, he began to mock him, imitated by the whole court. The beggar was not discouraged. He returned each morning to deliver his gift into the king's hands. The king would take it and place it in a basket placed beside the throne.

The basket contained all the apples brought by the beggar with kindness and patience. And now it was overflowing.

One day, the king's favourite monkey took one of those fruits and took a bite, then spat it out at the king's feet. The surprised king saw an iridescent pearl appear in the heart of the apple.



He immediately had all the fruits in the basket cut and opened and found a pearl inside each apple.

Amazed, the king summoned the strange beggar and questioned him. "I have brought you these gifts, Sire," replied the man, "to make you realise that life offers you every morning an extraordinary gift, which you forget and throw away, because you are surrounded by too many riches. This gift is the new day that begins." □

FIORETTI - 53 (From pg. 26)

"My good lady, a voice is calling me and I must leave."

"Wait, Father," the woman remonstrated. "My husband will return at once and take you by carriage to see my son."

"A voice is calling me," he repeated, "and I must leave."

And he departed. The lady rushed to her husband, they hurried after him, sure they would soon catch up with him; but they didn't see him any longer and believed he had gone off the road. On the other hand, imagine their astonishment when, having arrived home when the little one's wet-nurse told them that a priest had come and healed the child! The wet nurse lived in Coinaud, a village three kilometres from Saint-Rambert, and by calculation it turned out that the time that the priest had entered there coincided with the time Clément had left the house.

Those good people had been

trying for seven years to guess who that mysterious priest was, when a person who had seen the priest heal the child and remembered his physiognomy very well, went to Mr. and Mrs. Clément's with a book about Don Bosco that bore his portrait.

"Here," he said, "is the priest who healed their son!"

No doubt it was him; they both recognised him immediately.

Mrs Adele Clément died in 1914, and her husband in 1925; the miracle child lived until 1928. He then developed a brain tumour. The doctors predicted an excruciating death, but instead, he passed away placidly, which was considered a new grace of St John Bosco. The sister who reported this died on 23 January 1933, leaving the mug to her daughter, Mrs Durand, who then lived in Lyon in the Avenue de Saxe (from *M.B.*, XIV, 681). □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

In my new job I was being continuously troubled by a deceitful woman. I prayed the Devotion of 3 Hail Mary's to Mama Mary. My prayers are answered. This person had to resign due to some circumstances. Mother Mary saved me through her intercession.

Elvis Pink

Very grateful to the Infant Jesus and our dearest Mother Mary and my devotion to the Three Hail Marys for helping me in my anxiety and fear which has subsided considerably. I pray and am confident that I shall completely recover from this through their intercession. I am also grateful for the many graces bestowed on my family. *Cynthia Sha Goa*

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

JUNE 2024

For those fleeing their own countries

Let us pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys fraught with danger and violence, may find welcome and new living opportunities in their host countries.

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;

on 1st & 2nd of every month
Date of Publication: 1st of every month

Subs: (one copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland Rs. 200p.a;** **Airmail: Rs 500 p.a.**

MARY WAS THERE

Thanks to Our Lady for her intercession in preventing a great tragedy on May 4, 2023. We were four of us in the car travelling from Kharghar to Kurla. The front tire burst on the highway. The car swirled and collided with a truck and got stuck to a divider. There were a lot of heavy vehicles speeding by. If not for daily reciting Our Lady's Rosary, we would all have been killed on the spot. Nothing happened to anyone. Not a scratch. The car was completely damaged but we came out unscathed. It was all thanks to Our Blessed Lord and His most holy Mother.

(Godwin D'Souza)

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.

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.

To help a poor lad to reach the priesthood, is a privilege

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

Rs 5000/-, 10,000/-, 15,000/- for a boy studying for the priesthood;

But any amount, however small, will be gratefully received.

Send your offerings by Payee cheque or Draft on Mumbai banks;

MO/PO/INTL MO/BPO/Bequests, Wills, Perpetual Burses, all favouring Don Bosco's Madonna or Bombay Salesian Society or Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, (Trustee).

Please address all correspondence to:

Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,

SHRINE OF DON BOSCO'S MADONNA,

Matunga - MUMBAI - 400 019 - INDIA

Phone/Fax: 91-22- 2414 6320, email: dbmshrine@gmail.com